

# Red Rag

Issue 5, April 1998

30p

## WHAT'S LEFT IN EXETER

*The Exeter Left Group was formed to link and organise the Left in Exeter. We aim to provide a forum to discuss issues relevant to those in the struggle to overthrow this rotten system. Signed articles represent the views of the author (unsigned: the editor).*

# Fosters on Ice

## Labour couldn't give a XXXX about hunting

The Foster bill to ban hunting will have run out of parliamentary time as we go to press. The response of leading Labour politicians to the issue has been predictable. There has hardly been a single progressive measure that Labour has been committed to that it has actually had any intention of carrying out. Jack Straw the Home Secretary has stated that in his view, and no doubt the view of the Labour leadership, hunting will continue for another 50 years.

This issue goes beyond the issue of hunting. It reflects a level of conservatism and timidity in the Labour leadership that almost makes the Tories look progressive. If not rocking the establishment boat means going to war with Iraq, then lets slaughter thousands of Iraqi civilians, if a section of the ruling class wish to show their appreciation of the countryside by ripping apart wild animals then let them do so.

The message to anyone who wants any progressive change is very plain indeed - it will not come from Labour. Labour are quite happy to dump on the working class, the poor and the disabled but they are certainly not prepared to upset even the ruling class at play. The only way to get progressive change is to organise and fight for it.





# The New Barbarians from New Labour

## War plan exposes Imperial interests of Britain and USA

Clinton's threat of war against Iraq is fuelled by the collapse in the price of oil. The world oil price has slumped 25% in the last three months undermining the buying power of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. The danger for the USA and Britain is that the Gulf states will try to buy cheap weapons from Russia instead of expensive weapons from them.

Hence the hostility of Russia to military action which would re-establish US hegemony in the Gulf and drive up the price of oil.

### Asian crisis

The oil price collapse is closely linked to the Asian economic crisis which has seriously undermined oil sales by Gulf states to Asian countries.

The economies of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations are under serious economic pressure, not least because they are still paying for the last Gulf war. This is why the US/Anglo plan involves smashing up the Iraq food-for-oil deal which is driving the oil price even lower.

### UK and the USA isolated

Yeltsin has already warned that military action by America could lead to world war. This is no drunken prognosis but a veiled threat and shows how a war in the Gulf might spread further.

### World tension

There has been an increase in world tensions recently



leading to the possibility of a world war of a much more devastating nature than the two in the first half of this century. Relations between and within the world's three main trading bloc's is under greater pressure than ever before. Blair's support for Clinton, when Britain has just begun its presidency of the EU, is a serious blow to the prestige of the EU.

The end of 'communism' has

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**At least 200,000 Iraqis were killed in the last Gulf war - 100,000 of those were civilians. This is a conservative estimate**

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not ended capitalism's crisis, indeed it has plunged it into a new and more unstable era. The Asian economic crisis threatens to stop the period of 'Thatcherism' dead in its tracks right round the globe. A massive world slump is an immanent possibility, swelling unemployment to unheard of levels. It is in this

context that America feels forced to act.

### Why no support?

Other Gulf states are hostile or hesitant when it comes to the plans of US Imperialism, fearing that Clinton threatens the stability of their nations and the whole region. A gamble Clinton obviously sees as worth taking. At the time of writing (early February) Saudi Arabia and Iran have expressed complete opposition to military action.

France is also opposed, with the crisis threatening to blow Jospin's government apart if he supports the war. Again, economic considerations lie behind this as France seeks stronger ties with Iraq and Iran.

This could be a crucial turning point in history. The consequence of this war threatens to finally put to an end the alliances and relationships built up since the Second World War which have been crumbling since



the end of the long boom. OPEC and even the EU, already under pressure, could be damaged further or even destroyed by a conflict.

### **UK and US have no mandate within UN**

There is little chance of America bowing to 'world opinion'. The veil of the UN as the world power which all others must respect has been torn off by Clinton and Blair. The UN is now totally exposed, or more accurately is being trampled on by the USA and Britain. If a vote was taken on the Security Council today about war, Britain and America would lose.

### **America's weakness**

This action is not the sign of a strong superpower - the USA desperately feels its power ebbing away as the Asian economic crisis threatens to spread and undermine its dollar-backed dominance in Asia and elsewhere.

The reality is that neither

Clinton nor Blair could care less how many children, women and men they kill, 'legally' or 'illegally' the perverse logic of capitalism drives them to defend and extend if possible the imperial interests of their country's ruling classes. There is no qualitative difference between this war

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**Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, have been killed in Iraq by sanctions imposed after the last Gulf war - most of those killed have been the young and the old.**

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and the last Gulf war. But the USA in particular starts from a weakened position in world terms. The moral bankruptcy of the whole operation is exposed even before the war gets underway, with the ruling class split on the issue. The Times and The Telegraph have seriously questioned whether war is the right

course. Even Schwarzkopf and De La Billiere, mass murderers in chief from the last time around have expressed reservations. Iraq, after all, has invaded no one this time. The shocking sight of Blair and Clinton unleashing war without any 'moral backing' not only has no support on the rest of the planet but also has very little backing inside Britain and America. The logic of attacking a virtually defenceless and shattered country in an attempt to 'find' weapons of mass destruction exposes capitalism for what it really is - a vicious and deadly system in its death throes but needing socialist revolution to end it.

### **Hands off Iraq**

Socialists in Britain and the USA must stand up and call for the defeat of their own ruling classes in this war. The only answer to this problem is for the working class of the world to halt the imperialist slaughter.

**RK**

## **The practice of theory - Reviewing *Aufheben*, a periodical to uplift**

Some people love political theory, others switch off whenever it comes up. Sadly these are the majority. Those of you who do understand long words, however, should check out *Aufheben*.

The title is a German term originally from Hegelian dialectics (the long words are starting already!) meaning both to 'abolish' and to 'supersede', according to the editors (though my dictionary gives lots of other more mundane translations).

Politically, the magazine has no party affiliations, but the main tendency is Marxist and some of the collective happily accept the label of 'ultra-left' as defined by Lenin. Nevertheless, speaking as an anarchist, the contributions are mostly intelligent, intelligible and worth making an effort with any stray jargon.

Of particular interest is the current big feature: "What was the USSR? - Towards a theory of the deformation of value under state capitalism". This started in the last issue (no 6) and is projected to continue over the next two. As the introduction to the first instalment states: "Ever since the Russian Revolution of 1917, all points along the political spectrum have had to define themselves in terms of the USSR, and in so doing they have necessarily had to define what the USSR was." Thus, however stale the debate seemed to be at times, for over 70 years it was wholly unavoidable. Contrary to triumphalist right-wing propagandists and brain-dead journalists, such influence doesn't evaporate overnight.

This first part deals with the debate, mainly conducted between Trotskyist factions, over whether the USSR was "state capitalist"

or "a degenerated workers state". Despite any impression the title may give, Tony Cliff's formula for the SWP does not fare well.

The author criticises both positions, "considering Trotsky's ideas in details and in their own terms ...", with special reference to Trotsky's pronouncements on the Soviet Union, post-Lenin and their development by his supporters since his death. These includes logical non sequiturs such as the nature of the Warsaw Pact bloc states - "how could you have a degenerated workers' state when there had been no revolution and thus no worker's state in the first place?"

Personally I can't see how anyone can stay a Trot after reading this, but then they're a thick-skinned brood (and some are thicker than others).

Anyway don't be put off, it's good stuff and that's not just my recommendation. Other items in #6 are an unfriendly obituary for *Class War* and a review of a couple of books on the Situationist International. Number 7 will continue the above theme, by considering the ideas of Lenin's left communist opponents "before turning to examine [Hillel] Tickin's efforts to go beyond both [these theories]".

*Aufheben* appears about once a year, costs £2 a copy (cheaper with a subscription) and is obtainable from:-

*Aufheben*, c/o Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY.

**RA**



# The Campaign Against the Arms Trade



The CAAT had a very successful series of actions against the COPEX arms fair at Farnborough in September/October this year. A meeting on this was held in Exeter in November at the Friends Meeting House. This is the second such meeting in the city and more than twenty local pacifists and peaceniks, not just Quakers were addressed by Will McMahon from CAAT.

To quote from the meeting organiser: "Issues concerned with the globalisation of the arms trade" were discussed. Also the need to challenge the ethical dimension of the present government's foreign policy.

It would seem that there is little room for manoeuvre between the past and present government, with much political window dressing and not much vision.

The arms trade has become a tool for foreign policy, not what is necessarily good but what is the national interest. The criteria announced for judgement regarding the granting of licences, of which there were 20,000 issued last year, are still external aggression, internal oppression and regional tension, yet we are still sending arms to Nigeria, Indonesia and Turkey.

The meeting felt that the government could offer a greater degree of leadership to push forward for an international agreement over conventional military equipment. It was interesting to learn that the arms trade is the third most important topic to the general public after the environment and animal rights.

"Trade does not exist in a vacuum", it needs subsidy and planning to convert from military to commercial exports, but it can be done and there is more goodwill than is given credit for.

Next year, 1998, is to be a year of **local action**. For example, building up factory action networks, sending letters to various organisations requesting lists of in pension schemes investment in arms production and lobbying the local Chamber of Commerce.

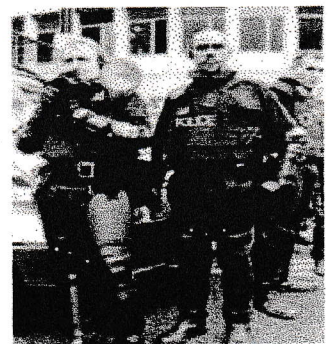
Nationally CAAT needs both people and financial support. Locally we need ideas and enthusiasm.

Anybody who feels they can offer ideas, enthusiasm, or money can get in touch with the group, for now, via the *Flying Post* PO Box.

Such successes alone won't stop the arms trade, but they help to end the culture of silence and complicity in which it operates.

For more info, contact: CAAT, 11 Goodwin St, Finsbury Park, London N4 3HQ; tel: 0171-281-0297; fax: 0171-281-4369

**Genetically engineered crops** were the target of a demo at the NFU offices in London on 9th October. For info, contact: Genetic Engineering Network 01810-374-9516. Local activity has taken place recently - contact the PO Box for further details.



*Liberty* (the old NCCL, not the clothes shop) and *Earthrights* held a conference, for the lawyers and protesters, on "Protest and public order: a litigation strategy" on Saturday 25 October, Conway Hall, London. If you want to find out what happened, call: 0171-357-8689.

**You Want More?** Given the normal delay in bringing out this newsletter, it's not possible to publicise every action we hear of in good time. **If you want notice of demos, campaigns, meetings, etc, in time to get along, get in touch via the PO Box. Let us know what you areas of interest are and enclose a donation to cover photocopying costs and postage.**

**If you know of any other local political activity, please send us details.**

*Exeter Left, c/o 'The Flying Post', PO Box 185, Exeter EX4 4EW*



# Tiger, tiger burning bright?

The "bubble has burst", economies are about to "implode" or collapse - all of these terms have been banded about to describe the state of economies in East Asia. The sound, ever growing and ever expanding economies of East Asia that both Tory and Labour politicians have worshipped seem suddenly to be no more than paper tigers.

Following on the earlier collapses on the Asian stock markets we now see major financial institutions collapsing - in Japan a major bank and the fourth largest stock-broking firm have collapsed. The question now is not whether there is going to be a recession in East Asia but whether it will spread to the entire world - around 17% of the US economy depends on Japanese and Asian capital, about 5% for Britain.

These developments show starkly that international capitalism has not resolved its contradictions - boom and bust is with us to day as it always has been, albeit in a probably faster and more severe way. The argument that the Tiger economies have shown that capitalism has overcome its contradictions and found a new and flourishing period of development does not look very plausible anymore. The arguments from the Right for us to adopt the "flexible working conditions" - i.e. low pay, poor conditions and no trade union rights - of the Tiger Economies looks even less desirable now. Besides, some of these countries actually have better trade union rights than we do here, the successful general strike in Korea earlier this year was in protest at the threat of the imposition of anti-union laws modelled on Britain!

However, these developments are not likely to be good for the working class - we will probably see intensified attacks on the working class internationally as capital attempts to minimise its losses. The significance for the



*The global nature of the class struggle was highlighted by the Liverpool Dockers*

Left of these events is two fold. Firstly there will undoubtedly be major class battles as a consequence of these developments, initially in East Asia. Secondly there is the ideological significance of recent developments. We have all been told for the last several years that "Marxism is dead" - in Eastern Europe popular uprisings overthrew the hated Stalinist regimes whilst the Tiger economies were providing prosperity in East Asia. For a while everything looked rosy for the supporters of the capitalist system and to hold a critique of capitalism was to live in the past, maybe there were a few problems around the edges, a bit of severe poverty here and there, but overall with a few minor adjustments capitalism was the key to prosperity and freedom; all that talk of capitalism being in crisis was ridiculous talk by people stuck in the past. However, the plight of people in nearly the entire of Eastern Europe has been the reverse of prosperity - standards of living have slumped to such a degree that some now look back to the days of brutal totalitarian rule as a golden age. Of course a very small and extremely rich class of entrepreneurs has arisen but not so for the vast majority. And now, in East Asia the bubble has burst on the Tiger economies that were once held up as a

model of capitalist progress.

Of course the equation that capitalism equals freedom and socialism equals tyranny has always been dubious. There is little or no freedom to be had in the vast majority of capitalist countries and why should socialism necessitate the kind of monstrous regimes in the former Soviet Union and Eastern bloc.

It is time the Left regained the ideological initiative and started to reassert that capitalism is not only in deep and permanent crisis, but it is also incapable of producing prosperity and freedom to the majority on this planet. Worse, capitalism is an inherently unstable system that continually risks throwing millions into starvation and war. Maybe the old formulation "socialism or barbarism" needs to be dusted off.

**DP**

Postscript: Since last Autumn the situation has deteriorated further. There has been unrest throughout the region including prolonged rioting in Indonesia. South Korea has made a deal with the IMF which has drawn parallels with the post war Marshall Plan. Capital is very anxious to head off the crisis and to stop it spreading globally. It remains to be seen whether they are successful.



# SLP Conference Farce - Letter to Scargill

*In Red Rag no.4 DB posed the question "SLP: Socialist Alternative or Stalinist Monstrosity". The SLP conference in December seems to have resolved that question. One Scargill loyalist had more votes than there are members of the SLP. Here we reprint the resignation letter of GB to Comrade Scargill...*

I received your circular letter dated 12 January 1998 telling me that SLP subscriptions are now due for 1998.

It would be ludicrous if I completed the form and remained in the party following the 1997 annual conference.

This conference was rigged in a way that was so outrageous as to be a joke. It is normal in organisations for the general secretary to try to ensure that the conference supports his or her viewpoint. But to walk in with over 3,000 votes and make all the rest of us redundant? This is the action of the toytown dictator.

None of us had been informed that the North West, Cheshire and Cumbria Miners' Association had affiliated. We had seen nothing of the ballot of their members. We had had no progress reports of the discussions in this association about joining us. A general secretary who had secured a genuine affiliation would have been proud of this achievement and would have made clear the success of the SLP in securing this support. I suspect that members of an organisation of 3,000 which had made an historic break with Labour, which has represented workers for the whole of its members lives, would be itching to attend the conference. I did not see any sign of this new mass membership at Conway Hall.

In these circumstances a politically serious general secretary would have recognised that the mechanical application of a rule which resulted in one affiliate having most of the Congress votes was crazy. The above tells me that you knew that it was all a cynical manoeuvre to control the party and that there was nothing genuine about the affiliation at all. I suspect that that the North West, Cheshire and Cumbria Miners had no membership debate to enlighten the members about the policies and organisation of the SLP. I doubt that they have meetings of more than a tiny handful.

Near the start of the Congress I moved, on behalf of my CSLP, that the Congress should discuss the constitution as a whole, as we had never collectively accepted it. The response from the platform was that by joining the party we had accepted the constitution. This left us in a strange situation. Apparently, the party had accepted the constitution before it had come into being. The notion that a party can act before it exists surely belongs in the realms of theology not socialist theory. Behind this bizarre idea was, of course, a belief that made sense. This was that the group who proposed and publicised the forming of the party set up an organisation and that the first Congress was not a foundation but a continuation of a pre-existing structure. I can put it another way: the party was set up by a small clique and the rest of us joined on the basis of the clique's pre-existing organisation.

As a means of party formation this is more like the nineteenth century method than that of the twentieth century labour movement. In the last century the cliques were made of gentlemen drawn from the ruling class. Today it seems that the clique is taken from a disgruntled segment of the trade union bureaucracies.

Either way, the essential job of the membership is to cheer the 'great' leaders.

We Marxists, of course, are diametrically opposed to this approach to organisation. Democracy is central because it is the only way in which the class can express itself. A workers' movement can only be built from the bottom up. An organisation, like your party, can never be a workers' party for this reason.

The Congress held special interest for students of bureaucratic manipulation. It was wonderful to see Harpal Brar's constitutional amendment carried. Most of the members opposed it. Your friend from the north-west pulled his vote out of his pocket and sunk the Black Section. Your own position was a classic. You were for the

Black Section but it had hardly any members and did no work anyway. If to run a bureaucracy you must be able to look yourself in the eye while looking up your own arse you surely will become a great leader.

Better than you were the poor, sad fiscites. This special breed of Trotskyist can approve of ballot rigging (by a mere 3000 votes) but sulk over black representation. On the one hand they wept and wailed over the dreadful decision over black sections, on the other they said they expected it and ages ago had threatened to squeak if it was carried. Having had their squeak, they had nowhere else to go so they crept back onto your Executive. Your Trotskyists were made for you. They protest about Black Section but cheerfully accept turning most of the members into mere bystanders. Keep them and cherish them, pet 'Trotskyists' are useful adornments for any bureaucracy. We are both aware that they are completely harmless to you. Indeed they can give your London operation the sophistication needed for the capital.

Another nice group of friends for you are the Bullites. Surely they will have earned their spurs and you can offer them a seat on the Executive next year. They have worked so hard to witchunt for you. I loved the resolution telling us that Cuba, Iraq, Libya and North Korea have '...chosen a socialist path to development, or have stood against imperialist or colonial diktat...' As I recall it was remitted to the Executive. I hope that the NEC enjoys discussing which of the four falls into which category. I am sure that all four share your vision of socialism as a dictatorship over the working class.

Of course, there is a clear link between your sense of how a party should be run and what socialism is. You and Royston Bull share a miserable vision of socialism as a society controlled by a massive state machine (Marx, of course, saw the ending of the state machine as essential to the advance to socialism). Likewise you think that a party is entirely a top down process (the top having been put in place before the party existed). You run a party dictatorship because you believe in a state dictatorship.

Before the Congress you publicly threatened the Glasgow branch, you told the comrades in Reading that they should only support the Liverpool dockers if it meant that they did not mix with others who had the same aim. Joseph Stalin's letter (or was it yours) to branches saying that branches, Regional Committees or individuals could only communicate with each other through the party leadership was another gem to be treasured. I did wonder if a couple who were members needed the general secretary's permission to talk to each other. If anybody heeded this nonsense, yours would be a party more disciplined than Hitler's Nazis. Fortunately you have no state to control and therefore no means to impose your totalitarian ideas.

These activities are better assessed by psychologists than political scientists. An anal retentive theory of organisation seems a reasonable starting point. It is more a problem with potty training than a Marxist approach to organisation.

I understand that you now think that a one party state is OK providing it is your party. You, Harpal Brar and Royston Bull are made for each other. You could produce a book, a good working title would be: *How to live through the 1990s and Learn Nothing*. Clearly, you have failed to see that a one party state is a no party state. The party - as the sole political voice of society - inevitable is corrupted. As it tries to articulate all interests (put through the mangle of a state ideology) it becomes the chaotic mish-mash that the CPSU became. You admire Stalin's Russia. There is no helping some people. This 'beacon of the socialist revolution' was transformed from a third world power with world leadership pretensions into, well, a third world power with leadership pretensions. What an achievement. In reality, the most important achievement of Stalin was to turn the Russian and most central European people against Socialism. Fortunately your party of 'thousands' will never be significant enough to do that.

I am definitely turning down your offer of continued membership. Circuses are supposed to be funny and you have failed even in that.



# Linking & Organising the Left in the SW - editorial

The crisis in East Asia and the recent brink of war in the gulf demonstrate that capitalism is inherently unstable. The Welfare Reform threatened by New Labour is being put in place in this context. The assumption is that people are out of work due to lack of enthusiasm or lack of help - as if dire poverty wasn't a great enough incentive to get off benefit. This all assumes there are actually jobs to go to and all the evidence is that the economy is heading for zero growth or possibly worse. This could well be compounded by the crisis in East Asia in which case we are talking about a new recession and a rapid increase in unemployment. The poor need an end to the economic system that condemns millions to live in poverty - they do not need attacking for being the victims of this system.

This requires a strong organised and active Left which is almost entirely absent at the moment. The collapse of the Stalinist bloc at the start of this decade has thrown the Left into crisis internationally. In Britain this has been compounded by the Thatcher

years and the success of the anti-trade union laws. However there are signs that the fortunes of the Left are starting to turn around. In recent elections in France the far Left received over 5% of the vote - a massive increase on previous showings. In Britain numerous initiatives are underway to regroup the Left and shed the sectarianism that has plagued the Left in the past. The Socialist Labour Party has been one false start on this road but there are other initiatives that whilst small hold much promise. A few groups like the Exeter Left group are forming around the country with the aim of bringing militants together whether socialist, anarchist or green.

We need to encourage unity in action where there is agreement and debate where there are differences. We also need to encourage the healthy cross-fertilisation that has been occurring recently as demonstrated with the cooperation between the Liverpool Dockers and the Reclaim The Streets direct action environmentalists.

To this end we are pleased to be working on a project with comrades from the Somerset Socialist (formerly Clarion) to produce a regional paper with hopefully the involvement of groups in Bristol and Plymouth. The first edition should be launched appropriately on May Day.

## Revolutionary Socialist Network Conference Exeter 9th & 10th May

- Struggles & Activity
- Global Capital & the economic crisis in South East Asia
- New Labour One Year On
- Individual Revolutionary Practice

Further details & new RSN magazine *Heresy*  
'RSN' c/o 180 Mansfield Road, Nottingham, NG1 3HH

## EXETER AND DISTRICT TRADES COUNCIL PUBLIC MEETING

*News of the happenings of Exeter Trades Council can only be found out by the most intrepid and well connected members of Exeter's broad left alliance. To find out more about this council, why not become a member! How? Stand for election at the next meeting of your branch, you won't find much opposition. Once elected you will then have to get along to the transport club in Bampfylde Street on the second Monday of every month and then . . .*

A public meeting was held in Exeter, organized by the Trades Council, to discuss the backdoor piecemeal privatisation of the Post Office. This poorly advertised event was held at the Barnfield Theatre on a Monday evening in November. After the usual preliminaries, Kevin Slogan the regional secretary for the CWU described the present set-up in the Post Office with respect to its catering arm called Quadrant. A move by the DTI to privatise this section of the business is strongly opposed by the workforce and to a much lesser extent by the union hierarchy. The CWU head office suggest a wait and see policy whereas the workers want immediate strike action to raise the profile of the campaign to save jobs which will inevitably be lost by the privatisation process. The chain of events which follow a sell off of a previously publicly owned company were highlighted by the next speaker from the Critchley label workers from South Wales. The

workforce were transferred from a wholly owned BT subsidiary to Critchley labels in 1993 with all the usual promises. In 1994 voluntary redundancies were asked for, in 1995 new terms and conditions were introduced, in 1996 10 compulsory redundancies were made including the branch secretary and chair. In December 1996 the CWU was de-recognized. A ballot for strike action was taken in January 1997 with an overwhelming yes vote. This started as two one day strikes followed by a week strike. The 31 workers involved were then sacked for taking strike action. The parallel between Critchley, the proposals for Quadrant and the Hillingdon Hospital workers plus Magnet plus the Liverpool Dockers can be clearly seen. The response of those present at the meeting was clear. A Labour Government has been elected by the support both financially and morally of the trade union movement. Now is the time for the Government to return its support to these workers who are struggling to keep their jobs and conditions intact. The general mood was that after the euphoria of May 1st activists need to regroup and reform to bring the government into line and stop the exploitation of the workers by capital. Activists should join the Trades Councils, both in Exeter and elsewhere to bring trade unions back to the people.

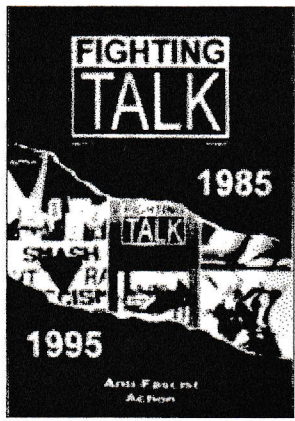
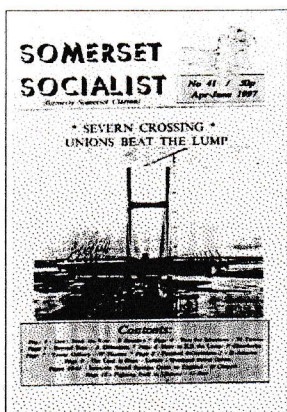
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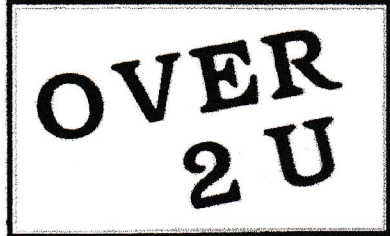
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*Red Rag is published by:-*  
 Exeter Left, c/o The Flying Post,  
 PO Box 185, Exeter EX4 4EW



**More useful publications:**

*SchNews* (for anti-CJA and other campaigns - weekly), c/o on-the-fiddle, PO Box 2600 Brighton BN2 2DX; tel/fax: 01273-685913; e-mail: schnews@brighton.co.uk; e-SchNEWS: http://www.cbuzz.co.uk/SchNEWS/  
*Squall* (squatters news), PO Box 8959, London N12 5HW; tel: 0171-561-1204  
*Undercurrents* (activist videos) 16B Cherwell St, Oxford OX4 1BG; tel: 01865-203662; fax: 01865-243562  
*Migrant Media* (videos on asylum and immigrant issues), 90 De Beauvoir Rd, London N1 4EN; tel: 0171-254-9701; fax: 0171-241-2387  
*West Country Activist* (environmental campaigns SW) c/o PO Box 426, Bath BA1 2ZD  
*Socialist Perspectives*: (ex-SLP newsletter) 333 Welcombe Avenue, Park North, Swindon SN3 2PF



*Over 2U* is a publication launched by ex-SLP supporters in Reading with similar aims to *Red Rag*.  
 Reading Solidarity Action c/o R.I.S.C.,  
 35-39 London Street, Reading RG1 4PS

**World Day for Laboratory Animals**  
 National Demonstration Sat 18th April Oxford  
 Transport is available for this national demonstration against vivisection. The focus is Hillgrove Cat Farm in Dry Lane, Whitney, Oxford where cats are bred for vivisection. The last demo attracted nearly 1,000 protesters and so far £500,000 has been spent on policing the place. Phone Nick 01392 426294 Tues or Thurs 7-9pm for details.



**REVIEW - Political Theatre in Exeter**

The new year in Exeter heralded a new play by local playwright Christine Roberts. The first performance was on 12th Jan 1998 at the New Theatre and was given by the group Lusty Juventus. This group works towards producing political theatre and completed its first season in 1997 with the play *Ceremonial Kisses*, which was about hypocrisy in the Catholic Church.

The new play *Shading the Crime* explores the issues of torture by the special police unit in an unnamed country. The issue of how Western countries can wring their hands over evil regimes and yet provide the police with electric shock batons and the ironmongery necessary to ensure that the prisoners are kept in their place is raised. A moving moment when one of the prisoners spells out the letters "Sheffield" on her shackles makes the audience aware that someone has to make the handcuffs that bind the prisoners. The torture

practices shown in the play are based on fact. The method of inculcating the raw recruit into the role of torturer is based on current procedures.

This play has a reality that not only shocks but also brings into grim relief the involvement of this government and consequently ourselves in the human rights atrocities that are committed on a daily basis. The play is tightly produced and well paced. An excellent interpretation of the miseries of both prisoners and officers. Watch out for the next production of this exciting new company of performers and writers. In Exeter again soon.

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 Exeter Claimants, c/o The Flying Post, PO Box 185, Exeter EX4 4EW