

# COMMON SENSE

*Journal Of Edinburgh Conference Of Socialist Economists*



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*Journal Of Edinburgh Conference Of Socialist Economists*

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# Editorial

Common Sense was first produced in Edinburgh in 1987. It offered a direct challenge to the theory production machines of specialised academic journals, and tried to move the articulation of intellectual work beyond the collapsing discipline of the universities. It was organised according to a minimalist production and editorial process which received contributions that could be photocopied and stapled together. It was reproduced in small numbers, distributed to friends, and sold at cost price in local bookshops and in a few outposts throughout the world. It maintained three interrelated commitments: to provide an open space wherein discussion could take place without regard to style or to the rigid classification of material into predefined subject areas; to articulate critical positions within the contemporary political climate; and to animate the hidden Scottish passion for general ideas. Within the context of the time, the formative impetus of Common Sense was a desire to juxtapose disparate work and to provide a continuously open space for a general critique of the societies in which we live.

For the first nine issues, the pages of Common Sense were filled with various attempts to address the issues of the day and with items that did not seek to be classified as one thing or another. Space was offered to ranters, to poets, to philosophers, to theorists, to musicians, to cartoonists, to artists, to students and teachers, to writers, and to whosoever could produce work that could be photocopied. However, times have now changed and the minimalist attitude to production has proved to be somewhat restrictive. Consequently, Common Sense has expanded to the form you see before you here. Nevertheless, the basic commitments of the journal remain as they were at its inauguration - to pose the continuous question of what the common sense of our age is, to articulate critical positions in the present, and to offer a space for those who have produced work that they feel should be disseminated but that would never be sanctioned by the dubious forces of the intellectual police.

Common Sense has not however been confined to the pages of a journal, and its various editors and contributors have done much more than produce words. All have experienced the massive changes that have characterised living in Scotland during the late 1980s, and all have been involved in one form or another with struggles against the creeping

attempts of the British State to control and socialise its population into the so called "Thatcherite" management plan. In January 1989, Common Sense helped to organise a conference on the poll tax that deliberately refused to be drawn into party political or factionalised bickering, and that attempted to theorise the thing beyond the simplistic conventional wisdom of the "its unfair" argument. From this developed an increased awareness of the politics of debt enforcement in relation to the crisis of late twentieth century capitalism, and a realisation that resistance to the poll tax involves much more than criticism of the party of government and must also involve resistance to government and state. Questions were raised thereby in relation to the adequacy of traditional political theory and practice, to the status of the law, and to the supposed benefits of the capitalist social democratic state.

The experience of this conference fed into the pages of the journal as discussions about the relevance of Marx(ism) to the imposition of the poll tax, and it suffused the independent anti poll tax groups who were increasingly discovering that the enemy was not only the Westminster parliament but also - and more crucially - the Labour Party controlled local councils with their bully boys - Scotland's very own unofficial riot police - the Militant Tendency. Common Sense moved with the common sense of the general revolt against the poll tax, and into the experience of autonomous resistance - frequently in direct opposition to Parties that offer themselves as representatives of the common cause. Common Sense has thus developed connections between radical philosophy, the critical or open tradition of Marx(ism), anarchism, innovative theory, autonomous activity, alternative forms of education, and good old-fashioned common sense.

The newly formed Common Sense now finds itself in a highly volatile and transitional period of historical movement. The Labour Party Mafia is preparing itself to continue where the Tories left off, and the Scottish National Party believes that the Westminster Parliament has just voted the poll tax out of existence. Meanwhile, under instruction from local government toadies, sheriff officers continue in their efforts to recuperate poll tax arrears as community resistance does its best to protect people. Local government generally is in a state of financial chaos, and the legitimacy of the British legal and justice systems daily becomes more obviously absurd. Moreover, in the aftermath of the so called Gulf War and with the breaking down of the boundary between East and West, masses of people seek work as capital attempts to produce larger more mobile markets, to assert itself in new areas of control, and to pay off its debts. The struggles within these movements will no doubt form the basis of the next century and set the terms of the

common sense of tomorrow. The conditions of critical debate have already changed as new political positions become articulated within the demise of those nebulous entities that usually went by the names of Monetarism and The Cold War....

\* \* \* \* \*

In this changing context, Common Sense is a form of words that needs to be clarified somewhat. It could easily signify anything from the conventional wisdom of the dying enterprise culture, to the pragmatic street wisdom of the many who have been excluded by its beneficiaries and who are thereby forced to struggle for basic human dignity. According to the Scottish Philosophical tradition, common sense has two major meanings: the psychological sixth sense that unites and distinguishes the perceptions of the other five; and the *sensus communis* or public sense that negotiates a shared sense of who and where we are, that maintains a sensible critique of the political world, and that animates the general feelings of a society. Common Sense thus recalls the notion of the Democratic Intellect according to which ideas are freely and generally available to all, and it resonates with a literary style of philosophical generalism that is utterly different from the dominant Anglo-Saxon and analytic traditions to which we have now become too accustomed in the educational institutions of the twentieth century, but which remains a powerful force at the margins of educational life and in the movements of Scottish culture more generally.

The producers of Common Sense remain committed to the journal's original brief - to offer a venue for open discussion and to juxtapose written work without regard to style and without deferring to the restrictions of university based journals, and they hope to be able to articulate something of the common sense of the new age before us. Common Sense does not have any political programme nor does it wish to define what is political in advance. Nevertheless, we are keen to examine what is this thing called "common sense", and we hope that you who read the journal will also make contributions whenever you feel the inclination. We feel that there is a certain imperative to think through the changes before us and to articulate new strategies before the issues that arise are hijacked by the Universities to be theorised into obscurity, or by Party machines to be practiced to death.

The producers of Common Sense will consider contributions from anywhere by anyone on any issue and in any form that can without difficulty be included in our new format - we are prepared to publish anything from recipes to meditations on truth. We will accept copy as



typescript, camera ready artwork, photographs, and computer files (Apple or IBM stored on 3.5 inch floppies). We would like the journal to be as full as possible of disparate work, and we would like to keep contributions as short and up to the minute as possible. We would prefer that articles be no longer than 5000 words or so, although we will consider everything we receive and will begin to publish longer pieces as occasional pamphlets loosely organised according to themes or particular debates. In this turbulent world, it would be politically naive to uncritically publish everything we receive, but at the same time we have no access to hard and fast criteria of exclusion. These issues are themselves subject to vigorous debate amongst the producers of *Common Sense*. It is for you as potential contributors to judge on the basis of critical common sense what should be included in the pages before you now.

# A New World Order or Old World Chaos?

"Bush is Saddam's friend. Why did he stop?"

"When they came they started to kill all the Kurdish and Turkish people. Just shoot, shoot, shoot by the government. The United States caused all this, why, why, why?"

*Kurdish refugees fleeing from the Iraqi army*

## A New World Order?

In recent months, much ink has been spilt in describing and discussing the New World Order. For supporters and critics of Bush's expedition in the desert, it is rapidly becoming *a new Common Sense*. As people interested in *an alternative common sense* to the ones we are cajoled to accept, we find this notion laughable. The New World Order is not much of an order, neither is it very new. On closer inspection it reveals itself as an Old World Chaos.

It was President Carter who declared that any attack on the Gulf would be treated as an attack on the vital interests of the United States. As part of an oil-based world economy, the United States has been the world's largest energy consumer for the last twenty years. Carter's creation of a rapid deployment force, ready to intervene in the Gulf area to protect the oilfields, was no accident. Since 1945, the United States has slipped from controlling the world economic system, through the Bretton Woods agreement, to being forced to share control with Europe (led by Germany) and Japan. Since 1982 the U.S. has become the world's biggest debtor.

In the space of twenty four hours - from August 1st - 2nd last year, the Iraqi regime moved from being a 'Middle East ally', to being the 'Arabic Third Reich'. The Western powers view of the Iraqi state is now very similar to what it was on August 1st. It is seen as being the lesser

of two evils - the alternative being self-determination for the people who live in the region. At the same time, we find that the Kuwaiti people, on whose behalf the UN US forces claimed to be fighting, are being redefined - the ruling Al-Sabah family has decreed that one million people are to be made stateless. Just as Kuwaitis suffered brutal repression after August 2nd, so are the Palestinians, other 'collaborators' and members of the political opposition now being tortured and killed.

George Bush is an old hand in the art of de-stabilisation, ever since he was appointed CIA chief in 1975 - at the time the US was supporting the genocide of 200,000 people in East Timor. As we go to press, we find ourselves forced to watch the obscene spectacle of a regime with Imperialist pretensions, Iraq, attempting to continue a genocidal programme, against the Kurds and others, that was interrupted when it got on the wrong side of a larger Imperial power, the United States

So how do we explain this paradox? One of the slogans of the Anti War campaigns was "No Blood for Oil". While much blood has been spilt, has Bush really secured the supply of oil that Carter was so keen to protect? On the one hand income from US controlled oil fields is secure and has increased in price, on the other hand Kuwait's oil is in flames. We prefer to ask why it is that so much blood has been spilt - what is really happening to people who have no choice but to leave their own homes to avoid starvation and to find work? There is no easy answer. Certainly, the issue of the war was not simply about oil. Let us look at the themes of debt, oil revenue, global money and migrant labour.

## Debt

*The control of populations, especially migrant workers, in countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq, permits the US to finance its debt.* This debt was built up during the credit-sustained boom of the 1980s. This boom has taken an ever more speculative dimension as illustrated by the crash of 1987 and the recession of the early 1990s. It has become clear that the financing of this boom was *fictional* - it was based, like any loan, on the promise of work to be carried out tomorrow.

The struggle of the working class has made it impossible for capital to use money as an effective means of command over workers. Instead, credit is used as a means of preventing capital insolvency. Credit is supplied to service interest payment. The ballooning of debt involves the accumulation of a growing claim on profits yet to be produced by the workers. The crash of 87 and subsequent recession brings to the fore the

fictitious character of exploiting labour on the basis of an accumulation of debt.

## Oil Revenue

The US is able to finance its deficits as long as there is an inflow of money capital. High interest rates are one means of achieving this. However, high interest rates undermine the US balance of trade, so eroding the value of the dollar on whose stability the entire deficit financing of world demand depends. There is also an inflow of money to the US from debtor countries. In addition, there is the inflow of dollars earned by OPEC, especially Saudi Arabia. Oil revenues finance, to a great extent, the global deficit spending of demand. *The depositing of oil profits in American banks depends on the political stability in the region.*

The war involved the attempt to secure the flow of not simply oil, but of oil revenue into the US. Despotism regimes like Saudi Arabia hold their reserves in dollars in exchange for American political and military protection.

## The Global Flow of Money

By invading Kuwait, Iraq upset the security arrangements of the area. Iraq invaded Kuwait because it needed money - money to rebuild after the long war with Iran, and to maintain its army - so as to suppress internal resistance to rule by the Ba'athist party. Prior to the invasion Iraq had threatened force to end the Kuwaiti practice of producing and selling more crude oil than their OPEC quota allowed. This practice tended to lower oil prices, so reducing Iraqi income from its own oil exports. Why did the US go to war? The US went to war against one of its allies in order to reassert its influence over the distribution of oil revenue and, most importantly, over the global flow of money from the South to the North. The rest of world capitalism depends on this influence. This control is fundamental to the stability of world capitalism, and depends on the ruthless exploitation of labour power in the region, especially that of migrant workers.

## The Threat of Migrant Labour

Iraq's violation of the status quo involved the real possibility of

undermining a power structure upon whose preservation the rest of world capitalism depends. The success of Kuwait's ruling family in outlawing legal opposition and the success of the Saudi Arabian ruling family in undermining any criticism of their rule have been vital for imposing a ruthless exploitation of labour thereby ensuring the global flow of money from South to North. *The defence of the status quo is heavily dependent on the political control of migrant workers in countries of the Gulf/Middle East area, through poverty, fear and militarisation of the region.*

*The reimposition of the status quo has militarised the region* and given greater power to the U.S. and its client states to assert control over local and migrant workers, thereby adding to their influence in the region as a whole. This control allows the US to affect oil policy and to guide investment decisions, such as the holding of oil revenues in dollars. The military destruction of oil production in Kuwait and Iraq allows states like Saudi Arabia to assert their influence in the OPEC cartel with much better effect. In addition, the war offered an opportunity to inflict a massive destruction which offers investment opportunities for capital at a time of recession. In November 1990 the largest arms sale in history took place - \$20 billion of U.S. arms to Saudi Arabia, and at present companies are tendering for \$25 billion of reconstruction contracts in Kuwait. However along with these opportunities there are also dangers.

While Israel has taken advantage of the war to legitimise its policy of keeping the occupied territories under curfew, and replace its Palestinian workforce with immigrants from the Soviet Union, Kuwait is trying to use the opportunity to replace its migrant workers (including many Palestinians) from Muslim countries such as Pakistan, Sudan, Egypt, Syrian and Jordan with workers from Eastern Europe.

It is important to remember that George Bush's appeals to the people of Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein were made to the very people his forces had just been carpet-bombing out of existence. Around 200,000 people were eliminated in Operation Desert Storm, many of them Shi'ias from Southern Iraq and Kurds from the North, conscripted by Saddam Hussein. Many commentators who accuse the US of hypocrisy seem to forget this. The US administration is being consistent when it says that the 200,000 war dead and the casualties arising out of subsequent uprising are 'unfortunate'. It is clear from the lack of US support for these uprisings that Bush and other allied states want a leader like Saddam Hussein, but more pliable. A victory by Iraqi Shi'ias, with links to Iran, just at the time when Iran, (along with Syria) is being prepared for International 'acceptability' - i.e. secure

investment - would give a boost to the radical fundamentalist elements of the Iranian regime and threaten further destabilisation of the whole Gulf and Middle East region. Similarly, allowing 1.8 million displaced Iraqi Kurds to settle in refugee camps on the Iranian borders would both lend support to the Iranian opposition - who have relied on the Kurds for shelter since the Khomeni regime began wholesale elimination of any resistance to the government in 1979.

The threats to Turkey are equally serious - for the last few decades, the Turkish government has been pursuing a campaign of torture, killings and cultural 'assimilation' (i.e. elimination) against its Kurdish population. It is now trying to enter the EEC and the last thing it needs is a refugee population, tribally organized and with nothing left to lose, with a tradition of armed resistance against one of the world's most vicious dictators. Nightmares of a Kurdish *intifada* must be haunting the Turkish and Iranian governments, as well as the United States. This is one of the reasons behind the moves being made at present to encourage the Kurds to return home, under some form of military protection. It is becoming plain for all to see that Operation Desert Storm is by no means over, but is instead continuing to throw up new and more dangerous crises for all the states participating in it.

## What was the war about?

*The war served the purpose of (preemptively) suppressing resistance against an ruthless exploitation of labour in the region.*

*The war was a military imposition of law and order upon largely migrant workers.*

*Further, the war was a means of securing the flow of oil revenue, so contributing to the financing of the US deficits.* These deficits are, to a great extent, financed and guaranteed by debtor countries and the oil producing countries.

*The war was an attempt by the United States and others to stabilise global exchange relations through the guarantee of holding oil earnings in dollars.* This guarantee depends on political and military power.

The war was an attempt to guarantee that profit will be extracted from

migrant workers at the point of a gun. *The war against Iraq was not against the Iraqi state but against the working class in the whole area.*

This war was a war which aimed at securing the integration of labour at home on the basis of an accumulation of debt. *The sustaining of debt depends on the military might to combat any collapses in control.* The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was such a collapse in control.

However, the Iraqi invasion was a welcome collapse as it made possible the show of military might. This show illustrates the intensity of the current crisis of capital. War was always a means of safeguarding relations of exploitation and of reimposing political domination through the liquidation of people and mass destruction. *The attempt to resolve the current crisis by war indicates the despair of capital. It indicates its despair because, in order to reimpose its domination, it has to execute mass destruction.*

## Disorder

*The invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent devastation of both Kuwait and Iraq are not about the rebuilding of order but a reliance on disorder.*

Over the last 45 years there have been many 'Low Intensity Conflicts' (to use the Pentagon jargon) around the world, largely US-sponsored and run. This war was the first 'High Intensity Conflict' since Vietnam - an unashamed, overt display of US military might. This event is not part of the New World Order but part of a series of wars, past and present (and future?).

*Why did the military move when it did? There is no self-sufficient, all-encompassing answer.* We have explored the themes of debt, oil revenue, global money and migrant labour, and mentioned the role of the arms and construction industries as beneficiaries. And so on. One could carry on forever trying to find out some specific reason why - we could doubtless come up with many such reasons.

So what explanations are we left with? One answer to the question might be that such behaviour is the workings of power-crazed meglomaniacs with no regard for human life, in the best traditions of *Doctor Strangelove*. It is true that Bush and Major as well as Hussein are insane and actively trying to exert power and violence. The danger with taking this view is that we assume that Bush, Major, and Hussein had a clear strategy. As people committed to creating an *alternative common sense* we do not want to simply condemn the New World Order

but show why it is an illusion.

What is clear is that *there is a very direct link between states and violence*, which is usually described as the need for defence of the realm. In practice it is the need to repress groups of people, whether they live inside or outside a particular border, and the need to ensure a thriving and profitable military and arms industry, both as a means to this end and as an end in itself. This process is sometimes described as the military-industrial complex.

The war and genocide that is happening as we speak is about increasing the chances for various states, acting on behalf of international capital, to terrorise people into submission so that they will work hard and restore profitability.

Overall then, we are left with disorder. As the slogan "Law is not Order ; Anarchy is not Chaos" implies, *it is they who are in a state of disorder. They also seek disorder, and depend on it to survive.* They seek disorder because we leave them no other choice. Their disorder is a direct result of our resistance to their repression and will continue to be so. Disorder is as much a crisis for them as it is for us. *Our experience of their "New World Order" is more of same old chaos, just as our attempts to take control of our lives throw them into chaos.* That's why it's important to reject the New World Order as well as condemn it. The only weapons they have at their disposal are *disorder and fear*. They use disorder and fear as an attempt to liquidate people who resist, and as an attempt to ensure the continual displacement of workers - to make them employable and with no rights apart from a possible work permit. It is our project to continue resisting, thereby perpetuating the crisis of the regimes involved.

\* \* \*

Many of us here in Scotland are feeling outraged at what is happening yet at the same time wonder what we can do. What remains as a daily reality for us in Scotland as much as people elsewhere on the planet is the violent nature of the state and its attempts to impoverish and eliminate us. That is why struggles that we are involved in directly contribute to the weakening of state power internationally. That is why (for instance) the Anti-Poll Tax Campaign, another example of collective resistance to debt, is a very direct and easy way of doing something that channels our outrage into something creative.



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# Producing The Proper Crisis

*a speech by Philip Agee, formerly of the CIA.*

## **Editorial Note**

The Gulf War is supposedly now over and Bush's "new world order" is underway. Saddam Hussein has kindly been left with just enough hardware to carry on doing what he does best - killing the people of Iraq. Meanwhile the smoke from the ruins of the Kuwaiti oilfields begins to show the prophets of eco-doom exactly what they meant. Elsewhere in this issue there are some first efforts to articulate what exactly Bush means by the "new world order". To set the context, we reproduce here the text of a speech that was to be given by former CIA agent Philip Agee on a 20-city tour of campuses and community groups throughout the USA. Agee was not able to give this speech because the Nicaraguan foreign ministry revoked his Nicaraguan passport preventing him from traveling freely. Now that Nicaragua has safely purchased freedom and democracy, the USA can easily persuade its new ally that Agee's speaking poses "a serious threat to the national security of the United States". The text was originally published in October 1990 by Zeta Magazine in the USA. This particular version was rescued from the international electronic mail network, and was appended with instructions to distribute it freely. The text provides ample alternative to the popular "Arab Hitler" story that the propagandists, pundits and professors of International Relations are keen to ram down our throats through the media. We at Common Sense feel that Agee's story should be made available as widely as possible. The truth is after all is common property, and it is more refreshing than the uncommon nonsense that pours out of teevee screens. We publish Agee's speech with the same message as we received it - reproduce these words by whatever means possible. Together we can smash the propaganda machine and undermine the forces of death.

\* \* \*

Sooner or later it had to happen: the fundamental transformation of U.S. military forces was really only a matter of time. Transformation, in this sense, from a national defense force to an international mercenary army for hire. With a U.S national debt of \$3 trillion, some \$800 billion

owned by foreigners, The United States sooner or later would have to find, or produce, the proper crisis - one that would enable the president to hire out the armed forces, like a national export, in order to avoid conversion of the economy from military to civilian purposes. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, encouraged, it seems, by the Bush administration, is the necessary crisis.

Not long after the invasion, I watched on Spanish television Bush's call to arms, when he said "our way of life" is at stake. For days afterwards I kept watching and reading for news of the tens of millions of people in this country, who would take to the streets in joy, in celebration that their days of poverty, homelessness, illiteracy and uncared-for illness might soon end. What I saw instead, like most of you, was the Bush "way of life" - fishing, boating, and golfing on the coast of Maine like any respectable member of the Eastern elite. Bush's military machismo of recent weeks reminded me of what General Noriega said about Bush a couple of years ago, before Bush decided to smash Panamanian nationalism for the foreseeable future. You remember? Noriega told his deputy in the Panamanian Defense Forces, who later made it public, he said, "I've got George Bush - by the balls."

When I read that, I thought, how interesting - one of those rare statements that contain two revelations. Back in the 1970s, when he was director of the CIA, Bush tried to get a criminal indictment against me for revelations I was making about CIA operations and personnel. But he couldn't get it, I discovered later in documents I received under the Freedom of Information Act. The reason was that in the early 1970s the CIA had committed crimes against me while I was in Europe writing my first book. If they indicted and prosecuted me, I would learn the details of those crimes, whatever they were: conspiracy to assassination, kidnapping, a drug plant. So they couldn't indict because the CIA under Bush, and before him under William Colby, said the details had to stay secret. So what did Bush do? He prevailed on President Ford to send Henry Kissinger, then Secretary of State, to Britain where I was living, to get them to take action. A few weeks after Kissinger's secret trip a Cambridge policeman arrived at my door with a deportation notice. After living in Britain nearly five years, I had suddenly become a threat to the security of the realm. During the next two years I was not only expelled from Britain, but also from France, Holland, West Germany, and Italy - all under U.S. pressure. For two years I didn't know where I was living, and my two sons, then teenagers, attended four different schools in four different countries.

The latest is the government's attempt to prevent me from speaking in the U.S now. Where this will end, we still don't know.

How many of you have friends or relatives right now in Saudi Arabia or the Persian Gulf area? I wonder how they feel, so close to giving their lives to protect a feudal kingdom where women are stoned to death for adultery, where a thief is punished by having his hand amputated, where women can't drive cars or swim in the same pool as men? Where bibles are forbidden and no religion save Islam is allowed? Where Amnesty International reports that torture is routine, and that last year 111 people were executed, 16 of them political prisoners, all but one by public beheading. And not by clean cut, with a guillotine, but with that long curved sword that witnesses say requires various chops. Not that Saudi Arabia, or Kuwait before the invasion, are any different in terms of political repression than any number of U.S.-supported allies. But to give your life for those corrupt, cruel, family dictatorships? Bush says we're "stopping aggression." If that were true, the first thing U.S. forces would have done after landing, they would have dethroned the Gulf emirs, sheiks, and kings, who every day are carrying out the worst aggression against their own people, especially women. Mainstream media haven't quite said it yet, as far as I know, but the evidence is mounting that George Bush and his entourage wanted the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, encouraged it, and then refused to prevent it when they could have. I'll get back to Bush later, but first, a quick review of what brought on this crisis. Does the name Cox bring anything special to mind? Sir Percy Cox?

In a historical sense this is the man responsible for today's Gulf crisis. Sir Percy Cox was the British High Commissioner in Baghdad after World War I who in 1922 drew the lines in the sand establishing for the first time national borders between Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. In each of these new states the British helped to set up and consolidate ruling monarchies, through which British banks, commercial firms, and petroleum companies could obtain monopolies. Kuwait, however, had for centuries belonged to the Basra province of the Ottoman Empire. Iraq and the Iraqis never recognized Sir Percy's borders. He had drawn those lines, as historians have confirmed, in order deliberately to deprive Iraq of a viable seaport on the Persian Gulf. The British wanted no threat from Iraq to their dominance in the Gulf where they had converted no less than ten sheikdoms, including Kuwait, into colonies. The divide and rule principle, so well-practiced in this country since the beginning. In 1958 the British-installed monarchy in Iraq was overthrown in a military coup. Three years later, in 1961, Britain granted independence to Kuwait, and the Iraqi military government massed troops on the Kuwaiti border threatening to take the territory by force. Immediately the British dispatched troops, and Iraq backed down, still refusing to recognize the border. Similar Iraqi threats

occurred in 1973 and 1976.

This history, Saddam Hussein's justification for annexing Kuwait, is in the books for anyone to see. But weeks went by as I waited and wondered why the International Herald Tribune, which publishes major articles from the Washington Post, New York Times and wire services, failed to carry the background. Finally, a month after the invasion, the Herald Tribune carried a Washington Post article on the historical context written by Glenn Frankel. I've yet to find this history in Time or Newsweek. Time, in fact, went so far as to say that Iraq's claims to Kuwait were "without any historical basis." Hardly surprising, since giving exposure to the Iraqi side might weaken the campaign to Hitlerize Saddam Hussein. Also absent from current accounts is the CIA's role in the early 1970s to foment and support armed Kurdish rebellion in Iraq. The Agency, in league with the Shah of Iran, provided \$16 million in arms and other supplies to the Kurds, leading to Iraqi capitulation to the Shah in 1975 over control of the Shat al Arab. This is the estuary of the Tigris and Euphrates, that separates the two countries inland from the Gulf and is Iraq's only access to Basra, its upriver port. Five years later, in 1980, Iraq invaded Iran to redress the CIA-assisted humiliation of 1975, and to regain control of the estuary, beginning the eight year war that cost a million lives.

Apart from Iraq's historical claims on Kuwait and its need for access to the sea, two related disputes came to a head just before the invasion. First was the price of oil. OPEC had set the price at \$18 per barrel in 1986, together with production quotas to maintain that price. But Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates had long exceeded their quotas, driving the price down to around \$13 in June. Iraq, saddled with a \$70 billion debt from the war with Iran, was losing billions of dollars in oil revenues which normally account for 95 percent of its exports. Meanwhile, industrialized oil consumers like the United States were enjoying the best price in 40 years, in inflation-adjusted dollars. Iraq's other claim against Kuwait was theft. While Iraq was occupied with Iran during the war, Kuwait began pumping from Iraq's vast Rumaila field that dips into the disputed border area. Iraq demanded payment for oil taken from this field as well as forgiveness of Kuwaiti loans to Iraq during the war with Iran. Then in July, Iraq massed troops on the Kuwaiti border while OPEC ministers met in Geneva. That pressure brought Kuwait and the Emirates to agree to honor quotas and OPEC set a new target price of \$21, although Iraq had insisted on \$25 per barrel. After that Hussein increased his troops on the border from 30,000 to 100,000. On August 1, Kuwaiti and Iraqi negotiators, meeting in Saudi Arabia, failed to reach agreement over the loans, oil thefts, and access to the sea for Iraq. The next night Iraq invaded. Revelations since then,

together with a review of events prior to the invasion, strongly suggest that U.S. policy was to encourage Hussein to invade and, when invasion was imminent, to do nothing to discourage him. Consider the following.

During the Iraq-Iran war in the 1980s, the U.S. sided with Iraq and continued this policy right up to August 2, the day of the invasion. In April, the Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East, John Kelly, testified before Congress that the United States had no commitment to defend Kuwait. On July 25, with Iraqi troops massed on the Kuwait border, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, met with Hussein. Minutes of the meeting were given by the Iraqis to the Washington Post in mid-August.

According to these minutes, which have not been disputed by the State Department, the Ambassador told Hussein that Secretary of State James Baker had instructed her to emphasize to Hussein that the U.S. has "no opinion" on Iraq-Kuwait border disputes. She then asked him, in light of Iraqi troop movements, what his intentions were with respect to Kuwait. Hussein replied that Kuwait's actions amounted to "an economic war" and "military action against us." He said he hoped for a peaceful solution, but if not, he said, "it will be natural that Iraq will not accept death..." A clearer statement of his intentions would be hard to imagine, and hardly a promise not to invade. The Ambassador gave no warning from Baker or Bush that the U.S. would oppose an Iraqi takeover of Kuwait. On the contrary she said, "I have a direct instruction from the President to seek better relations with Iraq." On the same day Assistant Secretary of State Kelly killed a planned Voice of America broadcast that would have warned Iraq that the U.S. was "strongly committed" to the defense of its friends in the Gulf, which included, of course, Kuwait. During the week between the Ambassador's meeting with Hussein and the invasion, the Bush administration forbade any warning to Hussein against invasion, or to the thousands of people who might become hostages. The Ambassador returned to Washington days before the invasion, and again testified publicly before Congress to the effect that the U.S. had no commitment to defend Kuwait. And, according to press reports and Senator Boren, who heads the Senate Intelligence Committee, the CIA had predicted the invasion some four days before it happened.

Put these events together, and add the total absence of any public or private warning by Bush to Hussein not to invade, together with no U.S. effort to create international opposition while there was time. Assuming the U.S. was not indifferent to an invasion, one has to ask whether the Bush administration policy was in effect to encourage

Hussein to create a world crisis. After all, Iraq had chemical weapons and had already used them against Iran and against Kurds inside Iraq. He was known to be within two to five years of possessing nuclear weapons. He had completely upset the power balance in the Middle East by creating an army one million strong. He aspired to leadership of the Arab world's feudal regimes, not just Kuwait. And with Kuwait's oil he would control 20 percent of the world's reserves, a concentration in radical nationalist hands that would be equal, perhaps to the Soviet Union, Iraq's main arms supplier. Saddam Hussein, then, was the perfect subject to allow enough rein to create a crisis, and he was even more perfect for post-invasion media demonization, a la Qaddafi, Ortega, and Noriega.

Why would Bush seek a world crisis? The first suggestion came, for me at least, when he uttered those words about "our way of life" being at stake. They brought to mind Harry Truman's speech in 1950 that broke Congressional resistance to Cold War militarism and began 40 years of Pentagon dominance of the U.S. economy. It's worth recalling Truman's speech because Bush is trying to use the Gulf crisis, as Truman used the Korean War, to justify what some call military Keynesianism as a solution for U.S. economic problems. This is, using enormous military expenditures to prevent or rectify economic slumps and depressions, while reducing as much as possible spending on civilian and social programs. Exactly what Reagan and Bush did, for example, in the early and mid-1980s.

In 1950 the Truman administration adopted a program to vastly expand the U.S and West European military services under a National Security Council document called NSC-68. This document was Top Secret for 25 years and, by error, it was released in 1975 and published. The purpose of military expansion under NSC-68 was to reverse the economic slide that began with the end of World War II wherein during five years the U.S. GNP had declined 20 percent and unemployment had risen from 700,000 to 4.7 million. U.S. exports, despite the subsidy program known as the Marshall Plan, were inadequate to sustain the economy, and remilitarization of Western Europe would allow transfer of dollars, under so-called defense support grants, that would in turn generate European imports from the U.S. As NSC-68 put the situation in early 1950: "the United States and other free nations will within a period of a few years at most experience a decline in economic activity of serious proportions unless more positive governmental programs are developed..."

The solution adopted was expansion of the military. But support in Congress and the public at large was lacking for a variety of reasons, not least the increased taxes the programs would require. So Truman's

State Department, under Dean Acheson, set out to sell the so-called Communist Threat as justification, through a fear campaign in the media that would create a permanent war atmosphere. But a domestic media campaign was not enough. A real crisis was needed, and it came in Korea. Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, in their history of the 1945-55 period, "The Limits of Power", show that the Truman administration manipulated this crisis to overcome resistance to military build-up and a review of those events show striking parallels to the Persian Gulf crisis of 1990. Korea at the end of World War II had been divided north-south along the 38th parallel by the U.S. and the Soviets. Five years of on-again, off-again conflict continued: first between revolutionary forces in the south and U.S. occupation forces, then between the respective states established first between the U.S. in the south, then by the Soviets in the north. Both states threatened to reunify the country by force, and border incursions with heavy fighting by military forces were common. In June 1950, communist North Korean military forces moved across the border towards Seoul, the South Korean capital. At the time, the North Korean move was called "naked aggression", but I.F. Stone made a convincing case, in his "Hidden History of the Korean War", that the invasion was provoked by South Korea and Taiwan, another U.S. client regime.

For a month South Korean forces retreated, practically without fighting, in effect inviting the North Koreans to follow them south. Meanwhile Truman rushed in U.S. military forces under a United Nations command, and he made a dramatic appeal to Congress to for an additional \$10 billion, beyond requirements for Korea, for U.S. and European military expansion. Congress refused. Truman then made a fateful decision. In September 1950, about three months after the conflict began, U.S., South Korean, and token forces from other countries, under the United Nations banner, began to push back the North Koreans. Within three weeks the North Koreans had been pushed north to the border, the 38th parallel, in defeat. That would have been the end of the matter, at least the military action, if the U.S. had accepted a Soviet UN resolution for a cease-fire and UN-supervised country-wide elections. Truman, however, needed to prolong the crisis in order to overcome congressional and public resistance to his plans for U.S. and European rearmament. Although the UN resolution under which U.S. forces were fighting called only for "repelling" aggression from the north, Truman had another plan. In early October, U.S. and South Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel heading north, and rapidly advanced toward the Yalu River, North Korea's border with China where only the year before the communists had defeated the U.S.-backed Kuomintang regime. The Chinese communist government threatened to intervene, but Truman had decided to overthrow the communist government in North Korea and



unite the country under the anti-communist South Korean dictatorship. As predicted, the Chinese entered the war in November and forced the U.S. and its allies to retreat once again southward. The following month, with the media full of stories and pictures of American soldiers retreating through snow and ice before hordes of advancing Chinese troops, Truman went on national radio, declared a state of national emergency, and said what Bush's remarks about "our way of life" at stake recalled. Truman mustered all the hype and emotion he could, and said: "Our homes, our nation, all the things that we believe in, are in great danger. This danger has been created by the rulers of the Soviet Union." He also called again for massive increases in military spending for U.S. and European forces, apart from needs in Korea.

Of course, there was no threat of war with the Soviet Union at all. Truman attributed the Korean situation to the Russians in order to create emotional hysteria, a false threat, and to get the leverage over Congress needed for approval of the huge amounts of money that Congress had refused. As we know, Truman's deceit worked. Congress went along in its so-called bi-partisan spirit, like the sheep in the same offices today. The U.S. military budget more than tripled from \$13 billion in 1950 to \$44 billion in 1952, while U.S. military forces doubled to 3.6 million. The Korean War continued for three more years, after it could have ended, with the final casualty count in the millions, including 34,000 U.S. dead and more than 100,000 wounded. But in the United States, Korea made the permanent war economy a reality, and we have lived with it for 40 years.

What are the parallels with the current Gulf crisis? First, Korea in June 1950 was already a crisis of borders and unification demands simply waiting for escalation. Second, less than six months before the war began Secretary of State Dean Acheson publicly placed South Korea outside the U.S. defense perimeter in Asia, just as Assistant Secretary Kelly denied any U.S. defense commitment to Kuwait. Third, the U.S. obtained quick UN justification for a massive military intervention, but only for repelling the North Koreans, not for conquest of that country. Similarly, the UN resolutions call for defense of Saudi Arabia, not for military conquest of Iraq - contrary to the war mongers who daily suggest that the U.S. may be "forced" to attack Iraq, presumably without UN sanction or declaration of war by Congress. Fourth, both crises came at a time of U.S. economic weakness with a recession or even worse downturn threatening ahead. Fifth, and we will probably see this with the Gulf, the Korean crisis was deliberately prolonged in order to establish military expenditures as the motor of the U.S. economy. Proceeding in the same manner now would be an adjustment to allow continuation of what began in 1950. NSC-68 required a significant

expansion of CIA operations around the world in order to fight the secret political Cold War - a war against socialist economic programs, against communist parties, against left social democrats, against neutralism, against disarmament, against relaxation of tensions, and against the peace offensive then being waged by the Soviet Union.

In Western Europe, through a vast network of political action and propaganda operations, the CIA was called upon to create in the public mind the specter of imminent Soviet invasion combined with the intention of the European left to enslave the population under Soviet dominion. By 1953, as a result of NSC-68, the CIA had major covert action programs underway in 48 countries, consisting of propaganda, paramilitary, and political action operations - such as buying elections and subsidizing political parties. The bureaucracy grew accordingly: in mid-1949 the covert action arm of the CIA had about 300 employees and seven overseas field stations. Three years later there were 2,800 employees and 47 field stations. In the same period the covert action budget grew from \$4.7 million to \$82 million.

By the mid-1950s the name for the "enemy" was no longer just the Soviet Union. The wider concept of "International Communism" better expressed the global view of secret conspiracies run from Moscow to undermine the U.S. and its allies. One previously secret document from 1955 outlines the CIA's tasks: "Create and exploit problems for International Communism. Discredit International Communism and reduce the strength of its parties and organization. Reduce international Communist control over any area of the world... specifically such operations shall include any covert activities related to: propaganda, political action, economic warfare, preventive direct action, including sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolition, escape and invasion and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states or groups, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups, support of indigenous and anti-communist elements in threatened countries of the free world; deception plans and all compatible activities necessary to accomplish the foregoing."

Another document on CIA operations from the same period said, in extracts: "Hitherto accepted norms of human conduct do not apply... long-standing American concepts of fair play must be reconsidered... we must learn to subvert, sabotage, and destroy our enemies by more clever, more sophisticated and more effective methods than those used against us. It may become necessary that the American people be made acquainted with, understand, and support this fundamentally repugnant philosophy." And so, from the late 1940s until the mid-1950s, the CIA

organized sabotage and propaganda operations against every country of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union. They tried to foment rebellion and to hinder those countries' efforts to rebuild from the devastation of World War II. Though unsuccessful against the Soviet Union, these operations had some successes in other countries, notably East Germany. This was the easiest target because, as one former CIA officer wrote, before the wall went up in 1961 all an infiltrator needed was good documents and a railway ticket.

From about 1949, the CIA organized sabotage operations against targets. The purpose was to create a high contrast between West Germany, then receiving billions of U.S. dollars for reconstruction, and the "other Germany" under Soviet control. William Blum, in his excellent history of the CIA, lists an astonishing range of destruction: "through explosives, arson, short circuiting, and other methods, they damaged power stations, shipyards, a dam, canals, docks, public buildings, petrol stations, shops, outdoor stands, a radio station, public transformation... derailed freight trains... blew up road and railway bridges used special acid to damage vital factory machinery... killed 7,000 cows... added soap to powdered milk destined for East German schools," and much, much more. These activities were worldwide, and not only directed against Soviet-supported governments.

During 40 years, as the east-west military stand-off stabilized, the CIA was a principle weapon in waging the north-south dimension of the Cold War. It did so through operations intended to destroy nationalist, reformist, and liberation movements of the so-called Third World, through political repression (torture and death squads), and by the overthrow of democratically elected civilian governments, replacing them with military dictatorships. The Agency also organized paramilitary forces to overthrow governments, with the contra operation in Nicaragua only a recent example. This north-south dimension of the Cold War was over control of natural resources, labor, and markets and it continues today, as always. Anyone who thinks the Cold War ended should think again: the east-west dimension may have ended with the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, but the north-south dimension, which is where the fighting really took place, as in Vietnam, is still on. The current Persian Gulf crisis is the latest episode, and it provides the Bush administration with the pretext to institutionalize the north-south dimension under the euphemism of a "new international order," as he calls it. The means will be a continuation of U.S. militarism within the context, if they are successful, of a new multi-lateral, international framework. Already James Baker has been testing the winds with proposals for a NATO-style alliance in the Gulf, an idea that William Safire aptly dubbed GULFO.

The goal in seeking and obtaining the current [crisis] stops short, I believe, of a shooting war. After all, a war with Iraq will not be a matter of days or even weeks. Public opinion in the U.S. will turn against Bush if young Americans in large numbers start coming back in body bags. And Gulf petroleum facilities are likely to be destroyed in the process of saving them, a catastrophe for the world economy. Nevertheless, press accounts describe how the CIA and U.S. special forces are organizing and arming guerrillas, said to be Kuwaitis, for attacking Iraqi forces. These operations provide the capability for just the right provocation, an act that would cause Hussein to order defensive action that would then justify an all-out attack.

Such provocations have been staged in the past. In 1964, CIA paramilitary forces working in tandem with the U.S. Navy provoked the Tonkin Gulf incidents, according to historians who now question whether the incidents, said to be North Vietnamese attacks on U.S. ships, even happened. But Lyndon Johnson used the events as a pretext to begin bombing North Vietnam and to get a blank check resolution from Congress to send combat troops and escalate the war.

I think the purpose is not a shooting war but a crisis that can be maintained as long as possible, far after the Iraq-Kuwait problem is resolved. This will prolong the international threat - remember Truman in 1950 - and allow Bush to prevent cuts in the military budget, to avoid any peace dividend, and prevent conversion of the economy to peaceful, human-oriented purposes. After all, when you count all U.S. defense-related expenses, they add up to more than double the official figure of 26 percent of the national budget for defense - some experts say two-thirds of the budget goes for defense in one way or another.

The so-called national security state of the past 40 years has meant enormous riches, and power, for those who are in the game. It has also meant population control - control of the people of this and many other countries. Bush and his team, and those they represent, will do whatever is necessary to keep the game going. Elitist control of the U.S. rests on this game. If anyone doubts this, recall that from the very beginning of this crisis, projections were coming out on costs, implying that Desert Shield would last for more than a year, perhaps that large U.S. forces would stay permanently in the Gulf. Just imagine the joy this crisis has brought to U.S. military industries that only months ago were quaking over their survival in a post-Cold War world. Not six weeks passed after the Iraqi invasion before the Pentagon proposed the largest arms sale in history: \$21 billion worth of hardware for defense of the Saudi Arabian throne. Very clever when you do the sums. With an increase in price of

\$15 per barrel, which had already happened, Saudi Arabia stands to earn more than \$40 billion extra dollars during the 14 months from the invasion to the end of the next U.S. fiscal year. Pentagon calculations of Desert Shield costs come to \$18 billion for the same 14 months. Even if the Saudis paid all that, which they won't because of other contributors, they would have more than \$20 billion in windfall income left over. O.K., bring that money to the States through weapons sales. That, I suppose, is why the Saudi Arms sale instantly became known as the Defense Industry Relief Act of 1990.

As for the price of oil, everyone knows that when it gets above \$25-30 a barrel it becomes counter-productive for the Saudis and the Husseins and other producers. Alternative energy sources become attractive and conservation again becomes fashionable. Saddam Hussein accepted \$21 [a barrel] in July, and even if, with control of Kuwait, he had been able to get the price up to \$25, that would have been manageable for the United States and other industrial economies. Instead, because of this crisis, it's gone over \$35 a barrel and even up to \$40, threatening now to provoke a world depression. With talk of peaceful solutions, like Bush's speech to the UN General Assembly, they will coax the price down, but not before Bush and others in the oil industry increase their already considerable fortunes.

Ah, but the issue, we're told, is not the price of oil, or preservation of the feudal Gulf regimes. It's principle. Naked aggression cannot be allowed, and no one can profit from it. This is why young American lives may be sacrificed. Same as Truman said in 1950, to justify dying for what was then, and for many years afterwards, one of the world's nastiest police states. When I read that Bush was putting out that line, I nearly choked.

When George Bush attacks Saddam Hussein for "naked aggression", he must think the world has no knowledge of United States history - no memory at all. One thing we should never forget is that a nation's foreign policy is a product of its domestic system. We should look to our domestic system for the reasons why Bush and his entourage need this crisis to prevent dismantling the national security state.

First, we know that the domestic system in this country is in crisis, and that throughout history foreign crises have been manufactured, provoked, and used to divert attention from domestic troubles - a way of rallying people around the flag in support of the government of the day. How convenient now for deflecting attention from the S[avings] & L[oans] scandal, for example, to be paid not by the crooks but by ordinary, honest people.

Second, we know that the system is not fair, that about one in three people are economically deprived, either in absolute poverty or so close that they have no relief from want. We also know that one in three Americans are illiterate, either totally or to the degree that they cannot function in a society based on the written word. We also know that one in three Americans does not register to vote, and of those who register 20 percent don't vote. This means we elect a president with about 25 percent or slightly less of the potential votes. The reasons why people don't vote are complex, but not the least of them is that people know their vote doesn't count.

Third, we know that during the past ten years these domestic problems have gotten even worse thanks to the Reagan-Bush policy of transferring wealth from the middle and poor classes to the wealthy, while cutting back on social programs. Add to this the usual litany of crises: education, health care, environment, racism, women's rights, homophobia, the infrastructure, productivity, research, and inability to compete in the international market-place, and you get a nation not only in crisis, but in decline as well. In certain senses that might not be so bad, if it stimulates, as in the Soviet Union, public debate on the reasons. But the picture suggests that continuation of foreign threats and crises is a good way to avoid fundamental reappraisal of the domestic system, starting where such a debate ought to start, with the rules of the game as laid down in the constitution.

What can we do? Lots. On the Gulf crisis, it's getting out the information on what's behind it, and organizing people to act against this intervention and possible war. Through many existing organizations, such as Pledge of Resistance, there must be a way to develop opposition that will make itself heard and seen on the streets of cities across the country. We should pressure Congress and the media for answers to the old question: During that week between Ambassador Glaspie's meeting with Hussein, "What did George know, when did he know it, and why didn't he act publicly and privately to stop the invasion before it happened?" In getting the answer to that question, we should show how the mainstream media, in failing to do so, have performed their usual cheerleading role as the government's information ministry.

The point on the information side is to show the truth, reject the hypocrisy, and raise the domestic political cost to Bush and every political robot who has gone along with him. At every point along the way we must not be intimidated by those voices that will surely say: "You are helping that brute Saddam Hussein." We are not helping

Hussein, although some may be. Rather we are against a senseless destructive war based on greed and racism. We are for a peaceful, negotiated, diplomatic solution that could include resolution of other territorial disputes in the region.

We are against militarist intervention and against a crisis that will allow continuing militarism in the United States. We are for conversion of the U.S. and indeed the world economy to peaceful, people-oriented purposes. In the long run, we reject one-party elitist government, and we demand a new constitution, real democracy, with popular participation in decision-making. In short, we want our own glasnost and restructuring here in the United States. If popular movements can bring it to the Soviet Union, that monolithic tyranny, why can't we here in the United States?

# The Student Debt Crisis: Danger and Opportunity

*Robert Ovetz and Ross Dreyer*

## **Editorial Note**

As the ancient universities of Scotland become cheap business schools and students look forward to dreary jobs in marketing, retail management, social bureaucracy, and technocratic research, the quality of the knowledge they reproduce is degraded into a catalogue of technical skills that bear scant resemblance to the ideal of scholarship upon which the universities are historically based. Students are encouraged to see their efforts as a way of getting a bit of paper that will serve as a passport to future "secure" employment, and increasingly rely on loans (either from banks of from the state) to finance their studies. We publish this article to demonstrate that Scotland is not an isolated case, and to offer solidarity for those who are dissatisfied with the knowledge they are expected to reproduce, or who are already "in debt". There are ways of resisting this imposition of mindless technocratic labour on lives! The authors are indebted to Harry Cleaver for uncompromising assistance, and acknowledge feedback from Conrad Harold, Ann Lucas-DeRouffigniac, David Riker, Tod Wells, and the Austin Autonomists. They are also interested in "rhizoming" with anyone thinking about or acting on the issues they discuss in their article. They can be contacted by writing to: Robert Ovetz, c/o Sociology Department, Graduate Student Mailbox, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, 78712-1008, U.S.A..

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Student debt has become a battlefield of class struggle in the U.S. school system between capital's attempts to impose schoolwork (the work of creating labour power) and students' refusal to accept such subordination either of their learning or of their lives. While such refusal has become extremely widespread (thus capital's preoccupation with overcoming it), it remains largely implicit, individualistic and unarticulated as a political phenomenon. As a result it also remains



unexplored as the grounds for a new cycle of organised student struggle. Below we offer an analysis of these conflicts around student debt and some ideas for putting struggles by and for students back on the working class agenda.

To decipher the struggles that are being waged around student debt, we students must first recognise how education has been designed to discipline us to accept a lifetime of endless work. Within the context of the current American educational system, learning to study the way we are supposed to is learning to impose work on ourselves, first within secondary school, and then in the university without supervision. Given the alienated structure of education - mostly made up of the competitive memorisation and regurgitation of material defined and designed by others, of the mastering of methods and techniques designed by others for their, not our, purposes - grades primarily reflect the quality of this work discipline. Those who do the most work receive the highest grades which, we are promised, amount to IOUs on higher future earnings. While there is usually some time and space (though these are under attack) for autonomous learning and self-defined intellectual development, these remain limited and circumscribed by an educational social structure aimed primarily at disciplining us to accept endless work as the dominant activity of life. This becomes ever more apparent in the employment process: business understands grades, and the diplomas they produce, for what they are: indices of our aptitude to do what we are told, and in the manner we are told to do it. At the university level they are evidence of our success in imposing work on ourselves.

However, no matter how much American capital has sought to discipline us as workers, the two decade old crisis of education is evidence of our ability to avoid such processing, and to carve out time and space not subordinated to life as work. The crisis shows how many of us have sought to escape this relationship of domination. We have struggled to realise a multiplicity of autonomous projects to fulfill the needs and desires of our lives. We have resisted the theft of our time so we could read the books we have discovered in the course of our own thinking - converting libraries from factories into playgrounds. We have preserved time and space in our lives to explore non-competitive ways of interacting with each other - as friends, and as lovers - converting dormitories from barracks into free spaces. We have high absenteeism in capital's classes so that we have time to play, and time to think critically, and time to fight against all those who would steal our lives from us. To the degree that we have been successful in these projects, we have ruptured capital's system of education; we have thrown it into crisis.

## **Crisis as Danger**

Those students, whose struggles in the 1960s broke open new spaces in higher education, left us a legacy of greater opportunity than they had available. Their success in forcing the creation of new areas of Women's, Chicano, African-American, and Marxist studies (among others) as well as women's centres, easier course loads with greater flexibility and less rigid requirements, etc., were victories which have been under attack for some time. The successes in delinking work and grades (grade inflation) has been attacked within schools by stiffer grading standards and without by historically high levels of unemployment (through the 1970s and 1980s) and welfare cutbacks which dramatically heightened the future income risks of refusing to work in school. The success in creating greater access to colleges and universities for minority students and women (which is now being attacked) created the battlefields on which we still fight.

For capital sought, even as it ceded these spaces, to neutralise or absorb the activities that took place within them - to use women's or ethnic studies to study the movements that generated them so that they could be controlled, to re-explore Marxist economics to see if it had anything new to offer capital's self-understanding within the crisis, and so on. Yet, despite a certain success in structuring these new spaces along old patterns - so that radical teachers disciplined students in the old ways, and competed among themselves in new "professional" groups - these policies of decomposition failed to break the class refusal of work and failed to restore control. A few old student rebels continue to resist the pressures to play the academic game as professors - to become supervisors of the factory - and each new generation, faced with the same alienation, has resisted the disciplining of its subjectivity. It is the continual failure of past methods of decomposition of student struggles that has forced capital to use debt as a significant part of its current counterattack.

The use of debt represents a particular form of the more general use of money against insubordinate workers. This particular use of money arises from the inability to convert another form of money - financial aid - into a Keynesian wage bargain: more wages for more work. It has come to supplement the use of grades as the primary means of controlling students, as the anti-war movement subverted grades' use as a tracking and discipline device during the war. We have certainly done everything former U.S. secretary of education William Bennett accused us of doing with the money and more. We've used it for trips to the

beach or on drugs, to buy steroids, to finance political demonstrations, to publish alternative newspapers, to travel to radical student conferences and to satisfy a few other of our many needs and desires. We have transformed the money from wages for work into resources to be used *against* work, or into anti-wages. We've skipped class with them, bought test answers, papers and class notes in order to reduce schoolwork to the absolute minimum. Such struggles are the source of the recent laments about the decline of the educational system, with *Business Week* magazine even denouncing the universities' assembly line for rolling out "lemons" (September 1988) by which they mean inefficient workers who can't (won't) follow directions, are unproductive and unsuitable for work - what we like to call anti-workers.

As the state has reduced grant monies, increased competition for entrance, and made both fewer and crummier jobs available, growing numbers of us have been forced to take out more loans - loans that are harder to qualify for and come with higher rates of interest. Thus, the spreading nightmare of being in debt for 10-12 years after graduation and of having to work to pay it off. This is a nightmare designed to produce more and more schoolwork in an increasingly competitive job market where we are all forced to compete against each other (and increasingly on an international scale). It also means subordinating any purpose we may have of our own, to studying what is necessary to get a job. The increased unemployment around us means we have less and less hope of being able to repay all our debts and still have time and money to live and struggle. At the same time, if we resist borrowing we are forced into increased hours of work or find second and third jobs just to make ends meet. Debt's substance is discipline; current enslavement while in school and future enslavement to stable work.

## **.. And as Opportunity for Struggle**

On the other hand, debt, as capital's weapon against our autonomous struggles, has so far failed to achieve its desired outcome - disciplining us for work. Even with the criminalisation of default, tightened loan availability, relentless attacks on non-loan financial aid (e.g. grants and scholarships), a required "no drugs" pledge, and even serious talk about phasing out loans altogether in favour of forced "volunteer" military or civilian "service" employment before college as a requirement for receiving aid (the Marines "make a few good workers"), many of us have used our loans in many of the same ways we have used money in its other forms. Mounting yearly defaults, now totaling over \$5 billion, demonstrate that people are refusing to divert their time and wages to the repayment of loans after school.

Demonstrations, riots, building occupations, and other struggles have occurred nationwide in protest of austerity cutbacks intended to supplement capital's use of debt. Renewed student demands for more money for African-American, Chicano and Women's studies; for higher minority enrollment and for the hiring of faculty to meet our needs (i.e., provide us with space to study what we want to); refusals to allow the reduction of general enrollment (the restructuring of the wage hierarchy as more students are tracked out of school at lower levels); new demands for decreased costs, for money for gay studies and for the differentially-abled along with struggles against racism (which is also being used to divide us and strengthen intra-class hierarchies) are becoming common in places as diverse as the City University of New York, the University of Texas at Austin (U.T.), the University of California at Berkeley, the University of New Mexico, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. The first signs of victory are emerging as universities, faced with massive self-organised student resistance, began to back down from tuition increases this March for the first time in ten years. The crisis certainly continues.

## **.. in the International Circulation of Struggle**

This interpretation of student debt raises the question of the implications of our struggles for the autonomous struggles of the international working class. As the left has been apt to do, student struggles have been marginalised as outside the relations of capitalist production (see H. Cleaver, in *Common Sense* 9). This, despite the obvious fact that capitalist production includes its own reproduction (including that of labour power). And it is precisely the relations of reproduction (our integration into production) that our struggles have undermined. It is at this juncture that student struggles join with the rest of class struggle occurring internationally in the home, factory, office, kitchens, unemployment lines, fields, streetcorners, prisons, etc.

Student struggles have not only been marginalised by the left, but by student radicals themselves. On any campus in the U.S. one is likely to find organised movements for divestment, against intervention in El Salvador and Nicaragua and against the CIA and racism. Yet in very few cases is the role of students in capital ever analysed. At such gatherings as the 1988 National Student Convention or the annual Progressive Student Network conferences, the struggles of students for financial aid, for "ethnic" and women's studies, for grade inflation and absenteeism or against tuition increases are rarely mentioned and never analysed.

Instead, what predominates is self-effacing pap about how students can serve as handmaidens to the labour, Women's, Black or national liberation movements. There is an amazing reluctance to consider what our own autonomous struggles have in common with these other battles.

Students are dismissed - even by students - as privileged and petit-bourgeois (or some equally insulting category). The everyday realities of student life are denegated as "troubles in paradise" and left to official student governments - often made up of would-be future capitalist bureaucrats. This happens despite the myriad ways in which these realities annually kill thousands through suicide, drug overdose, driving while intoxicated, etc., and permanently damage millions more through rape, intellectual degradation, and the experience of failure, etc. Much of the overtly political left student movement (with some rare exceptions) has merely taken over Stalinist, Trotskyist, Leninist, or left-liberal ideology. These groups explicitly subordinate student struggles to those of the blue-collar working class in the same manner they have sought to subordinate class struggle to themselves as professional revolutionaries. Our movements have served as a recruiting ground for these sects and in many places are infested with their authoritarian manipulation and exploitation. They constitute a real obstacle to student attempts at autonomous self-organisation. As opposed to working within, accepting the ideology and reproducing the activist/non-activist dichotomies of such groups, we need to reorganise the diverse day to day struggles of students (against schoolwork and austerity, for self valorisation, etc.) and make explicit their relationship to the rest of the international working class whether in the dorm or over the sea.

We need to recognise how our everyday struggles are more than just resistance, but also an opening up of spaces for the development of our own autonomous projects that can lay the groundwork for building a student movement. Only by articulating, elaborating and expanding these projects can we begin to circulate new social relationships that offer glimpses of post-capitalist life.

Cheating, skipping class, using financial aid in creative or different ways to open time and space for such projects need to be generalised beyond the individual level. In the 1960s many students skipped class to attend self-organised alternative classes to study a wide variety of subjects. Today, it is possible to also circulate our refusal of schoolwork in ways that promote similarly positive autonomous activities. The hatred for and frequent avoidance of the discipline of schoolwork by most students must also be examined openly in our struggles. Going to the

lake, writing or reading poetry, or making music instead of studying are such concrete examples of the refusal of discipline in favour of the elaboration of our own projects. We especially need to avoid glossing over or feeling embarrassed about cheating but valorise it as a generalised strategy for reappropriating time for other activities. Connections have to be developed among groups as well, such as between staff wage battles and for autonomous spaces for learning. Wage and spending cuts aimed at areas such as African-American, Women's, Environmental and Marxist studies, reduce our access to what little free space may exist to spend time exploring ideas that interest us. As the most radical or controversial faculties are the first disposed of in times of decomposition of student struggles, such as we are now facing at U.T., the link between our struggles for autonomous space and wage struggles must become evident. Similarly, "minority" recruitment is fundamentally important because it brings into contact the many diverse peoples that compose the class struggle. This enables us to share knowledge of each other's cultures and desires, break down the intra-class hierarchies, and better circulate our own particular struggles.

We shouldn't have to abandon current organised struggles, such as those for divestment. Instead, we need to make the connections between South African Blacks and debt-ridden students as underpaid (if at all) and overworked proletarians being pitted against each other in the international wage hierarchy and engaged in struggles for the realisation of their own autonomy. By circulating the nature of these struggles we can circulate them not only locally but throughout the global factory, as part of the international class struggle.

## **Stop Asking and Start Taking**

Capital's use of debt to discipline and maintain the organisation of life around work is obviously much wider than the schoolyard and the library. It can be found in Latin America, Africa, and in Eastern Europe. It has been aimed at blue collar factory workers in Poland and at peasant women in Mexico as well as students in the U.S.. Just as we need to organise against the use of debt to reimpose the conditions necessary for accumulation in the Third World, we also need to oppose the use of debt against students in the U.S., and elsewhere. The same banks profiting from Third World debt are profiting from student debt and must be attacked. But there is more than a parallel here. The use of debt in Eastern Europe and the Third World is also aimed at us in the First World. To the degree that capital is successful in imposing low wages on workers there, multinational corporate capital will pit them against us - this has been the experience in the U.S. in the last 20 years and it will

be the experience in Europe beginning in 1992 - if we don't stop it.

But our struggles need not be just reactive. We need to start taking actions that not only subvert capital's power but activate our ideas for new (potentially post-capitalist) ways of living and to reinforce already existing alternatives. Our actions must steer away from asking someone to take some action for us, e.g., hire more professors to teach overcrowded, useless, required courses, as many current student struggles do. It is time to stop asking and start taking new ground. We must keep in mind that the educational system, as part of the kapitaliststate, is not to be taken over but to be smashed - in the sense of being completely reconstructed around alternative social objectives using completely new approaches to learning - objectives and methods that are up to us (in the large social sense) to define and develop. What the 1960s and 1970s showed was how students could begin the process of reconstruction now - not "after the revolution". We can, as others have done before us, define and organise our own alternative subjects of study and demand that they count for graduation. We can explicitly struggle against every mechanism the caretakers of the system can improvise to integrate such subjects into their agenda. We can organise around self-defined and self-organised learning. Need more money to pay rent? Protests at the financial aid office about loans and interest rates can be combined with squatting of empty university buildings and houses to convert them into housing co-ops for students. Whatever strategies we use, it remains essential to find access to resources that will help us resist succumbing to even more work while in school.

The struggles of those facing default are complicated. Presently, refusal to repay is entirely unorganised and carried out individually. What are the alternatives? What can we learn from more or less analagous struggles - such as principled tax evasion? That too has been mostly an individual activity - except during the period of the Vietnam War and in the subsequent campaign for proposition 13 in California, which represented a refusal of tax-centred austerity. Such efforts grew into mass movements that forced a fundamental shift in U.S. government policy. Debt refusal strategies need to be discussed, such as how not to pay without defaulting, or how to default so as to minimise harm to us. We need also to communicate with students currently borrowing, and to share such strategies as getting more money through filing false information. We need to start thinking about organising against being defined as debtors. The final objective might well be to convert all loans into wages for schoolwork, past or present. Demands for replacing loans with free school with all living expenses paid could be raised. Should not the refusal of debt repayment be like the refusal to pay Poll Tax in Scotland, which is now spreading with a vengeance to

England and Wales, i.e., aimed at abolishing that which is being refused? These are only a few possibilities.

## **Not the Conclusion**

Capital's debt strategies are aimed at reimposing the discipline of work in an educational system threatened by *more than twenty years of student struggles*. We need to read the dynamics of student debt in the U.S. and, for example, the British government's plan to replace current financial aid forms with a loan program, in the terms of an international class struggle around debt that flows from Latin America, to Europe and to the U.S.. As the struggles against debt flowed into Caracas from the hillside barrios, it can also flow through the open spaces of U.S. campuses and into the streets of Europe.

**Good luck and Give'm Hell!**



# Poems

*by Bryan Duncan*

## Practice Makes Perfect

"I would like to speak, this evening,"  
Said the depute, nodding sagely,  
"About the importance  
Of spreading good practice."

An ageing teacher smiled wearily.

\* \* \*

## Consider the Lilies

"The Church must plan for the twenty-first century,"  
Said the Bishop, speaking six feet above contradiction,  
"We must all collaborate in the vision-building process."

Eyes stare back at him -  
Their vision reaching, with luck,  
February next year.

## Clairvoyance

"What does the future foretell?"

Said I to Madame Sosostris.

She stares at the cards,

Her ringed fingers, varnish-tipped,

Handle the cards with the assurance of habit.

What does she see?

Nuclear winter?

Personal Disaster?

World Revolution?

She pauses.

She speaks.

"Things will be much the same -

Only different."

\* \* \*

## Prognosis

Don't do that, my boy, you'll go blind.

Do that and you'll die crazy.

- Yes, Doctor.

Twice round the pan, and pointed

At both ends. Well done, my boy!

- Yes, Doctor.

Use this and you'll be safe.

Take this pill and you'll be all right.

- Yes, Doctor.

It's just a little test.

An exploratory operation, nothing to worry about.

- Yes Doctor.

There was no pain at the end.

It was all for the best.

-Yes Doctor.

She would have wanted it that way.

- You're right, my boy.

\* \* \*

Bryan Duncan recently retired from a large comprehensive school in Fife. These poems were written during 1989 when the changes in education were just beginning to be felt most intensely. Bryan has a passion for opera and renaissance art, and is enjoying his retirement productively.

# Scotland And Its People - A Photo Investigation

## *Adult Learning Project*

The photo-investigation stems from work at the Adult Learning Project in Dalry, Edinburgh. ALP is a part of Lothian's Community Education Service, working with local people to run a range of adult education programmes, projects, workshops and events. Photography has always played a big part at ALP, as a tool to enable people to analyse their situation, or concerns and beliefs, and to decide what they want to know more about. In addition there are regular photographic courses and projects run at ALP for people who want to learn more about photography and its uses.

After an investigation with local people in the Autumn of '88, ALP decided to focus all its learning programmes on the theme of 'Scotland and its people'. These included: history workshops, writing workshops, and the photo-investigation.

The photo investigation group began to explore issues and concerns through discussion and looking at the resulting photographs. The group also discussed technical problems, went out photographing as a group and spent many a long hour in the darkroom. With this exhibition in mind, we encouraged other people all over Scotland to become involved in a similar process, and consequently we hoped for a wide range of photographs portraying peoples way of life from many different perspectives. A photo-investigation pack was produced to encourage people to get involved and distributed to any groups and individuals who expressed an interest.

Information in the pack described the purpose behind producing this exhibition. People were encouraged to take photographs of their own experiences, so the images could then be used to re-examine their own day to day reality. Not all images, however, are relevant to people or intended to lead to reflection and action. Our lives are contradictory and complex, and with this in mind the images in this exhibition are intended to illustrate these contradictions rather than to promote a selective message or represent a situation as the truth. The exhibition reflects the wide range of peoples experiences, and the different reasons for taking them e.g for newspapers, or for discussion etc.

The intention of producing this exhibition has also been to encourage discussion on how photography can be used in unexploitative ways, as well as encouraging folk to learn more about the production of images.

It is intended that the exhibition will reflect these discussions and now be a tool for groups of people to take these discussions further. It will also be the starting point for a photographic archive of documentary prints which can be used in publications and further exhibitions.

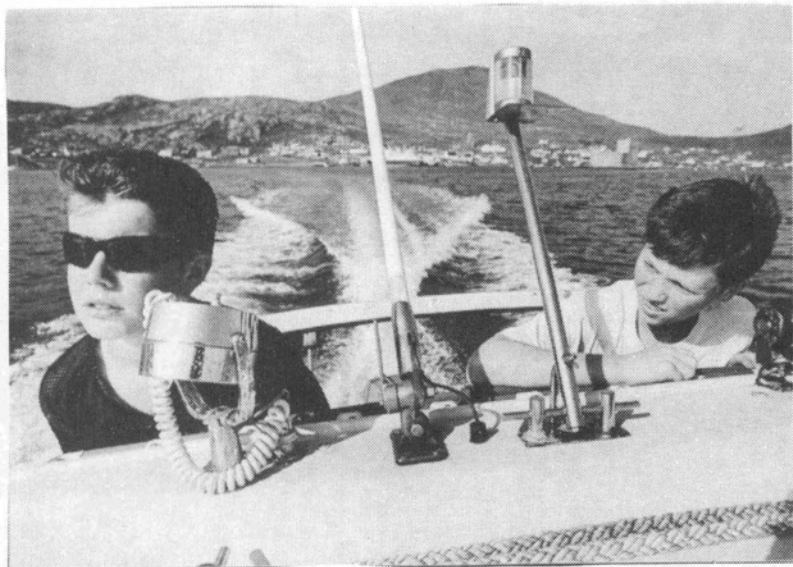
If you want to get involved in this project, get in touch with;  
Stan Reeves or Rob Hoon  
The Adult Learning Project  
184 Dalry Road  
Edinburgh  
tel: 031-337-5442



*Craig Maclean - Lothian 17 defence campaign*

*Margaret Drysdale - Day Out at New Lanark*

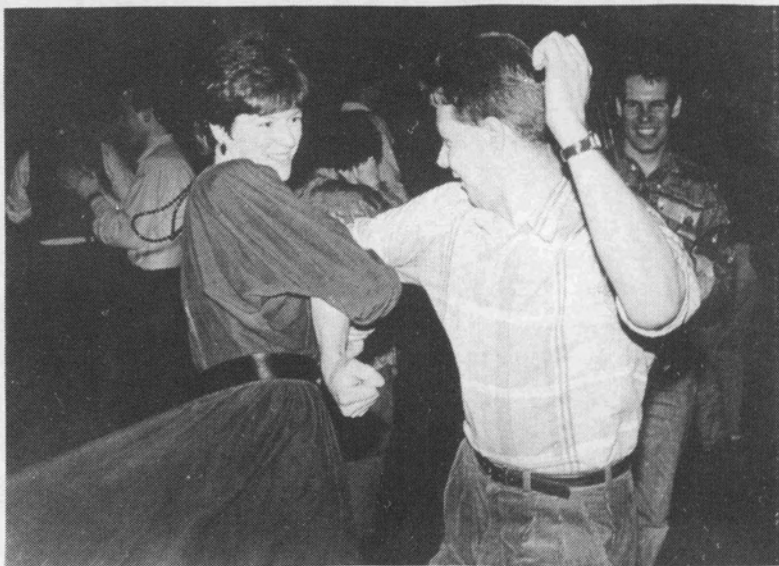




*Sam Maynard - Barra*

*Rob Hoon - Anti-Poll Tax Baby, Glasgow 1989*





*Rob Hoon - Ceilidh 1988*



*Calum Gillies - Anti-Poll Tax march, Edinburgh 1990*



*John Macpherson - Piper*



*Rob Hoon - Welder in Leith 1989*





*Sam Maynard - Stornoway*

# **Workers' Struggles And The Capitalist Counter-Offensive Under National Socialism**

*Elisabeth Behrens*

## **Editorial Note**

What follows is a new translation by Peter Martin of Section 5 of Chapter 3 of the book *Die Andere Arbeiterbewegung* ('The Other Workers' Movement') by Karl-Heinz Roth and Elisabeth Behrens. The whole book was first published in 1974 by Trikont Verlag, München. ISBN: 3-920385-55-1. In this first English publication the references have been left out, however, this should not affect comprehension of the article. References are available in the original source. This piece will also be included in a forthcoming book on 'class composition and questions of Germany - past and present', to be published by Red Notes (London).

## **The division of the working class through the forced-labour system.**

Those German workers who were not in the army found that their conditions of exploitation relative to the pre-war situation did not substantially worsen until well into 1942. This concession to German workers had a price, though - the forced transportation of millions of people and the limitless exploitation and repression which they had to endure. The restructuring of the working class, which was effected in the shortest possible time and via highly repressive means, led to an improvement of the German workers' position in production. But at the same time, any tendency towards the political homogenisation of this European working class was fought with every available means of class division. At the top of a consciously generated hierarchy that exploited racial prejudices, wage-differentials and positions in the process of production stood the German workers, who increasingly played the role of production overseers, with a view to extracting more output from the foreign forced-labourers. Their participation, whether direct or indirect, in the repression of that broad stratum of the working class subordinated to them effectively undermined the cycle of struggles that they had embarked on before the start of the war.

Apart from German male and female workers, there were five other distinct categories of workers: "Foreigners in general, Poles, Eastern workers, prisoners of war, and Jews". All "civilian" workers from states occupied by or allied to Germany came into the first group. These foreign workers generally had a work contract of at least six months duration, and were paid the prevailing rate for unskilled workers in the relevant branch of industry. Prisoners of war from Western Europe and Scandinavian countries, who were often transferred into a labour status falling under civilian laws so that they could be directly employed in the arms industry, enjoyed more or less the same conditions as the first group. This did not apply to the Polish and Russian prisoners of war. In the case of Russian prisoners of war, the Supreme Army Command ordered that "Soviet prisoners of war are not to be employed under conditions at all comparable with those of other prisoners of war . . . Only one law is to be observed: German interests, with a view to protecting the German people against Soviet Russian prisoners of war employed in workteams and in order to exploit the Russians' labour-power . . . The protection of the German people must be the main criterion when Russians are employed; putting them to work is of secondary importance". The Polish and Russian workers, the so-called Eastern workers, each came one step lower down the scale. And right at the bottom, not even regarded as human beings, came the gypsies and the Jews.

National differences between the peoples of Eastern Europe were consciously exploited, and new ones created, in order to prevent a process of solidarisation arising within this most oppressed stratum. The order of the day was "divide and rule". The German Labour Front's training material for guards and company managers mentions the importance of recognising "conflicts and enmities in dealing with the various nationalities". In its memorandum "On the Handling of Foreign Nationals in the East", it emphasises that "not only do we have the greatest interest in not uniting the population of the East, but on the contrary, it is in our interest to divide that population into as many sections and fragments as possible". This pariah-stratum among the workers already bore external stigmas; they had to wear badges bearing the words "Pole", "Eastern worker" or the star of David in such a way as to be visible to all concerned. The wearing of these badges was tantamount to putting them outside the law, and it left them without rights or protection against arbitrary excesses of treatment. They lived in ghetto camps, behind barbed wire, and eked out a barely human existence under dreadful conditions of hygiene, hunger and often sickness. Even the government commission set up by Sauckel's office was obliged to report that the big companies were ignoring even the minimum requirements laid upon them by the National Socialist

authorities in the camps. In the mass lodgings, darkness reigned; there was vermin everywhere, and the camps were regularly subject to epidemics. The combination of these living conditions together with the heavy labour every day, the meagre food-rations and the constant terror meant a slow death for millions of foreign workers - in short, destruction through work. The Polish and Russian workers were maintained in a particular pariah status within this working class by means of police methods and administrative violence. Secret service "Regulations Covering the Duties of Polish-nationality Men and Women Civilian Workers during their Residence in the Reich" gives a precise account of the measures used to ensure the isolation of, and discrimination against, these lowest strata of the working class. They were not permitted to leave their place of residence; they were forbidden to use public transport; they were to sew a badge saying "Pole" firmly onto the right breast of every item of clothing; if they deserted their place of work, worked sloppily, undertook acts of sabotage or committed offences against work-discipline they risked being sent to labour-education camps; all social contact with the German population and visits to cinemas, bars, etc. was forbidden; "any person having sexual intercourse with, or otherwise making indecent approaches to, a German woman or man" was punished with death. Needless to say, the ghettoisation of foreign workers in all areas of social life was similarly mirrored in their position in production.

The process of dividing the workers in the factories began with differing levels of pay and discriminatory job allocations, and ended in the concentration camps belonging to the companies themselves, the "labour education" camps. The wage scales were designed to match the grading hierarchy imposed on the workforce. The group classified as "foreigners in general" normally received the prevailing rate for unskilled German workers in the relevant branch of industry. According to a decree issued in June 1942, they were to be paid according to the prevailing local and national rates, in order to increase their output, with the proviso that foreign workers should "not find themselves better placed than German workers". As a matter of course, they received the jobs that fell into the lowest category anyway. Prisoners of war did not receive any pay at all: they were hired out to companies by the prisoner-of-war camp managers. The only way they could earn extra cash of their own was by way of piecework or other surplus-labour. From September 1943, however, regulations were introduced permitting prisoners-of-war to receive part of their wages directly, as part of a series of measures aimed at raising labour productivity. Polish and Russian workers, however, had additional taxes which they had to pay: the "social compensation payment" was a deduction of 15 per cent from the wages of Polish workers, and the "Eastern workers' payment" rose

proportionally as their earnings rose. After deductions for board, lodging, clothing and special taxes, the Polish and Russian workers often ended up without a penny of their earnings left.

Foreigners were set to work directly in the factories, and which jobs they were allocated depended on their place in the hierarchy. The Reich Industry Group had stipulated the conditions for the employment of foreign workers as early as 1940: "German-nationality manpower is not to be used for simple, subordinate and primitive jobs; jobs of this kind are to be carried out exclusively by members of the auxiliary populations (principally Slavs, etc). More dignified work of greater value is to be reserved for workers of German nationality." Thus the physically arduous, dangerous and dirty jobs were given to foreign workers, and "work of greater qualitative value" (which consisted in ensuring that no problems cropped up in production; and of acting as overseers to the foreign workers) was reserved for German workers. So, for example, the management at one of the Flick iron foundries wrote to the Reich Iron Association that "its plant needed a contingent of German employees, to oversee the Russian workers and get them to work harder." It was stated that maximum discipline and optimal control of foreign workers was achieved at the Flick plant by putting the foreign workers onto production-line work: "In order to secure higher output from these prisoners of war, groups should be put onto production-line working wherever possible." The employment of foreign labour was organised according to the same criteria. The IG-Farben officials responsible for industrial counter espionage drew up detailed plans for the employment of foreign workers: Soviet workers were to be kept constantly under the supervision of the *Werkschutz* (Works Security) or other specifically allocated supervisory personnel. In Mansfeld, as elsewhere in the mining industry, foreign workers were generally sent underground. W. Jonas describes the conditions of forced labourers in the Mansfeld copper mines: "The foreign workers were mainly employed where the heavy, arduous, slogging labour is, at the points where they themselves do not set the pace of work, but where the pace is set by the amount of mineral cut out by the mining team, with the latter maintaining a constant pressure on the ore-shifters to get the mineral away from the face." One last example: at AEG in 1942, the proportion of foreign workers stood at 35 per cent, and in some factories there were actually more foreign workers employed than Germans. The company management therefore proposed training the German workers so that they could "take over overseeing and training the foreigners".

The forced labour system operated along identical lines in every factory. Foreign workers got the heavy, dangerous jobs, and the German workers

were promoted up the hierarchy of the organisation of labour. They were retrained, they were allocated better and more skilled work, or they moved out of the immediate process of production. They became foremen or simple supervisors to the foreign workers.

Discrimination against forced-labourers and prisoners of war, both socially and in the factories, was maintained on a daily basis by an elaborate machinery of repression. There was considerable resistance on the part of the foreign workers who were transported to Germany and forced to engage in military and arms production. It was only by means of rule of terror that the growing resistance among the foreign workers could be kept under control.

The organised nucleus of repression in the factories lay in the hands of the *Werkschutz*, the Works Security body. At the onset of war, the *Werkschutz* was reinforced by groups of "politically reliable" employees, and a subsidiary Works Security system was built up alongside the main one. In August 1940, all company police were once again granted the official status of special police. With Himmler's decree of February 1942 on the "Employment of Manpower from the East", repression in the factories was further extended and intensified. The Gestapo were instructed to ensure that those responsible for factory defence kept a strict watch on Soviet forced labourers. Guarding these workers was defined as a specific task of the Works Security, and the *Werkschutz* "should be reinforced with master-craftsmen and foremen in order to be able to maintain strict control during the labour process as well." "Corporal punishment of the workforce," which could go as far as "special treatment with the rope", was permitted and actually practised. The Gestapo headquarters in Düsseldorf instructed factories in June 1942 that they were to appoint one guard for every 20-30 foreign workers. These guards were expressly ordered "to intervene ruthlessly at the slightest sign of lawlessness and disobedience... and to make unsparing use of firearms in order to break resistance. Escaping Russians are to be fired on immediately, with the intention of hitting them." In mid-1942, two additional bodies were established - the "Extended *Werkschutz* 1" and the "Extended *Werkschutz* 2". "Extended Works Security 1" was to reinforce the main *Werkschutz* body, and this was the principle role of its members. The activities of "Extended Works Security 2" were of a lesser order, and related to the maintenance of "labour peace" at the workplace. In 1943 it was stipulated that master-craftsmen and foremen in particular were to involve themselves with *Werkschutz* in order to be able to keep a particular watch on foreign workers at their place of work. Finally, in 1944 it was ordered that "in order to carry out the increased security measures necessary, the *Werkschutz* is immediately to be reinforced with an Auxiliary Works

Security and a Works Brigade (*Werkschar*)". With its manifold tentacles - Extended Works Security 1 and 2, Auxiliary Works Security, Alarm Units, Company Military Reserves, Guards, Works Brigades, foremen and master-craftsmen - the *Werkschutz* maintained a far-reaching hold over factory life. It was directed almost exclusively against the foreign workers and prisoners of war, and its powers were repeatedly extended as a response to the increasing resistance of these most oppressed strata of the working class. These works police were uniformed and equipped with rifles, pistols and truncheons; at Krupps they also had metal rods covered with leather. Former foreign forced-labourers who appeared as witnesses before the Nuremberg Military Court testified that these murderous weapons were used against foreign workers at the slightest provocation. The *Werkschutz* was responsible for guarding the foreign workers in the camps, on the way to the factory, and at their place of work. The forced-labourers were not spared the brutality and often cynical cruelty of their guards for a moment. Prison was omnipresent. But what was of decisive importance to the political behaviour of the working class as a whole was that it was not merely a small group of "inhuman works security, SS and Gestapo personnel" who were involved in this incredible system of oppression, but large numbers of ordinary German workers, who were integrated into the system and who basically benefited from it. German workers got better jobs and thus higher pay ; they were no longer right at the bottom of social ladder within the factory, because below them there were still the "foreigners in general, Poles, Eastern workers, prisoners of war, gypsies and Jews", who were much more deprived of their rights than they were.

German workers had become foremen, master-craftsmen, or "guards" of the foreign workers. A document dealing with the formation of the so-called "Factory Military Reserve" shows how an increasing number of German workers took on directly repressive functions over the forced labourers. The chief security manager of the Krupp company wrote to the State Police headquarters in Düsseldorf: "I have received confirmation that Factory Military Reserves have been set up and sworn in at every factory as per instructions. As soon as distribution of staves, arm-bands and steel helmets has taken place, some 310 Factory Military Brigades, comprising some 2,050 employees, will be available if reserve Brigades and Reserve members are included . . . Apart from these Factory Brigades, which . . . are intended to maintain the security of the factories, an Alarm Unit has been set up to reinforce the *Werkschutz* . . . We have received from the Army, via the local armaments brigade, 250 Mannlicher rifles and 4,600 rounds of ammunition to equip both the *Werkschutz* and the Alarm Units . . . The purpose of these units is to combat unrest among our 18,000 foreign employees, 6,000 of them Eastern workers, but in my opinion there

will be little need to call on their services, since fears of unrest among the workforce or the population need not be entertained”.

The German workers were not only being trained as a means for combatting possible attempts at uprising, and for suppressing armed resistance on the part of the forced-labourers and prisoners of war; they were also expected to oversee the productive output of the foreign workers in the course of the day's work. “Auxiliary guard-teams”, “guards” and “reliable” German workers were there to maintain the necessary work discipline. Prisoners of war were to be subjected to “the work-discipline of German factories” during their working hours. “This is maintained by Auxiliary guard-teams appointed from among the German members of the workforce . . . These teams do not have a direct working relationship with the prisoner-of-war camp, but they are subject to the regulations applying to soldiers in accordance with Article 35 of the Military Code, as regards the use of weapons.” There was no squeamishness about granting additional powers to this army of factory police. Their main duty was to establish “labour peace and work discipline” among foreign workers; nobody asked any questions about how they went about doing so, and nobody called them to account for their handling of those workers. On the contrary, they were induced to act still more harshly and ruthlessly against the forced-workers, on pain of punishment. In order to counteract the decline in output, a memo sent to company managers ran: “Foremen and guard-teams are to be held responsible for failures to maintain output. Ruthless action must be taken against supervisory personnel in any case of shirking - even when grounds of ill-health are pleaded - or loafing. Company managers must not allow any slackness to develop among their supervisory personnel. Sharp punishment is assured by the police, in summary form and without time-consuming hearings.”

How was resistance to be expected from this German “foreman of Europe”, against the perfected system of Nazi exploitation and repression? When you consider that there was one guard for about every 20 foreign workers, it is not hard to calculate how many German workers were involved solely in the direct oppression of the forced-labourers. And the privileges accorded to the German workers in this forced-labour system did not fail in their political intention of undermining any united struggle by foreign and German workers against this new form of capitalist rule. Direct repression in the factories had a whole arsenal of sanctions at its disposal. It began with the factory roll-call each morning, and could end with a worker being despatched to a “labour education” camp. In the IG-Farben factories, the morning roll-call was an undisguised intimidation of the foreign workers to achieve the required output. One set of instructions stated: “At the beginning of



every working day, it is to be explained to the Eastern workers, via an interpreter, what work-task they have to fulfil on that day. They are to be told that they will only return to their camp when the work has been properly finished. Under no circumstances is there to be payment for overtime." If work was poor, or output low, wages were cut, extra work was imposed in the form of overtime, night-shift or Sunday working, or the already insufficient food-rations were reduced still further. Sauckel's office instructed all factories that: "If the output of a worker falls behind the average output of a German workers, his pay is to be cut correspondingly." In the case of Polish and Russian workers, deductions for "insufficient output", board, lodging, transport to the place of work, and for time lost due to sickness, led to their not merely receiving no pay, but actually "falling into debt with the company". In cases of offences against work-discipline, food rations could be reduced for anything from one day to several weeks. But this by no means exhausted the sanctions available. In the Wolfen film factory, for instance, a special supervisory service was set up to identify "foreign shirkers". These spies from a body called "Social Bureau II" spent their whole day seeking out so-called "shirkers" and dragging them back to their workplaces. In order to sustain work-discipline, the company management at the Leuna works recommended the following "educative measures": "Heating may be denied to the workshy, for one or more days. The work-shy can be held in a place of detention on bread and water in the camp during their free time. Persistent shirkers are to be reported to the State Police for transport to a concentration camp". From 1940 on, there were so-called "punishment brigades" in the Leuna works for "workshy and lazy elements"; they were under the particularly strict supervision of a master-craftsman and the Works Security. In the Flick works too there were punishment brigades for workers "working carelessly and lazily". In cases where the factory workers did not themselves feel able to establish the necessary work-discipline among the foreign workers, the Gestapo was called in. The final stage of repression in the factories was the "labour education" camps. Their function was to educate "workshy elements to work discipline" and to "return them to their place of work once this goal has been achieved". Initially, the labour-education camps were attached to the State Police or the Criminal Police headquarters. But with the growth of labour resistance, the companies were losing too many men to the Gestapo and SS, so they took over the labour education camps in the vicinity of the factory with a view to disciplining the forced-labourers themselves. In IG-Farben's labour education camps, the inmates were divided into three categories. The first group was the "re-education company" and it contained mostly German workers who had drawn attention to themselves by making remarks in the factory. They were generally set lighter work, and in the evening had to attend courses in National

Socialist ideology. In the second group were the shirkers. Their punishment consisted of hard labour and arduous exercises. Then came the "punishment battalion". In addition to being subjected to hard labour, these people were harassed and ill-treated in an incredible manner. The testimony of former inmates of the Krupp punishment camp, the notorious Dechen and Neerfeld School, show that the companies' own punishment camps were no whit inferior to the concentration camps for ruthlessness. At Krupp's, workers were submitted to a regime of systematic torture. First they had to undergo beatings by the Krupp company police. Their private possessions were taken away, they received prison clothing without underclothes, and their heads were shaved with crude razors. "They were woken every day at six o'clock and taken to work without food. Some of the time they were put to work on heavy earth-moving, at other times they were put on munitions construction or into the cast-steel works. They were beaten to make them work harder. After twelve hours' work, they received about half a litre of warm water with cabbage leaves floating in it, about 50 gr jam and 25 gr sausage. Throughout their period of detention the prisoners received no washing water, no soap, no new clothing, no medical treatment and no wages." These conditions were not exceptional. One former inmate of the Siemens company labour-education camp in Radeberg wrote:

"I have spent six and a half years in German prisons. The worst I experienced was the labour-education camp at Radeberg. The conditions in Radeberg surpassed anything we had ever known. You could more or less calculate when and how you would drop dead. A prisoner who was put in with me died after two days as a result of the ill-treatment. You had to shovel muck several centimetres deep out of the barracks. There were no blankets, soap or towels, and corpses with signs of serious ill-treatment lay in the toilets. Inmates of the so-called labour-education camp at Radeberg were beaten for no reason at all, and this meant being put over a stool and being held down by your head and your hands. People often got 50, 60 or 75 blows, so that within three days inmates would die as a result of the beatings".

# Notes on Argentine Gauchos and the Nature of the Working Class

*from a Letter to George Rawick  
Harry Cleaver*

The case of the Gauchos raises interesting questions about the nature of the working class. As the material in Ricardo Salvatore's dissertation on Argentine trade in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries shows, the Gauchos made up a self-constituting "class" drawn from many different parts of society. They were part of the "working class" *in-itself* only to a limited degree because they only worked for a wage a small part of the year, and spent no special time reproducing the talents required for those jobs. Similarly, they constituted a part of the working class *for-itself* only to a limited degree in so far as they struggled for higher wages etc. and avoided work. Because they spent most of their time as they pleased - mostly independent of capital accumulation, they were only marginally incorporated into that accumulation - they were only partially accumulated.

As a largely self-reproducing group of people, living a relatively free life on the Pampas and in the cities, mostly wandering and hunting for fun and to survive, it almost seems odd that we should look at them as part of the working "class", given their success at avoiding incorporation into that Atlantic body. Being part of a "class" means being defined as a particular sector of a larger society - mainly by that larger society. We know the working class *in-itself* was forged as such by the capitalists who forced people to be defined by their work. The transition to working class *for-itself* occurs not mainly with the resistance to that forging but after it, once the struggle to avoid being coerced into a "class" has been lost. Before the failure to avoid becoming part of the working class, those people who became workers were either part of another class, or outside of class altogether, e.g. "primitive" non-class societies. So, it seems the issue should be *to what degree* the Gauchos are part of the Argentine working class and the Atlantic proletariat. Given that they work so damned little and

that their lives are not organized around work it hardly seems fair to just dump them in the "working" class.

I don't know about you but I pretty much define the "working" class this way: those whose lives are organised around imposed work and who thus struggle *against* that imposition and *for* other ways of being. How are we to view those who are able to avoid such subordination of their lives?

But this question leads to a broader one: isn't it true in general that workers have always struggled to be more than workers, to avoid having their entire lives subordinated to work? Even among those skilled workers who have been proud of their skills and their ability to create, most of them have probably sought to be more than one-dimensional men and women, have sought to live diverse lives beyond their trade. Among the ranks of the "mass workers" who have despised their work the point is obvious, but even among the relatively unalienated skilled workers, their work, at best, has been seen as only one desirable form of human activity and not as the end-all and be-all of existence. To the degree this is true, we can say that most workers have struggled to cease being *defined* as workers as they have sought a richer, more multilateral existence. From this point of view, to call such workers part of the "working" class is almost insulting, it implies their failure to avoid having their lives reduced to work. To be a worker, for such a person, is to be a loser. Who wants to be a worker?

Against this we have to place the pride of those who, failing to avoid having their lives subordinated to work, band together and struggle against capital. But is this the pride of being a worker (as the left generally see it) or of being part of a self-organised, highly motivated and victorious group of people who have struggled and won? We know that in their struggles not only have they fought to make the imposed work less onerous (and sometimes even interesting) but have also succeeded in limiting the degree to which they are "reduced to mere worker", as Marx says in the *Grundrisse*. That is, the struggle to reduce the length of the working day/week/year/life and thus to carve out time for other aspects of life. If we give up the socialist view that one organizes for and fights the revolution in order to be free to be a totally unalienated worker, and instead recognize that people fight to be more than workers, indeed many other things, then perhaps we should see that even in the concept of the working class *for-itself* there is a contradiction in terms. In Sartrean terms, and I think for Marx as well, *for-itself* means first and foremost being able to become something different than what you are (unlike being *in-itself* in which you are stuck in changelessness). In the case of the working class, being a class *for-itself* means struggling to go beyond being workers, struggling to become a thousand different kinds of people and thus unrecognisable and un'class'ifiable as a class. Isn't this what communism always alludes to? Not

to classes disappearing because everyone is now a worker, but because people live such diversified lives that it no longer makes sense to define them in terms of classes.

In the case of the Indians and then the Gauchos who escaped to the unaccumulated "frontier", they were successful (for a few decades) in carving out a great deal of time for their own lives, and in subordinating their work - of hunting wild cattle - to the rest of their life projects - riding horses, drinking yerba mate, playing cards, singing songs, etc. instead of the other way around. Here we have a clear parallel between auto workers and Gauchos. But if we hesitate to label those fiercely independent Gauchos and Indians as "workers" because the title does not appreciate their success at being other things than workers, perhaps we should also be careful about labelling people who work in factories and offices as "workers"? Perhaps we can understand why so many of them resist the label, because it is inadequate to the complexity of their struggles and goals and because the Left has used it to reduce them rhetorically to socialist myths.

But what can we call them - and ourselves? What language can we use that is not marked with the sign of the oppressor? Marx's jargon (the language of his theoretical concepts) is so marked because it was developed to express the nature and dynamics of oppression. Perhaps that jargon is adequate when we describe the mechanisms of domination, but it is inadequate to express the autonomous reality of the multi-self-directed population capital tries to dominate. If we embrace self-activity and self-determination perhaps we should also accept (not uncritically of course) self-definition. If Indians call themselves Guarani, and "Guarani" has a complex, self determined racial/cultural reality, then Guarani they are. If Gauchos call themselves Gauchos and "Gaucho" labels a complex, self-determined cultural reality, then Gauchos they are. To the degree that Argentine capital is successful at reducing Gauchos and the Guarani to "mere workers", we can indeed speak of them as part of the *working class in-itself*. But not pridefully, rather sorrowfully as it measures their failure to avoid that fate. To the degree that they continue their self-activity and struggle against capital we can recognize them as *working class for-itself* but, leaving aside socialist self-satisfaction with the honorific, we must remember to look closely and appreciate the diverse things they struggle for, as well as those moments of capitalist would-be universals they struggle against. And thus remember that they, as all "workers", are more than workers even in defeat. That, with whatever power they can muster and organize they fight to be humans and not one-dimensional droids, and for that struggle "working class" is an inadequate description.

So too with other "workers". We all struggle to be many different things, to self-define ourselves, individually and in social groups, in society as a

whole. This, it seems to me, is what self-valorisation is all about, and we are in dire need of greater recognition of this process and of greater understanding of how it shapes the "class" struggle. We know what people struggle *against* - capital, and in the stunted, alienated being it seeks to impose. We need greater appreciation of the diversity of being people struggle *for*. Only by understanding both aspects of our struggle can we think clearly not only about what we are seeking to destroy but where we want to go and what are the best ways of getting there.

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*LLV (in TSDC pink bib) witnessing arrest*

## Policing the Poll Tax

### Editorial Note

As the Anti-Poll Tax campaign has grown, so direct confrontation with the forces of law and disorder has increased. The Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign (TSDC) was created, after a national Anti-Poll demonstration of 200,000 in London on March 31st 1990, which was subject to military-style police attacks, including the use of vans and cavalry against innocent demonstrators. Over 520 people have been arrested and many have been fined or imprisoned since. The formation of the TSDC has changed the campaign out of all recognition. The TSDC's work shows how all branches of the legal system have worked together in an attempt to criminalise the whole Anti-Poll Tax movement. Already, the state has secured convictions for up to *four years* on trumped-up charges, such as 'kicking a police van' - police jargon for the van running over the protestor's foot. However, what the TSDC has also shown is that the police and courts can be put on the defensive, if evidence is produced. Several cases have collapsed due to the obvious fabrication of police evidence - last November a jury gave a verdict of innocent before the defence evidence was finished, as the prosecution evidence was so obviously falsified - a case unprecedented in British legal history. The fact that the National Anti-Poll Tax demonstration on 23rd March in London this year was not attacked by the police is a direct result of the tireless work of the TSDC. In particular, the very high level of organisation and back-up for the protest, march and picket of Brixton prison held on October 20th last year that is detailed below cannot have failed to make an impression on the forces of law and order and make them think twice before attacking demonstrators again. Crucially, the TSDC

has shown that the Anti-Poll Tax campaign is about much more than an unfair and unworkable tax. It has taken the lead in showing how the Poll Tax is part of a wide pattern of attempts to suppress protest and dissent - witness the new laws passed such as the Public Order Act aimed at restricting the right to demonstrate and the Employment Acts that are trying to constrain the right to strike or join a union. Also the rise of para-military policing through the eighties - against the inner-city uprisings of 1981 and 1985, the 1984-85 miners' strike, the Wapping Printworkers dispute, anti-fascist and anti-racist protests, and demonstrations by students, Irish solidarity organisations, animal liberationists, free festival goers and many others. The next issue of Common Sense will contain a discussion of the failure of the Poll Tax, the success of the Anti-Poll Tax campaign, and the chaotic attempts of the government to find a solution.

There is not the space here to explore the many aspects and implications of the TSDC's work. However it is undoubtedly true that the TSDC has had an effect upon how both the state and demonstrators approach anti-poll tax protests. This has involved changing the very nature of the way in which the British working class deals with 'demonstrations'. Traditionally most marches in Britain have remained "peaceful" precisely because the police are allowed to do what the like by the march 'organisers'. If a marcher actually does want to *protest* they not only find themselves being confronted and cajoled by the police but by the march organisers/stewards as well. If 'trouble' does flair up, because of police provocation (eg. ripping protestors' banners, etc) it has been the tradition within the so-called 'organised' British left (Labour Party, including the Militant Tendency, and Trade Union Congress) to take the side of the police when, in fact, protestors have only stood up for the freedom to walk *their* streets in peace. This tradition reached its climax when the Militant Tendency, and the rest of the Labour Party, condemned the Trafalgar Square demonstrators when it was plain to see that the police caused the riot.

The TSDC have made large strides in breaking this mould. Even the simple notion that stewards on a march are there to take the protestors side in any dispute seemed like a 'radical' break when in fact it was just plain common sense. Beyond this the TSDC have broken new ground in the organisation of demonstrations by hoping for the best but *expecting*, and thus being prepared for, the worst kind of police attack - the kind that comes in riot gear! They have designed a system for supplying legal back-up on the day of protest (the "Bust-card" - with information for those arrested and witnesses to contact lawyers etc.), and during the proceeding period when most support is needed; initiated and organised Legal Liason Volunteers (LLVs) whose job is to give a truthful account of confrontations on a march (this includes taking pictures, videos and other records which only defendants have access to); and distributed the necessary information to counter balance the state/police/establishment point of view, which amounts to a lot of misinformation, 'economies of truth' and downright lies.

Here we publish excerpts from a report produced by the TSDC of the protest, march and picket of Brixton prison held on October 20th last year. The report is very detailed, of which only part is printed here, and was published 3 months before the official government report of the events - demonstrating the inefficiency and incompetence of those who were supposed to be "in control" of the march.



# **Preliminary Report On The Policing Of The Anti-Poll Tax Demonstration of 20th October 1990**

## *Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign*

### **Introduction**

On August 4th this year, a national meeting of the Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign agreed to call for a protest in London on October 20. The demonstration was to oppose the Poll Tax and to support all those arrested and subsequently imprisoned following the March 31st demonstration in Trafalgar Square.

After protracted negotiations with the All-London Anti-Poll Tax Federation (ALAPTF), we organised two events associated with the ALAPTF demonstration to greet the People's March Against the Poll Tax when it arrived in London.

These events were:

- 1) A picket of Horseferry Road Magistrate's Courts where many of those arrested on the 31st are being tried, followed by a 'feeder' march to Kennington, the assembly point for the ALAPTF rally in Brockwell Park.
- 2) A march to, and picket of, Brixton Prison where four anti-Poll Tax protestors are being held, following the ALAPTF rally in Brockwell Park.

Through these events, we hoped to draw attention to the plight of those arrested and imprisoned as a result of the events of March 31st, and to give the anti-Poll Tax movement a chance to show its solidarity with them.

Having taken a decision to conform to the requirements of the law where this did not infringe our right to demonstrate freely, we kept police informed at every stage of our plans, and discussed our preparations with them in every detail.

March organisers met with police on three separate occasions. All the practical suggestions that they made were incorporated, and they at no

stage raised any objection to our plans.

During the final meeting, on the eve of the demonstration, the officer in charge of policing on the day, Deputy Assistant Commissioner John Metcalfe told us that he had heard “rumblings” that some of his officers might be intending to treat the days events as a ‘rematch’ for the clashes in Trafalgar Square.

He assured us that he would not tolerate any of his men behaving in this way, and that he had made it clear to his senior officers “in the strongest way I know how” that he would deal with any officer who steps out of line “with the utmost severity”.

In the light of the experience of Trafalgar Square, we organised a sophisticated legal liaison system. Sixty volunteers were deployed on the demonstration, monitoring police tactics and behaviour and taking notes about arrests. Many of these were equipped with video cameras and other photographic equipment.

These legal liaison volunteers were in telephone communication with our office, from which we had arranged for solicitors to visit the police stations to which arrested persons would be taken, and for doctors to attend to those who were injured.

In the event, the feeder march, the main demonstration to Brockwell Park, and the march to Brixton passed off peacefully. However, the Prison picket was violently dispersed by police more than an hour before it was due to finish. Dozens of protestors and bystanders were injured, and there were 135 arrests.

Given that the maximum sentence for violent disorder is five years, these are very serious charges, and there has to be some question as to whether they are justified given the scale of the events.

On the evening of October 20th, Deputy Assistant Commissioner (DAC) Metcalfe - the senior officer in charge of policing the day's events - held a press conference at which he alleged that “anarchists intent on clashing with police” had precipitated “running battles” through Brixton, that petrol bombs had been thrown, and that future anti-Poll Tax demonstrations might have to be banned.

Press reports on Sunday repeated police allegations and accepted their categorization of the events as “disorder ... running battles between police and protestors.” Despite the care that the organisers took to inform the police at every stage of their plans and despite the support of

the organisers of the main demonstration, the march was also consistently referred to as a 'breakaway' or 'splinter' protest.

The following day, the Home Secretary David Waddington called for a full report on the events, and back-bench Tory M.P.s echoed DAC Metcalfe's comments about the banning of future anti-Poll Tax marches.

In the light of the seriousness of the allegations, and the threat which now hangs over the right to demonstrate against the Poll Tax, we decided, as organisers of the demonstration, to produce a report on the day's events.

This report has been compiled from the notes and photographs taken by our 60 legal liaison volunteers, and from statements taken from hundreds of other witnesses. It has not yet been possible to collate all the information we have collected, but given the seriousness of the situation, we felt it imperative to produce a preliminary report at this stage.

It is our sincere hope that this report will be read carefully and with an open mind by those with responsibility for public order, and that it will lead to a serious re-assessment of the role of the police in public order situations such as this.

## **Section 1: Background**

On March 31 1990, the eve of the implementation of the so-called 'Community Charge' or Poll Tax, one of the largest demonstrations this century took place in Central London. Nearly a quarter of a million people marched from Kennington Park to Trafalgar Square, demonstrating conclusively that this flat-rate local tax is the most unpopular piece of legislation enacted since the war.

Many refuse to pay the tax on principle, and many more simply cannot afford it. The latest figures indicate that the overwhelming majority of the population disagrees with the tax, and that there are over 12 million non-payers throughout the U.K.

The Poll Tax has provoked mass opposition, uniting previously-disparate organizations, and drawing hundreds of thousands of people into political activity for the first time in their lives.

This opposition has taken many different forms, from passive refusal to pay through active door-to-door campaigning to mass demonstrations.

As is now well-known, the demonstration on the 31st March ended in violent clashes between police and demonstrators.

Politicians, the march organisers, and the police originally concurred in blaming a small minority of the demonstrators - variously identified as 'anarchists' or 'trotskyites' - for precipitating the violence. Since then, much evidence has emerged which directly contradicts this version of events.

The Channel 4 documentary 'Battle of Trafalgar' showed that the fighting was actually precipitated by a baton charge into a peaceful sit-down outside Downing Street, and the use of police horses against bewildered and terrified demonstrators in Whitehall.

Nearly 400 people were arrested on the 31st March, and the police acted quickly to obtain photographs and film of protestors from the broadcast and print media. 'Operation Carnaby' - the police codename for the hunt for those they believe they have identified committing offences - has resulted in over 100 more arrests of anti-Poll Tax activists.

The trials of these people continue in an atmosphere of persecution and hysteria, with defendants being convicted on the flimsiest of evidence, and receiving heavy fines and long prison sentences.

It is widely accepted that the last fifteen years have seen significant changes in the way that public protests, demonstrations and pickets are policed.

There have been consistent allegations - during the Miners' and Printworkers disputes, for example - that policing has become a political tool to contain opposition to government policy. Serious questions have been raised as to whether the policing of these kinds of events is designed to preserve public order or to criminalise political protest and beat protestors off the streets.

The behaviour of the police in such situations has been the subject of severe criticism from well-informed and respected bodies such as the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Police Complaints Authority. These criticisms have been acknowledged by the police themselves at the highest possible level - the Association of Chief Police Officers.

## Section 2: Chronology of Significant Events

(For reasons of space we are only publishing excerpts from this section - Ed)

10.50: Feeder march from Horseferry Road Magistrate's Courts to Kennington moves off. At this stage there is near constant liaison between the march organisers and the ranking officers present. Large numbers of police down both sides of march. Aggressive policing: people not allowed out of the march. Plain clothes police spotted integrating into the march and police camera crews observing. Police warned demonstrators with drums that they would be arrested if they used them, and a man with a megaphone was also warned twice that he would be arrested if he continued to use it.

12.07: Despite high profile policing, mood of the march generally good-humoured and jovial as it arrives at the assembly point in John Ruskin Street. Police reports referred to "a carnival atmosphere".

12.10: TSDC march meets main march in John Ruskin Street.

14.30: Whole of march now in Brockwell Park. Demonstrators who have climbed on the roof of the building housing the park toilets are surrounded by approximately 70 police. Stewards persuade people on roof to come down. Situation defused. In general, police remain near main gate, and do not approach the rally. Presence in the park very discreet, consisting mainly of occasional pairs of officers in ordinary uniform.

15.45: TSDC march leaves Brockwell Park for Brixton Prison picket. Approximately 2,500-3,000 on march. Control van at head of march. Heavily policed - lines two to three deep on each side of march. Large group of 2-300 police *behind* demonstrators. Five unmarked minibuses and one coach bring up rear of march. It appears that a number of the police at the rear were initially stood down at Brockwell Park and have been remobilised at the last minute. March kept moving at rapid pace.

16.10: PC MS112 heard by LLV CM saying loudly, so that marchers could hear: "I'd like to start kicking some people's heads in now", alongside rear of march along Brixton Water Lane. Police shepherd stragglers trying to keep up with the march into the procession *and box it in*.

16.20: A sergeant is observed, passing down the line of police at the

side of the picket, instructing officers to fasten chin straps and “watch the sky lads” (ie. for missiles).

16.35: It is evident by now that the police have been deployed in Police Support Units consisting of one inspector, two sergeants and twenty constables. (PSUs are riot formations). One PSU advances south down the clear lane of Brixton Hill to beyond the head of the demonstration, is briefed by senior officer, deploys along east side of picket, in front of Methodist churchyard railings.

16.36: LLV unable to see number on policeman's jacket. Had to ask him for his number. WW515 said it was “new jacket”.

16.55: Unidentified police officer announces “Clear area - shield officers will be deployed”. LLV AS and others decide to head back to Brockwell Park to avoid trouble. Four vans down Waterworks Road: Police in arc round the mouth of Waterworks Road.

16.58: Demonstrator lying on road with split head arrested. Two demonstrators carrying woman M with head wound towards ambulance in the clear lane of Brixton Hill. Police prevent woman M from entering ambulance. Man objects and is arrested.

17.00: Police vans drive into retreating crowd at North end of Brixton Hill. Police HQ car speeding down Brixton Road towards prison.

17.05: Riot police in cordon across Brixton Hill North of Endymion Road shout “We're on!” and charge. In this charge, young male arrested and handed to officers by the side. PC took him to van and was heard to say “I don't know what I'm arresting him for”. Senior officer replied “Arrest him for assault on PC”. The two officers were TW5 and YF143.

17.06: Police lines block across Brixton Hill: police riot vans blocking also.

17.34: People in Brixton Road break into a run towards the Tube and are pursued by riot police. A total of 28 vans now in immediate area.

17.55: Police chase demonstrators down Atlantic Road. Riot police at Brixton tube close gates to tube. The tube station is now closed, no trains are running out of Brixton rail station and no buses are running as Brixton centre and surrounding roads are blocked off by police vans.

18.02: Number of riot vans go down Atlantic Road. Group of 100-200 protestors pushed north by about 300 police. Forced to move (frog-

marched) at a fast walk/jog (including young man with broken leg who, having lost his crutches was forced to hobble on his cast) all the way up Brixton Road to the Oval tube station where police chased/threw protestors down the up escalator.

## Section 3: Conclusions

The events that we have outlined above raise some very serious questions about the policing of our demonstration on October 20th, and by implication, the policing of past and future anti-Poll Tax protests.

The most important question must be why the police felt it necessary to disperse violently a peaceful demonstration more than an hour before it was due to end.

From our observations it is clear that there were at least 3,500 police officers deployed or on standby in Brixton. Given that there were at most 4,000 protestors, and that at least 300 had left within an half an hour of our arrival at Brixton Prison, there were therefore more than enough police to deal with any situation that might have arisen.

Right up to the point at which the first police charge took place, the demonstration remained peaceful, and the situation was under control.

It is clear that the police came prepared for violence and that their action in dispersing the demonstration had little to do with maintaining public order. indeed the decision to disperse the demonstration appears to have been made immediately the march arrived at Brixton Prison. A number of observations support this:

- \* The deployment along the eastern pavement of Brixton Hill of police who were later used to divide the demonstration and to clear a space for the further deployment of short shield units. This began at 16.35, only 20 minutes after the head of the march had arrived.

- \* At 16.45 a few minutes before the first baton charge by yellow Jacketed officers, two vantage points from which protestors and bystanders would have been able to observe the police attack - the George IV pub and the railing on the Methodist Churchyard - were cleared, in one case with a provocative arrest, and in the other case with unnecessary force.

- \* The order to fasten chin straps and watch out for missiles (16.20) and

the deployment of police in riot formation PSUs (16.35) all came along before the first placard sticks and empty cans were thrown in response to apparently random attacks.

\* The police have alleged that the first arrests were of missile throwers. This claim is directly contradicted by the evidence that we have marshalled above. In fact missiles were thrown by angry protestors in response to arrests.

\* On a number of occasions, organisers appealed to the police to withdraw a few yards in order to calm the situation. They refused point blank even to consider this.

\* At 17.55 the police had, in a pincer movement on Brixton Road trapped the majority of the protestors and a large number of innocent bystanders outside Brixton tube station. They had closed the station and refused to reopen it despite a fax sent by the march organisers to the operations room in New Scotland Yard appealing for them to do so in order to facilitate a peaceful dispersal.

We regard this as a clear evidence that the police intended to make the maximum number of arrests. We suggest that this should not be one of the prime motivating factors in the dispersal of a demonstration.

In addition, and despite the assurances that we were given of DAC Metcalfe, it is clear that many officers were treating the days events as an opportunity to 'get their own back' for the clashes in Trafalgar Square.

This is demonstrated by the attitude of a number of police on the feeder march and later in Brixton. Comments such as "Well, that's on call, then" made to arrested protestors and "They're all scum, let's get the lot of them" are not indicative of a reasonable outlook or of professional detachment.

There also seems to be a contradiction between the apparent confident expectation of a peaceful demonstration shown by the senior officers involved in negotiations with the march organisers prior to the day, and what could seriously be called contingency plans such as the cancelling of police leave and the block-booking of Horseferry Road Magistrate's Court. Such contradictions do not serve to foster mutual trust and respect between the police and the organisers of demonstrations in the future.



The question as to the motivation for the police's violent dispersal of the demonstration is further heightened by their obstructive attitude towards the organisers of the picket. In effect they prevented communication among the stewards and between the stewards and the demonstrators. Several specific instances illustrate this attitude:

- \* The organisers' van, which was equipped with the public announcement system necessary for communication with such a large demonstration, as well as additional megaphones, was not allowed to join the organisers at the head of the march.
- \* The police did not allow stewards access to one another. Since the police had packed the crowd so densely along one side of the road, the only means of moving from one part of the picket to another was along the southbound carriageway of Brixton Hill. Stewards were not allowed past the police lines and onto this carriageway. Thus they were prevented from communicating either with each other or with parts of the demonstration that were beyond earshot. Their only means of communication was by cellphones, with which only four were equipped.
- \* At 16.40 the police did provide one steward with a megaphone to assist his communication with the crowd. However, after the space of about one minute this was snatched by two ranking officers without either explanation or negotiation. This in itself was seen by the crowd as an inflammatory act.
- \* Most seriously, however, both the stewards and the named organiser of the Picket were denied access to the commanding officers. In particular, the steward Liaison officer Sgt Noel and 'Bronze' commander Chief Superintendant Hird absented themselves from the front of the demonstration upon its arrival at the prison, and could not thereafter be located, despite numerous appeals.

It is clear that as soon as the head of the picket arrived outside the prison all communication and authority structures, previously agreed with the police, were ignored. Instead, the police immediately began to behave as if dealing with a serious public disorder, a situation which by no means prevailed at that time. This can only lead us to conclude that the police were in fact putting into operation a pre-planned series of moves designed to disrupt and disperse the picket.

Police allegations that the protest was hi-jacked by a violent minority are simply not borne out by the facts. To the contrary, in the face of enormous provocation and excessive violence from the police,

demonstrators showed great courage and restraint, and their behaviour deserves to be applauded.

The above chronology also gives us cause for concern in other areas, most notably the large number of serious injuries sustained by demonstrators, particularly head wounds, a result of the vicious and indiscriminate use of truncheons, and secondly the large amount of evidence from throughout the day concerning the singling out of individual protestors as targets for the police well before any disturbance.

More generally, we believe that this report should lead to a serious re-assessment of the way that such events are both policed and reported. In particular, it must give one pause for thought in any consideration of events of March 31st.

Finally, some of DAC Metcalfe's comments subsequent to the events noted above also give cause for concern; particularly his implication that future anti-Poll Tax demonstrations may have to be banned. We are concerned that DAC Metcalfe feels that he has the executive power to make pronouncements about people's rights to demonstrate, a fundamental right in any democracy. Such a right extends not only to the freedom to organise protests but also the right to protect those protests from attack and wilful disruption by the police.

## **Recommendations**

- 1) The immediate suspension of DAC Metcalfe, pending a full inquiry into his handling of the situation. The suspension of such a senior officer is a serious step, but one which we believe to be justified in view of his role as the commander-in-chief of police operations on the day, his failure to enforce the assurances which he gave to the organisers about the behaviour of his officers, and his responsibility for the decision to deploy short shield units and to disperse the picket.
- 2) The criminal prosecution of other officers who have been identified attacking demonstrators, using unwarranted violence, or demonstrating provocative behaviour.
- 3) The setting up of a public inquiry into the policing of anti-Poll Tax protests, especially the events of March 31st and October 20th, with a view to seriously re-considering whether the police can be allowed to

take responsibility for public order in such situations.

4) The immediate suspension of all charges against the protestors arising from March 31st and October 20t, pending the outcome of the inquiry.

5) That a statutory right to demonstrate be enshrined in the law.

### **TSDC**

**Room 205, Panther House,  
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London WC1X 0AP**

Donations appreciated - for the legal and political defence and welfare of all those arrested on March 31st and October 20th 1990.

Copies of the full report plus "Stand Firm", the TSDC's newsletter, are available from the above address. Price 50p each (or donation) plus P & P.



# Poems

by Jim Ferguson

Jim Ferguson once worked in the Civil Service, but recently he resigned to concentrate on writing poetry. These selections were written earlier in the year while many of us were in a state of angry despair at the legalised carnage in the Gulf. These poems perhaps articulate something of what it was to live in a country at war. Jim's fourth book of poems - *The Art of Catching a Bus* (ISBN 09516049) - was published last year by *Neruda Press*. This book contains a beautifully crafted series of poetical observations on Scottish life during the late eighties. Jim's work pays occasional homage to Tom Leonard but it is however gentler and a little more metaphysical than Leonard's. Titles include *Concrete and Flesh*, *'The Petrified Muck of Today'*, and *Emotions/Conversations & Unsteadiness*. It is available price £2 from Neruda Press, Ed. Bobby Christie, 51 Allison Street, GLASGOW G42, and from A/K Distribution, 3 Balmoral Place, Stirling, FK8 2RD. Jim's previous books are: *Tower of Babble*, Itinerant Publications, 1987 (with Graham Fulton, Ronald McNeil and Bobby Christie); *No Sunrise*, Echo Room Press, 1988; and *String Drink*, Itinerant Publications, 1989.

---

## Five Poems

1

"Never in the field  
Of the sharp increase in  
The rate of unemployment  
And home repossessions..."

Interesting that, home repossessions!  
Funny wee pun or something.  
Just like collateral-damage  
And pin-point accuracy can  
Make you laugh;

It's all in the guidance system.  
Predetermined.  
Press, bend, or succumb to  
Pressure.

2

Always go in company!  
A motto of dubious intent.

In regard to suicide it is  
Possibly a method of

deterrence. Here though  
the possibility of homicide  
is enhanced.

3

IF

"In the real world"  
the moral is not political

the political not moral  
how the fuck

are we to keep  
becoming human

enter Hobbes  
screaming

LEVIATHAN!

4

wanting to buy  
a pair of shoes

or something  
which will teach me

the value of money  
the value of common sense

or common courtesy  
the value distant voices

muttering beneath the carpet  
of a smothered culture

the shoes with no feet  
are wanting to buy a pair

of milliseconds of respect  
from no-one to nothing

nowhere on earth is so much

constructive work being done

all the cobblers being dispatched  
to their lasts always welcome this

"New American Century" Mr Bush.  
life's been fine since he got

his feet wet he knows the value  
of life tripe treacle-toffee and

cowboy boots Texas the value of  
everything is every thing  
spreading

in to nothing just  
the pit of my stomach rolling

down hill the worth of nice shirts  
the arse out of my trousers

the smart pair of shoes  
the value of democracy

5

now here  
hear me  
you there  
me here  
no idea  
what has  
gone once  
before  
you I  
between  
the page  
womb and  
daffodils

## Seven Poems

3

1

fuckin imajin  
eh

bright as a button  
smokin ndrinkin

moovn inti midnight  
kickin nscreamin

wan mer wan mer  
afore wi go

a johnny walker!  
golden piss

oan thi flerr  
diggin heels in

gawn ti fuck

2

drifting off  
into sleep

wondering quietly  
if this is

what it will  
be to die

hoping  
I might be

right

night might  
have come

and gone

it's nevertheless  
not always the same

old uncertainty  
Einstein bored

and Heisenberg  
sits. chuckling.

4

the murder and pain of  
why did you do it?

"Why did I do it"  
standing accused before

it is possible to speak  
about seriousness with

the absolute boredom. Check  
Watch. time talking madly

on a spree with god whisky  
the hurt looks on our faces

eyes angry and sad

5

breakfast time  
can be quite handy

useful as an instrument

for measuring the lack of

7

paralysis on the tongue  
Time's sweet about that old

bastard numbs and kills it  
isn't the same as an act of

will could be predetermined?  
the will to freedom

the freedom to will  
an act of god perhaps?

look out for bad weather  
and St Paul scudding into

the pub a good bit of  
mysogyny all round

man of the people!  
Determined and

dead too

no awthat good  
okay maybe  
been worse  
always sure  
uv thi same  
thing that  
thingsll nivvr  
be thi same

ha! no very fucking clivvr  
give masel peace

cheerio

6

angry accused offensive  
and desperately drunk

kicking over tables the  
revolutionaries who want

to be civilised are  
not amused at this

rebel in their midst  
who does not want to

hurt but has to act against  
this living hypocrisy

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