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Fighting Tories' racist Asylum and Immigration Bill
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Socialist OUTLOOK

Build February 24 anti-racist demo

Smash Tory Racist Laws

INCREASINGLY weakened and divided the Tories are even having difficulty with the one thing they could normally depend upon to unite the party—racism. The government are faced with mass opposition to the Bill.

The Immigration and Asylum Bill, in conjunction with the Tory's proposed Social Security regulation changes, represent a wide-scale attack on all black people living in Britain as well as on those fleeing persecution throughout the world.

The Bill is a both a result of the move towards "Fortress Europe" and a cynical electoral ploy. Given their crises, defeat of the bill and the government is looking a very distinct possibility.

Peter Lilley has already been forced to put back the date for cuts in social security benefits for asylum seekers to February 8. Widespread opposition must be mobilised. It is an opportunity must not be wasted.

The Campaign Against the Asylum and Immigration Bill (CAIAB) is clearly the central focus for opposition. At the moment the central priority of the campaign must be for its complete defeat.

The TUC has declared its opposition to the bill and pledged to support the national demonstration on February 24. Activists must ensure these words are turned into action.

This widespread opposition must be mobilised as a mass movement led by black people and the labour movement.



TUC must be pressured to continue support for CAIAB after February 24 demonstration

Photo: Andrew Ward

Brixton Brixton tells the old truth... Eyewitness Diary

6.30 pm Wednesday December 13 1995.

ABOUT 150 PEOPLE assemble in the cold and rain outside the police station to demonstrate against Wayne Douglas' death in custody.

He was the second young man in the area to die at the hands of the police in 7 months and the sixth black man to die in custody in 2 months.

The demonstration is small and angry—the demonstrators are mainly black, many youth, and noticeably, many women of all ages.

The number of police at the demo is provocative but the demonstration is peaceful.

Speaker after speaker laments the lack of action taken after the high death toll of 102 black people who have died in custody since 1969.

They speak of the failure of the black community to take action after these deaths—voices of despair are joined by voices of righteous anger.

The crowd marches down the high street to demonstrate that anger.

As I walk up the High Street to join the demo I notice van loads of police in riot gear on the side streets.

Brixton Oval 7.15pm.

Police on horses try to clear the streets and three police vans with the grills down are lined up across Brixton High Street.

The crowd is in a strong position in the middle of a crossroads. Demonstrators are determined to get the message across and intent on not moving.

The atmosphere is charged. It is both threatening and dangerous—yet mundane and ordinary. People stand by watching and passers-by ask what is happening. Then someone throws a bottle at the police who are lined up across the road by the Town Hall.

'Right - helmets!' shout the police. They are up for a fight. Later they are seen banging on the sides of their vans to intimidate the crowd.

Brixton Thursday December 14 12.30 am.

Shops are on fire, looting and police all over the streets. The national media have descended, excited by the violence and indifferent to the earlier demonstration.

Brixton Thursday

It is like a police state. There are masses of the police on the streets. You can see burnt out shells of very specific targets attacked by the previous night's crowd - the banks and the local yuppie pub.

Predictably, the media circus starts. Underlying issues are buried by Tory and Labour alike, who condemn the rioting by "criminal elements" and praise the police.

In the evening the streets are empty - except for police. It is as if there is a curfew. The few black youth on the street are the main target of police interest.

Brixton Friday

No-one really takes any notice of the tiny demo outside the police station. Brixton is taken up with Christmas shopping. The veneer of tranquillity and prosperity once again falls like a blanket.

No justice for black people

Ellen Moore

WHAT TURNED a small, angry yet peaceful demo into a riot? In short, the police. Underlying that - state and police racism, lack of power and marginalisation of a whole layer of the community, poverty and unemployment - leading to the perception that there is no other avenue, there is no other way, there is no justice.

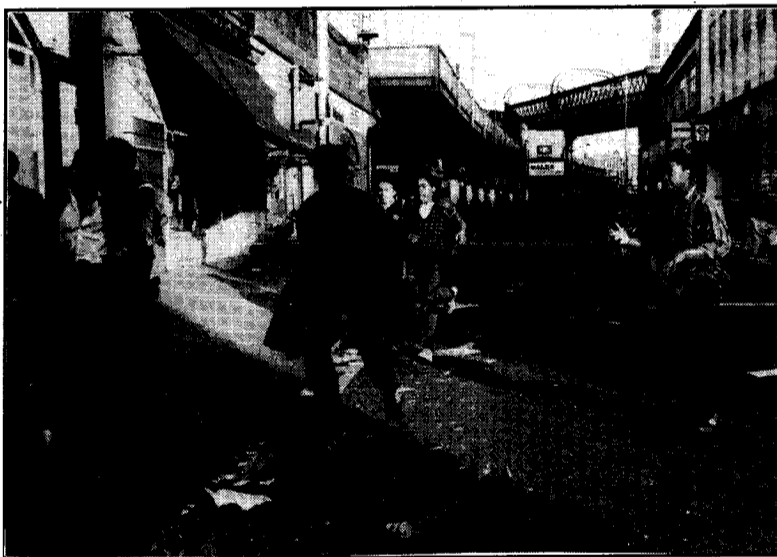
The Labour Party united with the Government in reaction with an attack on Brixton youth and praise for the way the police handled the situation.

Both ignore the anger and reject the fact of deaths in police custody.

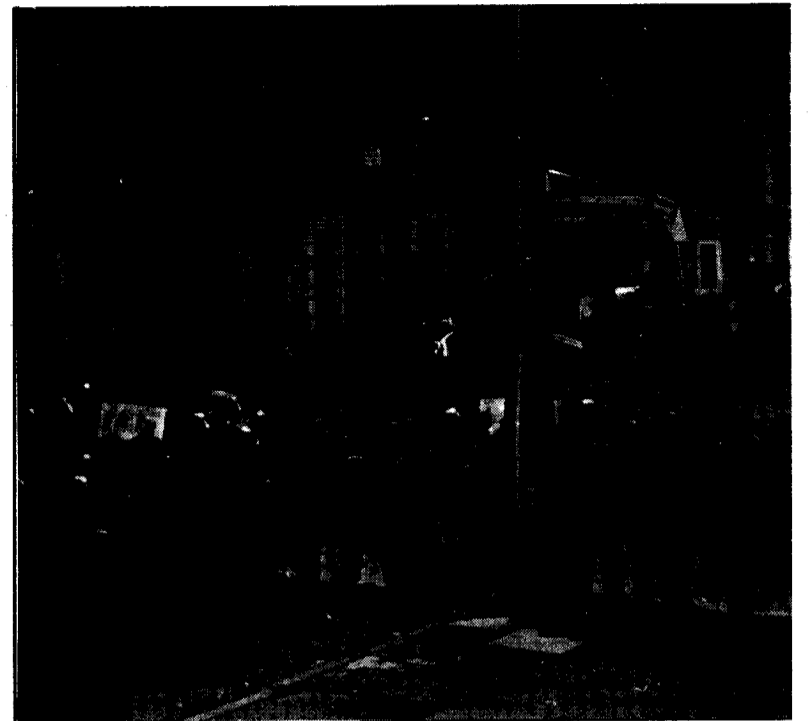
Labour's official, but secret, policy is that MPs should say nothing critical about policing—other than to attack the lack of resources available. To criticise the police is a sin no Labour Party careerist can afford to commit.

True to form, Kate Hoey MP, whose constituency includes Brixton, supports "a thorough, independently supervised investigation. That is exactly what the independent PCA is doing."

Yet when in May 1995, Brian Douglas died after being hit on the head with a baton only a short distance from the playground where Wayne Douglas



Cops play hares and hounds



Last time around: 1981 police beaten back

(no relation) was allegedly beaten before his arrest and death, the PCA did not bring any charges against police. It simply passed the report of its investigation to the Crown Prosecution Service, who have yet to decide whether to bring charges against any of the officers involved.

The Left's weakness since its defeats in the 80s, and its failure to effectively combat state racism and build a strong, united, black-led anti-racist movement is also a factor. The failure of the ARA to truly become such a movement, and the cynical manipulation of bereaved families by its leading members, has fuelled the anger, cynicism and sense of futility of many black people about participating in politics.

The need for a tie-up between the labour movement and the black community remains.

Atma Singh from the NBA has recently put the crisis of black leadership in perspective when he said: "Black people in the labour movement have to be concerned about what's going on in their communities, whether people are

being murdered and attacked (those who don't have those concerns are not representing black communities".

The Left's defeat in the 80s also has a more far-reaching and profound legacy. The backlash against political correctness, itself the tragic result of a divorce of social movements from

The answer is a society run on the basis of need not greed, which is democratically run, that empowers its citizens who are part of its institutions

struggle, has helped create the context where the Tories can introduce the Asylum and Immigration Bill.

"As long as unemployment is a feature of our economic system, riots will be here to stay" said an *Independent* editorial recently. The newspaper can only pose the question—the answer is an entirely different political agenda.

The answer is a society run on the basis of need not greed, which is democratically run, that empowers its citizens who are part of its institutions, a society committed to anti-racism and with an internationalist perspective. What is needed is socialism.

In this struggle, the black left and white left must act together in unity.

Hillingdon strikers stand firm!

Rod Marshall

THE LOW PAID cleaning workers on strike at Hillingdon hospital for four months are standing firm despite attempts by UNISON negotiators to reach a settlement with Pall Mall management. Pall Mall wanted to cut 20 per cent off their wages and sacked them when they refused to agree.

UNISON regional Health official Godfrey Eastwood has sent a letter to Pall Mall calling for a settlement. The strikers call for action to spread including a one day stoppage of the entire hospital.

Picket line feeling was expressed by strike leader Malkiat Bilku who stated "There will be no settlement until we get our jobs back on the old terms and conditions. Our contracts must be honoured". Another striker said "What we want is a letter to go round to the people inside calling them out on a one-day strike". However, the strikers are even being told they can not hold a UNISON branch meeting.

A lobby is being organised of UNISON's next health committee calling for a London wide demonstration in support of the strikers.

• Messages of support: UNISON Hillingdon NHS Trust branch, UNISON office, Hillingdon Hospital, Pield Heath Lane, Uxbridge, Middlesex.

Memorial volume honours Bob Smith

Anthony Brain

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK held a successful meeting on November 22 to commemorate the life of comrade Bob Smith, and to launch a book in his memory. *Ending the Nightmare*.

Marian Brain discussed the many struggles he sought to advance the interests of the working class and oppressed. Mary Pearson from the Troops Out Movement spoke of how he understood the importance of the Irish revolution in connection with the other struggles of the semi-colonial masses against national oppression, and how important the Irish revolution is for

British socialists.

Pat Brain who worked with Bob for many years spoke of his qualities and principles: "It was workers like Bob who kept the continuity of Marxism alive by sticking to the principled ideas of our movement. If the class was given proper leadership it could overthrow the capitalist system".

• *Ending the Nightmare* is a collection of articles on racism and fascism including Ernest Mandel's *Learn the Lessons of Germany*. For your copy of this 128-page book, send a cheque for £4.95 plus 75 pence postage, payable to Socialist Outlook Fund.

Another wall for Fortress Europe

Simon Deville

SOCIALISTS MUST build a broad campaign of all forces opposed to the racist Asylum and Immigration Bill. The bill must be smashed.

This is a golden opportunity to inflict a massive defeat on the Tories.

The TUC has declared its opposition and pledged to support the national demonstration on February 24. Activists should ensure these words are turned into action.

The Blair-led Labour Party is opposing the bill as a whole. Its reluctance to distinguish itself from the Tories over any significant policy meant that its original position was one of "gaining a bi-partisan consensus". Pressure from the left and right in the party made it pull back.

Exploit

Labour Party members must exploit this leadership manoeuvre to engage CLPs in campaigning opposition to the bill.

Unfortunately many Labour-controlled councils are already preparing to implement some of the social security regulations involved in the bill, examples include withdrawing housing benefit or free school meals.

Demands must be placed on local

councils to resist the bill and the social security regulation changes. Even if central funding were withdrawn we must demand that refugees are not thrown onto the streets to starve.

Mass movement

The Liberal Democrats, churches and even some Tories are opposing the legislation. This widespread opposition must be turned into a mass movement led by the labour movement in alliance with refugees and black people.

The Campaign Against the Asylum and Immigration Bill (CAIAB) is clearly the central focus.

At the moment the priority of the campaign must be for a complete defeat of the whole bill.

Local campaigns should be established that bring together and mobilise all the forces opposed to the bill.

Many public sector workers will be asked to implement either the bill or the proposed social security regulations.

Trade union branches are already committing themselves to non-implementation and defence of members who are victimised for not complying.

This is useful both in raising discussions about the proposals and in preparing the membership in the event of the proposals being introduced.

All trade unionists should ensure that the bill is discussed at their forth-

coming national conferences.

Why have the Tories taken this step? One reason is to help create a racist "Fortress Europe" contained within the Schengen agreement.

Britain and France have insisted, for the moment, on maintaining an independent immigration policy from the rest of Europe. Yet both governments are actually proposing legislation that will bring each respective country's legislation in line with other European states.

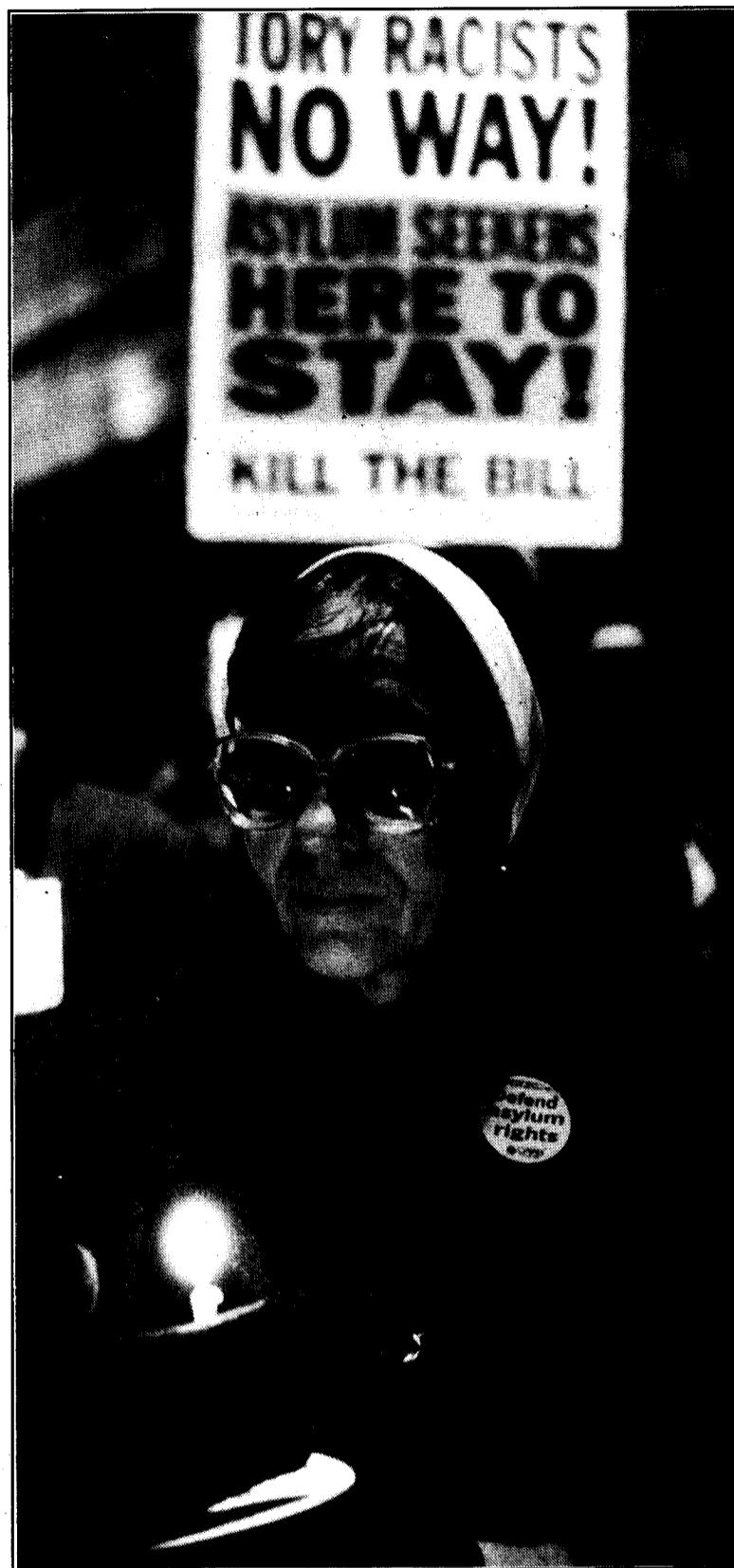
Bargaining chip

Remaining outside of the Schengen agreement appeases the Atlanticist right within the Conservative Party who do not agree with ceding power to Brussels to restrict immigration. It also provides a bargaining chip to force an even more draconian European policy.

The "anti-Europe" right of the Tories are fully in favour of the chauvinist ideas behind Schengen.

The defeat of the bill could potentially bring down the Government—especially given its ever-dwindling majority. A victory for this campaign could boost the confidence and combativity of the working class and the oppressed in fighting the whole range of attacks.

We have a real chance of winning—now we must take it.



The campaign must be built as broadly as possible

Photo: Andrew Ward

What's the Asylum and Immigration Bill?

Brian Gardiner

THE HOME Secretary will be able to decide which countries pose no serious threat of political persecution, ie those on the so called "white list". It is unclear as to what criteria will be used to decide this.

Before the recent political executions the government had hinted that Nigeria could be included in the list. Following its expulsion from the Commonwealth, this is now unlikely. Likely inclusions are Turkey and Sri Lanka where political and ethnic minorities are daily facing political torture by the state and in some cases depopulation and genocide.

The bill severely narrows the definition of who is a refugee and closely follows a 1995 European Union resolution under which asylum seekers who are not fleeing from persecution by the state but from, for example opposition groups, will no longer qualify for asylum under the terms of the 1951 UN convention on refugees.

This would affect people fleeing from counties such as Algeria where the state is not willing or able to protect people who experience persecution.

The vast number of asylum seek-

ers, including those from countries on the "white list" will be subject to a fast track appeals system. Appeal will be only to a special adjudicator with no further right of appeal to an Immigration Tribunal or the Court of Appeal. This will create an entirely new class of immigrant and asylum seekers, effectively turning people into second class citizens.

Criminal offence

It will become possible to remove asylum seekers to "safe" third countries with they will have no right of appeal unless the appeal is made from outside the United Kingdom.

It will become a criminal offence for someone to enter or attempt to enter or remain in the UK by deception. This could be used to prosecute asylum seekers who enter the country with false documents.

Most asylum seekers are unable to obtain *bona fide* documentation from the country they are fleeing from.

Assisting an "illegal entrant" including an asylum seeker to enter or remain in the UK will become a criminal offence. This could result in the prosecution of lawyers, MPs, and even trade unions who assist and advise asylum seekers and immigrants.

The Bill increases internal control by giving police and immigration offi-

cers greater powers of search and arrest. Certain areas could be targeted, effectively placing all black people and those from ethnic minorities under suspicion.

Employing a person with no immigration entitlement to work in the UK will become a criminal offence.

To avoid prosecution, employers will therefore have to check the immigration status of all prospective employees. As this will be time consuming and costly many of them will merely not recruit black people from the black and ethnic communities.

Asylum seekers and immigrants without leave to remain could be denied any assistance with housing. Local authority housing officers could be required to check the immigration status of all housing applicants before making any provision.

In tandem with the Bill, changes to benefit regulations will come into effect on 5 February. Although these changes will not now mean that Income Support is withdrawn from the majority of existing asylum seekers, people who fail to claim refugee status at the port of entry will lose any right to claim welfare benefits.

In addition to this, the Bill will remove entitlement to Child Benefit for the children of asylum seekers.

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Tories tremble before David Trimble

David Coen

IT IS IRONIC that the fate of yet another British government is hanging on the outcome of events in Ireland. In March 1979 the Labour Government under Jim Callaghan lost its last vote of confidence because of the abstention of Frank Maguire, Independent nationalist MP for Fermanagh South Tyrone (the seat later held by Bobby Sands).

Maguire could not bring himself to vote for a Government which exactly three years earlier had withdrawn political status from prisoners.

Labour's Northern Ireland Secretary during the time, Roy Mason, must be a serious contender for most hated Englander of all time—in spite of the quality of the opposition.

The end of Special Category Status led to the dirty protests and the Hunger Strikes. The deaths of the ten Hunger Strikers led in turn to an upsurge in support for the Republicans which shook the whole island.

The strongest card played since by Dublin and the Social Democratic and

Labour Party in the North has been the argument that no internal Six County solution will keep militant Republicanism at bay. Dublin must therefore have some role, however token, in guaranteeing the position of the Northern Nationalists; otherwise they will turn to the IRA.

The British demand that the IRA gives up some weapons as a precondition of all party talks is a watered down version of the Unionist demand for an IRA surrender. Leader of the Official Ulster Unionist Party David Trimble has a new angle.

If decommissioning is too big a barrier, there should be elections to a new Assembly to work out the new constitution for Northern Ireland. He suggests the Unionists would then have no alternative but to talk to Republicans with such a mandate.

It is a clever ploy, designed to split the Dublin-SDLP-Sinn Fein alliance. It may yet succeed. All three are agreed that the main part of the new settlement will be a new six county state—re-

formed, but still very much in existence as it has been since 1921.

Major and Mayhew parrot the Unionists position on disarmament and are loudly trailing the Assembly idea. Even if they didn't depend on their votes their bottom line is that the Republicans must do more to entice the Unionists into all party talks—in other words, accept an internal settlement even before going into the negotiations!

This is also the position of the Labour Party.

It is clear the Tories will hang on as long as possible. This means keeping the Unionists onside. The Peace Process will grind even more slowly.

The little Englander wing of the Tory Party could be more reliable defenders in opposition than the desperate leadership of a Tory Government on the edge of the abyss

There will be tremendous efforts to break Dublin and the SDLP away from Sinn Fein and go for a settlement over their heads.

For the Sinn Fein leadership, going



David Trimble

along with this plan might be more than politically suicidal.

In time, the new arrangement will be sold as a step towards eventual Irish unity: to openly go along with it now would make it appear as if the results of 25 years of armed struggle is no more

than a vague promise that Dublin will have some say in how the Nationalists are treated in the new arrangement, in other words, that their fate will be in the hands of

those who left them to fend for themselves at the time of Partition.

Meanwhile the futile war against drugs will escalate as the armed struggle elements in the Republican Move-

ment declare a proxy war against British intransigence, the Peace Process and, sooner or later, against the Adams leadership.

If Trimble was smarter he could cut a very favourable deal now and concede nothing except gestures to the nationalists.

If he lets the Tories fall he is not sure of Labour, but at the same time, the little Englander wing of the Tory Party and their friends in the ruling class could be more reliable defenders in opposition than the desperate leadership of a Tory Government on the edge of the abyss.

Trimble's dilemma is but one more illustration of how closely linked is the fate of Ireland to the emerging crisis of the British State.

Textbook strike

Geoff Smith Bolton NATHFE BC (personal capacity)

THE LONGEST running strike in Further Education history has forced management to back down in their attempts to replace Bolton College lecturers with part time agency workers and lengthen their hours through imposing new contracts.

Instead of new staff working 950 hours (classroom contact) under College Employers Forum (CEF) contracts or 856 hours for others under a management offer, the action secured a deal where lecturers will work 810.

An overall pay increase of 9.5 per cent was also won. Even more could have been wrung out of the employers, but for the role of the NATHFE leadership who threatened to remove strike pay unless the Bolton branch accepted the deal. This treachery is typical of bureaucrats who have shown no lead in the fight against CEF contracts and cuts.

Grassroots members are organising to demand a more militant stance from the union. At a Conference in Manchester on January 13, 200 delegates from NATHFE branches condemned the leadership's role in the strike and called for greater accountability of officials. They also identified all out indefinite action as the best way forward for branches to pursue disputes with management.

This action has shown a way forward—expect a rash of FE strikes in the months ahead.

Liverpool Docks Daze

Steve Hall

LAST WEEKEND a 1,500 strong demonstration marched through Liverpool in support of the 500 sacked dockers. Unfortunately this enthusiasm has not been matched by TGWU leader Bill Morris.

He had announced that the union would back a hardship fund. Not a penny has been received. The union has also failed to back demonstrations and other initiatives.

There is a fair degree of suspicion that the T&G's negotiating team, rather than supporting reinstatement, are busy cobbling together a pay-off deal to bring the strike to a dishonorable end! Luckily the strikers are standing firm.

One reason the solidarity has been maintained is the emergence and effective organisation of women in a support group. Initially assisted by Women Against Pit Closures, the group is playing an increasingly important role in the

overall fight.

Support groups have been set up in Southampton, Hull, Merseyside and Greater Manchester. Striking dockers have been toured round workplaces, trade union branches and trades councils. In Southampton a picket took place of Drake International the firm hired to organise scabs to break the struggle in Liverpool.

Building support extends well beyond the dispute itself.

It is about revitalising the trade union movement after a long series of defeats. The Labour Party has, not surprisingly, refused to back the dispute. All efforts should be made to bring up this issue inside the Labour Party and the trade union movement and to pressurise the TGWU leadership to officially recognise it.

The dockers desperately need cash! They also need support on their demonstrations and rallies (next one Saturday February 3) and on their picket lines.

If you would like a docker to speak at your TU branch, trades Council, Labour Party Ward or Constituency contact Jeff Jones on 0151 207 2288.

Job Centre strike escalates

Nigel Danby, CPSA Regional Secretary (in a personal capacity)

EMPLOYMENT Service workers around Britain are poised to join in CPSA's campaign over pay.

Offices called out include Moss Side, Leamington Spa and Sheffield, as CPSA General Secretary Barry Reamsbottom succumbs to pressure from ordinary members to escalate the action.

While some activists feel that this is "too little, too late," the fact that Reamsbottom has agreed to it is a victory in itself. When he threatened to suspend the strike during talks with ACAS, CPSA's Leeds HQ was besieged by strikers, many taking part in their first dispute, chanting "No sell-out!" and singing "I'd rather be a picket than a scab!"

Even notorious right-wingers like Reamsbottom can be forced to act in their members' interests by pressure from below. Instead of being suspended, the strike is being escalated and ACAS talks called off.

The importance of the dispute can be seen in desperate management offers of a £500 bonus to anyone willing to break the strike in Leytonstone office.

Last month, almost 100 casual staff were hired to lessen the impact of the strike in Leeds. As one casual said before joining the strikers, "I've only been here a week. If I'd known they were employing me to break your strike, I'd have told them where to stick their job."

As a striking casual worker, she has put her job on the line. CPSA members owe it to her to be stubborn in their pursuit of their nine per cent pay claim and unremitting in their pressure on the union bureaucracy.

Beating back Blairism

Editorial

TONY BLAIR'S recent talk of a "stakeholder society" along with promises to follow in the footsteps of Margaret Thatcher leaves no room for doubt as to the direction of a future Labour Party government.

The sheer volume of reactionary speeches from leading figures in the party has been hard to keep track of. Under the guise of radicalism—"thinking the unthinkable"—the shadow cabinet have set about a steady campaign of social comment that capitulates to some of the most backward aspects of the Thatcherite agenda.

Straw's outrageous attack on "winos and addicts" captures the callous flavour of what is in store.

But there is more involved than simple electioneering, or capitulation to middle-class prejudices.

Responsibility

Blair's office are deliberately preparing the ground for a Labour government that will continue the Tory attack on the welfare state, shedding all state responsibility for the welfare of its citizens.

This is because whichever party wins the next election they face the same set of problems.

British capitalism has not the resources to maintain its swollen military machine and finance sector. It remains trapped in an economic and social structure built around empire.

Ruling the waves for centuries has left it with a set of social alliances that are unworkable in its new position. This is what is behind the crisis in the Conservative Party.

The end of Britain's leading international role requires a new direction in both economic and political policy. Without a massive income from overseas integration is required to look to European Britain for its future.

But this undermines the chauvinist social alliances on which the Tory party is founded, what Thatcher calls the "the shared instincts and traditions of the British people".

Cutting welfare

It also means that the only way capitalism can increase the level of investment is by driving down the level of wages and cutting welfare spending.

A Blair government will be in the same boat.

But the Labour Party faces its own set of difficulties in carrying through such a project. Unlike the Liberal Democrats and Tories the party is based on the working class and tied to the trades unions at every level.

This means that working class resistance to attacks on wages, conditions and cuts in welfare rights is expressed through its structures, however indirectly.

The changes in the block vote and the constituency organisations are an attempt to block the process. Some of the bourgeoisie's more far sighted strategists realise full well how damaging for their European project it would be if workers' militancy was able to politically organise in the party of government.

These difficulties should be seen as our opportunities. Defending the class basis of the Labour Party is a crucial part of defending the British workers'



Photo: Andrew Ward

Socialists should link up with all those in struggle

movement. This is one reason why the call for a new Socialist Labour Party is mistaken. To give up the struggle inside the Labour Party is massively premature.

The main battles remain ahead of us. As well as the fact that such a project has little practical chance of getting off the ground, Arthur Scargill has a mis-assessment of the tasks facing socialists.

The crunch

When the crunch comes it will occur at the heart of the labour movement.

Moreover, the organised labour movement is the only force that has the potential power to present an effective challenge to the bosses' offensive.

The left in the trades unions and in the Labour Party—primarily organised in the Campaign Group—has to take up this struggle, linking up with all the forces who are affected.

The Labour Party, and its relations with both the trades union movement and capitalism, are as much a product

of the empire as the Conservative Party; as much trapped in the contradictions of a new situation.

We remain therefore at the beginning of the huge changes in British politics, not the end.

What will emerge at the end is impossible to say. But to abandon the terrain of battle now is foolhardy in the extreme.

The energies of those trying to build a new party would be better spent elsewhere.

Defence of the welfare state, for example, should be absolutely central to our activity in the next few years. This requires us to build an alliance in defence of the welfare state from the bottom to the top of the labour movement, drawing in all those who will be affected.

It has become the key issue for the western European working class.

This was seen recently in France. The strikers explicitly posed their struggle in terms of resistance to Maastricht. From hospital closures to cuts in schools we are all affected by the Europe-wide offensive.

This is why we need to begin to build a campaign against Maastricht in the labour movement that draws upon all the varied experiences of those in the front line of the defence of workers' welfare rights.

The European dimension can also be seen in the Tory's Asylum and Immigration Bill.

Building Fortress Europe means ruthlessly attacking the rights of immigrant workers and their communities. It further implies a generalised attack on black people in Britain.

Getting the bill withdrawn is a real possibility. Its defeat is our most immediate task.



Arthur Scargill

Struggle continues at JJ Foods

LAST OCTOBER, 45 workers at JJ Fast Foods Distribution in Tottenham were sacked for forming a union. Mostly Turkish and Kurdistan, they were paid £130 for a 60-70 hour week with no overtime, holiday or sick pay.

With support from many local trade union and political activists, the workers have stood firm in demanding reinstatement and decent pay and working conditions.

Daily factory pickets continue. The support group has persuaded many major JJ customers (including several local councils) to end their contracts. There are also weekly pickets of JJ's Burgers, owned by the firm. Jenny Foods has been severely damaged.

Official TGWU support has been minimal. The union agreed to call a demo outside the factory on January 13, then withdrew support, advising the workers to take their case to an Industrial Tribunal.

There is no guarantee that the workers can win. The best result likely is compensation for unfair sacking rather than reinstatement and the enforcement of trade union rights.

Only collective struggle can win the workers their jobs back and achieve all their demands.

• Support Group meets every Wednesday at 72 West Green Road, N15, 7.30 pm Public meeting: Saturday, February 3 at the Day-Mer Community Centre, Howard Rd, N16. Phone 0181 802 9804 for further information.

Socialist Campaigning

Jonathan Joseph

Southampton Socialist Campaign Group has got off to a flying start with a launch meeting of over fifty local activists. Jeremy Corbyn addressed a further meeting of forty on poverty.

The group supports a minimum wage, full employment, repeal of the anti-union laws, anti-discrimination measures, defence of the NHS and education, cutting military spending, and for common ownership.

It has committed itself to political education within the area, organising debates and public meetings. All this will be used to put pressure on the local Labour Party and on the local authorities with the General Election in mind.

Martin Hughes, chair of the group says: "We are attracting support from the many local Party members who are rejecting the cynical manoeuvring of the Blair leadership, and choosing to back socialist principles instead."

In contrast a meeting to discuss the launch of Scargill's Socialist Labour Party was a miserable affair with only seven people supporting the project.

Despite the weakness of the Labour Party left, there is still a receptive audience for socialist ideas.

Anger over Clause Four must be turned into outward looking campaigning if a realistic alternative to Blair is to be built.

Against the bosses Euro offensive

Will McMahon

THE MAASTRICHT project is now in jeopardy.

Millions of workers in Italy, Belgium and now France have gone on strike in defence of the welfare state and against Maastricht.

What was obscured in the fine print of the treaty has come to life because of the governments' attack on welfare provision.

Governing parties across Europe are caught in the vice of the demands of the global market and the organised resistance of the working class.

Suffering

And now because of the strikes they are suffering huge political setbacks in their attempts to carry through ruling class wishes to create an integrated European economy.

Yet the treaty is critical for large-scale European capital.

It is a necessity if it is to engage in inter-imperialist competition with NAFTA and the developing regional trading bloc in the Far East.

Maastricht serves solely the interests of European capitalism. This is what is at its heart.

Those on the Left who abstain or equivocate over Maastricht need to grasp this fundamental fact.

Socialists cannot justify hiding behind the spurious notion that the European Union has "progressive" aspects.

Nor can it be suggested that Britain needs to be part of such a project because it is in some way historically "backward".

These arguments should be abandoned to the urgent necessity of the practical struggle against the consequences of Maastricht.

Demands

The main problem is how to transform national struggles against Maastricht's material effects into a continental campaign with a comprehensible set of demands. However there is no readily available way of achieving this.

In Spain, France, Italy and Germany left-wing parties are mobilising support on the basis of opposition to Maastricht.

However if the working class manages to destroy the treaty without the Left fighting for a viable egalitarian European vision the situation will remain dangerous.

Unemployed

European capitalist integration is driving the petit-bourgeoisie out of business and has created tens of millions of unemployed.

And part of the political effect has been to polarise a layer of petit-bourgeoisie and unemployed behind parties of the far right.

Thus a failure to create an alternative may well leave socialists staring down the barrel of a



Members of Belgium's Socialist trade union federation demonstrating against Maastricht's austerity

Photo: La Gauche

chauvinist gun.

This is not a mindlessly catastrophic view—a fragmented capitalist Europe in decline poses as many dangers as one

A fragmented capitalist Europe in decline poses as many dangers as one attempting to stride the world stage

attempting to stride the world stage.

As internationalists, the Left's alternative to capitalist in-

tegration should not be to defend national sovereignty.

Any campaign that has even the slightest trace of "little England" is unacceptable. A campaign based on chauvinism will fail.

A programme is required for the integration of European economies in the interests of the mass of the population. It needs to ensure a Europe

which guarantees full employment and a welfare state.

The programme should promote equality for women, call for an end to racist immigration controls, push for a defence of ecology and a break from the economic exploitation of the third world.

Europe has enormous resources to guarantee all of these things, but it means taking a very different road from that put forward in the Maastricht Treaty.

70,000 march in defence of public services

Belgium revolts against Maastricht

Duncan Chapple

IT WAS like a scene from years gone by.

Blow after blow has been levelled at Belgian workers through the 1990s. On December 13 1995 more than 70,000 public sector trades unionists took their fight against privatisation and austerity into the streets of Brussels.

The socialist-conservative coalition government has attacked rail, telecomms and shipbuilding workers. When they turned on Sabena, the state airline, workers there knew that struggle was the only road. That's when the build-up to the march, jointly organised by public sector unions, started.

The coalition, led by Jean-Luc Dehaene, is following in the footsteps of Juppé in France. However their unre-

lenting salami tactics — taking on service after service — don't fool many people anymore. They all take place in the framework of the coalition's 'Global Plan'. The Plan aims to bring Belgium's debt-laden economy on line for European Monetary Union. More and more workers, students and parents understand that the Plan — which provoked massive opposition when introduced in 1993 and 1994 — won't disappear until it is beaten.

Nevertheless, the sheer scale of the December 13 demonstration was a shock, and the best kind of shock too. Frans Fermon, a leader of the moderate CGSP trade union federation, skeptically predicted a turnout of just 10,000. In fact, it turned out to be Belgium's

biggest ever demonstration against the Maastricht process.

How could the union leaders have been so wrong? How could they have failed to sense the changing climate, across western Europe, which resulted from the French strikes?

The sad fact is that the union leaders

The union leaders wanted the march to relaunch negotiations with the government so they could return to their normal sedentary lives

never considered the possibility of a massive demonstration. They wanted the march to relaunch their negotiations with the government so they could return to their normal sedentary lives. Their call for the demonstration soon developed an uncontrollable dynamic: it showed the possibility of pub-

lic sector workers in different unions and federations acting as a single force.

This demonstration alone was not enough to force a reversal of the attacks. The coalition continued with its privatisation plans for the rail and telecomms. However the march proved that a real willingness exists amongst public sector workers to resist privatisation and other attacks.

Sadly that's the kind of proof the union leaders want to ignore. The day after the march they said workers needed to go back to work and think. It's not convincing advice.

The government wasn't convinced that the march was anything else than a gesture: that's why the following day the bourgeois daily *Le Soir* announced:

"Next time: social security reform". Unless the union leaders wise up, it probably will have to be an attack of that scale on social welfare that gets this kind of a united response from them again.

It would be a serious error to wait for that to happen. The union leaders are seriously hampered by believing all the government's fairy-stories about prosperity through Monetary Union.

Perhaps they'd be better listening to the leader of Belgium's CSC employers' confederation: Jacques Lorez recently explained that "the monetary norms risk making Europe a social desert."

The march on December 13 was filled with slogans that showed a growing awareness of the reactionary role of Monetary Union — that sentiment needs to be built upon in the year ahead.

French strikes shake Chirac “The Streets Have Spoken”

Terry Conway

AFTER SOME of the most extensive strike action in Europe since 1968 the struggle against Prime Minister Juppé's onslaught on social security, health, education and welfare have been suspended. But Juppé is not out of the woods.

It is difficult to see how Juppé can find a long term solution to the central problem — how to placate the union leaders, who are under massive pressure from their members, and satisfy the Maastricht criteria for a single European currency.

Important concessions have already been won by the strikers and their supporters - most notably by the rail workers who were in the forefront of the strike action.

Concessions

Juppé was forced to scrap plans to restructure the railways, halt privatisation talks, sack the railway chairman and leave intact the special pension rights of rail workers. Students have also won important concessions from Education Minister Bayrou.

The discussions of the social summit which took place just before Christmas in which Juppé was forced to raise the question of the reduction of the working week to combat unemployment opens up a new target for the struggle of the workers movement. Unemployment looks set to rise to over 3 million in the Spring according to the governments own forecast.

The Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (French section of the Fourth International) have made a 32 hour week with no loss of pay one of the key slogans during the upheavals.

Confidence

Obviously the confidence of the French workers was massively increased by the strikes and demonstrations. Tens of thousands participated in daily strike meetings, while many others who were not on strike lined the streets to hail the massive demonstrations which brought the whole of France to a standstill.

Militancy was by no means confined



The Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire won an eager audience for revolutionary ideas

to Paris. Astronomical proportions of the population in provincial cities such as Rouen and Marseilles were involved in actions. Students were a vital component of the fightback. The fight spread from Rouen to other campuses outside and then later extended to the large universities in the capital.

The demands of today's French students are not for professors off the campuses but for more money and teachers. At the same time students organised not only at campus level but through a national co-ordinating body of elected delegates from each of the universities involved. They have also called for the repeal of the viciously racist Pasqua laws.

There have been limitations to the struggle. Despite the popularity of slogans such as 'Public, private: together we can win' on the mass demonstrations, there was a complete refusal by the leaderships of the big union confederations to call for strike action in the private sector.

Strikes

The CGT (the Communist-led trade union federation) Congress of December passed a resolution calling for the generalisation of the strikes against the wishes of Viannet and the rest of the leadership.

But the rejection of a call for a general strike was key because private sector workers have lost the right to pensions after 37 and a half years.

The Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, has been a key force in the fight against the Juppé plan. In particular they have been the only force on the French left to call for a general strike.

As a result some militants of the French Communist Party (PCF), whose leader has argued that Juppé should not resign, have rushed to help the Ligue with flyposting. Such debates will lead to a deepening crisis inside the PCF.

The struggles in France have been an inspiration to many workers across Europe, many of whom faced similar assaults on the Welfare State as embodied in the Juppé plan. We now need to turn the anger into action.

Making sense of Maastricht

Maxime Durand

MAASTRICHT is a break with the previous economic process. It goes beyond harmonisation to deregulation.

Therefore one can no longer speak of continuity within a coherent economic project.

Unification responds to the European bourgeoisie's real need for co-ordination. This requires setting up elements of a supra-national state. But this development is unfolding in the context of a contradiction.

On the one hand, European construction is not taking place through a simultaneous convergence on the level of production and on the level of state apparatuses.

On the other hand, the functions that must be taken on by an embryonic state are being only partially displaced towards the European level.

For the most part, class struggle is being managed on the national level. The European Union is thus not so much a state wholly equipped with the attributes of a state, as a sort of trustee for several bourgeois states.

Maastricht is one road among several possible roads, and it is a particularly narrow road. The principle of harmonisation has been abandoned in favour of simultaneously pruning the welfare state, nibbling away at public services and social protection, and setting social systems in competition with one another.

The lever of this unification rests on the dialectic between freedom for capital and a single currency. The convergence criteria sum up this way of proceeding: they have been fashioned so as to meet monetary and financial requirements, and constitute a burden on social budgets and wages.

The Maastricht process is therefore contradictory. It underestimates the diversity of different national situations (class relationships, solidity of currencies, industrial policies).

This should be seen in the collapse of the European Monetary System. There has never been so much exchange rate instability as since the goal of a single currency was proclaimed.

This leads to an enormous political problem, with increased fragmentation of various bourgeois orientations and the project of a Europe at several different speeds.

The Maastricht process is nonetheless "rational", since it enables governments to intensify neo-liberal austerity in all its forms.

Budgetary austerity results from convergence criteria that are class criteria, because income derived from capital is increasingly free of tax.

Social austerity comes with the offensives against social protection and public services. Wage austerity is justified with arguments about competitiveness and defending the national currency.

Paradoxically, the Maastricht process makes policy co-ordination more difficult. Even measures that the bourgeoisie could take in another framework and with another relationship of forces are in reality unattainable.

Maastricht Europe is thus a region of unemployment and instability.

All the basic documents, such as the White Book, explicitly reject the idea of a generalised reduction of the working week.

The idea that wages have to rise more slowly than productivity is put forward as a norm: in other words, the share of wages in the economy must continue to fall and inequalities must get still deeper.

The preferred formula is "choice of working time", ie dismantling the legal framework of the labour contract; and austerity is counterposed to the supposedly outdated idea of concerted counter-cyclical policies.

Supporting a social Europe therefore means opposing Maastricht, which

stands for a Europe that is by its very nature anti-social.

The idea of completing, amending or improving Maastricht is a false perspective, because it ignores the deep logic of the process. Even defending such basic objectives as public housing requires fighting against the dominant bourgeois projects.

To think that we can influence them is a fallacy.

This is an important point, because our disagreements with reformists have to do not so much with the kind of demands or goals to fight for, as with the character and scale of the obstacles we face.

We have to integrate the European dimension into our thinking, because it has become the level on which demands can be coherent, on which the argument about competitiveness can be countered.

Turning back to the national level means inevitably turning back to the national bourgeoisie (or at least to some of its fractions). We cannot break with free trade without breaking with capitalism.

Completing, amending or improving Maastricht is a false perspective. Even defending basic objectives, like social housing, requires fighting the dominant bourgeois projects

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West Papua - another Ogoniland

Paul Walker

AFTER YEARS of protest against the Indonesian occupation and the multinational despoilation of their land the Free Papua Movement has resorted to taking scientists into custody in order to get international recognition.

It is a tactic that has worked. West Papua has now made its way onto the world media agenda.

West Papua was annexed by Indonesia after a ballot by gunpoint in 1969. This opened the

way for multinationals to evict tribespeople from their ancestral lands and to begin digging for minerals.

Now Freeport-RTZ (FP-RTZ is a US/UK multi-national) are sitting on the biggest copper and gold reserves in the world.

There has been mass resistance among the villagers to the exploitation and the consequent environmental pollution.

The problem was great exacerbated in 1995 when FP-RTZ were granted a new concession. Their interests expanded from 11,000 to over 2.6 million hectares.

This raised the stakes massively for the tribespeople. Displacement of thousands is sure to follow to the lowland Timika area where others have been resettled and have faced human rights abuses and murder.

The unit that has detained the scientists is led by Kelly Kwalik who has been active since the late 1970s. The Free Papua Movement has not as yet issued a statement on the detention and the unit is hiding in a remote area.

Since 1994 they have been mounting peaceful actions in the form of flag raising—a tradi-

tional way for the West Papuans to express their identity. They have been ignored.

In one final attempt Kelly Kwalik organised a flag raising ceremony - which in the past has led to the Indonesian armed forces killing those taking part - on Christmas Day 1995.

No international press or observers attended. It was following this that the detention plan was hatched.

According to Carmel Budliardjo of TAPOL, the Indonesia Human Rights organisation, the scientists are in no danger.

The biggest threat is from the Indonesian KOPASSUS troops - infamous for their brutality in East Timor - who are being sent to West Papua to find the unit.

Carmel Budliardjo argues that "The Labour and trade union movement in Britain needs to put pressure on the British Government to end its political and economic support for the Indonesian Government and to campaign for the ending of the Indonesia occupation of West Papua." The West Papuans urgently need international solidarity.

Russia: reaction on hold?

Paul Walker

THE COMMUNISTS have come out on top in the first meaningful free elections in Russia.

The victory is more than just a continuation of election results across the ex-COMECON states. Russia is the home of 1917.

The result makes late capitalism's triumphalism begin to look somewhat premature. It also cuts across the doom and gloom of those on the left who are abandoning 1917 to the unreconstructed Stalinists.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation mainly won because their election programme was popularly believed to be against Boris Yeltsin's market reforms. It was irrelevant to the workers and agricultural proletariat that the Communists' programme was for a more gradualist introduction of capitalism.

But we should not go overboard. The vote was not in favour of 1917 or socialism as such. It shows opposition to the anarchy of the market. It is not simply the Russian working class resuming their forward march.

The East has not gone red but reaction is on hold.

There are also other reasons for the victory which are mostly specific to Russia and are not so positive.

Ordinary people wanted a return to order against the growing social fragmentation produced by the new frontier-style capitalism. The Brezhnev-Stalin vote was made up of a mix of the disgruntled and the politically aghast.

Also some voted for the Communists because their lives depend on the Russian military and industrial complex. The fragile position of the Rus-



Moscow and St Petersburg were the heartlands of the vote for Capital—against the regions

sian military was demonstrated by the near meltdown of Russian nuclear subs when the gas bill was not paid. It is also shown by the politico-military stalemate in Chechnya—a war which the Communist Party has been publicly against.

And the vote also showed that Russia is becoming increasingly fragmented. Moscow and St Petersburg were the heartlands of the vote for capital—against the regions.

It is possible for capital to coherently organise itself in the cities of the west where its representatives can improvise

the supposed future benefits of a market economy.

But outside these areas reforms mean that wages are not paid and pensions are worthless. There may now be food in the shops but most people have no money to buy it. It does not take a genius to make the link between the land privatisation and the shortage of affordable food.

Another significant reason for the victory is the nationalist Communist vote. As well as its reactionary content, there is a second side to the vote. It is felt as a vote in part for national self-determination against the interests of an incipient bourgeoisie and its foreign allies. This is important for Russian people who have been encircled by hostile powers for most of the twentieth century.

In the election Yeltsin walked into the oldest Russian bear trap of them all—allowing the Communist Party to portray him as a westerner against the Motherland.

Bolshevik leadership of the nation was for a workers' and peasants' republic but was also against capitulation to the West and its emissaries from Nicho-

las II to Kornilov. In the same way Stalin slandered Trotsky as an agent of imperialism. Now the Communists are able to pose as the defender of Russia against a true agent of imperialism—Boris Yeltsin.

All of this poses real problems for imperialism. Yeltsin first appealed in a nation-wide broadcast for people not to vote for the Communists. He then argued after the vote that it would not make any difference.

Yeltsin may have finished with 1917 but 1917 has not yet finished with him

This is behaviour of a sick man with a severely dented political profile. The effect of the Communist victory has been to push the bulk of reformers towards temporarily slowing down the pace of marketisation and promoting some populist adjustment. They are advancing this strategy to peel off part of the Communist vote to gain 51 per cent needed in the presidential election in the summer.

A new reform programme is being prepared for the election which will talk the language of the people while also

preparing for a carnival of reaction if the Communist Party is defeated. It is then that those without the stomach for the fight will be pushed aside by an iron fist.

An authoritarian candidate is also a real possibility. Populist General Ledbed believes that the Pinochet alternative is worthy of consideration.

Nevertheless the working class of Russia, the first workers' state in the world, is at least feeling its way towards political solutions.

This should not surprise us—a century of struggle and political history does not disappear overnight or even in half a decade. Classes do not throw aside their historic organisations without testing them to the full.

To lose a welfare state is one terrible prospect but to lose control of a whole state is something of quite a different historical order.

Yeltsin may have finished with 1917 but 1917 has not yet finished with him. The election results of December 17 1995 have created a situation which revolutionary Marxists can and must exploit. The battle for Russia is now on.



Ethnic divides in Dayton accord will not bring peace

NATO enforces Bosnian carve-up

Alan Thornett

THE 49-51 per cent partition of Bosnia Hercegovina under the Dayton agreement, rammed down Bosnian President Izetbegovic's throat in 21 days of "negotiations", and now being enforced by 60,000 mainly NATO troops - including 20,000 Americans and 30,000 British - implements what has been the objective of Western/UN policy from Vance Owen to the Five Nation Contact Group: "peace" via the division of Bosnia along ethnic lines.

Formally Bosnia will remain a single state: the Bosnia-Croat Federation - up to now a hollow shell - and a Serb Republic. In reality they will be completely separate states with their own armed forces and a border between them which will be the most fortified and inaccessible in Europe, shaped out of the current front lines.

Izetbegovic described it as "not a just peace but more just than the continuation of war". In a reference to the pressures put on him he went on "In the situation as it is, and in the world as it is, a better peace could not have been achieved".

The deal has created not a peace but the cessation of the war: an armed truce under Uncle Sam's big stick.

This cynical carve up was signed on behalf of the Pale regime by Milosevic who had decided that 49 per cent of Bosnia was the best that could be achieved; particularly given the effects of the sanctions on Serbia and the growing military strength of the Bosnians.

The deal infuriated Serbian nationalists bent on no compromise. Vojislav Seselj, the leader of the neo-fascist Serbian Radical Party, denounced it as "the greatest treason in the history of the Serbian nation".

If it lasts the settlement constitutes a serious defeat for the Bosnian people who have defended their national rights and multi-ethnic society for four years against near impossible odds—including an invasion by the Yugoslav army and a revolt by a section of the Serbian population whipped up by Milosevic.

They fought almost without weapons and initially without an army, in the face of a highly effective arms embargo.

Izetbegovic described it as "not a just peace but more just than the continuation of war"

It is true that Karadzic has not got everything he wanted - like the whole of Bosnia or enough of it to make it non-viable as a country. He also failed, at this point, to gain the right to federate with Serbia. But the conditions are flexible and he may well achieve it in the future if the deal holds.

Those who have supported the defence of a multi-ethnic Bosnia must condemn the carve up under the Dayton agreement, we cannot, however, be against the cessation of the war. Only those who must fight such a war can decide to continue it.

There has never been a unified western policy, but several policies, within the framework of partition; at times



1995: Soldiers loyal to rightist leader Fiket Abdic taking a break from fighting — alongside Serb nationalists — north of Bihac

publicly in conflict with each other and often in complete disarray.

This made the role of the US crucial at Dayton. Through its bases in Turkey and its Middle East oil interests the US has consistently appeared more pro-Bosnian than any of the major European powers. This stance, hollow as it was, put the US in a strong position to force an agreement on the Bosnian delegation.

The NATO bombing which followed the bloody events around the fall

sive pressure onto the Bosnian Government to halt the offensive and negotiate.

Both this offensive and the Dayton agreement have altered the political balance in ex-Yugoslavia enhancing the role of Croatia and the influence of Tudjman. The agreement strengthens the Croat component of the Bosnia-Croat Federation - the previous HVO controlled territory of Herceg-Bosnia - which will further strengthen the Croatian position.

The Dayton agreement provides for a joint Bosnian/Croat presidency and a joint Government for the Federation. This will weaken the Bosnian Government and provide a means for the direct influence of Tudjman over Bosnia affairs.

Up to now the Federation has been an empty shell. The Croat side has been lukewarm, content to make money out of taxing the southern route from Split which crosses its territory.

Internationally the agreement has strengthened the hand of the USA. Clinton has been able to pose as the bringer of "peace" in the Middle East and Bosnia, even in Ireland, and cover up previous disasters such as Somalia.

Both the UN and the EU were made to look ineffective. Russian objections were brushed aside.

Srebrenica and Zepa are (shamefully) handed over to the Serbs. The

Bosnian Government is to control Sarajevo and the remaining Bosnian enclave of Gorazda is to be linked to Bosnian territory by a land corridor: the Serbs were given land around Mrkonjic Grad in "compensation". Serb demands for the widening of the Posavina corridor at Brcko were unresolved and submitted to international arbitration.

The agreement also covers Eastern Slavonia - the remaining Croat territory occupied by Serbian forces - and Tudjman has agreed to accept its rein-

tegration into Croatia over a two year period. Had this not been agreed Tudjman would have taken it by force.

The agreement also contains a "guarantee" of the right of return for all refugees, a clause which is likely to be honoured by Bosnia since it is defending a multi-ethnic society, but ignored by the Serbs who will be building an ethnically pure state.

The UN has now handed over to NATO and the UNPROFOR has become IFOR—the NATO Implementation Force. IFOR troops are now deploying throughout Bosnia and the US troops are already in Tuzla, having opened the short northern route over

the river Sava—involving the biggest pontoon bridge constructed in Europe since the end of the Second World War.

The agreement gives IFOR troops the powers of an army of occupation: they can shoot who they like in order to uphold the agreement.

Opposing the Dayton agreement also means opposing IFOR and its presence in the region. We call for the withdrawal of IFOR troops with no reimbursement of the arms embargo.

Partition and the violation of national rights are rarely the basis for long term peace — as events in Chechnya currently show

Nearly 300,000 people have died during the four years of the war, most Bosnian. The war has created over three million refugees - two million Bosnian. The world has witnessed torture, rape mass murder and genocide in Europe in the 1990s. Many in Bosnia of all nationalities feel that they should not have died or suffered in vain.

will end the war, although the course of events are hard to predict. There is an enforced settlement which is manifestly unjust and is hardly the basis for a long term settlement. Partition and the violation of national rights are rarely the basis for long term peace as events in Chechnya currently show.

Nearly 300,000 people have died during the four years of the war, most Bosnian. The war has created over three million refugees - two million Bosnian. The world has witnessed torture, rape mass murder and genocide in Europe in the 1990s. Many in Bosnia of all nationalities feel that they should not have died or suffered in vain.

'Rise' of Militant: Talkin' Taaffe

NIGEL DANBY reviews
'The Rise of Militant' by
Peter Taaffe

ALTHOUGH I would hesitate to recommend *"The Rise of Militant"* it is useful in that it illustrates how their flawed approach to politics has distorted their practice over the past 30 years.

Their miscalculation rests upon the idea of the Labour Party as being potentially capable of delivering socialism.

Taaffe makes much of the way ex-Militant leader Ted Grant failed to respond to the new realities of Labour's swing to the right. It would be truer to say that both Taaffe and Grant share illusions.

This is exemplified in the rapture over Scargill's plans for a Socialist Labour Party. Scargill wants to leave Labour because it was once a socialist party but is no longer. According to Militant they left Labour because they thought they could no longer transform it into a socialist party.

These contradictions were impor-

tant in making my mind up to leave Militant and become a supporter of *Socialist Outlook*. Socialists need to remain inside Labour Party fighting to defend it as a mass party based on the working class, even though it is led by the worst type of reactionaries.

Another of Militant's defining features has been their "plague on all your houses" attitude to anti-imperialist struggles.

From Vietnam to Ireland they have had the same theme. On Bosnia they have argued that only war mongers would profit from arming the Bosnian

people. They may as well argue that the only ones to profit from sending a consignment of haddock to Bosnia would be fishmongers!

This refusal to come out explicitly on the side of those in the front line of fighting imperialism is echoed in Militant's work in the unions and among the specially oppressed.

Instead they substitute their own party building project for the interest of those they seek to organise.

This is the only way to explain how the "deepest" of entryist groups in Britain could drop the key ideas it had

fought for decades in order to adopt opposite positions—with an equal degree of stridency!

The strength of this book is that it acknowledges the contribution that Militant members have made as individuals. There are many comrades in the organisation who do not share the sectarianism of the central leadership. These are the people we work with on the ground in day to day struggles.

It is only through this experience in the class struggle that they will be broken from the politics of their organisation's leadership.

All show no substance

BRIAN GARDINER
reviews Paul Verhoeven's
Showgirls

ALTHOUGH IT is well made and at some points visually stunning, Paul Verhoeven's *Showgirls* is a confusing vacuous film.

Claiming to show the side of Las Vegas that you normally do not see, its central character Nomi (Elizabeth Berkley) arrives at the desert strip seeking fame and fortune.

Joe Eszterhas' extremely plodding script mainly follows the conventional Hollywood genre of the showbiz rags to riches story.

But it perverts this by demonstrating—no doubt quite rightly—that people do not make it on their talent, but on the back of who they know, who they fuck and who, they literally push out of the way and maim in the process.

This is an interesting idea which could have been much better executed.

Also, in struggling to make Eszterhas's ill-conceived and cardboard characters come to life, the actors seem to be wading through a savannah swamp rather than treading lightly across the desert sand.

At the beginning of the film, we know that Nomi is a person with a past.

But because the director and script-writer do not reveal anything of this until the end, they deny the possibility of dramatic tension and any shred of



Crystal Connors (Gina Gershon) pursues Nomi (Elizabeth Berkley)

Photo: Guild Film Distribution

sympathy we might conceivably have for the character.

Until this moment she merely seems

a contradictory and inexplicable mix of hard-nosed ambition and extreme naivety.

For example, on the one hand, to get to the top she is prepared to kick her rivals out of the way. Yet she is outraged when, after making it into the top Vegas show, it is suggested that she might earn a few extra-curricular bucks by providing a more personalised form of entertainment for a visiting Japanese businessman.

Pursued by Crystal Connors, the bisexual star of the sex review, Goddess, she flirts but refuses to be bought and the tension between them makes for some of the better acting in the film.

Drawing on the type of Jungian archetypes which he also used in his earlier Dutch film, *"The Fourth Man"*, Verhoeven is suggesting that the new goddess must kill the old goddess in order to supplant her.

But with the otherwise intellectual vacuity of the piece, such symbolism seems pointless and clumsy.

The film has attracted controversy by containing extended sequences of women and men dancing either fully naked or only partially clothed.

The movie seems to exploit this at the expense of having any real character development. But Verhoeven has not even made an erotic film.

While segments are technically complex, the sum total is nothing more than an accurate but pointless replication of the Vegas meat market.

Seemingly caught between making an art film and providing a titillating and voyeuristic glimpse of the Vegas sex industry, Verhoeven and Eszterhas end up achieving neither.

While segments are technically complex, the sum total is nothing more than an accurate but pointless replication of the Vegas meat market

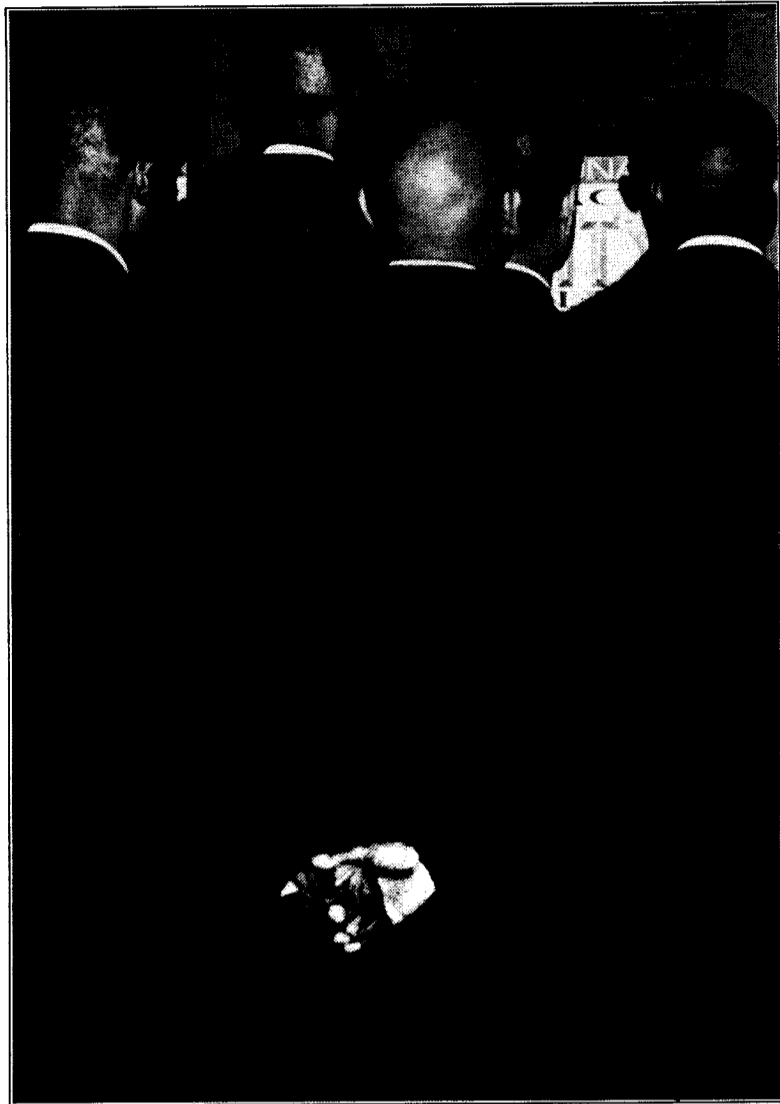


"Where did it all go wrong, Paul?" — Verhoeven with Elizabeth Berkley

Photo: Guild Film Distribution

FEEDBACK

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Mass black support doesn't change 'reactionary character' of Nation of Islam

Farrakhan: partner in racism

JOE AUCIELLO totally underestimates the reactionary character of Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam when he characterises it as merely "conservative" and refers to the "taint of anti-Semitism" ("The Nation of Islam: radical conservatives or heirs of Malcolm X?" SO 93).

Let us actually look at what Farrakhan says: "The Jews are blood suckers whom Jesus had condemned in the plainest of languages...the scriptures charge your people with killing the prophets of God...You shout 'Never Again' but you can't say never again to God, because when he puts you in the oven 'Never Again' don't mean a thing".

If you came across that statement without knowing the source you would assume it was written by a nazi. In fact if you look back at Farrakhan's writ-

ings and speeches up to the last 18 months, when he has been more careful about what he says, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that he is, indeed, a nazi.

More disturbing, perhaps, are the actions of both Farrakhan and his predecessor, Elijah Mohammed. There is photographic documentation of both of them meeting with Ku Klux Klan members in the 60s.

More recently Farrakhan has associated with Tom Metzger, leader of Aryan Nations, as well as being chummy with Britain's fallen fascist star, Patrick Harrington.

Of course, it would be too simplistic to argue that because Farrakhan is, and Mohammad was, a nazi; and that the Nation of Islam is a fascist movement. A Black nationalist movement in a white imperialist heartland cannot function as a full-blooded fascist organisation. The nearest it could come to that would be as a junior partner in a white supremacist fascist run country or state, actively recreating segregation.

We can safely assume that if the

Nation of Islam went down that road, it would lose its mass support in the Black community, so there are clearly strong limits to how far Farrakhan can pursue his vision.

Socialists have to be very clear about this. Certainly it is vital that we don't ignore this phenomenon. It is equally important that we don't give it any kind of left cover by participating in it.

Socialists, and primarily it will be Black socialists, have to engage with this issue inside the Black community but outside the Nation of Islam itself. On this question I think Angela Davis has got it right and Socialist Action (USA) have got it wrong.

Yours in struggle

Dave Landau, North London

When is the time to split?

IT NOW looks increasingly likely that on May 1 1996 the "Socialist Labour Party" will be born.

At first glance, this new party may seem attractive to socialists both within and without the Labour Party—it won't be led by Blair and it will almost certainly put forward policies that socialists will agree with far more than those of the Labour leadership.

However, this project has several potential problems. The first and most obvious of these is the dismal record throughout history of those groups that have chosen to split from the Labour Party in the past. From the ILP to the SDP, it has been a road to almost certain oblivion for those who have chosen that path.

For Militant Labour the motivation is all too clear—they will seek to revive the high profile of this new organisation to revive the old LPYS to enable them to attract naive young people who are attracted to the idea of socialism, but have little experience of its theory and practice. There is no sound theory behind Militant Labour's decision to join this project; it is opportunism, pure and simple.

Scargill's motive for setting up this organisation is a profound misunderstanding of the nature of the Labour Party. The belief that Clause 4, before it was abolished, defined the Labour Party as socialist, could not be further from the truth.

Clause 4 never defined the Labour Party as socialist because the leadership never intended to carry it out!

Socialists and the oppressed are in the Labour Party because its links with the unions define it as a working class party, not because of its constitution or programme.

Now is not the time for a split. The working classes want the Tories out above anything else—Scargill's new party won't be able to do that. Nor can it offer an alternative to the long, hard fight on the key issues of full employment, the minimum wage and workers' rights.

Joe Naim, Southampton

300 CLUB ROLLOVER

FOR JUST one minute every month Socialist Outlook outdoes the National Lottery while we draw our 300 club. Labour Party committee rooms, trades union halls, student union buildings and entire workplaces are covered by an intense hush. This week we have a double treat. December's prizes have rolled over to make January's draw extra special. Not two, but three lucky winners can be announced!

The 300 Club allows readers to support Socialist Outlook. In exchange for a monthly donation, 300 Club members get to take part in our special monthly draw — and get

a free subscription to Socialist Outlook as well.

For each five pounds donated, 300 Club members get one number in the draw. In addition to a £50 cash prize, desirable runners-up prizes are also awarded.

Ian M., from Fulham has won this month's £50 cash prize, while Ceri from Cardiff wins Alan Woods' and Ted Grant's controversial review of marxist philosophy 'Reason in Revolt'. Mike from Southampton wins 'Earth Summit', a massive compilation of accounts and documents of the UN conference on environment and development.

For more details write today to 300 Club, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

WHAT WE'RE FIGHTING FOR

UP AGAINST mass unemployment, rampant employers with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-won public services, the working class in Britain faces a real crisis — an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

Socialist Outlook exists to build a new type of working class leadership, based on class struggle and revolutionary socialism.

The capitalist class, driven by its own crisis, and politically united by its need to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has had determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal Tory high command.

The Tory strategy has been to shackle the unions, and to fragment and weaken the resistance, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time.

In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeatist politics of 'new realism', effectively total surrender, while ditching any pretence of being a socialist alternative. Every retreat encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form of reformism, seeking only improved conditions within capitalism.

We reject reformism, not because we are against reforms, but because we know that full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy, can never be achieved under capitalism.

Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these demands ever be achieved under the bureaucratically deformed workers states and degenerated USSR, whose regimes survived only by repressing the working class.

We are a marxist current, based not on the brutish totalitarian parodies of state marxism, nor on the tame, toothless version of 'marxism' beloved by armchair academics, but the revolutionary tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Our socialist alternative is not based on parliamentary elections or illusions of peaceful legislative change.

We fight to mobilise and unleash the power of the working class to topple the corrupt and reactionary rule of capital and establish its own class rule.

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, to unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth — and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and worldwide.

Socialist Outlook is above all an internationalist current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises in over 40 countries.

Unlike some other groups on the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. This degenerates into sectarian posturing and abstinence from struggles in the labour movement, playing into right wing hands.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland, Ireland and Wales should be left to await revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now for their demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism.

But propaganda alone, however good, will not bring socialism. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politically educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we press for united front campaigns on key issues such as racism and fascism — in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while remaining free to debate differences.

If you agree with what you see in Socialist Outlook, and want to join with us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in cities across the country.

Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

Get organised! Contact us now!

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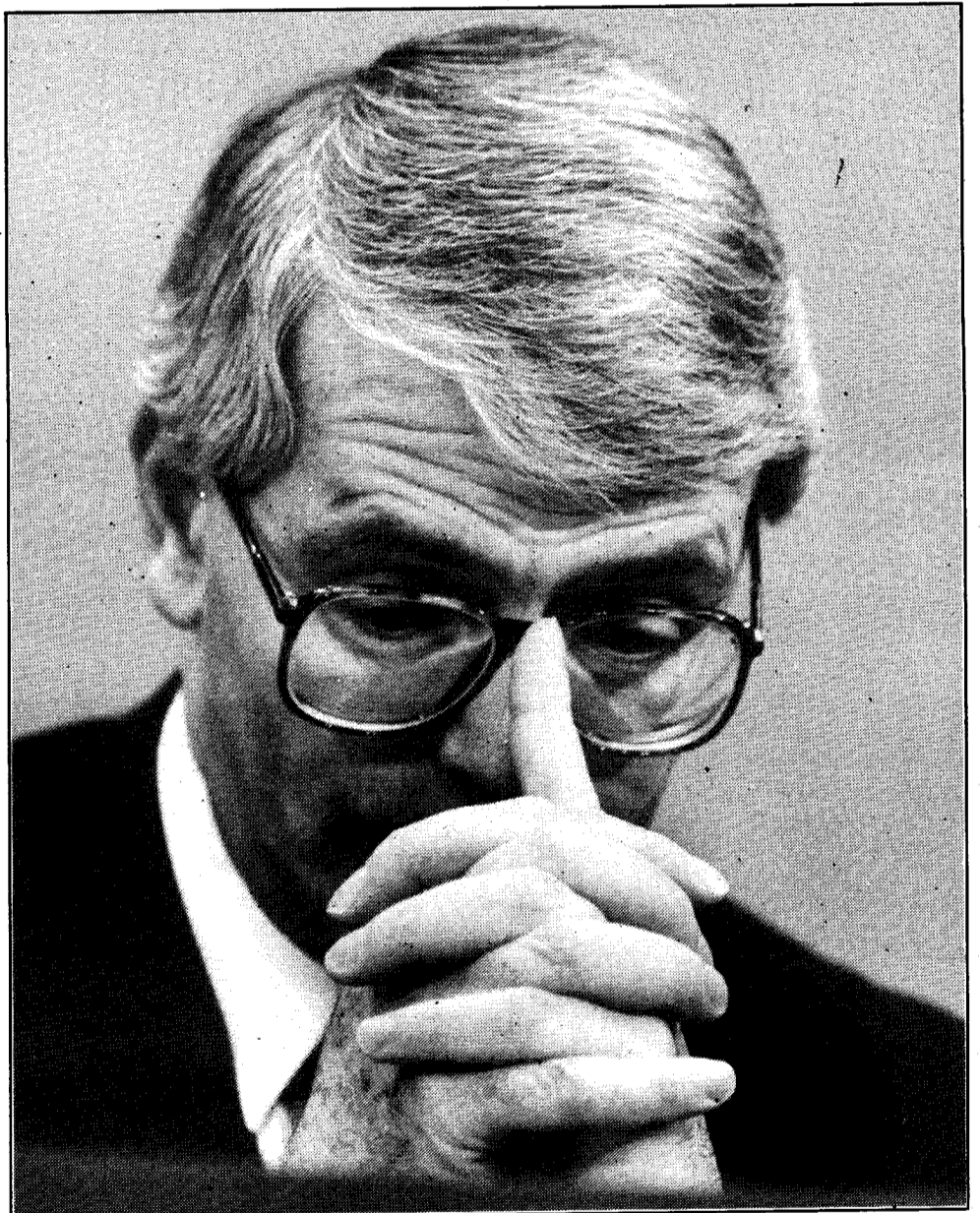
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Socialist OUTLOOK

Tories in tatters -- Labour should show the way

CRACK OPEN TORY SPLIT



Major faces defeat

Photo: Andrew Ward

THE TORIES are tearing themselves apart and now face an electoral abyss.

The party is not in disarray because there is no "feel good factor". Nor is it because it is trailing in the polls.

The Conservative Party is in crisis because the German and French ruling classes are driving towards European Monetary Union.

It matters little in this context that single currency project is in tatters and even in the last month the German deficit has jeopardised the Maastricht timetable for union.

For the drive to union is still

causing cracks in the Tory ranks as wide as that caused by the 1846 Corn Law.

The ideological rift exists between those who want to integrate British capital into a Europ an superstate and those who will defend the pound sterling come what may—and see a central bank as the Bundesbank by another name.

Tory division

In other words there is a division between the majority of British capital and the mass membership of the Tory Party.

So when Emma Nicholson and Alan Howarth point to social policy as key reasons for their

defections this should be taken with a large pinch of salt.

Both are in favour of European institutions and policy making processes, which have laid the foundation stones for the Asylum and Immigration Bill and the attack on the welfare state.

Despite this humbug, the Left has to take advantage of Tory divisions to attack the projects of the ruling class.

It must defeat the current central plank of Conservative legislation—the Asylum and Immigration Bill—through building the broadest possible alliance against it.

That coalition includes the likes of Nicholson - but it needs

to have a labour movement and black leadership.

But simply to destabilise Tory rule is not enough.

Welfare state

The problem for the Left is that the majority of the working class is desperate to defeat the Tories by voting Labour—but once in power Labour will launch further attacks on the welfare state.

These attacks will intensify opposition to a Blair government within the labour movement.

And the engine that will drive this fightback will be the struggles of the working class and the oppressed, mainly through the

trade union movement.

It is critical that socialists orientate these struggles to the policy battle that will unfold in the Labour Party and that the Labour left provides solidarity with these struggles.

Socialists must also begin to reach out to the trade union and Labour Party youth sections who will oppose the Labour leadership when they implement workfare.

But struggle alone is not sufficient to challenge the Labour leadership.

Socialists need to show they have a political and economic alternative to both Blairism and Maastricht.