

Workers power

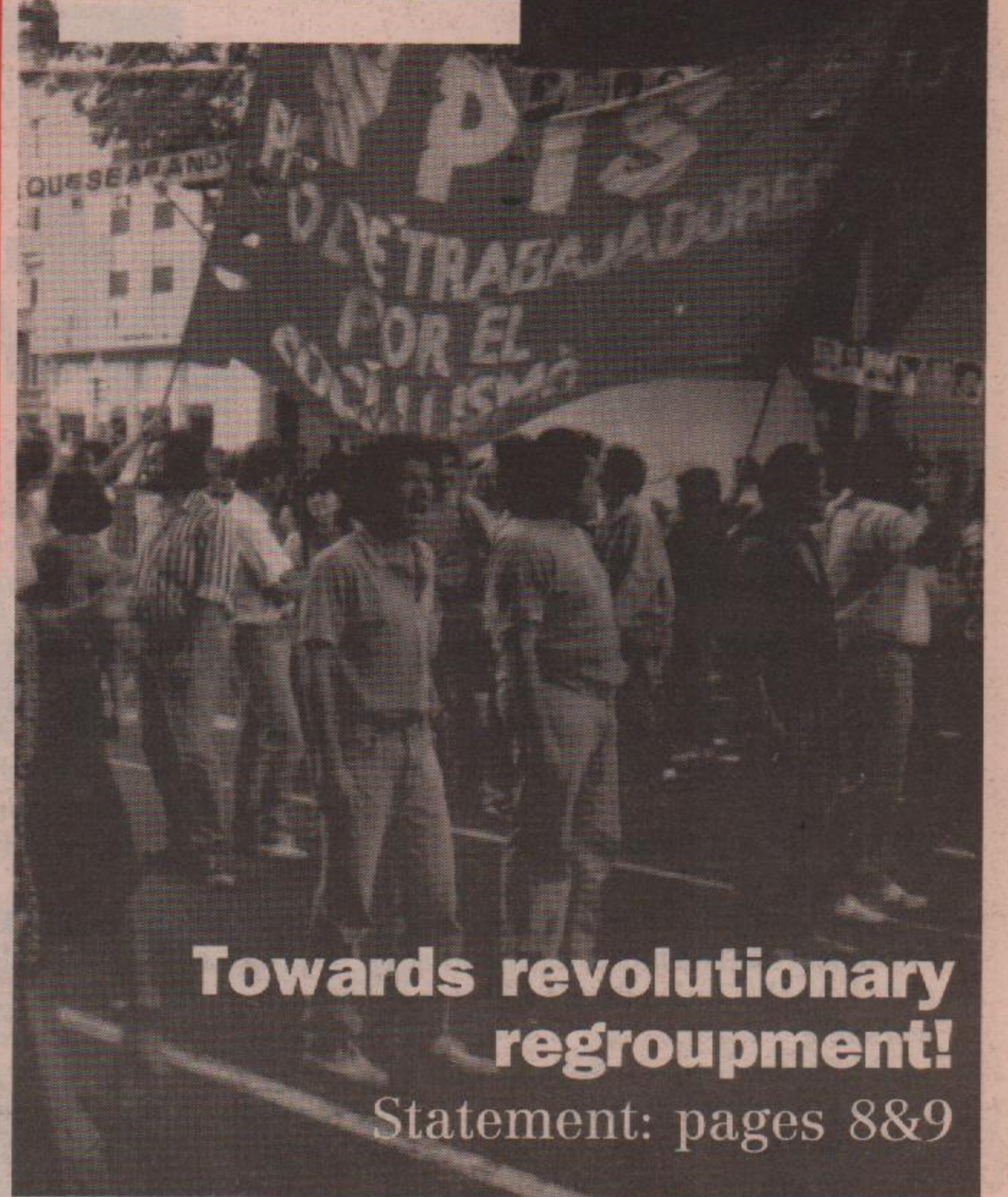
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France: the fight goes on!

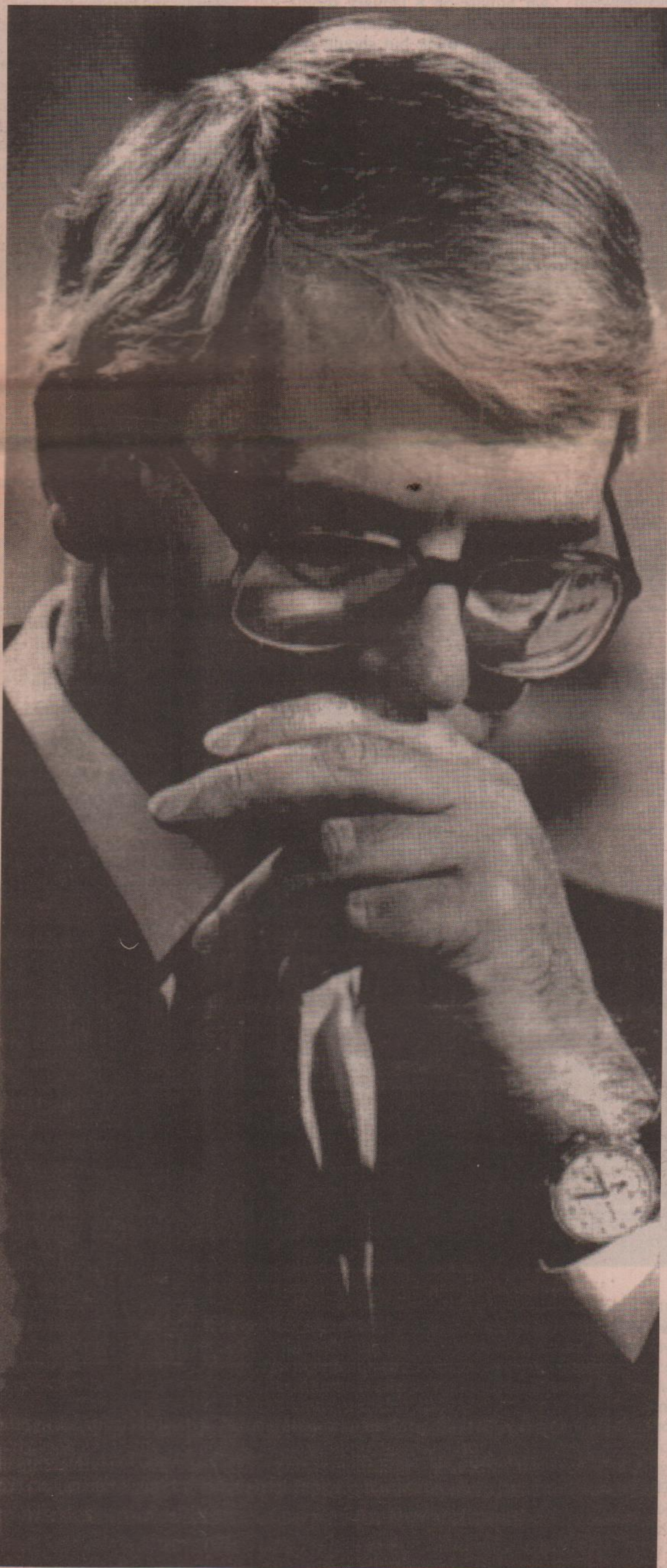
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Towards revolutionary regroupment!

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AS EURO-ROW splits Tories

Drive Major out now!

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

So 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 non-cooperation 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 com-

ply, 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-

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 display of unity. But in reality the involve-

ment of these establishment and pro-capitalist 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—incredibly—they 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 cross the line into a militant struggle or

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 non-implementation 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 Jan 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

WAYNE 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 post-mortem, 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 got.

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 discrimi-

nation.

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 white—have 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 candidate 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 self-defence. 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.■

Europe – which way forward?



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. Philippe 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.



THREE 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 ambitions of those European imperialists who yearn for a unified superpower, capable of rivaling 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 marvelous 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 compro-

mise 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-

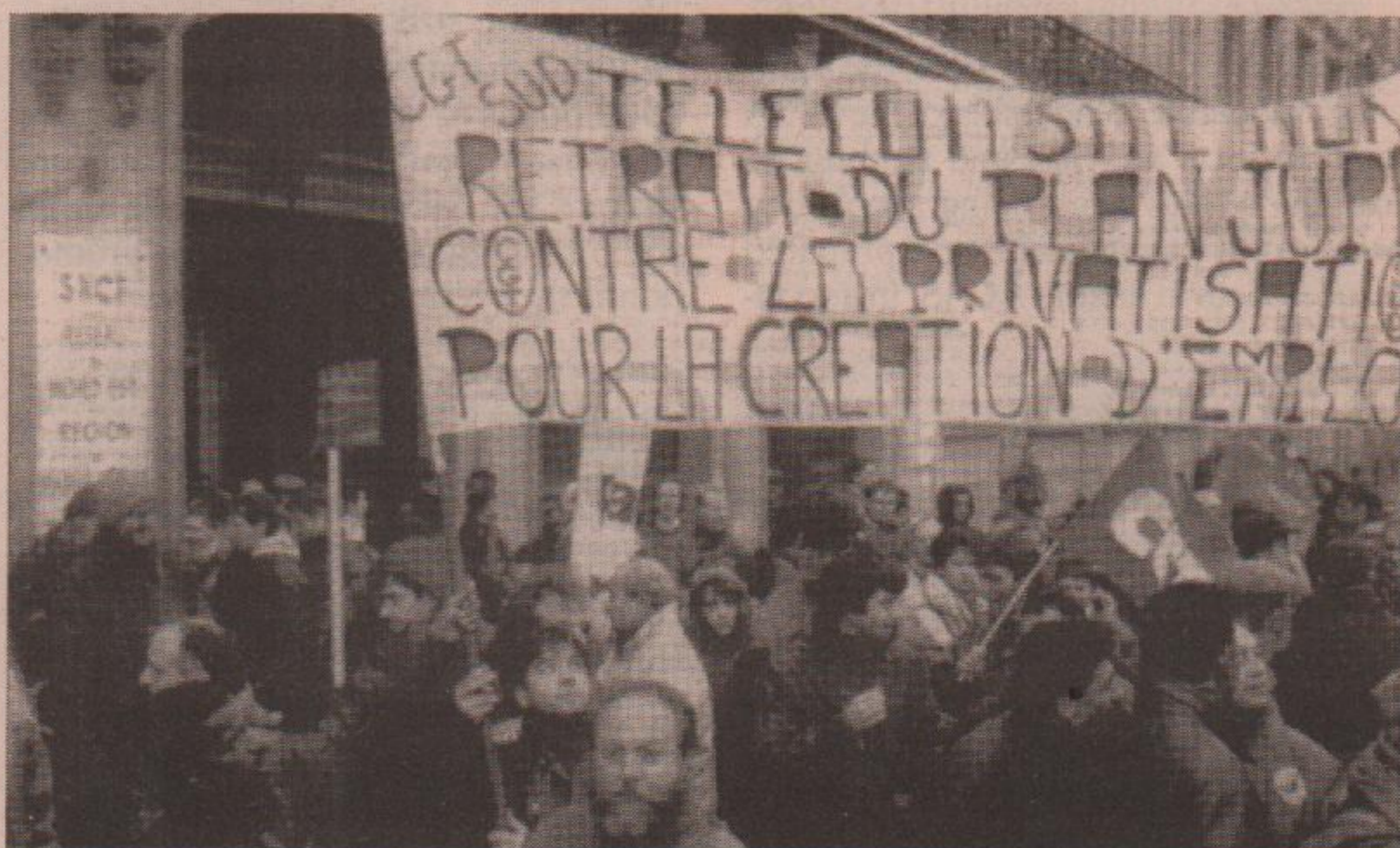
cal period. We said then that this would be a revolutionary period, with growing instability and rivalry between the imperialisms.

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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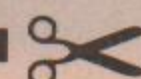
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Employment Service

Spread the strike!



Employment Service strikers at Barnsbury, North London

ON 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 spon-

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 Churchyard 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 Churchyard'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 a 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 all-out 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 necessary!

Bolton college strike

by a Natfhe member

BOLTON COLLEGE lecturers have been on strike since late 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 provision.

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 fortunately 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

THE SECOND Unison CDFU 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

LIVERPOOL'S SACKED dockworkers are still battling for reinstatement 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 MDHC 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 dockerman 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!

JOHAN 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 parliament.

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

AS 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 all-out 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 anti-union 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.

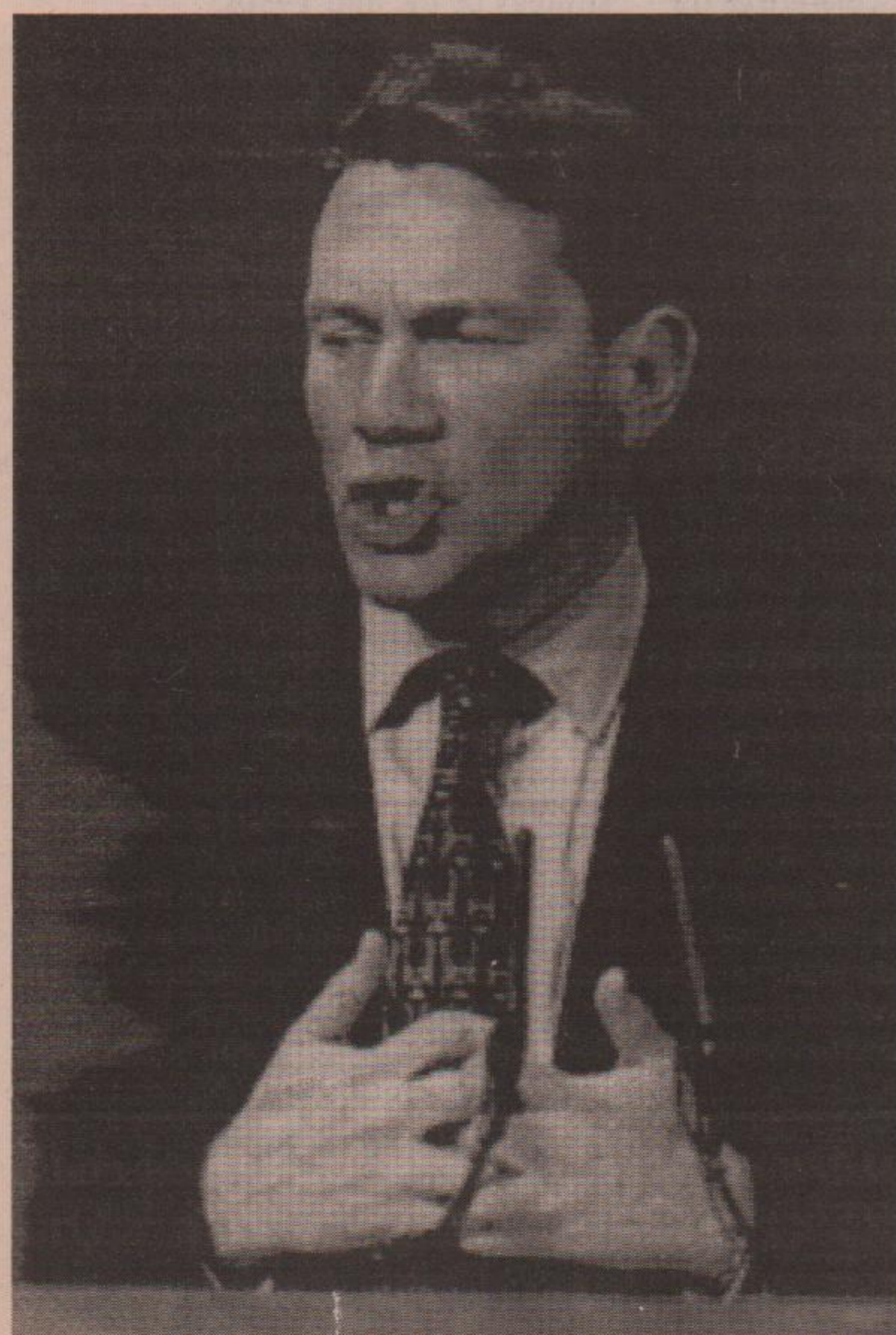
There was a notable rise in victimisations, but an important victory was won by the unions when steward Dave Carr was reinstated at London's Middlesex/University College Hospital after Unison members threatened an indefinite strike.

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! ■



Michael Portillo and (right) Emma Nicholson

Write to: BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX

Socialist Labour Party

Scargill constitution threatens SLP

ARTHUR 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. ■



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.

THE 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 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 right-wing 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.

Tragically this was not to happen.

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. ■



Arthur Scargill

The left and the SLP

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.

THE SWP is running scared of Scargill's SLP initiative. It fears a rival organisation to the left of Labour, for the simple reason that it cannot clearly delineate its political differences with left reformism.

Between 1992 and 1994 the SWP 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 extra-parliamentary 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

Socialist Worker

combining serious intervention in elections with struggle outside the Commons. In practice the two pull in opposite directions. The

search for votes pushes a party towards a softening of its message, towards a search for accommodation with the 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. ■

Militant 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* 15/12/95)

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 perspective.

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

Militant

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 revolutionary regroupement!

AS A RESULT 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 coup-makers 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 Paulo 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 re-foundation 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 post-war 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

Colin Lloyd

France

A Tale of Two Cities

IT 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 cheered-up 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 "Co-ordinations" 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 out:

"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.

THE 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.

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 the millions who voted for him, and

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 failure.

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 Ouvrière (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.

Mass strikes set France ablaze!



Turkey

Islamist election surge

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 Islamism 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 anti-working 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 anti-

Kurdish chauvinism as it stripped Kurdish MPs of their parliamentary immunity from prosecution and intensified the decade-long "dirty war" against the PKK and the rural Kurdish masses.

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 guerrillism 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 EU!
- Turkish troops out of Kurdistan; For Kurdish self-determination!
- For revolutionary workers' parties in Turkey and Kurdistan.■

A World to Win

EuroDisney

The labour movement found some surprising new recruits as 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 performance-related 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 guerrillism.

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Workers power

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Smash the Asylum Bill!

THE 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 for 8 January, pending the 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 January.

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 iceberg.

Immigration checks at work

The new Bill requires employers 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 remaining civil rights.

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

"White list"

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 Immigration 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