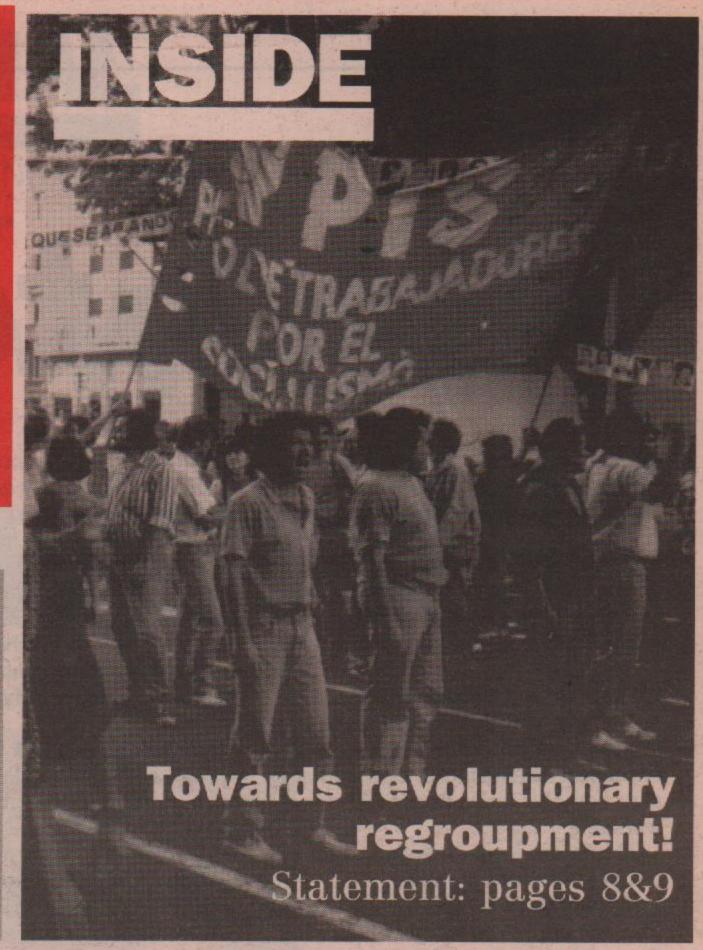
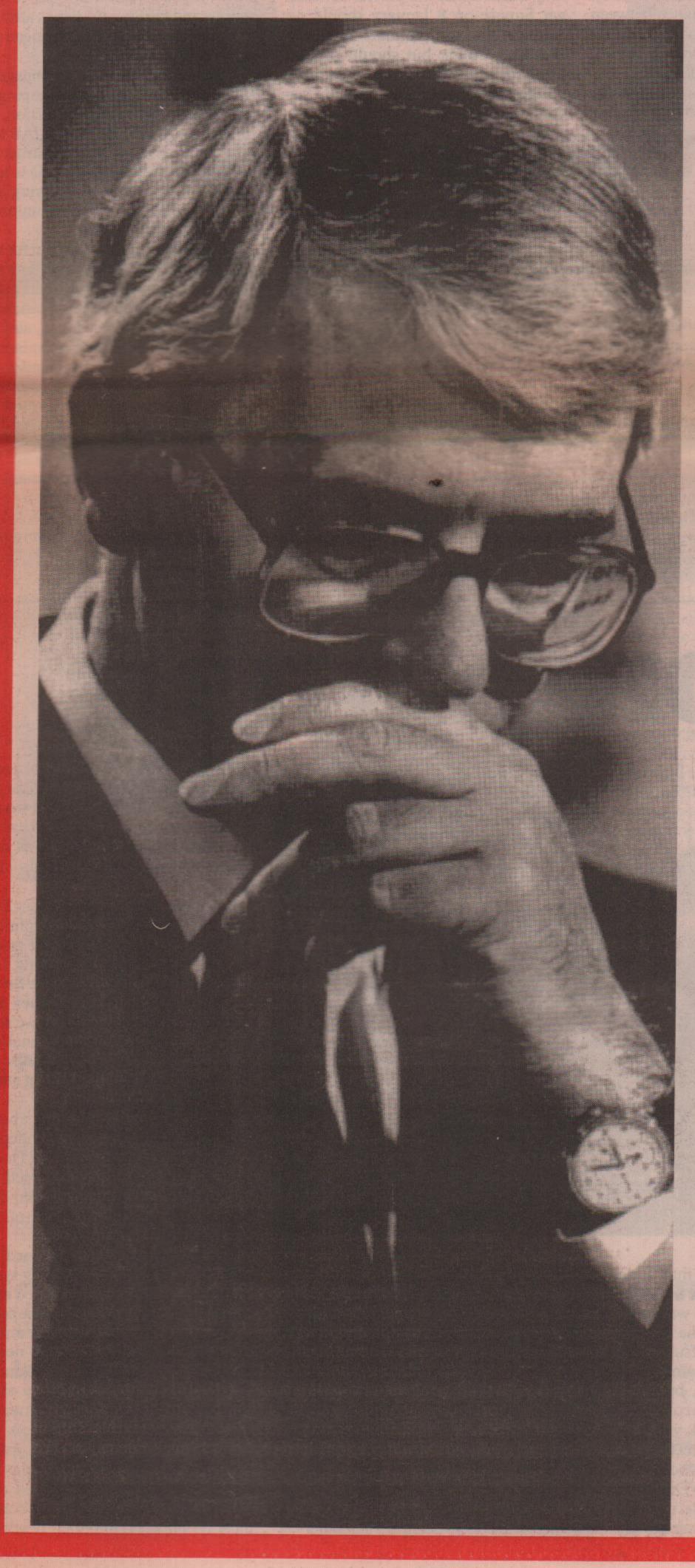
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No 196 JANUARY 1996 ★ Price 50p



France: the fight 9008 On! Report: pages 10&11





# AS Euro-row splits Tories

# Drive Najor

Mass action can bring down the Tories

The Tory Majority in parliament is crumbling. As the party"s blue-rinsed grass-roots follow Portillo to the right, more MPs are set to follow Nicholson and Howarth out of the party, like rats from a sinking ship. To the very last the Tories are determined to make us pay for the sickness of their system. It's time to finish them off! Turn to page 5

## Tory Asylum outrage

# How to beat the Bill

o far the Campaign against the Immigration and Asylum Bill (CAIAB) has focused almost exclusively on lobbying MPs with the aim of defeating the Bill in parliament. But the Tories still have a working majority and can rely on the votes of their parliamentary allies to push the Bill through.

#### **Mass non-cooperation!**

The key to defeating this racist onslaught is action. The working class movement can and must stop this attack and show the Tories that it will be unworkable.

This means a mass campaign of nonco-operation with the Bill.

It is workers who will be expected to send out notices to refugees informing them of the benefit cut. It is workers who will be told to recall and withdraw order books, and workers who will be instructed to refuse school meals to the children of refugees.

In the same way, it is workers who will be expected to process information gathered by employers under the new system of internal checks.

Without the co-operation of the organised working class movement, none of these outrages could happen. The working class has the power to stop this Bill in its tracks.

Many teachers, council employees, civil servants and DSS workers will argue that they have no choice but to implement the law. Of course, as an isolated individual, you can do very little. But that is no excuse to give in.

There is an alternative: organised, mass defiance. That is only possible where union branches and national union leaderships commit themselves to supporting the workers who will be in the front line of the fight for non-cooperation.

That is why we need to win trade union branches up and down the country to refusing to implement this law.

In the event of any worker being sacked or disciplined for refusing to comply, unions should respond with strike action until the charges are dropped and they are fully reinstated.

Don't delay. Put a motion to your union branch pledging non-cooperation with the Asylum and Immigration Bill and the benefits cuts now. Speakers from refugee organisations should be invited to address workers to put the maximum pressure on them to defy this racist law.

#### **Force Labour to fight**

The Labour Party claims to oppose the legislation. But instead of fighting this disgusting proposal and preparing to obstruct its implementation, Labour councils across the country are positively rushing to carry it out.

The maximum pressure must be brought to bear on Labour-controlled local authorities to defy the law. Members of affiliated trade unions should be bombarding the party with resolutions calling for them to stop doing the Tories' dirty work for them. Tony Blair and Shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw should be forced to declare that a La- display of unity. But in reality the involve- cross the line into a militant struggle or

bour government will repeal the asylum legislation immediately and restore all the benefits robbed from refugees and asylum seekers.

#### **Militant movement**

The Campaign Against the Immigration and Asylum Bill (CAIAB) is the largest national organisation opposing the Tories' plans. It has the nominal support of the Labour Party and many trade unions. It has also secured the backing of the TUC and the Transport and General Workers Union for a mass demonstration against the Bill on 24 February.

With the size and strength of its sponsoring organisations it carries more support among refugee groups and in the labour movement than all of the other asylum rights campaigns put together.

But that is just one side of the story. CAIAB represents an alliance between working class organisations and an array of Liberal MPs, charities, church organisations and lawyers.

To some this may seem an impressive

ment of these establishment and procapitalist organisations and individuals greatly weakens the ability of the movement to organise the one thing that can stop this racist law-militant action.

#### No to gesture politics

Representatives of the ruling class are determined to prevent the movement against the Bill from taking direct action. They fear anything that smacks of effective struggle from below as opposed to passive, legalistic and ultimately ineffective lobbying.

That is why the leadership of CAIAB tried to prevent refugees who attended the lobby of parliament on 19 December from joining the militant demonstration outside the Palace of Westminster that afternoon. It is why-incrediblythey insisted that the protest in Trafalgar Square on 8 January should not march in the road the short distance to Downing Street, but should proceed along the pavement! They would rather refugees remained almost invisible than defiance of the law.

Crucially, the CAIAB leaders will not campaign for non-implementation and defiance in the workplace. Their capitalist allies would never stand for that! So to keep their block together, they sacrifice the one form of action that would be sure to defeat the law. To cover their backs they occasionally promise to carry out "civil disobedience" and even to go to jail themselves.

But gesture politics won't beat the bill. Only mass action will.

#### Where next?

What should workers, youth and refugees who oppose the Bill do? Some may be tempted to ignore CAIAB altogether and concentrate on smaller initiatives. But this would be self-defeating. It will leave the powerful working class organisations and refugee groupings affiliated to CAIAB under the unchallenged control of the passive leaders.

The answer is to fight to engage the trade union and refugee groupings in CAIAB into militant direct action, and to challenge and defy the CAIAB leaders whenever they seek to obstruct that action. The best way to do this is to set up local CAIAB groups, drawing in all local anti-racist, refugee, trade union and labour movement bodies.

Commit these groups to fight for nonimplementation of the laws and send speakers and delegations to workplaces, schools, colleges and union branches to explain the case for defiance, and link them up with all other organisations committed to non-implementation.

That way the wide range of unions and refugee groups organised under the umbrella of CAIAB can be freed from the stultifying influence of the establishment leaders, and we will be unleashing a force powerful enough to smash this Bill completely.

Affiliate to CAIAB, 28 Commercial Street, London E1. Phone 0171 247 9907.

## Campaign Round-up

#### Sheffield

In Sheffield, the DSS were quick off the mark in sending out letters to the council threatening to cut off income support to individuals on 8 January.

In response the Black Community Forum set up a Campaign against the Asylum Bill. Campaigners collected 2,000 signatures within a week and staged an open air meeting on the town hall steps on 18 December. It attracted school students as well as local trade union members and Labour councillors. UNISON provided transport to the following day's national lobby. The next Campaign meeting is on 16 January at 6pm at the BCF room of the ACE Centre, The Wicker, Sheffield.

#### **South London**

In South London, a local CAIAB is up and running, with the goal of drawing the various trade union and refugee campaigns into joint action against the Bill.

The next CAIAB meeting is at the Ian Rebane Centre, Thornton Street, Brixton at 7.30 on Tuesday 16 January. All trades unionists, anti-racists and refugee campaigns in South London are invited to affiliate and attend.

#### Hackney

The East London borough witnessed the single biggest demonstration so far against the Tories' racist moves.

On 16 December, 2,000 over-

whelmingly Turkish and Kurdish protesters marched through Hackney and faced down a heavy police presence in a powerful display of defiance.

The Hackney Teachers' Association (the local NUT branch) banner was on the march, which had been organised in conjunction with the Colin Roach Centre.

Activists from the Centre are now building for a public meeting to mobilise both community and labour movement opposition to the attacks on benefits and asylum rights on Wednesday 24 January at 7.30pm.

Further information about the meeting and activities in Hackney from the Colin Roach Centre, tel: 0181 533 7111.

# Why Brixton burned

AYNE DOUGLAS' death in custody was the last straw. Arrested for aggravated burglary, Wayne, unarmed according to eyewitnesses, was battered by officers from Brixton police station. They used the same long handled batons which killed Brian Douglas (no relation), another black man from south west London, in May 1995. The police claim Wayne died of a heart attack, a conclusion supported by an independent postmortem, carried out at his family's request.

But thousands of black residents in Brixton, and many of their white neighbours, know that Wayne, like Brian, was killed by police racism.

Across South London the police have been out of control, even by their own sick standards. They routinely stop and search black youths; routinely beat up young people they arrest; routinely lie in court to cover up their crimes.

When a 150-strong, peaceful demonstration against Wayne's death decided to march through Brixton on 13 December, police chiefs unleashed a carefully planned police riot. As Lee Jasper, one of the organisers, said:

"When the anarchist road protesters stop the traffic in Brixton, police ignore them. When little old ladies on the south coast stand in front of cattle lorries they are politely moved on. When black people in Brixton stage a peaceful march, in their own area, all hell is let loose."

Despite march organisers' attempts to end the demo in a peaceful, coordinated way, police went out of their way to pro-



The not so thin blue line

voke violence. And violence is what they

Like all uprisings the riot was short and sharp; a mixture of battling with police, settling scores against racist businesses and the inevitable small number of random acts.

On the morning after the press and TV agonised over the riot. "Why, with all the government money spent on Brixton, is the community no more passive than before?" they asked. The clear implication, confirmed by the statements of two local Labour MPs, Kate Hoey and Keith Hill, was that "it was all the work of criminals and the left". The "real people" of Brixton, we were told, had nothing to do with the riot.

In fact, the causes of frustration are clear. They include a regime of racist terror against the youth, beatings and deaths in custody; a police commissioner who openly brands black youth as the "most responsible" for street crime, and Labour MPs like Hoey who refused to lift a finger over the Brian Douglas case. Beneath all this, lies the unrelenting misery of unemployment and discrimination.

The much vaunted £37 million "Brixton Challenge" scheme, the government's cynical "riot money", has failed to assuage the anger precisely because most Brixtonians-black and whitehave not seen a penny of it. The promised £140 million from the private sector never appeared. Instead the money has been spent on prestige projects designed to "turn the area into a cultural centre".

This is a euphemism for a "white middle class cultural centre". As Emerson Webster of Panther UK put it, at a meeting called in the wake of the violence: "What have the brothers got from £4

million spent renovating the Ritzy cinema? We're allowed to work as ticket collectors and security guards, that's what."

But if the police-Labour-Tory coalition think they are up against "mindless criminals" or marginalised left groups, they are in for a rude awakening.

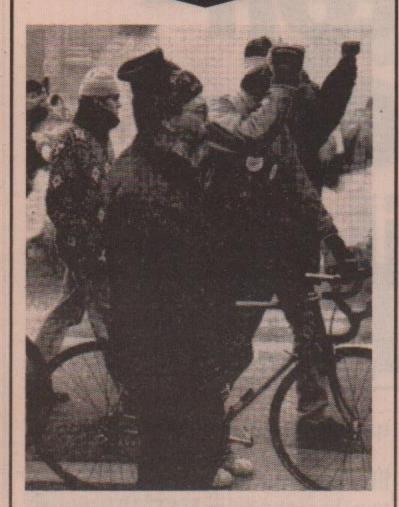
Speaker after speaker at the Brixton Rec meeting called by Panther hammered home the message that we're not going to "shit in our own backyard anymore". We're going to organise protest, organise police monitoring and organise self-defence.

Many activists are talking about a voter registration drive and an independent black carididate to kick out Hoey at the next election. (Hoey herself was elected only because the Labour Party bureaucracy vetoed the selection of black candidate Sharon Atkin).

The key, however, is organised selfdefence. Any police monitoring system must be independent and backed by the local labour movement, not in the pocket of the local authority. Local community and trade union organisations need to draw up their own plan to regenerate Brixton and demand the return of millions stolen from local government by Tory cuts and Labour corruption.

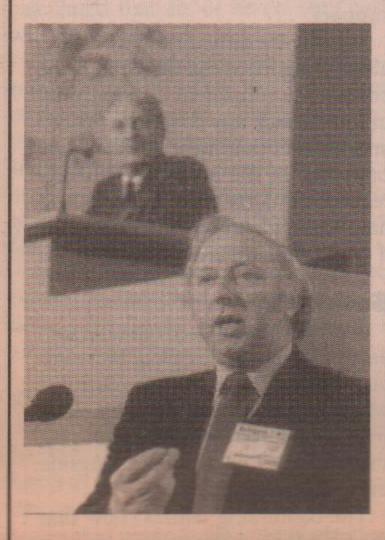
And, immediately, the officers responsible for killing Brian Douglas and Wayne Douglas must be charged, and a full inquiry, under community control, must be launched into their deaths.

### in this issue



#### France in revolt

Eyewitness report of mass strike movement in France plus in-depth analysis of the strike, its outcome and "where next?" Pages 10&11



#### Scargill's SLP: the left's response

Scargill's constitution threat. Lessons of the ILP. The left and the SLP. Pages 6&7 Letters. Page 14



#### **Between Islam** and Ataturk?

The advance of Turkey's Islamic Welfare Party has shocked the ruling class, but marginalised the left. Phillipe Martin reports. Page 13.

#### Plus:

Towards revolutionary regroupment. Joint statement between the LRCI and the IF/PTS. H is for History: Centre Pages.

Russian elections. Page 12

CPSA strike. Bolton Natfhe dispute. Liverpool Docks. CFDU. Whistleblower. Pages 4&5.

#### In February's issue

I for imperialism; Rise and fall of the Fourth International.; SLP debate continues.

## EDITORIAL

WORKERS POWER 196 JANUARY 1996

# Europe-which way forward?



HREE DEVELOPMENTS dominated the European political scene at the end of 1995: the end of Bosnia's three-and-a-half year war; the electoral success of ex-Stalinist parties in Russia and Poland; and, above all, the mass strikes in the French public sector which saw millions take to the streets to resist the Juppé plan.

Each of these developments suggests significant changes are taking place in the post-1989 world order. The Dayton/ Paris peace settlement is not only a blow to the multi-ethnic Bosnian state and the Bosnian Muslims. It revealed as threadbare the ambittons of those European imperialists who yearn for a unified superpower, capable of rivalling the USA.



Europe's weakness in Bosnia stemmed from the fact that Germany, long an economic lion and European Union (EU) leading political power, remains a military lamb, unable to impose its diplomatic agenda on the continent. As a result, it has to accommodate to the political objectives of Britain and USA.

Germany and its unreliable partner, France, cannot depend on the USA for long. Clinton's difficulties in gaining Congressional approval for deploying US troops in Bosnia is a warning to the EU that it cannot rely on the US for its defence.

The differences between Europe and the US over Bosnia, apparent in the French discontent with the Dayton de-

cision not to partition Sarajevo and the abrupt US rejection of Ruud Lubbers the French favourite for Nato's Secretary General, will eventually convince France and Germany that there is no real alternative to their strategic alliance. Not least, it will force them to confront the question of their lack of an independent military force sufficient to defend their own interests on the mainland of Europe.

#### **Destructive**

The resurgence of "post-Stalinist Stalinism" in Poland and Russia is another blow for the European bourgeoisie. While these parties remain committed to restoring capitalism, they are responding to pressure from below to slow the pace, and defend some of the social gains that neo-liberalism is presently uprooting. Sections of mainly older workers in Poland and Russia now realise the destructive character of capitalism's advance. This all reinforces a trend across eastern Europe of a recovery of union activity, and of political struggles on a left-right basis; towards, in short, reformist class politics.

The French strikes brought a marvellous end to the year. For workers across Europe, the sight of millions on the streets was our best possible mid-winter boost. Juppé and Chirac's determination to press on with Maastricht-inspired attacks in an attempt to inch towards monetary union provoked the strikes and demonstrations. The French government has to savage public spending in the next period, or else even the "strong" centre of Europe - Germany, France and the Benelux countries - will fall apart.

The French workers responded magnificently to the challenge. While the majority of strikers went back to work without a full victory, it was only after Juppé had retreated over the specific attack on the rail workers. These workers, and the millions they inspired, are undefeated and will fight again.

The rest of Europe is not immune to the logic of Maastricht. In 1996, Italians will see the end of Dini's compromise government. If the right then win a clear majority in the ensuing election, then we can expect a vicious attack on the working class and militant resistance. Spain, too, facing a likely, Popular Party government from the spring, will face an upsurge in class battles.

An increasing erosion of neo-liberalism's ideological hegemony among layers of the working class has accompanied this resurgence of struggle. The claims that lower taxes, less red tape and more privatisation would create more and better-paid jobs and safeguard welfare, are widely seen as bare-faced lies in a way they were not five or so years ago. Rather, more and more have come to understand that neo-liberalism means corruption of state officials, big pay and share deals for the heads of privatised industries and job insecurity and low pay for the mass of workers.

The instability across Europe is most evident in the outbursts of militancy as in France and Belgium. Meanwhile, the slow recovery of class politics and of trade union activity in the east show the rebirth of a proto-class consciousness.

These developments signal the start of an important shift in the political situation. After the failure of the opportunities for political revolution in 1989-1991, the world entered a new histori-

cal period. We said then that this would be a revolutionary period, with growing instability and rivalry between the imperialisms.

#### **Fiction**

Their New World Order has since proved to be a fiction. But we recognised that the first phase of the post-89 period would be dominated by the effects of economic slump in eastern Europe and the victory of imperialism's Cold Warriors, a world where counter-revolutionary settlements and reactionary ideologies would shackle the working class.

As 1996 begins, there is evidence of the beginning of the end of the reactionary phase. Workers Power in Britain, and the LRCI internationally, will seize the opportunity to build on the renewed struggles, and press home the attack against those who seek to profit from the misery of the New World Order. The LRCI will do this in a way that provides the only guarantee of ultimate success: by fighting to build a world party of socialist revolution that can finally ensure an end to the reactionary epoch of imperialism.

• For more on France, see pages 10 and 11; Russia page 12.



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## Employment Service

# Spread the strike!



**Employment Service strikers at Barnsbury, North London** 

N 3 January in Bexleyheath JobCentre in South East London, a woman hospitalised four people, including one member of staff, in a frenzied knife attack. For low-paid Employment Service (ES) workers throughout Britain, this attack did not come out of the blue. It was a tragedy waiting to happen.

For years, civil servants in JobCentres, "on the front line", have been under increasing strain as they have had to administer ever decreasing benefits with ever more pressure to get claimants "off the books".

Now these workers have had enough. CPSA members in 41 local Employment Service (ES) offices have been on indefinite strike since 30 November in pursuit of a 9% pay claim.

But the dispute is about more than just money. The strike is already threatening to delay the introduction of the hated Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) in October. ES workers know that the JSA will increase the harassment of the unemployed, leading to more attacks on staff.

Strikers should add the scrapping of the JSA and the installation of proper safety equipment to their list of demands. This would force management back on the defensive, which is the best way of ensuring the support of claimants and preventing the victimisation of strikers on their return to work.

#### Danger

The strike is already in danger of being sold out. On 12 December, the right-wing "moderate" leadership of the CPSA rang up local activists and announced that the strikes were being suspended because ES management were prepared to meet them in talks at ACAS. In a spontial management have offer \$500 bonus to scabs prepared office and break the strike. Else strikers are being phoned up at and offered more hours or even put to meet them in talks at ACAS. In a spontial management have offer \$500 bonus to scabs prepared of the triple.

by a Civil Service worker

taneous and angry protest 150 strikers from around the country converged on Leeds two days later to barrack Alan Churchyard, the CPSA Deputy General Secretary leading the negotiations.

Halfway through a militant confrontation, someone leaked an internal ES minute which revealed that the precondition for the talks was that the 1995 pay settlement was not up for discussion. This was to be kept top secret so as not to embarrass the CPSA leadership! Alan Chuchyard was not allowed to leave Leeds without getting onto his mobile phone and getting authorisation to call the strikes back on.

The following day, the buoyant mood of militancy spread. In London another huge lobby of strikers surrounded the CPSA HQ to demand ratification of Chuchyard's decision and an escalation of the action. In Cardiff, JobCentre strikers picketed out a neighbouring office who had thought the action had been suspended and then held an 40-strong impromptu rally in the snow.

Unfortunately the Christmas break allowed time for management and the CPSA leadership to regain their composure. Nothing has yet been heard of the promised escalation of the action. Less than 5% of the offices nationally are on strike. This has enabled the ES to run a virtually uninterrupted service. To rub salt into the strikers' wounds, London regional management have offered a £500 bonus to scabs prepared to move office and break the strike. Elsewhere strikers are being phoned up at home and offered more hours or even promotion if they return to work now.

It is urgent that strikers and other militants in the ES begin to organise on a national basis. The unofficial Central Strike Committee, drawing in delegates from the six London offices on strike, has already organised some impressive lobbies and mass pickets. It now needs to draw in delegates from the rest of the country and fight for an immediate allout national strike. It alone should have full control of all negotiations, the running of the strike and access to the union's fighting fund. Only this way can further sell-outs be stopped and more offices brought out with the equal distribution of strike pay.

#### Drastic

Without such drastic action the strike looks set to become isolated. Many strikers, especially Militant Labour supporters who are in the Section Executive leadership, believe that the dispute can still be won because of the effect it is having on JSA training. Their proposed strategy for a programme of 2-day regional rolling strikes, is a step backwards.

Strikers need to push for a national indefinite strike—even if this means putting at risk the full strike pay they are currently receiving. The bureaucrats are using their ability to turn the tap of strike pay on and off to isolate the dispute.

Given a strong and clear lead, workers' confidence in their ability to fight and win can grow in leaps and bounds. Activists need to grasp the nettle and start agitating for more militant action and building up independent strike funds for unofficial escalation.

- For an indefinite national ES strike!
- For a national strike committee!
  Spread the action, unofficially if nec-

essary!

# Bolton college strike

by a Natshe member

November. They are fighting to stop the imposition of new contracts. The strike has now become a key test of strength. If the Bolton management defeats this well-organised branch, then the employers in further education (FE) colleges across the country will go on a renewed offensive.

Many colleges are experiencing redundancies and the November 1995 Budget promised more to come. Gillian Shephard's much vaunted extra money for schools comes simply from robbing the FE and higher education budgets.

FE colleges are expected to increase student numbers by 50,000 on reduced resources. Yet over the last three years there has already been a cut in funding of 11% per student. Overall, colleges have been told to increase numbers by another 12% by 1999, while suffering a cut from £3,069 million in central funding next year to £3,016 million in 1998/9. The Further Education Funding Council, together with college corporations, is using the fake "market" to justify cutbacks, leading to job losses and serious attacks on provi-

About 150 colleges are "in difficulty" and around 40 of these were insolvent, according to figures released in November. College "efficiency drives" using new contracts enforced by hard line managers have sent stress and illness rates rocketing. Any dissent is met with the threat of complete closure if the college loses its "competitive edge".

In the face of these attacks, several NATFHE branches have mounted strong resistance but the union leadership has sabotaged national action. The majority of colleges have now concluded local agreements or are in talks with NATFHE on a local basis. So far, these agreements all involve a substantial retreat from the old "Silver Book", but they do incorporate some protection and hours limits for all teaching staff, unlike the totally flexible contract which the employers' organisation, the CEF, originally wanted.

The loss of a national agreement has led to fragmentation and this leaves some branches vulnerable. Bolton management clearly hoped to exploit this situation, but have for-

tunately received a nasty shock.

The Bolton strikers need further financial and moral support to sustain them and every NATFHE branch should be holding collections and solidarity meetings. They also need further support from their students and other local trade unionists. In response to management's attempt to recruit scab labour there should be effective mass picketing, with delegations from local colleges in support.

Despite the difficulties involved in attempting to spread the strike – the consistent refusal of the national union to back any solidarity action, and the fact that most of the strong branches in the area have already reached settlements – militants will have to argue for ways of doing this if management stays intransigent.

#### Solidarity

A properly organised national solidarity day should be called. More importantly branches in dispute, whether over redundancies, contracts, part-timers' rates or pay, should fight to come out alongside the Bolton strikers.

The continuing battles show that the fight for a militant rank and file movement in the union is still crucial. The initial resistance to the contracts was organised by the small Socialist Lecturers' Alliance. As the dispute developed more militants came into the fight, including the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) which has a substantial membership in NATFHE. Last year, the SWP-backed Fight the Contracts Now campaign provided some co-ordination, but SWP leaders have made clear that Fight the Contracts Now is to be dropped with the waning of the national dispute.

The attacks, however, are not going away. The North West Region has taken the initiative in calling a conference on Saturday 13 January to discuss the way forward. This conference must back candidates for the executive elections who are committed to militant policies, but more importantly it must commit itself to action in defence of jobs and conditions and for a renewed fight for a national contract. It must launch the fight to transform the union's whole structure and leadership and agree to set up an organisation to fight for these aims.

### CDFU Conference

conference was attended by around 120 delegates from 80 branches. It represented most of those branches who have begun to reorganise the left in Unison over the last two years. It included leading organisers of the SWP's Unison work.

One of the main resolutions of the day included a demand on the SWP that they no longer stand aside from the rest of the left but unite in one organisation. It also called for the establishment of local CDFU groups. But in spite of this appeal, the SWP leadership made ever more spurious and absurd excuses.

According to the SWP leaders, any attempt to prepare for action, build solidarity, or prepare a fight against the officials when there is no action

currently going on, is a "diversion" leaving socialists less able to respond to spontaneous outbreaks of action, they said.

**Fight** 

The CDFU proved, in the debates of the afternoon around pay, privatisation and racism, that it can show the way forward for those Unison members who want to fight.

It must now build on the progress it has made and go forward to develop the basis for a rank and file movement which can break the bureaucracy's hold over our union once and for all.

We urge the SWP as an organisation, and failing that individual SWP members in Unison, to join us in that fight.

## Liverpool fights on

instatement and union recognition after more than 15 weeks.

The dispute between dockworkers and the scab-herding bosses of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC) has reached a crucial stage. The ACL shipping line, which accounts for nearly 60% of the port of Liverpool's traffic, has publicly threatened to take its business elsewhere, unless there is a settlement by 15 January. MDHC may soon face a choice between either closing Liverpool docks or stopping their attempt to run the port with cheap, casual labour.

Before Christmas, T&G General Secretary, Bill Morris, began talks with MHDC management. Morris characterised the negotiations as "constructive and conducted in a spirit which indicates a determination to find an agree-

ment." Some dockers fear a sell-out that would only provide for selective rehiring. But as Bob Ritchie, Liverpool docker and T&G shop steward, told Workers Power, "there is no way any of us are going back through those gates, unless we're all going back."

The dockers have won support from workers across Merseyside and beyond. Delegations from Liverpool have travelled to Europe and even further afield, including visits to Australia, Canada and the USA. In Bob Ritchie's words, "internationalism has been key to the success we've had so far."

In the USA, a trio of pickets persuaded dockers in New York, Baltimore and the naval port of Norfolk, Virginia not to touch the ACL-owned Companion Express. Francophone dockers in Quebec pledged not to touch ships coming from or bound for Liverpool and have contributed more than £5,000. Australian dockworkers have chipped in with a vital £15,000.

For the Liverpool dockers, victory is far from assured, but is certainly within reach—despite the T&G's refusal to give more than token backing to an illegal walk-out. The Liverpool battle has key lessons for all of us about the need to uphold such basic union principles as "don't cross picket lines". The dockers' experience graphically illustrates that capitalism is a global enemy that we can and must fight globally.

Cheques/postal orders payable to: Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards' Committee, c/o Mr J. Davies, Secretary/ Treasurer, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool L6 4AS.

Join the demonstration on Saturday 13 January. Assemble at Myrtle Parade, 10.30am for march to rally at St. George's Hall, 12 noon.

## Major's majority crumbles

# Sweep them away!

OHN MAJOR'S new year resolution: give up politics.

If this wasn't what he decided to do as 1995 turned into 1996, life could well decide it for him. Emma Nicholson's defection from the Tories to the Liberal Democrats has cut Major's parliamentary majority to three. By-elections early this year will almost certainly cut it to one and a firm of statistical analysts has calculated that six or seven Tory MPs will die in 1996.

There is a diary of disasters looming—rail privatisation votes, the publication of the Scott Inquiry report, local elections and the European Union's (EU) Inter-Governmental Conference. Each one is a potential land mine for the Major government. Each could be the catalyst for the government's collapse.

Major hoped that the leadership election last summer had quietened his party down. The "right" were beaten—so it seemed—and order was restored.

The defection of Alan Howarth to Labour and Emma Nicholson to the Lib Dems within the space of three months—both of them citing the party's lurch to the right as the reason for their discontent—has demonstrated that the leadership contest came nowhere near resolving the real split in the Tory Party's ranks.

#### Phase

The last phase of Tory rule is particularly nasty. The economic recession in Britain in the early 1990s, and today's anaemic recovery, have given them less room for tax bribery and have forced them into taking some desperate measures. Stripped of the cosmetics of the economic boom of the late 1980s, the ugliness of Toryism is revealed.

But Nicholson and Howarth would be hard put to prove that Major or his government are really to the right of Thatcher in her prime. After all hers was the government of endless rounds of racist legislation, attacks on civil liberties and all-out assaults on workers' rights, services and living standards. Both Howarth and Nicholson were loyal members of those administrations.

Michael Portillo's response to

Nicholson's defection shone a light on the real cause of the split—Europe. He announced:

"If she wants a United States of Europe then of course she is right to leave the Conservatives, who are opposed to it."

Nicholson is an unsavoury Thatcherite careerist, who happily served as a "vice chairman" (sic) of the party for two years under the rabid racist Norman Tebbit. She does not want a United States of Europe but now inclines more towards the pro-Europeanism of Ted Heath than the Little Englandism of Portillo.

Yet Portillo chose to make Europe the main issue, just as he did with his conference speech last October. The reason is simple. The battle lines in the Tory Party are drawn over Europe, not over "left" and "right".

This rift within the British ruling class, between those sectors whose economic interests are oriented towards the US and Japan, and those who depend for success on closer economic integration with the EU's markets, is causing the Tories to self-destruct. They could quite possibly split when they go into opposition. It will certainly keep them on the brink of permanent crisis for the rest of their term of office.

Today the Tory Party has the stench of the charnel house. Political corpses are piling up. Decay and destruction are the trademarks of Major's government.

Should we stand by and wait for them to finish themselves off? Should we stand, like spies on the old Berlin Wall, waiting and hoping for more defectors to cross?

No! The turncoats are Tories, perpetrators of endless attacks on the working class, who are now desperately trying to save their own political careers. If Nicholson wants to become a Lib Dem Euro-MP, so what? We are glad to see them cause problems for Major, but we don't want these people in the labour movement. We don't want them to strengthen the anti-socialist right in the Labour Party.

And we certainly do not want to wait for the Tories to self-destruct. We want to destroy them as a political force. Back in December Major lost a parliamentary vote on EU fishing policy. Tony Blair observed that "the government is unravelling". He was correct. But in 1996 Labour has the opportunity to inflict far more serious defeats—if it has the guts to table repeated confidence motions and wreck the government's legislative programme. In this case the government won't unravel, it will collapse.

Major, who won a 21-seat majority in 1992 against all predictions, is now effectively finished. If he does survive another year in office, stumbling on as a minority government courtesy of Ulster Unionist support, it will be as a result of Labour failing to move in for the kill.

#### Spark

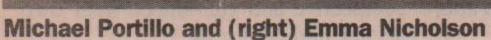
A strategy aimed at wrecking the Tories' legislative programme inside parliament—something that Labour could very easily do even within parliamentary procedure—could spark anti-Tory militancy outside parliament.

The fight against the Asylum and Immigration Bill could become an enormous movement if Labour gave such a lead. The same holds true for the fight against rail privatisation. Wrecking tactics by Labour could encourage strike action by rail workers. But the last thing that Blair wants is an election victory based on working class action outside

In order to ensure that Tory voters flock to "New Labour" at the next election, Blair prefers to let the Tories tear themselves apart. The fact that millions of workers and thousands of refugees will pay for this strategy in what one pundit labelled the Tories' "scorched earth policy" as they enter their death throes, is for Blair a small price to pay for the keys to No. 10.

For us it is an unacceptable and unnecessary price. We need to force Labour and, crucially, the unions to fight the Tories and bring them down *now*. And the best way of doing that is to fight them on the streets and in the workplaces now. If we do, then they won't make it to the local elections in May, never mind see out 1996.









# Strikes and sellouts in 1995

by Kate Foster, NUT rep

S 1995 ended most union activists had their eyes firmly fixed on France. But what kind of a year was 1995 for the unions in Britain? The 12 months just ended saw signs of revived combativity. But it also bore witness to the continuing potent influence of the Tories' anti-union laws. These laws are not only a weapon in the bosses' arsenal, but have time and again enabled union bureaucrats to defuse rank and file anger.

On the positive side, 1995 was the "Year of the Post". Throughout the year, postal workers in numerous towns and regions organised strikes, official and unofficial. January saw victories for Communication Workers Union (CWU) members in Bradford, London and Ayr. The post office is a key part of the sector which saw the most strike days last year.

Official figures up to September 1995 show that 30% of all strike days were recorded in transport, storage and communications. And this was before posties in Scotland took six days of illegal action to force a Royal Mail management climbdown in December. 1995 was supposed to see the end of long-running NATFHE contracts dispute, but didn't. College lecturers, sold out by the national union and stung by anti-union laws, retreated into local bargaining.

But not all lecturers went back to work on worse terms and conditions. Southwark College saw one of the most notable victories of the year. NATFHE members organised an allout strike for four weeks and successfully fought off management's attempt to impose redundancies.

The year ended with a flurry of disputes: strikes at Tate and Lyle, Hillingdon Hospital, and, of course, Liverpool's dockers and firefighters.

Unfortunately, 1995 was also the Year of Strikes that Never Were. The NUM were due to come out in July but they came unstuck over the antiunion laws. Despite an 83% vote for strike action against RJB mining, the Court of Appeal declared the strike illegal because it would have started just hours after the new legal deadline of four weeks (between the ballot result and the start of action) expired. In September, recruiting people to the unions fell foul of the law. The court informed the RMT that their strike ballot over London Underground pay was invalid, as they had recruited 800 new members from ASLEF!

#### Sabotage

The courts proved keen to use the Tory laws to sabotage action, but they were not nearly as effective saboteurs as the union bureaucrats themselves.

Nationally, teachers did not strike against education cuts. Few council workers, with the notable exceptions of the Sheffield library and Liverpool care workers, took strike action against vicious cuts, and the much-vaunted NHS pay dispute fizzled out before it had even begun.

What didn't happen in the schools was probably most remarkable. Remember thousands on the streets

marching against the education cuts? Middle England was in revolt but the teaching unions flew the white flag. The supposedly "left" NUT, refused to affiliate to the Fight Against Cuts in Education campaign and led a boycott. Not of the SATs, but of the anti-cuts demos!

So what lessons should trade union militants learn from the battles of 1995? Undoubtedly, a different spirit is developing in the unions, partly due to the widespread belief that the Tories' days are up.

Partly this is also due to workers being enraged by the boardroom's naked greed, while our real pay shrinks and conditions worsen. A "change in mood" surfaced in 1995; a sense that more workers were prepared to take action. The mood, however, didn't often translate into walk-outs. Up to September 1995, the bosses lost fewer working days and the number of workers who actually took strike action was down from the previous year. There were slightly more strikes, however-206 in the 12 months to September 1995 compared to 190 the previous year.

#### Offensive

The bosses have also been on the offensive. There have been some hard-fought, bitter disputes. The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company threw down the gauntlet with the sacking of some 500 workers. Another example came as workers at JJ Foods were locked out and then beaten up on the picket line.

There was a notable rise in victimisations, but an important victory was won by the unions when steward Dave Carr was reinstated at London's Middlesex/University College Hospital after Unison members threatened an indefinite strike.

Another encouraging feature of 1995 was the return of the all-out strike to win, as opposed to the one-day token protest. London lecturers, Sheffield library workers and Scottish posties provided some of the inspiring examples.

The anti-unions laws continue to be a spectre stalking all disputes. But the growth in unofficial action showed one way round the laws. Unofficial action seemed to dodge the threat of sequestration of union funds, at least until February when the High Court found the CWU responsible for January's wildcat postal strike in London and fined the union. These laws must be smashed, through the widest possible defiance—however much union bureaucrats wring their hand or denounce such action. It is no good appealing to European courts or waiting for a Labour government already committed to retaining them.

As for the bureaucracy, it is responsible for the Year of Strikes that Never Were. To make sure it doesn't happen again, we need to build rank and file organisation to challenge the stranglehold of these traitors.

What then of the coming year? British trade unionists should be prepared to follow a few French lessons. Au revoir 1995, bienvenue 1996!

Write to: BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX

## Socialist Labour Party

# Scargill constitution threatens SLP

RTHUR SCARGILL'S announcement of his intention to found a new Socialist Labour Party (SLP) presented enormous potential for socialists in Britain. For the first time in decades, a trade union leader with national influence had issued a call capable of rallying serious forces on the left wing of the labour movement.

Workers Power responded positively, declaring ourselves prepared to engage in such a process with the aim of promoting the formation of a SLP on the firm foundations of a programme for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the socialist transformation of society

But the approach adopted by Scargill since his announcement shows that there is now a serious threat that the party may never get off the ground. The initial discussion process around the formation of the SLP has been secretive and exclusive, rather than drawing in all socialists who favour the party's formation. Worst of all, a constitution has been drawn up which would severely restrict democratic rights within the party, and would exclude all existing socialist groupings from affiliating to or joining the SLP.

The draft constitution was drawn up by the barristers Michael Mansfield and John Hendy. Two Clauses in particular constitute a charter for witch-hunts of socialists and adherents to alternative views to those of Scargill:

Clause II (3) reads:

"Individuals and organisations other than bona fide trade unions which have their own programme, principles and policies, distinctive and separate propaganda, or which are engaged in the promotion of policies in opposition to those of the party shall be ineligible for affiliation to the party."

For a party which has not yet been established, and which has as yet no decided programme or policies, this is astonishing. Organisations already exist on the British left. Of course they will have "their own programme, principles and policies". Yet any organised force is being excluded from participating in the party unless it abandons its own views in favour of . . . Arthur Scargill's? Or SLP policy once it has been determined?

Either way, this prevents democratic debate within the party, and even prevents individuals from advocating an alternative programme to that of the SLP's incoming leadership.

Put another way, the clause could be summarised as follows:

To be eligible for affiliation to the party, individuals and organisations must either be prepared immediately to abandon their views in favour of those of a leadership which has not yet been elected, or they must in the first place be people without a programme, without policies and without principles.

This is a blueprint for a completely undemocratic and uncritical sect, not a living working class party, which should have nothing to fear from democratic debate or the existence of organised groupings loyally promoting their views within the party, so long as the party's unity in action is not disrupted.

Had this proposed Clause II(3) existed in the old Labour Party constitution, Scargill as an individual would certainly have fallen foul of it. Did he not promote his own policies, on renationalisation, and the scrapping of the anti-union laws? He did and he was right to do so.

The fact is that this method of undemocratic party organisation is derived directly from Stalinism - an influence that has always been very strong on Arthur Scargill. It has nothing in common with the democratic centralism practised by either the Bolsheviks in the days of Lenin or the early years of the CPGB, which always allowed minority points of view the right to organise within the party. Without this, how can the discussions and debates within the party be genuine and accurately reflect the experiences and views of militant workers and youth? How can erroneous policies and tactics be corrected?

How, indeed, can the leaders be called to account or replaced by the membership, so as to avoid, in Arthur Scargill's own words;

"a situation where the parliamentary party takes control of the apparatus and the political tail wags the dog"?

If party members are not allowed to combine around alternative views to the leadership, then the SLP's programme will simply not be up for substantial discussion, development, or democratic amendment.

The draft continues in the same vein. Clause II(4) goes on:

"A member of the Party who joins and/or supports a political organisation other than the Party shall automatically be ineligible to remain a party member."

It is perfectly obvious what is intended here. Scargill wants to exclude the established far-left groupings altogether, rather than allow them to combine in a common organisation and express their opinions democratically within the party. And that is why, without substantial backing from major sections of the trade union movement, and without any sizeable existing left wing current of Labour Party members prepared to found a new party, Scargill now faces a real risk that his entire project could be stillborn. The SLP launch could, unless this course is reversed, draw nothing but a few hundred individual members.

This would be a waste of a great opportunity. There is still time to avoid it. Instead of the restricted and secretive approach adopted so far, there should be open meetings in every city where all socialists willing to help build a new party could express their views about the structure, tasks and programme on which a new party could be founded. In place of national meetings with a handful of invited figures, a democratic national conference should be held open to delegates from all organisations who support in principle the setting up of a new party.

That is the only way to ensure that the process of discussion around the formation of the SLP can provide the basis for a fighting party in which a new generation of militants can debate and decide for themselves the programme they need to overcome the crisis of working class leadership and settle accounts with the capitalists once and for all.



Arthur Scargill



ILP leader James Maxton addresses a rally in 1934

## Lessons of the ILP split

The debates around the wisdom of founding a Socialist Labour Party (SLP) have thrown up references to the last big split in the Labour Party. In July 1932 the Independent Labour Party (ILP) voted to disaffiliate from the Labour Party. John McKee draws some lessons for today.

HE ILP WAS one of the founding organisations of the Labour Party. At the turn of the century it affiliated over 13,000 members to the Labour Representation Committee. Two thirds of the parliamentary Labour Party elected in 1924 were members of the ILP.

The year it left the Labour Party it had 653 branches, 250 of which were in Scotland. It had a large working class membership and was particularly well rooted on the Clyde and in the north of England.

The political circumstances in which it left the Labour party were very different to today's SLP. From the mid-1920s the ILP had been moving leftward. A left group around James Maxton organised his election as party chairman in 1926.

The leftward evolution of the party led it into growing conflict with the Labour leadership. The economic crisis that gripped Britain in 1930 led the then minority Labour government, led by Ramsay Macdonald, to capitulate to Tory and Liberal pressure and introduce massive benefit cuts for the unemployed.

Seventeen ILP MPs led by Maxton fought against this in parliament despite threats of disciplinary action by the Labour leadership.

Macdonald des

Macdonald deserted Labour for a Tory dominated national government in 1931 and split the party at the ensuing general election. But the remaining Labour leadership continued to demand that ILP MPs abide by the Parliamentary Labour Party's (PLP) discipline.

1931 saw massive demonstrations by the unemployed and by striking teachers against 15% wage cuts imposed by the government on the public sector. Discontent in the armed forces boiled over with the fleet in Scotland refusing to put to sea until pay cuts were rescinded, the famous "Invergordon Mutiny".

Under this pressure, in July 1932, the ILP conference rejected arguments from a section of the leadership to accept PLP discipline. They voted by a majority of two to one to disaffiliate from Labour. The ILP left with over 17,000 members, hundreds of branches, an important working class base and three MPs.

This situation contrasts dramatically with the proposed launching of the SLP by Arthur Scargill, where the recent history of the left in the Labour Party has been one of retreat and capitulation in the face of right-wing attacks. The gains made by the left in the late 1970s and early 1980s were surrendered without a fight, with the result that the left in the party is at its weakest since the 1950s.

But there are some similarities between the ILP experience and the project being launched by the SLP. Scargill is proposing to repeat all the *mistakes* of the ILP that guaranteed its decline and extinction. The ILP membership were right to refuse to be bullied by the Labour leadership. They were right to refuse to vote for anti-working class measures, even if this meant a split with the Labour Party. Indeed the whole struggle against a rightwing Labour leadership in the early 1930s opened up the possibility of building a mass revolutionary working class party which could have broken the hold of reformism on British workers. But on one condition: that the ILP broke from the left reformism and pacifism that dominated the party and struck out on a revolutionary road of struggle.

Instead of holding its positions in the Labour Party, in the constituencies and as delegates from the trade unions, and challenging the reformist leadership to expel them for defending working class interests, the ILP just upped and left the LP. The result of this policy, which they called "the clean break", was that they lost the opportunity to win the tens of thousands of LP members who stayed but who sympathised with ILP policies.

The ILP lost thousands of members and supporters as a result of this policy. Worse still, despite the leftward move of the party, as Trotsky recognised, from left reformism to centrism (a political current that vacillates between revolutionary politics and reformism) its leadership stopped half way and became increasingly hostile to a revolutionary strategy by the mid-1930s.

Having cut itself off from work with the mass of Labour Party supporters and refusing to enter the road of revolutionary struggle, the ILP suffered defections both back to the LP and to the Communists

The 1936 conference was a watershed marking its trajectory back to reformism. The party rejected a move to amend the ILP statutes to make clear that the party stood for "the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system". The same conference backed a leadership proposal to end the system of organised groups within the party, a direct attack upon the Marxist Group.

There was of course no room for another reformist party in Britain and the ILP was by this time was a shrivelled reformist sect which rapidly went into terminal decline.

What were the lessons of the ILP split? In the mid-1960s Militant's Peter Taaffe wrote:

"Marxists criticised the ILP in 1933 for breaking from the Labour Party at the wrong time and on the wrong issue."

Taaffe was wrong. The ILP broke from the Labour Party on a principled issue and at the right time, if its purpose had been to set about building a real revolutionary alternative to Labour. The leadership of the ILP turned its back on this perspective and guaranteed their own decline and demise.

# The left and 1 = 5 = 2

It is an open question whether the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) will ever get off the ground. Nevertheless, the responses of socialists to Scargill's call tells you a great deal about their politics. Mark Harrison assesses the response of the Socialist Workers Party and Militant Labour to Scargill's initiative.

Scargill's SLP initiative. It fears a rival organisation to the left of Labour, for the sim-

reformism.

grew rapidly. But growth was only achieved by diluting revolutionary politics. Party cards were scattered amongst the masses, with no requirement for the holder to be an active or even a revolutionary socialist in practice. The SWP's slogan: "Hate the Tories? Worried about Blair? Join the Socialists" summed up the minimum requirement for membership.

Scargill's call for a mass socialist alternative to Labour poses an acute challenge to the line that the SWP are the only socialists to the left of the Labour Party. The SWP's response to Scargill proves that maintaining that fiction is more important to them than fighting for revolutionary politics inside the British working class.

The SWP's response has focused, almost totally, on the secondary question of electoral politics, not on the political programme of the proposed new party.

Initially Scargill's call only drew a response from Alex Callinicos' personal column in Socialist Worker. Before Scargill's call had even been debated in the labour movement Callinicos concluded that the SLP:

"would be just as much an electoral organisation as Labour is . . . This means that the SLP, whatever its intentions, could have little to do with the extraparliamentary struggles which Scargill rightly sees as the future of socialist politics in Britain." (Socialist Worker 18/11/ 95)

The real socialist alternative, according to Callinicos:

"will be built from below, out of struggles on the ground, not from above, through electoral politics". Callinicos treats electoral campaigning in complete abstraction - separate from the politics such campaigns are based on.

He concludes that standing candidates for parliament is necessarily counterposed to class struggles outside parliament. He effectively writes off the possibility of revolutionaries ever standing in elections, a point made in a letter to the following week's Socialist Worker by Eddie Prevost.

Callinicos equates reformism with elections, something Lenin and the Bolshevik members of parliament before the Russian revolution would be very surprised to hear.

The real arguments, with Scargill and other left reformists, will be about the politics of the SLP: what will it fight for; who will control the parliamentary representatives; what will its programme be; how will it operate in the class struggle; will there be internal democracy?

These are the issues around which revolutionaries can begin to break workers from reformism. They are ignored by Callinicos.

They are also ignored by the more authoritative statement in the Socialist Worker of 25/11/95:

"In words it is possible to talk about

THE SWP is running Socialist combining serious intervention in elections with Worker struggle outside the Commons. In practice the two pull in opposite directions. The

ple reason that it cannot clearly deline- search for votes pushes a party towards ate its political differences with left a softening of its message, towards a search for accommodation with the Between 1992 and 1994 the SWP union leaders in order to secure backing and finance. The alternative is to centre on struggle and to recognise that in any situation short of an insurrection revolutionary socialists will appeal to only a minority of the class."

It is true that the pull of electioneering can dilute your militancy, but the reason for that is politics, not participation in elections alone.

If you think that elections can bring about a fundamental change in capitalist society then you will accommodate your politics to win them. But if your programme is revolutionary, and you fight elections with the main aim of making broad propaganda for revolution, then that danger can be resisted.

This is the Leninist method. The Bolsheviks attached great importance to seizing the opportunity to get elected to the Tsarist Duma, a parliament that was considerably more restricted in its scope for revolutionary agitation than the House of Commons.

Indeed, in a book reprinted by the SWP, The Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma, the Bolshevik MP Badayev writes:

"The Central Committee attached exceptional importance to the elections in St Petersburg and therefore instructed the St Petersburg organisation to extend its work as widely as possible and to mobilise all the party forces for the election campaign.

Were the Bolshevik MPs seduced by parliament because they had drunk from the poisoned chalice of "electoral" politics? No. As Badayev points out:

"Activity within the Duma was only a small part of the tasks which confronted the workers' deputies, the predominant part of their work taking place outside of the Duma. Immediately the elections were over, I became absorbed in this and was faced with many new Party and trade union duties."

And this occurred in a situation well "short of an insurrection"!

The assertion that "electoral politics" is opposed to "socialism from below" is rubbish, as any socialist who has done electoral work-revolutionary or reformist-well knows. On the doorstep socialists are confronted with the real life, everyday issues that workers want answers to immediately. Intervening in, and transforming, the everyday fight over council house repairs, rents, crime and school provision is about as "below" as the class struggle goes!

The SWP are forced to make participation in elections the key issue because they have no programme on which to fight Scargill and distinguish themselves politically from his project.

They have no rounded alternative to his left reformist vision for the SLP and therefore cannot fight him for the political heart of the project. Only a revolutionary programme provides such a means. Without one the SWP are constantly prey to reformism themselves.

ilitant Labour are unreservedly in favour of the foundation of a Socialist Labour Party. To their credit, they haven't allowed their enthusiasm to push them into a capitulation to Scargill's bureaucratic constitution. Indeed, their paper fully exposed Scargill's manoeuvring:

"... we have to sound a warning. The opportunity could be thrown away unless the secretive, exclusive approach adopted so far is superseded by a much more open approach." (Militant 15/12/

Workers Power fully agrees with this. We are ready to unite with Militant Labour to fight for an open, democratic discussion about what sort of party the SLP should be.

We disagree with one of Militant's main sticking points—autonomy for a Scottish section-which we believe concedes to Scottish nationalism and would disrupt the fight to build a British revolutionary party. But we agree that this should be a matter for open debate, not something dictated by Scargill.

However, there are more central elements of Militant Labour's approach to the SLP that reveal a flawed method.

Militant Labour long maintained a perspective of strategic entry into the Labour Party—the notion that socialists should remain within Labour at all costs and aim to transform it into an instrument for the socialist transformation of society.

Even after they felt compelled to split from Labour, Militant argued this was only a "detour" from their main perspec-

They would, at some future date, get back on to the main road of entryism.

## AHHAR

They claimed it was impossible to build a revolutionary party outside the Labour Party since the masses would inevitably enter it in vast numbers. "History" would push the party leftwards and bring it under Militant's leadership. The task of socialists was to remain within the party, and in order to do so, to adapt their politics to the Labourite milieu and refrain from advancing clear revolutionary demands.

Thus even whilst standing independently for the European Parliament, Scottish Militant Labour had to struggle against the national Militant leadership in order to be allowed to include the word "revolution" in their election programme.

To justify their change of tack with regard to the Labour Party, Militant Labour has wrongly estimated the nature of the changes brought about by Blair and the character of the Labour Party itself.

In the December issue of Socialism Today, Militant Labour argue that the final dropping of Clause Four (after Scargill's defeat at the annual conference) and the de-selection of Liz Davies for Leeds North East were decisive:

"These developments clearly mark a decisive, qualitative change in the character of the Labour Party." (Socialism Today, December 1995).

This analysis reflects a deep confusion. Blair's counter-reforms do not constitute a qualitative transformation of the Labour Party.

Indeed, so far Blair has relied on the backing of the trade union bureaucrats for the success of his policy changes. The union leaders' influence in the party exists because of Labour's working class roots in the trade unions.

The union link is a feature of Labour's character as a bourgeois workers' party (a party based on and supported by the working class but with thoroughly capitalist politics). That link has been weakened-by Blair and with many of the union leaders' consent. But it has not been broken.

But it is not necessary to label New Labour a bourgeois liberal party in order to favour the idea of the SLP. The SLP provides the chance to rally working class forces to the fight for a revolutionary party, a revolutionary socialist alternative to Labour.

But Militant Labour's leaders are clearly not trying to do this. They see the SLP as a left reformist alternative to Labour that can once again serve as a vehicle for their old perspective of strategic entry.

This is clear from two things: their attitude to Scargill's original discussion paper and their espousal of the model of the Italian Rifondazione Comunista (Communist Refoundation, a neo-Stalinist split from the former Communist Party).

Militant Labour repeatedly accept Scargill's notion that Clause Four was the socialist soul of the Labour Party, that it lent the party some sort of socialist potential. But Clause Four was never more than a reformist socialist fig leaf for Labour's real purpose: to save capitalism, time after time, from the anger of the working class.

Behind Militant's acceptance of Scargill's view of Labour's socialist past lies their view of the SLP's future. It is not to be a Labour Mark II - fair enough. But they set out as their model for the SLP the Italian RC:

"The RC in Italy has attracted new layers of the working class precisely because it avoided Stalinist forms of organisation." (18/11/95)

But the RC is a party with left reformist politics. It is led and controlled by neo-Stalinists. Its MPs are not under rank and file control. They have just voted for prime minister Dini's austerity budget and saved the government's skin.

In other words, it is not a model for those who want to build a revolutionary alternative to Labour. But by pointing to it as the type of "broad church" that they favour, Militant are making clear in advance that - as with their old tactics towards Labour - they will not fight to make the SLP a revolutionary party. They will try to make it a roughly adequate vehicle, "a viable weapon" for socialism.

We reject this for the same reason we rejected Militant Labour's old view of Labour. Workers and youth need a revolutionary alternative to reformism, not a variant of it that Marxists burrow into, waiting for the day when an "objective process" delivers the masses and the party to them.

To build a revolutionary party you have to fight for a revolutionary programme. And that is an argument that needs to be taken into the discussions around Scargill's SLP, just as much as it does in discussions within the Labour left, the unions and every other sphere of the class struggle.



Revolutionary election work can help mobilise around basic struggles

# Towards revolutional regroupment!

SARESULT of initial discussions, a study of the declarations of both tendencies and above all as a result of the visit of a representative of the LRCI to Argentina, the Internationalist Faction (IF) and the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) recognise that there has been a convergence of programme and perspective during the last years between the two organisations.

On this basis we announce the following declaration of intent to our supporters, to the workers and popular vanguard of the countries where we work, and to the different tendencies that claim the banner of Trotskyism. This declaration of intent between the IF and the LRCI outlines areas of agreement and differences, as well as areas for further discussion to deepen our knowledge of the positions of both organisations. It includes steps to be taken to continue on the path of deepening relations between both tendencies.

It is the responsibility of the leaderships of both international tendencies to accelerate the initial convergence that we have noted, making every effort to overcome the conservative and sectarian pressures that we have been subjected to after years of isolation and search for a resolution of the differences that remain. If we do not enter into this process, both tendencies run the danger of allowing the events of the next years to separate both groups, something that would impede the strengthening of a pole of struggle against revisionist currents that have usurped the name of Trotskyism.

Both currents, the IF and the LRCI, are the product of a struggle with centrist organisations that claim to be Trotskyist: the IF inside the LIT, and the LRCI traces its origins in a split from the International Socialists of Tony Cliff.

Like the LRCI, the IF insists that the Fourth International adopted clearly centrist positions at its Third Congress in 1951 and was transformed into a centrist movement by 1953. Both tendencies arrived independently at the conclusion that none of the fragments of the Fourth International after the war (e.g. LIT, USFI, FI-IC, FI-OCRFI, CWI, ICL) represent the revolutionary continuity of the Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938.

Since 1989 we have witnessed fundamental changes in the post-war world, that have been an acid test for the programme and perspectives of all the important currents that claim to be Trotskyist. All of them have failed this test. Some have adapted themselves fatally to the nationalist and restorationist currents (which led some for example such as the LIT to state that there had been "a triumphant democratic revolution" in 1989/90). Others equated the collapse of the Stalinist bureaucracy with the liquidation of the workers' states, revealing thereby a profound adaptation to Stalinism.

Faced with all this the IF and the LRCI have arrived at a common evaluation of:

• the crisis of Stalinism, which has not made worse but rather increased the possibility of overcoming the crisis of revolutionary leadership in the workers' movement.

the characterisation of the process opened up in the years 1989-91, and a common policy in the face of the central events of this process. We both raised the demand for revolutionary and socialist unification in the face of the events in Germany in 1989-90. This was in sharp contrast to all those who argued either for the defence of the Berlin Wall and the Stalinist bureaucracy (eg Spartacism, the USFI majority), as well as those who capitulated to Kohl and German imperialism with the (non-class) demand for "re-unification" now!" (eg Lambertism and the LIT). In the same way both ten-

dencies opposed the attempt of the coupmakers in the USSR in 1991 and were in a bloc with those forces that struggled to stop it, while at the same time struggling to prevent Yeltsin from coming to power by advancing a policy for the working class to come to the head of the struggle for the political revolution.

• a convergent definition on the actual character of the states of eastern Europe and the ex-USSR today, rejecting the position that the process of restoration has finished and that capitalist states have been constructed in them.

Apart from these important areas of agreement, we also agree on:

• the view that after 1989 there has been a process of social-democratisation of the Stalinist parties, the bankruptcy of bourgeois nationalism and the resurgence of new mediation forces of a reactionary character such as the Sao Paolo Forum in Latin America.

• the struggle against the imperialist blockade and the defence of the conquests of the Cuban revolution at the same time that we struggle against Castroite bureaucracy for the political revolution.

• during the war in Bosnia, the defence of the multi-ethnic character of this state, the right of national self-determination, raising both the necessity for the struggle for a workers' multi-ethnic Bosnia, the struggle against the imperialist intervention and for arms to the Bosnians.

the appearance of new phenomena of struggle of the oppressed masses, such as the blacks in the USA, peasants in Mexico and above all the events in France in the struggle against the effects of the Maastricht Treaty. We agree on the need for an independent struggle against those sectors of the French bourgeoisie that oppose European unity, for the denunciation of the traitorous role of the trade union leadership, and the struggle for the development of self-organisation by the workers.

On more general matters concerning strategy in the construction of the party both tendencies have:

• a general agreement in the policy towards the trade unions, on the tactic of the workers' and peasants' government and the soviet strategy as presented in the Trotskyist Manifesto and in Estrategia Internacional Nos 4 and 5, materials which in general both currents agree to be of a principled character.

 the importance of youth work and the need to build an independent youth organisation.

#### Areas of difference

1. We have a different evaluation of

Since 1988 the main centrist current of degenerate Trotskyism in Latin America, the International Workers League (LIT) has been convulsed by crisis. Splits in its "mother party" in Argentina (the MAS) were precipitated by the death of its leader Nahuel Moreno in 1987, the collapse of Stalinism after 1989 and a series of defeats inflicted on the working class under President Menem. In turn the entire LIT has suffered splits. The first of these was the expulsion of the Internationalist Faction (IF) from the LIT in 1988, a faction led by what is now the PTS in Argentina. Other groups of the IF exist in Brazil, Chile and Mexico. Since the IF's expulsion from the MAS, for criticising its strategic adaptation to Stalinism, the response of the IF and the LRCI to major events in the new world order has been markedly similar. As a result the LRCI and the IF have been

able to agree the following declaration.

the character of the revolutions in China, Yugoslavia, Cuba and Vietnam. For the IF the key to the theoretical explanation of these events is to be found in the theoretical hypothesis contained in the *Transitional Programme* which argued that; "under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure etc) the petty bourgeois parties including the Stalinists may go further than they wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie".

The LRCI believes that this hypothesis only applies to Stalinist parties, and that they can expropriate capitalism only after having liquidated the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses.

These differences on the character of the above revolutions open up a different interpretation of the theory of permanent revolution after the Second World War. Nevertheless, neither current considers that Stalinism is a centrist or progressive force, and the different interpretations do not appear to give rise to programmatic differences.

2. The LRCI does not agree with the slogan of a "Black Republic" that the IF used as part of its programme in South Africa.

3. The area of major difference is in regard to the question of reconstruction or refoundation of the Fourth International on a principled basis.

The IF considers that it is necessary to deliver a death blow to defeat revision-

ism that has usurped the name of Trotskyism, and that this blow is synthesised in the need to reconstruct the Fourth International. This is based on the fact that despite the capitulations and treason committed by the "Trotskyist" currents during the post-war period that have, at one time or another, capitulated to forces of counter-revolution (Stalinist, Social-democratic, bourgeois nationalist), the banner of the Fourth International continues to appear as the "spectre" of the social revolution, a flag that embodies a revolutionary tradition in the fight against imperialism, fascism and its agents in the womb of the workers' movement. In particular the FI is the only current that confronted Stalinism in a revolutionary way when it originally emerged, including confronting it in the concentration camps of Vorkuta.

Only the FI can present these revolutionary banners in the heart of Marxism, different to the prostitution that the currents have made in the name of Maoism or Castroism. For this reason the IF considers that it is totally unjustified to surrender these revolutionary banners to the centrist organisations that speak in the name of Trotskyism.

The LRCI considers that the demand for a "new, Leninist-Trotskyist International" best expresses the fact that the Fourth International ceased to exist as a unified or revolutionary international during the years 1951-53. Partial criticisms by various factions of various frag-

ments of the Fourth International have failed to regenerate either the politics or organisation. The LRCI considers that the question of number is less important than the fact that such an international must be Trotskyist in ideology and programme.

On the history of the Fourth International in the post-war, as we have already signalled, both consider that the FI was transformed into a centrist movement in the period 1951-53, and that none of the currents that emerged out of the fragmentation maintained continuity with the strategy and programme of Trotsky's FI founded in 1938. Nevertheless, to insist on this is not to suggest that during the post-war period distinct currents did not emerge which episodically raised revolutionary positions in the face of events in the class struggle. The IF believes these positions to be part of the theoretical and political sharpening of principled Trotskyism and constitute important signposts for the reconstruction of a revolutionary strategy and programme. The IF considers that these partial struggles allowed the maintenance—in a dispersed and scattered form-of threads of continuity with the revolutionary strategy and for this reason the IF does not agree with the concept of "petrified centrism" used by the LRCI.

#### Areas for further discussion

1. The IF wants to deepen the study of the materials of the LRCI on the postwar period, such as in the *Trotskyist Manifesto* where it argues that the productive forces were developed after the Second World War, trying to specify the sense of this affirmation and the implications of it for the character of the epoch as one of wars, crises and revolutions. The LRCI insists that its affirmation does not imply that there was a new stage of "neo-capitalism" such as was argued by Mandel, nor does it imply a change in the character of the epoch.

2. The exact nature of the situation opened by the years 1989-91.

3. Electoral tactics and when and how to give a critical vote to reformist bourgeois-worker parties and centrist organisations that claim to be Trotskyist.

4. The nature of the anti-imperialist united front (in particular the programme raised in relation the US invasion of Haiti in 1994).

5. The nature of social oppression under capitalism (gender, youth, sexual orientation and racial) and the programme and necessary forms of organisation to overcome them.

6. The process of the construction of the party, the forms of organisations and



PTS contingent on the 7 December Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo demonstration in Buenos Aires

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tasks appropriate at different stages for increasing the size of the party, given its influence in the class struggle.

7. The nature of democratic centralism in an international tendency. Both organisations reject the tradition of the "mother party", as well as federalism based on diplomatic relations. Nevertheless, in initial discussions there seems to be difference on the degree of centralism and democracy that there would have to be in an international regroupment in the actual conditions of the stage of development of our tendencies. However, we agree that given the present state of relations between both currents we must prioritise the clarification and resolution of differences over aspects of theory, strategy and programme that we have outlined above.

Given what we have noted about the need for programmatic and strategic clarification and of aspects of theory and history we believe that the key to deepening relations between both tendencies will be our ability to arrive at common principled positions on today's class struggle. In the coming months this means that the LRCI and IF will attempt to arrive at a common evaluation of:

1. The French strike wave;

The resurgence of black struggles in the USA;

3. The EZLN in Mexico;

- 4. The resurgence of neo-Stalinism in Russia;
- 5. The revival of reformist and centrist currents such as represented by Scargill in his call for a new Socialist Labour Party in Britain, the convergence between the PCF and LCR, and the call for a Workers' Party that currents such as the LIT and UIT have made in France—to suggest only the most important;
- 6. The concrete programme for the development of the political revolution in Cuba

#### Stages for deepening relations between both tendencies

1. The first stage is an intensive study and exchange of materials, of translations of key materials of both currents, that will allow a better knowledge of positions by all the militants and leaderships of all sections in both international tendencies.

2. A second stage that evaluates if there is a sufficient basis to form a Liaison Committee between both organisations, which, through common work and discussion, will study whether the basis exists to move to a superior form of relationship, such as the fusion of both currents into a common international Trotskyist tendency. To discuss this we should convene a meeting in mid-April either in Buenos Aires or London.

3. Lastly, a delegation of the IF will attend the IEC of the LRCI in July 1996 where we will evaluate advances registered thus far and how to carry forward the relationship.

The signatories consider that this declaration of intent is an important step towards achieving a principled revolutionary regroupment of Trotskyism and consider it part of the struggle to defeat centrist revisionism that has usurped the name of Trotskyism. We hope that the principled character of this declaration will influence other currents that claim to be Trotskyist and sectors of honest revolutionaries that are found inside centrist organisations and that in this sense it could act as a pole of attraction for international revolutionary regroupment.

Approved unanimously by the Central Committee of the PTS (Argentina), 16 December 1995 and by the IF.

Approved unanimously by the International Executive Committee of the LRCI, 30 December 1995.

## Mexico

# A regime of crisis

ON 20 December 1994 the Mexican government devalued the peso. US investors panicked and withdrew their funds on a huge scale. The economy collapsed into a severe recession, boosting mass unemployment. The government has spent the last year trying to restore investor confidence by massive attacks on welfare spending, further privatisation and erosion of labour rights.

David Ellis, a Workers Power supporter working in Mexico, interviewed two militants of the *Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo*, the Mexican sister group of the Argentinean PTS, about the events of the last year.

WP What caused the crash of the peso in 1994 and the economic crisis?

The devaluation was caused by US plans for Mexico, especially the effect of the Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) effective from January 1994, and also by the Zapatista rebellion which started in response to the NAFTA accord. It was a crisis of the economy but also a crisis of the legitimacy of the Mexican regime.

Following the collapse of Stalinism, imperialism is trying to reorganise itself. It is trying to re-colonise Latin America. It is doing this through privatisations and attacking the old nationalist, protectionist states.

WP: How has the risis affected the middle and working classes?

to protest against mounting debt. Between 1990 and 1994 it was easy to get as many as ten credit cards! With the devaluation it has been impossible to pay these debts since the value of the middle class' dollar savings has been eroded. Small businesses, rich farmers and the "informal sector" have all been affected by the recession. The working class has naturally been more affected by the decrease in the value of its salaries; the minimum wage is 18 pesos a day. But so far it has been the middle class that has organised.

WP: What do you mean when you say there is a crisis of the regime?

PRI that does not want political reform. All the main political parties and the factions of the PRI want to continue with the economic reforms. The trouble is they want to do this without affecting their own interests. The interests of the sectors of the bourgeoisie closest to imperialism and other sectors of the national bourgeoisie can be different. This has caused the growth of factions in the PRI. The current leader and President Zedillo belongs to no factions. He is the weak man that stands between the faction. That is why there is still a sharp crisis in the PRI.

WP: How is the government attacking the working class?

LTS: First of all, the PRI still uses its control of the unions to introduce reactionary measures. It wants to attack the laws that protect workers. This includes Article 123 of the Constitution which includes the right to strike and the eighthour limit on the working day.

It is difficult for them to attack it openly because it would mean an attack on the whole class. So they are using underhand methods.

For example, a worker would be forced to work more than eight hours. Companies are attacking the more secure contracts and are introducing temporary contracts.

Education is another example. Here there is a process of decentralisation. The

federal government gives a grant to the local state and it is therefore no longer the responsibility of the government. If there is a lack of resources, it is the problem of the regional state.

WP: On 1 December there was a 100,000 strong march against the government reforms of social security organised even against the wishes of many union leaders. Social security workers, telephone, electricity and transport workers joined together on this demonstration. How significant was this?

Congreso del Trabajo (CT)—the congress of all the trade unions which are independent of the PRI-controlled Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM).

The union leaders, especially Velazquez of the CTM, cannot guarantee the PRI will help the workers. There are sections of the CT that have had to speak out against the attacks. But the workers have yet to gain confidence in their own strength. They have not reached the conclusion that they need to organise themselves for their own interests. What we have is more local struggles, often as a result of the process of decentralisation of federal government responsibilities, but these have not extended to a national level.

WP: What is the way forward?

politics for a revolutionary solution. This includes the need for independence of the working class from the PRI and for democracy in the unions. They need to form their own organisations and to use class struggle methods.

After the Chiapas uprising we argued to extend the struggle, the land occupations and to overthrow the PRI and fight for a revolutionary constituent assembly organised by the workers and peasants.

The Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD, a bourgeois party formed by Cárdenas after he split from the PRI over economic policy), the Zapatistas and the leaders of the unions preferred to negotiate with the PRI.

They have a lot of control. In the movement against the privatisation reforms of the *Instituto Mexican del Seguro Social* (IMSS) there are some union bureaucrats. They have been forced to speak out against the reforms. But MPs who are members of the social security union and of the PRI voted for the attacks.

This is another weakness: there is no workers' party. The Zapatistas and the left have called for a broad opposition front and say the problem is one of bad government.

Instead, we say that the regime is irreformable and we call for united fronts against repression and unemployment. Trotskyism is very weak in Mexico. Those that call themselves Trotskyists are very small groups and often tail the PRD or Zapatistas. The LTS is pledged to reverse this situation.



# History

ISTORY USED to be about Kings, Queens, battles and, above all, dates. Today it is all about "experience". You can take a "dark ride" through a recreated Viking settlement in York, or a walk through the Imperial War Museum's "Blitz Experience", replete with "authentic" smells, explosions and visual effects.

The problem with both these kinds of history, however, is the way they avoid the question: why? And this is the most important question.

Why did Danish peasants suddenly take to their longboats and spread out over northern Europe in the middle ages? Why did Britain go to war with Germany in 1939?

Once you start asking these questions other, deeper, questions arise. What causes change in history? Where is human society going?

Only Marxism has a coherent answer to them. In the famous opening words of the Communist Manifesto, Marx wrote:

"The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class

Human beings produce their own means of existence. Marx explained that this productive activity has two aspects: material and social. We don't just produce things, we produce and reproduce social relations between people.

For Marxists, the interplay between the development of the material forces of production and the social relations of production is crucial to understanding history. Because from the very moment human society was able to produce more than that needed for mere subsistence there was a struggle over who was to control the surplus.

The relations of production reflected not just the necessary forms of social organisation for work, but the forms of social organisation required to distribute the surplus to one class and extract it from another.

Before Marx, historians and philosophers had no coherent way of explaining the distinct phases of historical development. They saw that the Egyptians were followed by the more advanced Greeks, who in turn were conquered by the more advanced Romans. They saw the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire", but advanced no coherent explanation for it. They tended to see revolutions as eruptions of irrational violence: interruptions to the "normal" process of history.

Marxism understands the fundamental class struggles going on behind all these events. It sees revolutions as key to the progress of humanity. As the Communist Manifesto explains, all history is the history of class struggle:

"Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight; a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes".

Egypt, Greece and Rome collapsed because none of the classes

struggling within ancient slave society had the power to make a revolutionary breakthrough. Feudal society, which grew up on the ruins of the ancient empires, ultimately produced a class which could make that breakthrough: the city-dwelling class of merchants, bankers and early factory owners known as the "bourgeoisie".

This class originally existed on the margins of medieval society. But their form of property, and the new method of production and exchange it enabled, was revolutionary compared to feudalism.

Thus, from the 15th to the 18th century we see a growing class struggle between the rising bourgeoisie and the declining feudal aristocracy. The main events in English history are part of this process: the Wars of the Roses, the English Civil War, the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, the replacement of one royal house by another.

Finally, in a series of revolutions the bourgeoisie, with the help of a growing class of urban workers or "artisans", overthrew feudalism altogether. This victory unleashed a revolutionary upheaval in the means of production themselves. The plough, little changed in two or three thousand years, was replaced within a century by the tractor. A few decades later we have the combine harvester and genetic crop engineering.

But we also have poverty, unemployment, racism and war.

Capitalism is long past its sell-by date. It holds back the development of new methods of production, or so controls them that they only benefit a few or endanger our lives and environment.

Fortunately, there is a way out. Capitalist society gave birth to the modern working class, the proletariat. This class owned none of the means of production. Its victory in the class struggle, Marx said, could not lead to a new form of class society: there was nobody below the proletariat to become the new exploited class.

After Marx, even bourgeois historians found it impossible to ignore the masses as the key participants in history. Hence the concentration on "ordinary life" in many of today's historical TV series' and museums. But they systematically ignore, reject and undermine the view of history as class struggle.

That is why the Jorvik "dark ride" in York tells us nothing about the classes within Viking society, and the class struggles in early Medieval Britain. Likewise the "Blitz Experience" tells us nothing about how the Trotskyists led workers in pulling down the gates to Tube stations, locked up during the Blitz, while the bosses moved out to their safe country houses.

History is, ultimately, about where humanity is going. The whole history of the 20th century confirms the Marxist view that either the working class makes a revolution, or the bourgeoisie destroys humanity through nuclear war, environmental disaster, famine, disease and racist genocide.

by Colin Lloyd

Mass

strikes

set

France

# Colin Lloyd

France

## A Tale of Two Cities

T WAS the best of times; it was the worst of times . . . but mostly the best. We drove through freezing fog, non-stop, from London to Paris. Unlike most of the people travelling that night we were cheeredup by every single hold-up and delay.

The shiny new Eurostar terminal at London's Waterloo lay silent: the trains to Paris were on strike. The 5.30am Ferry crossing was full—the French boats were on strike. From the outskirts of Paris to the centre was one huge traffic jam: the railway, tube and buses were on strike.

Arriving in Paris we went straight to a mass rally called by the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) the French equivalent of Socialist Outlook.

The highlight was when a rank and file railway worker from Rouen described one of the few "Coordinations" existing between sections of strikers. Every day there would be a 1,000-strong meeting in a railway cutting, mainly of strikers but with private sector delegates attending. There was a small committee of delegates, trying to spread the strike to the private sector.

So it was next stop Rouen.

With the total shutdown of the rail and coach network our French comrades needed every car they could get. We were there to ferry them all over France, to learn about the struggle and give what advice we could from our experience in the miners' strike, Wapping etc.

#### Demo

As we reached the centre of Rouen, a big industrial city on the Seine, we didn't need to ask for directions to the demo. Everybody in Rouen was going to it.

We started to give out our leaflets and sell the latest Pouvoir Ouvrier newspaper. Within minutes we had given out all our leaflets. Then we crested a hill-and saw the actual demonstration!

The official figure for the Rouen demo was 100,000-about a third of the city's population.

French workers march in contingents according to workplace and trade union.

Their banners are usually made on the day, with paint and a couple of sheets. No velvet and tassels, only slogans. And the main slogans were: "General strike now, smash the Juppé plan, kick Juppé out".

#### Carnival

There was a carnival atmosphere, with most contingents including people in fancy dress: I marched a considerable distance alongside a man dressed as Tina Turner.

The only problem, like at the beginning of the miners' strike, was the absence of any idea that the movement could possibly fail or be sold out.

At the front of the demo were the cheminots—the railway workers who were leading the strike wave. There was an impressive service d'ordre-a stewards' group to protect the demo. It didn't need protecting, because the police came nowhere near this mass demo all day.

The next contingent was led by a long line of people in white overalls, white hoods, gas masks banging big oil drums. Each had a "Radiation:

Danger" sticker on their back. Greenpeace against Juppé? In fact it was the nuclear power workers. As well as striking and occupying their plants they had managed to turn all consumers onto the cheap rate in more than 50% of power stations: a hugely popular measure with the rest of the working class, needless to say.

#### Claimants

Further along came uniformed health workers and postal workers: each with their makeshift drum bands. The postal workers had decided to open the post offices for two hours a day so that claimants could get their giros.

The quality newspapers called this a "strike against globalisation" and against Maastricht. But there was a marked lack of nationalism. A railworker came up to buy a copy of Pouvoir Ouvrier:

Railworker: "How much? Me: "Ten Francs"

Railworker: "Here, thanks: what do you think about the strike?

Me: "Please, speak slower, I'm English"

Railworker: "[Big grin, slaps me on the back] Brilliant!"

Another day, another city. We were in Le Mans, at a Pouvoir Ouvrier branch meeting. Our comrades had been arguing for a "Co-ordination" to be set up between the strikers, and for a determined effort to get the

private sector out on strike. But despite Le Mans being one of the most militant cities, with a demo every two days and a strikers' meeting every day, the bureaucracy's strategy still held sway.

At our branch meeting one Renault car worker explained the problem of getting the private sector

"All the older blokes come out for 3 hours on the big days of action, but the younger workers, who are all on 6 month temporary contracts, are too frightened. If two hundred railworkers appeared at the gates calling for solidarity they would come out. But the union leaders are arguing for a 'wait and see' strategy".

#### **Picket**

Later we visited the railway picket line. It was late at night and only a few pickets were present. The problems of the strike were apparent:

"We've won on our own demands. but we can't beat the Juppé plan on our own" said one CGT member. "Look at the British miners: they were defeated because nobody supported them." Within three days the rail strike was over.

As we landed back in London another "shift" of Workers Power comrades was already on the way to Paris for the next big anti-Juppé demo.

Paris had been a city where everybody walked or bicycled everywhere, where most people supported the strike, where the police looked nervous and unconfident, where banners and posters added to the general mood of solidarity.

In contrast London seemed sullen with the cops parading defiantly among the broken glass of Brixton, Labour MPs denouncing the rioters as "criminals", and no mass demos to look forward to.

It certainly was a "tale of two cities". But hopefully not for long!■

By mid-December the revolt against the Juppé plan had grown into the biggest mass workers' movement since the general strike of May 1968. On two successive days of action over two million workers demonstrated throughout France, and the transport system was paralysed. Juppé caved-in to the demands of striking railway workers and made small concessions to the union bureaucrats. By Christmas the key strikes were over. **Paul Morris** reviews round one of an epic fight between the French workers and their bosses.

HE RUN-UP to the Juppé plan would be familiar to almost any worker in Europe.

A new conservative administration determined to launch a frontal assault on workers' benefits and services. A pathetic "socialist" party not prepared to fight even with words, let alone action. A trade union movement suffering from years of retreat, and written-off as a relic from the past.

Most workers and even many activists thought they could predict the result of this equation: token resistance, collapse and victory for the right.

But in a few short weeks the French working class has turned the tables. Juppé's frontal attack produced a massive and militant response. While his plan is still alive, it is only at the cost of big concessions to an important section of workers. And while the workers failed to smash the Juppé plan outright, they have fatally weakened the administration, won significant concessions, and most importantly - revived the confidence and combativity of the entire working class.

#### **The Maastricht imperative**

Margaret Thatcher spent her first year in office, indeed her first term, carefully laying the groundwork for an attack on the working class. In her second term she won using a strategy of "divide and rule": taking on and defeating the miners, printers and dockers one by one. the millions who voted for him, and

Chirac and Juppé, by contrast, could not wait six months before launching a desperate and indiscriminate attack on all workers. Unlike Thatcher, they were forced to attack a labour movement that was, although weakened, still unbeaten.

Why? The short answer is European Monetary Union. Without French capitalism this key project of the European bosses is a dead duck. But France is way off course for meeting the economic "convergence criteria" needed to move to a single currency by the end of 1997.

Juppé has to cut the \$63 billion budget deficit by 10% this year, and at the same time to halve the country's massive social security budget debt.

To add to his troubles, he has to do this in an economy where economic "recovery" has been virtually non-existent and is nearly over.

In short Chirac and Juppé have to try and "fast forward" through the equivalent of ten years under Maggie Thatcher before they can join the single currency.

This was always bound to provoke working class resistance. The fact that it provoked a mass social struggle unparalleled in Europe for decades is, in large part, due to Chirac's total duplicity at the polls.

Chirac was, he claimed, the opposite of Thatcher. He promised to "heal the social fracture", to reduce unemployment, to preserve the social welfare system and, at the same time, deliver tax cuts for all.

Such brazen deception has shocked

outraged the millions who did not. This explains the mass support for the strikers amongst unorganised workers and even the middle class. It explains why Chirac and Juppé's attempts to mobilise "service users" against the strikers, and to organise scabbing, were a total fail-

Time and again, the speeches and banners of ordinary workers during the strikes contained the same questions: What kind of society do we want? Do we want to carry on wasting the lives of our children with unemployment? Do we want to carry on inflicting 6 month contracts and harsh working conditions on young workers? Do we want to be like Britain and America?

We do not, was the collective answer. And when the workers said it loud enough even the media pundits started to listen. As the strike wave grew even TV presenters softened their hostility to the movement. Eventually the French equivalent of Radio 4's Today programme one day woke its listeners with the profound question: "Is it a revolution?"

#### The Juppé Plan

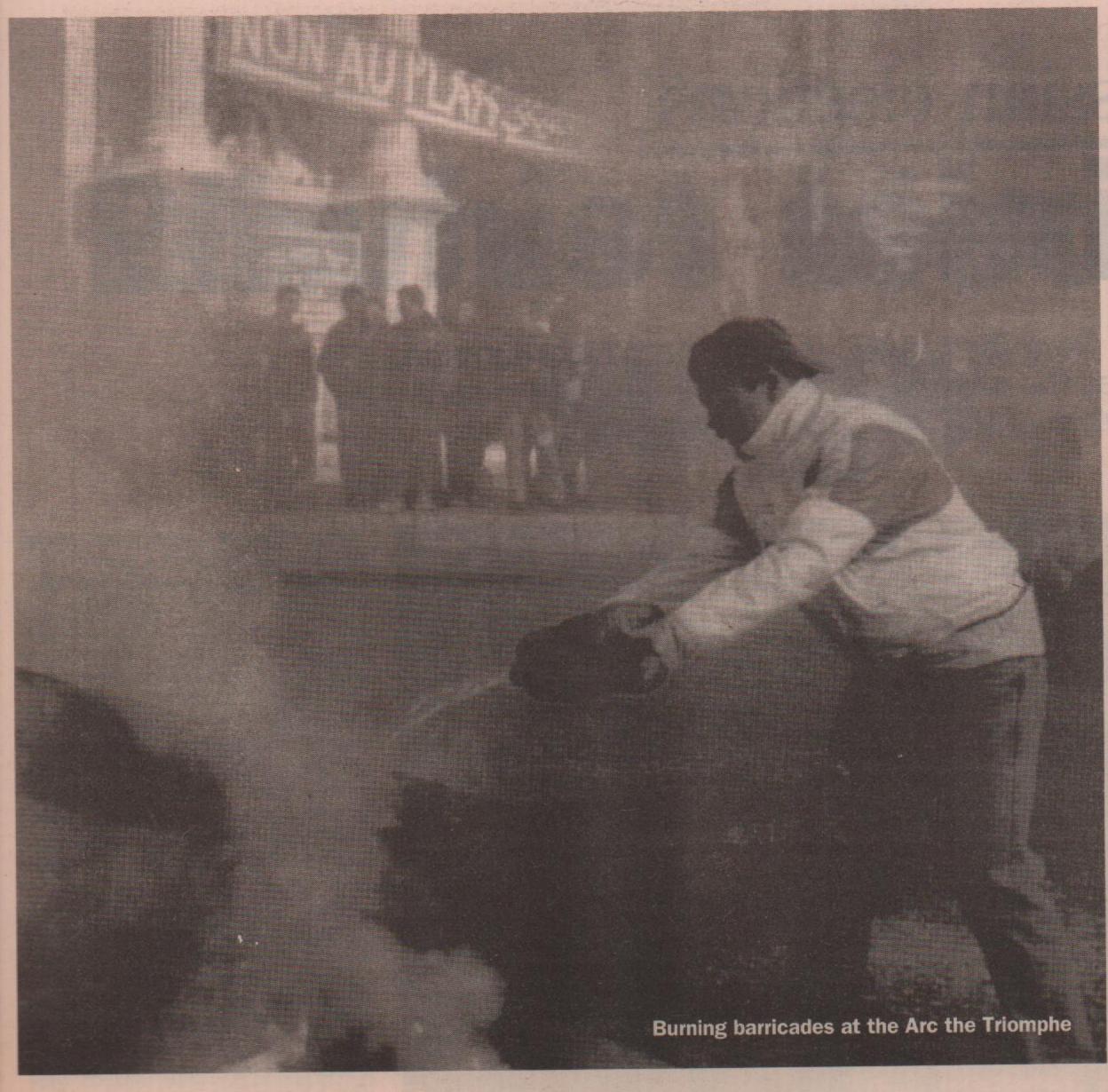
The core of the Juppé Plan is the attack on the "Sécu". This is the complicated system of payment for health, welfare and pensions whose budget is bigger than the rest of government spending put together. As part of the concessions won by French workers in previous struggles, the Sécu is not under direct government control but run by elected boards, in which the unions, and in particular Force Ouvriere (FO) have a decisive influence.

The Juppé Plan contains:

- a new 1% tax on wages to pay for the Sécu's debts;
- a snap increase of two and a half years in the time public sector workers have to work before drawing a pension;
- · a freeze in child benefit;
- increased contributions to the Sécu from workers' pay packets;
- £400 million a year cut from health spending for the next two years; · removal of union control over the
- Sécu.

For good measure, Juppé brought forward a plan for massive cuts in the railway system, handing lines over to regional councils and forcing them to cut services. And he introduced a specific attack on the pension and retirement rights of railway workers.





#### The unions' response

A French miners' leader once said. "French workers treat unions like British workers treat left groups: they join them when they're on strike".

French workers are amongst the most poorly unionised in Europe, with less than 6% union density. The unions themselves are divided not according to occupation, or sector, but along political lines.

The CFDT is led by Social Democrats and Liberals. The CGT is led by and historically affiliated to the Communist Party. FO is led by a strange combination of Socialists and Gaullists, and its bureaucracy has important links with a "Trotskyist" group, Pierre Lambert's "Workers Party" (PT).

This situation makes the unions weak and divided. But it also has a positive side. It means that far more union members are union activists. And it means that they have often had to make a political choice when they join a union.

At the level of the bureaucracy the initial response to the Juppé Plan was not encouraging. Nicole Notat, the CFDT leader, announced she was "85% in agreement" with the Juppé plan, and would support it.

The other unions mouthed opposition, and when the crunch came, in late November, they began by playing their usual game of "you strike Wednesday, we'll strike Thursday". FO and the CGT called days of action and demonstrations on different days.

But the anger of the rank and file burst through these bureaucratic obstacles. First the railway workers, then the post and electricity workers brought key workers on all-out strikes which - because picket line observance was 100% - shut down the entire service.

On 24 November Nicole Notat was chased from a mass demo by union members raining kicks onto her chauffeur-driven limo. The bureaucrats began to ride the wave of militancy. And the pressure of the CGT rank and file, particularly in the rail, power and post, forced the bureaucrats to fight.

By the end of November the bureaucrats' attempts to stage a series of limited "days of action" had been superseded by an indefinite mass strike of the rail, tube and bus workers, mass strikes in the electricity industry and the post, and widespread occupations.

Why did the bureaucrats follow the initiative of the rank and file? In the first place because, if they played same the role as Notat, they risked being swept out of office. Secondly, because of their

vested interest in keeping control, of the Sécu. Without control of the Sécu they would lose prestige, bargaining power, and the massive perks that go with the job of running the system. This was true in particular of FO, in many ways the most conservative and passive of all three unions. Without the militant intervention of the railworkers the union leaders might have kept the movement to "days of action".

#### Railworkers take the lead

The railway workers have been waging a virtual guerilla war against the bosses for the last three years. They have the highest strike figures, higher than average unionisation and a clear consciousness of their strategic importance. On 24 November, along with a million other workers, they went on strike. But unlike the others they did not go back.

The initial call was for three days of strike action. But the rank and file railworkers extended this right through to late December by seizing control from day one.

Every day massive "general assemblies" took place in the depots, stations and sidings, with a vote at the end on whether to continue the strike. Thus, as well as a display of strength, the French railway workers gave the workers of the whole world a display of what real workers' democracy means.

The task now was to extend the action into a real, indefinite general strike, drawing in all public sector workers and, crucially the private sector.

In the end this never happened. The actual course of events demonstrates the crisis of working class leadership and holds important lessons for the next round of struggle.

By the first week in December the railway workers were solid. Rail, tube and bus strikes had paralysed the capital. Most big cities were eerily quiet, with the mass of the population being forced to walk to and from work. This meant that no-one could forget, for a single moment, the strike and the questions it raised. The vast mass of the working class was sympathetic to the railway workers.

The government could not give in. The credibility of Juppé and Chirac in Europe rests on cutting government spending. And the attack on the Sécu was only the start.

The union leaders called a series of one day strikes and demonstrations. Since Juppé had said "With two million people on the streets my government will

fall", the rank and file set about the task of building each one day strike to meet that figure. The French equivalent of Spitting Image started the "Juppéthon", giving nightly reports of the target reached.

It was reached on Tuesday 12 December, when 2.2 million people demonstrated across France. Because of the transport strikes, there was no question of holding national demonstrations. In the end the local character of the demos only underlined the level of support for the strikers. On 12 December 300,000 demonstrated in Paris alone, 120,000 in Marseilles and 100,000 in Toulouse. Even small towns, rural and industrial, had big demos. In the strongest centres an estimated one in three people demonstrated: i.e. the whole of the economically active population. And these were not passive demos. They were loud, militant protests from which the police, in general, had to stay away.

The government's initial response was to ignore the strikes. But the massive demos on the 9, 12 and 16 of December, each bigger than the last, forced Juppé to act. In a partial climbdown he

cancelled all the attacks on the railway workers, and promised the union leaders a meaningless "Social Summit".

The railworkers clearly decided that they had won. The sectionalist and labour aristocratic currents inside SNCF (the French rail company), began to argue for a return to work, as did the bureaucrats. Realising they had inflicted serious damage on Juppé, and that they could not, on their own beat the attack on the Sécu, the railworkers went back to work.

The strike did not, as the press reported, "crumble". The general assemblies, which had been meeting every day, simply met and voted to return. This was an orderly return to work by an unbeaten, confident, vanguard section of the working class. Nevertheless it did bring the first round of the struggle effectively to a close. The following Saturday, as rail services began, saw an even bigger demo, with an estimated 2.5 million on the streets against the Juppé Plan. But, as British workers know, mass demos on a Saturday are not enough to win anything on their own.

#### Lessons of the struggle

The strike failed to spread throughout the public sector. Post and power workers came out solidly on the days of action but carried out only sporadic action in between. The rest of the public sector came out only on strike days.

The private sector was even more difficult to mobilise. Private sector workers had already suffered an extension of 2.5 years to pre-pension work time, two years ago. The tax and contribution increases in the Juppé Plan did not provoke an immediate mass response. The best organised private sector workers are in the stable, skilled manufacturing sector and probably reckoned they could win this back through pay increases. The hardest hit by the attack on the Sécu low paid workers - thought they did not have the power to fight.

Both of these problems, the failure to strike in the private and much of the public sector, show the limists of spontaneity and the need for leadership. They could have been overcome by a determined rank and file initiative from below. But this did not take place, and was one of the weaknesses of the movement.

Unlike the previous strike wave of 1986 there were very few "coordinations" built between different sectors of strikers, even in the public sector. Instead of trying to picket out other sectors onto all out strike, the railway workers left spreading the strike in the hands of the union leaders. True, some of these leaders were forced to call for the "generalisation" of the strike, but they did nothing to bring that about. Throughout the events there was no attempt to convene a national strike committee.

Thus the mass movement of December never became a real general strike, and that was why Juppé was able to

demobilise it with concessions to a key sector.

#### Where next?

This was a major battle. But it was not the final one. Both sides, the workers and the government, are clearly gathering their strength for the next attack. It is even possible that new resistance will be sparked as the first Sécu deductions from pay packets are made, or that a mass struggle will break out over victimisation of militants.

More likely Juppé will retreat to lick his wounds, preparing another attack more carefully targeted than the last.

The French working class cannot afford to sit back and wait. It has to begin now the creation of the necessary organisations to co-ordinate the struggle:

 "Co-ordinations" -between workplaces and union branches affected by the cuts, drawing in students and working class youth;

Self defence squads to meet the attacks of the CRS. Once the mass movement subsided the police went on the rampage against occupying tramway workers in Marseilles

· Rank and file committees in the unions aimed at taking control out of the hands of the bureaucrats.

Most of all what is needed is revolutionary socialist leadership. The rest of the French left failed badly in the strike wave. Lutte Ouvrière, convinced that it was only an "economic" strike, treated it as such. They failed to call openly for a general strike, failed to activate their members in the private sector to agitate for one, and even refused to advance their previous call for a new workers' party to break the political logjam.

The Ligue Communiste Revolutionaire (the French USFI group) clearly recognised the potential of the strike wave, and activated their members accordingly. But, as always they bowed to spontaneity.

They reported on the strikes, cheered them on but made no real attempt to stand against the prevailing mood and give a lead.

Only hesitantly did they advance towards calling for a general strike, and that is not surprising. For although it flipped over into optimism and activity during the strike the LCR had only a few years ago decided that the "epoch of October" was over, that revolutions are off the agenda, and that the international workers' movement faced a long process of rebuilding through small scale actions. At the same time they continued to pursue the fools' gold of "regroupment" with the left of the Communist Party and the Greens.

Socialisme International, the French sister organisation of the SWP, did call for a general strike. But they seriously overestimated the student movement. As a result they found themselves selling a paper, two thirds of which was about student struggles, past and present, at the height of the workers struggle and with the students in retreat.

This too was no accident, as SI's perspective of doing mainly student work left them with little feel for the workers' movement.

Only Pouvoir Ouvrier, the LRCI's French section, showed what revolutionaries can and should do in this situation. It has small forces in only a handful of towns.

It mobilised around not simply supporting the strikes but argued for extending and co-ordinating the action. PO comrades argued consistently on the picket lines for spreading the action, for rank and file "co-ordinations" and for flying pickets to bring the private sector out.

PO was able to move from a monthly paper to a weekly bulletin during the strike, focusing its demands and propaganda towards the changes in the situation but never forgetting the constant task of addressing the political crisis of leadership among socialist, communist and even Trotskyist militants.

Our French section has emerged from this strike strengthened, with a higher national profile (its comrades were interviewed in the Communist Party daily L'Humanité, and victimised in the fascist weekly Minute) and more members.

As 1996 opens - a year of mass struggle in France - Pouvoir Ouvrier determined to carry on building a real revolutionary alternative to the misleaders of the unions and the left in France.

#### What happened to the student struggle?

The spectre haunting the French tonomist" and anarchist groups, but when a student struggle ignited the working class, sparking the biggest general strike in history. In September and October the bosses had good reason to fear a repeat performance. It was the students who began the resistance to Juppé and Chirac, with a series of occupations and demonstrations.

But even before the workers' strikes began, the student movement had reached an impasse, due to a lack of national perspective, lack of a serious struggle in Paris itself, and a lack of national co-ordination.

Local deals, around local grievances, were being struck by student bureaucrats and college managers, even as the storm clouds of working class action gathered.

Ultimately what allowed this to happen was a lack of national political leadership. Socialists and activists, including members of Pouvoir Ouvrier, tried to set up a national "coordination" of student struggles. But this was disrupted, prevented from meeting - ostensibly by various "au-

bosses is the spectre of May 1968, probably with the participation of police agent provocateurs.

These events show two things. First the need for organised leadership. There is no French equivalent of NUS. Since most of the student struggles were about local issues, it would have taken conscious political leadership to unify them and ally with the workers, as our comrades did in Rennes, for example, by making concrete links between students and railworkers. Second, that students can occasionally detonate a bigger struggle but they themselves are not some kind of "vanguard", more progressive and decisive than the working class.

On the other hand French students today number millions, instead of the few hundred thousands of 1968. And they include far more working class youth. Their struggles always draw in the unemployed youth of the estates, in particular the black youth.

Only if they turn to and ally with the organised working class, can they play a revolutionary part in the overall struggle.

## Russian elections

# The Stalinist revival?

"Communism has risen from the grave", wailed the Western media.

Dave Stockton analyses the impact of the Russian election results and the revival of the Russian Communists.

N RUSSIA the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) gained 22.3% of the popular vote in December's Duma elections. This vote was double that of the next largest party—Vladimir Zhirinovsky's fascistic Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The KPRF almost doubled its 1993 vote (12.4%).

The KPRF still proclaims itself to be Leninist, using all the symbols and imagery of the Soviet Union. It calls for protectionist measures for industry and the national economy, for continued nationalised ownership of the land, transport and communications, and of certain sectors of industry considered "vital for the nation".

It places great stress on the need for an expanded welfare state and for the "voluntary restoration of the USSR". It denounces the expansion of Nato and calls for "an independent foreign policy"—ie an end to Yeltsin's slavish pro-US policy. It indulges in all the usual Soviet-style hymns of praise to a "Great Russia" as the core of a state of "fraternal" nationalities.

In short, it is a Stalinist party, directly descended from the CPSU. KPRF chief, Gennady Zyuganov, praises Stalin as a "great war leader", a "colourful character, worthy of a Shakespeare", albeit one who committed "not a few breaches of legality"!

Suffering

The main focus of the party's popular campaign was on the social misery and suffering caused by the market reforms: the soaring unemployment and the collapse of the social security and medical system due to lack of funding. This had a major appeal to the one in five of the electorate—some 30 million—who are pensioners. They have suffered terribly from high inflation and the decline in the social security system. This is one reason why in Russia, at the moment, older people are more likely to be passionately political than the young.

The party achieved its highest votes in the industrial regions—including around Moscow, the Volga, Kuznetsk and Siberian regions. The KPRF is by far the largest party in Russia with 780,000 members. Although it has an old membership (average age 50) it is no less active for that It-spent little money on newspaper or TV advertising but went in for cheaply produced local leaflets, distributed by its mass membership in the streets and housing estates.

The Communists went in for "skilfully articulating the social pain and confusion caused by the fitful transition to a market economy", complained the Financial Times.

Yet the western media need have no worries that Zyuganov and the KPRF will be rushing to propose the renationalisation of the means of production. The party has gone out of its way to emphasise that there will be no return to the past as far as this is concerned.

#### Reformist

The KPRF does not call for renationalisation or the restoration of the planned economy. Indeed, Zyuganov has been lunching at the American Chamber of Commerce in Moscow and courting foreign businessmen. In an interview just before the elections, given to the main business paper in Moscow, Kommersant, he indignantly denied being opposed to the market or private ownership. Communists, he said, favoured both; look at China where there



Supporters of the Russian Communist Party in Moscow

is a Communist government!

The KPRF is an openly reformist party fully committed to parliamentarism. But it is a reformist party in a state where capitalism has not yet triumphed over the shattered and disorganised remnants of socialised production. It therefore has many supporters and sympathisers amongst sectors of the managerial bureaucracy.

Nor is the "communist" vote restricted to the KPRF. "Working Russia" (hardline communists close to the official unions) polled 4.5%; the Party for Workers Self-Government won 4%; and the Agrarian Party (the collective farm allies of the KPRF) 3.8%. In fact part of the increase in the KPRF vote can be accounted for by a collapse of the vote of the Agrarian Party, although it did much better in the constituency section of the vote.

Our Home is Russia, the party of premier Viktor Chernomyrdin, got only 10.1%, despite spending far and away the most money on its campaign and having the state media on its side.

Representation

Half the Duma deputies are elected from party lists by proportional representation and half in single member constituencies. There was a totally undemocratic 5% threshold that a party needed to reach in order to get Duma representation in the party-list section. This meant that with 41 parties standing, fifty per cent of votes were "wasted" in that their chosen parties did not get above 5%.

The only radical reform party to top 5% was Grigorii Yavlinky's Yabloko ("Apple"), with 6.89%. Yavlinsky ruefully told the *Herald Tribune*;

"I'm not seen as real opposition people hate the government so much they support its all-out enemies."

In fact he did this well only because he distanced himself from Yeltsin and Gaidar from the outset of the "reform" process, and attacked them fiercely before, during and after the election campaign.

Vladimir Zhirinovsky and the LDP

got 11.2%—only half their 1993 vote. Clearly he has been replaced by the KPRF as the principle party of protest against the "market reforms" of Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin. Indeed all the most openly Great Russian chauvinistic parties did worse this time. Social questions were at the forefront of people's minds and mere foreigner-baiting could not overcome this.

The LDP has little in the way of an organised mass base and relies on Zhirinovky's televised demagogy (financed by whom is never clear). In his eve-of-poll broadcast, Zhirinovsky's bizarre ramble included the typical mix of conspiracy theories, xenophobia, calls for law and order and appeals for strong co-government.

But Zhirinovsky, for all his vitriol against Yeltsin and the USA, has always supported the President at such critical



moments as the storming of parliament, the renegotiating of the IMF loans and the assault on Chechnya. His electorate is young, anti-communist, racist against Jews and Caucasian peoples; but its support is very volatile. Zhirinovsky does not (yet) represent a mass fascist movement and these elections indicate that the broader mass of people discontented with the catastrophic situation are increasingly looking to the KPRF rather than to Zhirinovsky.

These elections certainly did not decide who rules Russia. Under the 1993

Yeltsinite constitution, parliament does not appoint the ministers nor—without a two-thirds vote in both chambers in two successive sessions—can either individual ministers or the government as a whole be sacked. The presidential powers are so great that even an overall majority in the Duma for one party (or a solid alliance of parties) hostile to Yeltsin could not overrule the latter's decrees—a two-thirds majority in two separate sessions is also required for that! The Russian system is a form of plebiscitary Bonapartism.

Discredit

The Bonaparte's legendary overindulgence in the pleasures of the table and bottle have endangered the stability of the system. The elections took place with Yeltsin in a sanatorium. His declining health mirrors his collapsing political prestige. Nearly 25% of Russians express strong hostility to him in opinion polls. Over 50% think he should resign at once and only 10% approve of him and his policies.

A year after he approved the Russian army's drive into Chechnya, six months after they at long last managed to occupy the capital, Grozny, and despite months of abortive discussions with the Dudayev-led forces, the Russian troops look set for a long stay. The war has been deeply discrediting, not only for Yeltsin and General Grachev, but for the Russian armed forces as a whole.

It threatens the entire political entourage who surround Yeltsin and who wield the real power in Russia. Power in Russia is held neither by the parliament, nor by the government. Formally it is vested in the Presidency, in Yeltsin. Increasingly he is a weak figurehead for a number of groupings of top military and administrative officials, all in constant rivalry with one another but able to unite to defend their power against external challenge. Each of them have ties to the top directors of certain industries and their associated banks and to sources of protection within the armed forces and the security services.

These rival cliques are now called

"clans" in Russian. There is the "oil and gas" clan led by Viktor Chernomyrdin (former director of Gazprom), the "Moscow group" led by the city's Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, the military-industrial complex headed by Alexander Korzhakov, Mikhail Soskovets and first-deputy premier Oleg Soskovets, and the "Westernisers" led by Sergeii Filatov and Anatoly Chubais. There is also an agrarian "clan" linked to the directors of the great collective farms. Such a situation is inevitable in a country where a bourgeois class which controls production as well as state power, has not yet crystalised.

There is a new bourgeoisie, which took advantage of Yeltsin and Gaidar's shock therapy in 1992 to seize large sectors of commerce, services and light industry. Interlinked with the mafia and with foreign investors, this class forms the "New Russians" who send large amounts of their ill-gotten gains abroad. This led to a huge net capital outflow from the country, prolonging and deepening Russia's slump.

Challanged

But this new bourgeoisie cannot draw towards itself more than 15% of the population and so cannot win the battle for power against the sections of the old managerial bureaucracy. This latter group is rapidly coming to own much of industry through the privatisation scheme put into effect over the last two and a half years; it is a bureaucratic/monopolistic capitalist class in the making. This is the class that Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin represent. It is challenged on the one side by the reformers and on the other by the KPRF and the smaller Stalinist parties.

On 16 June Russia is set to hold presidential elections. If they take place they will be decisive as to what political forces rule in Russia. Chernomyrdin's Our Home is Russia has shown that for all its money, it cannot field a candidate who can win. The "radical reformers", including Yavlinsky, have all been compromised by the last five years, and are unlikely to win the presidency. Vladimir Zhirinovsky may well be a spent force, and would only ever be a desperate last resort.

Clique

So the Bonapartist clique and the "clans" are unlikely to be able to find a replacement for Yeltsin. But even if they get him to stand again he is very unlikely to win. Thus the possibility of another "constitutional coup" will loom as June approaches.

The Economist too senses this:

"Equally unclear, and equally urgent, is the related question of whether the clan system as now constituted would accept any new president . . . in place of Mr Yeltsin . .". The answer would presumably depend upon a new president's willingness to be co-opted into Mr Yeltsin's role—or on his willingness to break the system."

Gennady Zyuganov may well be willing to carry out such a role but the question is: will he be able to do so after he has won an election on a tide of working class expectation of fundamental change? The desperate men in the Kremlin may decide that they cannot take the risk. The relative passivity of the masses in 1991 and even greater passivity in 1993, may give way to an explosive reaction if they try to thwart the popular will this time. Spring and summer 1996 are likely to bes yet one more turning point in Russia's history.

The KPRF is an openly reformist party fully committed to parliamentarism. But it is a reformist party in a state where capitalism has not yet triumphed over the shattered and disorganised remnants of socialised production

## Turkey

# Islamist election SUFEE

THE 24 DECEMBER general election saw a major victory for Necmettin Erbakan's Islamic "Refah Party of Prosperity" (RP). Winning 22% of the vote and 158 deputies, the RP is now the strongest political party in the country. This result sent tremors through diplomatic and military circles in Washington and western European capitals as they took Erbakan's rhetoric about Turkish withdrawal from Nato to be a real threat.

The Islamists presented themselves as the last line of defence against the "decadent west". Instead of the Turkish bosses' plans to unify with Europe, the RP called for a union of all Muslims from Morocco to Pakistan, reviving the old Ottoman dream of Pan-Turkism.

The Turkish masses rejected the Ciller government's programme of privatisation and economic restructuring prescribed by the EU and the IMF. The results of these anti-working class economic policies have been disastrous. Inflation is rampant, running at over 100%, while unemployment stands at 25%. Turkey has again become a cauldron of unrest.

The recently inaugurated customs union with Europe-leading to the opening of frontiers to European goods—will dramatically worsen the plight of sections of the small peasantry. It will also trigger the closure of thousands of companies, with an attendant jump in unemployment.

#### Discontent

The stinging defeat suffered by Ciller's "Party of the Right Road" (DYP) and her coalition partners expresses the discontent of all the popular masses, but especially that of the working class. Indeed, it was the massive public sector strike-involving 700,000-and their march on the capital, Ankara, that led directly to the collapse of the coalition.

Along with the DYP, the other traditional right-wing party—the Party of the Motherland (ANAP)—was a clear loser in the election. Without an overall majority, the DYP and ANAP have had to broaden their coalition to include the nationalist Party of Social Democracy (DSP) and even the centre-left Republican Party of the People (CHP).

The instability of parliamentary alliances reflects the profound divisions within the Turkish bourgeoisie itself. All the legal parties that support entry into the EU will be forced to work together to minimise the influence of the Islamists. At present, the price of excluding the RP from the government involves making concessions on the separation of mosque and state and the abandonment of the secular principles inherited from "Ataturk's revolution" that established the Turkish nation state in the 1920s.

#### Mosque

So Ciller, otherwise the embodiment of an "emancipated" western bourgeois woman, has suddenly adopted the veil, and other right-wing leaders ostentatiously visit the mosque.

The Islamists of the RP represent the bitterness of the provincial bourgeoisie, deeply suspicious of the western-trained elites, and intimately linked with the semi-feudal landowners. But the party has also made itself the champion of the petit-bourgeoisie, financially ruined by the IMF. The RP's implantation has also been extended to the shanty-towns and the poorer sections of the working class.

Erbakan is a shrewd political survivor from the turbulent 1970s, who has

Rocked by a wave of public sector strikes in response to her austerity programme, Turkish premier Tansu Ciller lost her grip on parliament in autumn 1995. Philippe Martin of Pouvoir Ouvrier looks at the background to her decision to go to the polls: a costly gamble that did nothing to resolve the underlying crisis facing the

Turkish ruling class – but boosted the

fortunes of "political Islam".



Tansu Ciller

posed as the democratic face of Islamicism and as a stalwart opponent of the corruption rife in Turkish politics. As RP leader, Erbakan has been able to build a cross-class front, with religion presented as a fake alternative to imperialist exploitation. To do this, the RP has made a series of symbolic and demagogic gestures towards the poor and downtrodden of the shanty towns.

Its urban activists have cultivated sections of the electorate with the provision of social services including the distribution of free medicines, food and coal. It has promised work for all, together with a tripling of wages, in the case of an RP victory. The RP even went so far as to charter planes to provide free transport back to the polls for Turkish immigrants in Europe.

Financially backed by Saudi Arabia and Iran, the RP made massive gains in the March 1994 municipal elections, winning control of the key cities of Ankara and Istanbul.

In both these centres, the true antiworking class policies of the RP, targeting council workers in particular, have been revealed for all to see. Physical attacks against women and the Alevi minority have also increased, in liaison with the fascist militias of Colonel Turkes and his Nationalist Action Party (MHP) direct descendants of the notorious "Grey Wolves".

All this highlights the RP's shameless tactical opportunism. In the Kurdish regions, the RP defends the rights of the Kurds because they are part of the "Islamic community", whilst in central Anatolia the RP allies itself with the MHP to declare that Turkey is "one and indivisible".

#### **Paradox**

This explains the apparent paradox of the RP/fascist alliance gaining 50% of the vote in both the Kurdish town of Maras and in the Anatolian town of Konya. In general, the RP came top of the poll in the Kurdish regions, except in those south-eastern provinces where the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) has deep roots.

The Ciller government has sought to deflect attention from the effects of its economic policies by whipping up antiKurdish chauvinism as it stripped

Despite the fact that 3 million Kurds were denied the vote because they do not have a permanent address—their villages having been burned to the ground by the army—the Party of Popular Democracy (HADEP), close to the PKK, did well. They came top in provinces such as Van and Batman, where the PKK's guerrillas have been active. But because the HADEP lacked adequate national representation, the Kurdish party was unable to pass the 10% threshold and so has no deputies in the new parliament.

#### Results

The other left parties scored completely insignificant results—less than 1% for the Workers' Party (IP), for instance. The left Stalinists-Maoists, "pro-Albanians" and Guevarists—are all involved in the tragic dead-end of urban guerrillaism against the regime. They decided to boycott the elections, but this had no impact on the results.

The working class thus found itself completely disarmed by the elections, having no party that it could consider as its own, able to represent its desires and aspirations.

The need for a revolutionary workers' party in Turkey has never been more urgent.

Turkish revolutionaries must break with the armed reformism of the left-Stalinists and fight for the creation of a working-class party, deeply rooted in a relatively well-organised and often militant urban proletariat, and armed with a revolutionary programme. They must fight for:

· Neither Ataturk nor the Koran but workers' revolution!

No to the diktats of the IMF and the

 Turkish troops out of Kurdistan; For Kurdish self-determination!

For revolutionary workers' parties in Turkey and Kurdistan.

Kurdish MPs of their parliamentary immunity from prosecution and intensified the decade-long "dirty war" against

the PKK and the rural Kurdish masses.

#### **EuroDisney** The labour movement found some surprising new recruits as

A World to Win

1995 drew to a close -Mickey Mouse and his mates are joining the struggle.

Workers at EuroDisney near Paris have been protesting over low wages. Nearly 3,000 of the 8,000 strong workforce are organised by the CGT. They are fighting for a pay rise and against the introduction of performancerelated pay.

On New Year's Eve some 200 union members were attacked by management's security guards as they protested at the ticket office.

The guards went for the demonstrators as they tried to get into the theme park. Fourteen people were injured-four of the demonstrators and ten of the security guards. Mickey is clearly a mouse not to be messed with!

EuroDisney's hard line management are now threatening to sack eighteen of the workers, claiming they started the trouble.

#### Bangladesh

On 1 January 100,000 women demonstrated on the streets of Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. They were protesting against the reactionary Islamic clerics who are opposed to education and employment rights for women. Smashing the stereotypical image of passivity, the lively demonstration attracted women from all over Bangladesh, including isolated rural areas.

Clearly it is not just the clergy who are afraid of women beginning to organise. The Indian government refused to grant Bangladeshi writer and activist Taslima Nasrin a visa so that she could attend a conference in New Delhi at the end of December.

#### Belgium

December saw a series of strikes and demonstrations in Belgium against attempts by the government to attack welfare benefits.

The campaign to stop the government cuts has so far included a 60,000 strong demonstration which brought Brussels to a halt on 13 December. Post, telecommunications, bus and tube workers joined the march. The proposed £2 billion cuts package would affect pensions and pay. It would inevitably lead to job losses in the state sector.

Mirroring the battles across the border in France, railworkers have been to the fore, staging a series of strikes. The Belgian government had planned to cut up to 10,000 jobs on the state-run railways. When the Eurostar bosses boasted about the return of service to Paris and Lille at the end of the French dispute, they then had to admit that passengers would still have to go by bus to get to Brussels!



Dev Sol: The left Stalinists are all involved in the tragic dead-end of urban guerrillaism .

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#### Activists' Diary

Dear comrades,

capitalist system.

vides no strategy.

points.

chine.

The Workers Power Editorial

Board statement on Scargill's "discus-

sion paper" (WP 195) provides an ex-

cellent critique of his muddled thinking.

with references to Labour's supposed

previous "commitment" to common

ownership and socialism. In reality La-

bour has never been committed to any-

thing other than the preservation of the

claim, "designed to commit the Party to

for the Left), Scargill's own paper pro-

a strategy for achieving socialism".

Clause IV was not, despite Scargill's

And, despite its title (Future strategy

Coupled with a tedious whingeing

about "new" Labour's supposed aban-

donment of a (mythical) commitment

to socialism, are a hodge podge of policy

nunciations of the "European Common

Market" (sic) and vague "commitments"

about providing for everyone from the

cradle to the grave, to demands for a four

day week with no loss of pay, and volun-

demands are realisable "even within a

capitalist society", its unfortunate that

he ignores the question of the reaction

of the capitalist class and its state ma-

bourgeois state became even clearer than

normal when thousands of workers

chanting "Arthur Scargill, we'll support

you ever more" confronted it during the

to contest elections "on the basis that

Parliament is but one element of democ-

racy". No, Arthur. it's the talk shop of

bourgeois sham democracy, designed to

mask where power really resides. Par-

liament should be entered, exposed,

smashed and replaced with organs of workers' democracy-workers' councils

Scargill denounces the European

Union as "this bastion of international

capitalism", but makes no mention of

workers' internationalism. Workers

need a revolutionary socialist interna-

tional to lead the struggle for world revo-

These are the sort of "traditional"

Scargill's initiative certainly provides

an opportunity to discuss the type of

programme and party we need to achieve

socialism. But one thing is clear: we don't

need another reformist party, however

For a revolutionary socialist interna-

No more bourgeois workers' parties!

socialist strategies which need to be re-

vived in the labour movement!

But it is not surprising. Scargill wants

Great Miners Strike.

and workers' militias.

lution.

Particularly so since the role of the

Given that Scargill believes the latter

tary retirement at 55 on full pay.

These range from little-England de-

Scargill constantly peppers his paper

#### Demonstrate: **Support Liverpool** Dockers!

Saturday 13 January Myrtle Parade. 10.30am Liverpool.

#### **Public Meeting:** How to fight the **Asylum Bill**

Thursday 25 January 7.30 pm Summerfield Centre, Dudley Rd Birmingham.

#### **Bloody Sunday** March and Rally: Troops out of Ireland now!

Saturday 27 January Details PO Box 208 Leicester LE4 5YU Leicester.

#### **Demonstrate:** Smash the **Asylum Bill**

Called by CAIAB. Sponsored by the TUC. Saturday 23 February 11am Embankment London.

#### **Public Meeting:** Smash the **Asylum Bill**

Organised by the Colin Roach Centre, Hackney 7.30 Wednesday 24 January Details: 0181 533 7111 Hackney, London.

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## LETTERS

WORKERS POWER 196 JANUARY 1996

# FOF OF against the SLP?



**Arthur Scargill** 

Last month's Workers Power statement on the Socialist Labour Party has attracted a big response. We have expanded the letters page and welcome further contributions. See pages 6 & 7 for the latest on Scargill's initiative.

Dear comrades,

Bernard Harper,

Yours in comradeship,

"left' sounding.

tional!

Berlin.

In your statement last month (WP195) you said the real problem is not the premature foundation of an SLP, but that it could even have come too late:

"If Militant had found the political courage to break with Labour during the struggles in Liverpool in the mid-1980s, and if Arthur Scargill and his allies in the NUM had made the call, tens of thousands could have been broken from the

grip of Kinnock". Interesting point. But I don't recall that Workers Power had the "political courage to break with Labour . . . in the mid-1980s".

During the miners' strike wasn't Workers Power saying that the class struggle had to be waged in the unions "and in the Labour Party"?

Perhaps it's just that we missed something overseas. But the British miners' strike was of great significance, and we tried to follow it closely, along with the strategies of left socialists. If we overlooked a call for a revolutionary break with Labour, please enlighten.

Walter Daum,

League for the Revolutionary Party (USA)

#### Dear comrades,

Last month's editorial on the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) made a number of good points. It was right to criticise Scargill's "golden era" notions about the Labour Party. For Scargill ditching Clause 4 was all-important. It meant that the Labour Party was no longer socialist. As your statement pointed out, however, the Labour Party has never been a socialist party, it was and still is a bourgeois workers party.

Unfortunately the statement goes on to give a confused and at times gross overestimation of the forces likely to respond to Scargill's initiative. Allied to this is a lack of clarity about what fighting Blair means, irrespective of the SLP launch.

You argue that, though Scargill is isolated in the LP he's much less so in the "wider movement". Maybe so, but it depends what he is arguing for.

For example, opposing Trident wins you widespread support, whereas leaving the LP and setting up an SLP does not. In other words, the layer of militants that you can describe as "Scargillite" overwhelmingly disagree with his project.

You only need to look at his erstwhile allies-ex-Stalinists, Campaign Group, NUM left, Yorkshire Labour Party etc. to know that he has very little support.

That is not to approve of their reasons for opposing him, but to recognise this reality. Secondly, you cite 38,000 people who have left the LP and 73,000 "left" voting members of Unison. You imply that these forces could be part of any SLP's future base. Well maybe some of them will, but it would be much better to look at those forces more closely and analyse what they really represent.

Many of those who have left the LP will end up campaigning for Labour at the time of the general election, and many could have gone out of politics altogether. It is wrong to suggest that they will automatically support Scargill's

Equally, we should be more careful when talking about the Unison vote. The larger part of those 73,000 votes were for Bannister. In his manifesto there is not a hint of advocating a new party, or of Unison affiliating to an SLP, and in fact there isn't even any policy to take on the Blair leadership of the LP. The only reference to the LP is in a throwaway formulation about needing to fight for Unison policies in the LP!

In reality Scargill's project is not just politically flawed, i.e. it is not a real break from reformism, it is based on sentimentalism and no real forces in the working class. The statement should have said so. It should have made that point without denying that there is very real opposition to Blair's policies throughout the movement.

Revolutionaries need to address that opposition to Blair with a strategy for fighting in the here and now, and not waiting, as many on the reformist left argue, for some time after a Labour government has been elected.

That is why organising around demands on Labour allied to campaigning for solidarity with existing struggles is the main way to intervene amongst that opposition, while raising the need for a revolutionary party. Scargill's SLP project is irrelevant to that strategy.

S. Lvle. Rotherham, S. Yorks.

## Opium of the people?

Dear comrades.

On reading your recent "G is for God" piece there are a number of points I'd like to make.

You present a series of disconnected theological arguments that many theologians have been in the forefront of dismissing-for example your arguments regarding the "goodness" of God were first used by a protestant theologican F. Schleriermacher, born in 1768!

Another point is that you, like Marx, show a certain Eurocentrism regarding religion-many Eastern and native religions contain no idea of an omnipotent God or indeed any "external" being.

If you, like Marx, are going to put forward the thesis that religion is the inversion of reality then it shows two points: (a) that you assume that we can ever really know what reality is, and (b) that you (and Marx) are infering this from a model of religion, ie. nineteenth century Christianity-Judaism. What happened when, dialectically no doubt, that model ceased to exist? Religion and politics both change. Lastly Marx' comments about religion being the opium of the people betrays a lapse of intellectual vigor on the part of Marxism.

Whether the Liberation Theology movement in Latin America were feasting on "pain-killers" depends on whether

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you see their action—participating in guerilla warfare against oppressive regimes—as signs of "opium" feeding.

Of course to claim that religion is the all-embracing "opium" is a contradiction.

If religion was "opium" then nobody would have been able to get outside that framework and denounce it as "opium", or ideology—of course as soon as this is done you are left with a problem—what is religion? It is not "opium"—every atheist is living proof of that—so what is it?

Thanks, Steve Davies Birmingham

### Ivory Coast

Dear friends.

The Party for Progress and Socialism of the Ivory Coast, UK branch, is delighted to wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year for 1996.

We also thank you for your support of our struggle over immigration rights.

We cannot give up fighting; because our exile in this country is justified and because the Ivory Coast is not a safe country although they say it is.

We cannot give up fighting because the future of socialism for the African people and the whole world depends on it.

Mr K A Loa Foreign Secretary of the PPS

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# Hate and hope for French youth



GRITTY black-and-white film holds up a mirror to contemporary France and reveals an ugly image. Yet it captured a major prize amidst the bourgeois chic of the Cannes Film Festival.

The world depicted in La Haine is far removed from the decadent glamour of Cannes, but much closer to the reality of everyday life for an entire generation of working class youth, not only in France but in cities throughout the industrialised world.

First and foremost, the film is a gripping indictment of a system in decay. It focuses on a Parisian banlieu - a peripheral dumping ground dominated by bleak high-rise blocks.

Its opening image combines with a voice evoking a world about to fall apart or implode. On the estate, youth unemployment is rife and the spectre of fascist violence and Le Pen's Front National is never far away. The police are off the leash and free to mete out a daily dose of brutality.

Against this background, a defiant multi-ethnic youth culture of rap, reggae and cannabis flourishes. It brings together three apparently unlikely lads: Vinz, a working class Jew who models himself on Robert De Niro's half-crazed vigilante in Taxi Driver; Said, the son of Algerian immigrants who imagines himself a small-time hustler but hasn't quite acquired the requisite street sense; and Hubert, a promising boxer of West African descent.

G.R.McColl reviews La Haine (Hate) Directed by Mathieu Jassovitz. (95 minutes. French with subtitles).

Hubert is the most desperate of the trio to escape from the dead end of the banlieu, but even he cannot flee from the social whirlwind that engulfs his mates.

At one level, La Haine might be seen as an urban adventure film about three young men who can't keep out of trouble for 24 hours. But while the plot is not wholly original, director Jassovitz steers clear of action picture formulas. The story slowly unfolds from midmorning as cops scour the streets in the wake of a riot which swept the estate the night before. The police themselves had triggered the uprising, having left Abdel, a friend of the three main characters, on a life support machine after "routine" questioning.

Vinz has found a police handgun lost in the evening's confrontation. The gun becomes a central plot device, but Vinz's relationship to the weapon is also emblematic of his alienation, confusion and ultimate inability to act as a lone avenging angel. Vinz, Hubert and Said seem only to have each other in this manic 24-hour ride. There is no stable collective organisation and the labour movement is wholly absent from their lives.

This observation is not a criticism of Jassovitz's film, but an indictment of the movement's failure to address a whole generation of youth from such estates.

The physical presence of the cops is constant throughout the film. Its depiction of them is unflinching. One disturbing scene features Said and Hubert being subjected to a brutal interrogation by a sadistic racist with a badge. Jassovitz's message is clear: it's not a case of a "few bad apples", but of armed men driven by an ideology of virulent racism, twinned with a barely concealed contempt for all the youth of the banlieu.

The film sustains an atmosphere of almost unrelenting tension, relieved only by brief interludes such as Said's hopeless attempt to chat up two women at the opening of a private art exhibition, and a surreal encounter in a public toilet with a concentration camp survivor. La Haine moves sometimes languidly and sometimes at breakneck speed but with a chilling inevitability to its conclu-

The film's tragic ending recalls Spike Lee's Do the Right Thing. But this is a harder-edged and ultimately more convincing movie. Unlike Lee's work, it embraces the possibility of a class-based, multi-racial unity in the face of state repression and racist violence.

La Haine is riveting cinema which sheds light on key aspects of the crisis that erupted last month into a working class mass movement that has shaken Chirac's France to its foundations.

# Blood for oil

t is five years since Operation Desert Storm. For over a month Western warplanes blitzed Iraq: killing thousands of civilians and, as one US genthe Middle Ages". Then they unleashed a land offensive which, within four days, shattered the Iraqi army and "liberated Kuwait".

This month BBC1 begins a documentary series The Gulf War where participants, in particular retired soldiers, speak frankly about their experiences in the war.

Such documentaries are now part of the ritual of modern warfare. During the Gulf War itself the press and TV news lied shamelessly. The government lied shamelessly. And of course the military lied shamelessly. Now they will line up to expiate themselves by revealing selfjustifying snippets of truth.

During the war journalists were restricted to reporting what the military would allow. Those who tried to report the truth, like Alex Thompson of Channel 4, were arrested and threatened with deportation.

At home the broadcasters joined in to do their bit for the war: no casualties were allowed to be shown on air. The pervading images were the nose-camera shots from missiles and Allied jets, showing "smart bombs" impacting into con-

crete. Only after the war were we allowed to see the impact of napalm on human flesh.

eral promised, "bombing Iraq back to we were told it was to "liberate" Kuwait from Iraqi control and to punish the dictator Saddam Hussein. In reality it was a war for oil, and a war to re-impose imperialist control over the balance of power in the Middle East.

Until August 1990 the West had supplied Saddam Hussein with masses of armaments, including the means to make chemical weapons.

It had turned a blind eye when he used these weapons against Kurds and Marsh Arabs. As the war ended it was clear that the imperialist troops had smashed most of the Iraqi Republican Guard, Saddam's insurance against revolution, and that Iraq was in danger of breaking up as Kurds, Shia Muslims and some workers rose up against Saddam. Under the silent guns of the US tanks the remnants of the Republican Guard were allowed to withdraw and redeploy to crush the Shia rising in the south, and then the Kurdish revolution in the north.

Workers Power stood firm throughout the Gulf War, not just in opposition to the imperialist warmongers but in support of Iraq's right to defend itself against imperialist attack. We knew, despite the murderous reactionary rul-

ers of Iraq, that imperialism's victory would be our defeat. Conversely, a military defeat for imperialism would have What was this war about? At the time shattered the pretentions of our rulers to impose oppression and starvation in the third world at the point of a gun.

Even the USA's minor military catastrophe in Somalia in 1993 inflicted major damage on their willingness to impose the New World Order at gunpoint.

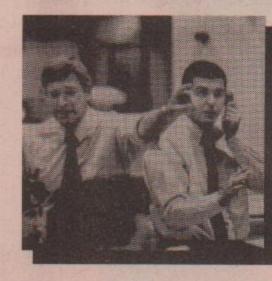
Now, in the BBC series, British Commander Sir Peter de la Billiere reveals that the British establishment was not prepared to suffer massive casualties, despite the propaganda barrage at the time:

"To be perfectly honest I didn't think we should be losing a lot of British lives. We were there to support a friendly nation and protect their borders. I wasn't prepared to lead a force with monumental casualties and victory at the end of the day."

The fear of massive casualties even led de la Billiere to withdraw British troops from the advance into Kuwait. In the end they followed the US army into Iraq saying, in effect, "we're right behind you".

Five years later the imperialist order reigns for the moment, in the Middle East. This order was imposed in the Gulf War—a war for blood and oil fuelled by racism, jingoism and, above all, lies.

## Where We Stand



#### Capitalism

is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need. Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party

and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.



#### The Labour Party

is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party-bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.



#### The Trade Unions

must be transformed by a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class-factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.



#### October 1917

The Russian revolution established a workers' state. But Stalin destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The parasitic bu-

reaucratic caste has led these states to crisis and destruction. We are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We oppose the restoration of capitalism and recognise that only workers' revolution can defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism. Stalinism has consistently betrayed the working class. The Stalinist Communist Parties' strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist.



#### Social oppression

is an integral feature of capitalism systematically oppressing people on the basis of of race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour

movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.



#### Imperialism

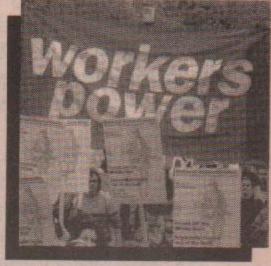
is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists, we fight for per-

manent revolution-working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and urfconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

#### Workers Power

is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the revolutionary documents of the first four congresses of the Third International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International. Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary Interna-



tional (the Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51. The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working classfighting for revolutionary leadership. If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!★

British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International

Smash the Asylum Bill! Saturday 24 February 11am Embankment. London Details: 0171 247 9307

No 196 JANUARY 1996 ★ Price 50p

No co-operation with racist laws!

HE TORIES' new Asylum and Immigration Bill is the most vicious piece of racist legislation for years. But the Tories are not waiting for it to pass through parliament. They are pressing ahead with a new law which denies over 13,000 refugees all access to benefits and public funds.

Thousands of refugees who claimed asylum more than one week after arriving in this country, or who have appeals outstanding, will have all rights to benefit cut off. This includes all income support, housing benefit and legal aid. Even children and disabled people will be sentenced to starve, as the Tories cut off free school meals and incapacity benefit.

The Tories have postponed the introduction of the cut, originally planned debate in parliament. But already councils and benefit agencies across the country have been rushing to implement the Tory law. Unless the law is defeated or made unworkable, we can expect the same thing to happen in earnest once the law is brought in.

In Lambeth the council rushed out letters to refugees announcing the withdrawal of their benefits. The YMCA hostel in Lambeth threatened to evict all refugees whose housing benefit is cut off, within seven days.

In Sheffield the DSS has already notified Housing Benefit offices of the withdrawal of benefits from 7 lanuary.

In South London, the DSS had already begun the withdrawal of refugees' payment books and is poised to do the same again. Asylum seekers have been informed that they have no right to legal aid, making it

nigh on impossible to pursue their appeals against deportation.

In Hackney, east London, the Labour local authority is preparing for the withdrawal of free school meals to the children of refugee families. And this is just the tip of the ice-

#### **Immigration checks** at work

The new Bill requires employers planned for 8 January, pending the to carry out regular checks for "illegal immigrants" and to demand passports and evidence of residential status from all employees and job applicants.

Failure to do this will be punishable by a fine. Around 2 million people a year will have to produce their documents before being allowed to work or change jobs.

Black people, already facing heavy discrimination in employment, will be treated by employers with even greater suspicion. Racist employers will have just another excuse to refuse black applicants. Bosses will be able to claim a lack of time and resources as a reason for simply rejecting all workers with African, Asian, Turkish or Latin American names.

The result will be even greater discrimination and poverty, and more violent deportations like the raid that led to the killing of Joy Gardner and



the brutal deportation of Abdul Onibiyo last year.

#### **Asylum rights blocked**

The procedures for asylum application are already a nightmare. Under the new law they are to get even worse. Oral hearings for appeals are to be abolished and a new "fast track" procedure is to be brought in. This will enable the authorities to make a quick decision and then simply throw refugees out of Britain before they can contact their families, friends and supporters or make use of their few

Without the right to legal aid and adequate representation, even fewer appeals will be granted.

#### "White list"

remaining civil rights.

The Tories' proposed new "White List" is a blanket ban on asylum from countries that the Tories claim are safe. The list includes Ghana, where dissidents are imprisoned for their ideas and views alone, India, where separatist movements in Assam, Punjab and Kashmir face systematic state violence and repression, and Pakistan, where religious minorities can be detained for the offence of blasphemy, which carries the death sentence.

According to the Tories, nobody could possibly be a genuine refugee from persecution in such countries! Worse still, the list can be added to at any time by the Home Secretary without reference to parliament.

This only increases the tremendous obstacles asylum seekers already face.

Take Nigeria for example, a country now notorious throughout the world for savage repression and execution of dissidents by the military regime of General Abacha.

In 1994 there were 4000 claims for asylum from Nigerians. Yet in the last 10 years only three Nigerians were granted the status of refugee! In 1995, following mass revolt against Nigeria's dictatorship, not one application for asylum was granted.

To defeat this filthy racist bill we need a massive campaign in the labour movement and on the streets to smash the bill.

- Smash the Asylum and Immigra-
- tion Bill! For a campaign of mass non-compliance!
- End all immigration controls!

Turn to page 2 for more details of the campaign to beat the Bill!

Refugees face eviction and starvation