On the back of Gazza’s goal, the Manchester bomb and the beef war Major is once again plumbing the depths of little Englandism to get the Tory machine cranked up for an election.

But the old banger refuses to budge. He has gone too far down the road to Europe to turn back. The rabid racist right are too true blue to be convinced.

His attempts to stir up a chauvinist Summer whirlwind to propel him back into office has turned into a pathetic whimper.

With the Tories fighting like rats in a sack, Labour and the unions must organise the fight-back.

The Enemy Is At Home

Post workers deliver strike

POSTAL workers are set for their first national postal strike since 1988. The negotiations between Royal Mail and the union have failed on the issues of teamwork and delivery standards. This makes a national strike inevitable. The Communication Workers Union conference outlined their demands: no teamwork; no one to be worse off under pay restructuring; protect the second delivery. Royal Mail failed to meet any of these demands.

Teamworking is the buzzword used in the Royal Mail’s “Employee Agenda”. Postal workers must cover all absences and vacancies for no extra pay. The union fears that bosses secretly aim to completely abolish the second delivery. Massive job losses would result.

Despite this conflict the union’s joint General Secretary, Alan Johnson, is doing everything to avoid a prolonged strike. He has been a keen supporter of Tony Blair and frequently at odds with his own executive. Johnson does not want to upset Labour’s electoral prospects.

The one-day strikes which have been called in a confusing way, instead of calling a simple 24-hour stoppage, Johnson has issued complicated instructions to branches stating which shifts workers should not turn up for. This will mean some will strike while others are working.

This confusion may influence union members to stay at home rather than join a picket of their workplace. The lessons of the last national dispute are being ignored.

The 1989 dispute also began with a one-day strike. When union members returned to work, some found their offices were full of casual labour. This caused an immediate walk-out in 14 offices.

The dispute escalated when other offices refused to handle the work. Royal Mail forced a lock-out but failed to defeat the union’s membership. It was left to the union leadership to sell out its workforce despite solid industrial action initiated by the branches.

None of this has been lost on Royal Mail. Managing Director Richard Dykes has spoken openly about the possibility of a lock-out this time round. Post Office bosses have at their disposal a vast arsenal of anti-union laws, not all of which were available in 1988.

The stage is set for a major industrial confrontation. The task for CWU branches is to put pressure on the leadership of the union to call an indefinite national strike. They should continue to organise independently of the leadership. This will encourage the executive to stand firm against the manoeuvring of Johnson.

CWU branches have shown time and time again their ability to take effective industrial action. If the dispute is to be won the branches should not allow the executive to become isolated from the striking workforce in secret negotiations. If action is effective and pressure on the executive is maintained, Alan Johnson will find it difficult to sell out the workforce.

The dispute could turn into a long hot summer of struggle. Labour movement activists should be preparing to back the postal workers in their demands and support groups where this is possible.
Rail workers re-organise after BR break-up
All change on rail

Wales Labour Party debates Assembly and Europe
Where for Wales?

Greg Tucker

DELEGATES at the RMT annual general meeting have had to grapple with a number of serious problems, not least an ongoing financial crisis. Caused in part by loss of members' result of BR's withdrawal of the check-off-delegates can take some heartfelt from the fact that for the first time membership has started to rise.

Significantly, TSSA and ASLEF members have been joining the RMT in large numbers. As representatives and contract units in the space of a few months.

The 1995 Labour Party Conference saw a commitment to a railway under "public ownership and public control." This soon evaporated.

There are no plans to end franchises early and Railtrack is not to be renationalised. For some leading RMT members this has prompted a call for a "real入りon" of political and financial accountability—Scargill's Socialist Labour Party.

On the other hand, national action is being hampered because the union is finding it impossible to collect a detailed list of members' support for the ballot of a union-wide national dispute.

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As the CWU enters into action on the future the RMT cannot afford to hold back on its disputes.

In particular, its Train Crew dispute promises to be a test issue that cannot wait any longer. Ballot papers are due to be posted before the end of September with a clear date set for the start of the strike on 21 January.

\* London Train Crew Mass Meeting — 2 July Friends Meeting House Euston 7 pm.

\* Don Davies spoke at the JPR meeting of the need for an "inclusive assembly" and for a "consensus amongst pro-devolution parties to make it a truly Welsh Assembly and not simply a Labour Assembly".

He also expressed his support for PR and his view that the policy might change

\* Maastricht’s economic consequences will spell disaster for peripheral regions like Wales, which rely so heavily on social spending and public sector employment.

\* Evidently deep divisions exist on the Assembly within the Welsh Executive. One wing is Anna Gail, Jim Hopkins and Percy Thomas represents the wrong kind of arrogant, complacent and bureaucratic body.

The other wing consists of Ron Davies and his supporters, including a large number of Welsh MPs who favour change but shy away from an open fight.

Between the general election and the elections for an Assembly, Socialist Outlook discusses with some of the members of the Assembly.

In this way it could express Welsh autonomy within a wider British and European federation.
Beg, steal, and borrow

Labour's education policy is being采写 from another party, writes HARRY SLOAN

IS there any Tory policy which Tony Blair and his team will not shamelessly steal and proclaim their own?

John Major and Gillian Shephard thought they had the field to themselves when they began to whip up a backbench against comprehensive education.

Shephard began floating the idea of replacing the 11-plus exam and giving all secondary schools the right to select their entire intake, with the overt intention of disrupting Labour's election-winning promise.

Major were further urged, the renunciation of a grammar school in every town—something that is clearly in line even with the true-blue electorate of his own Hun
nigan constituency, who have drawn out plans for the biggest local comprehensives against no-grammar school status.

Gillian Shephard, eagerly assisted by the servile Chris Woodhead, right wing en of the Office for Standards in Edu-

cation, raised the banner of "traditional teaching", declaring war on the "liberal" methods being taught in teacher training colleges.

But just as the Tories worked themsel-

ves into a lather they were overtaken by Labour's terrible, Blair and Brown.

Blair has called for greater selection in comprehensives, while making it clear that grammar schools will be abolished, not just private schools will be touched by "new labor".

Blunket has outflanked Shephard as the scourge of failing teachers, echoing Woodhead's calls for more traditional methods.

Blair's speech, a logical development from his and Harriet Harman's choice of grammar schools for their own children, paid lip service to comprehensive educa-

tion. But his attack on the blanket applica-
tion of mixed ability teaching—a method barely practised since the 1960's—was a shameless lurch to the right.

In fact the most recent survey of com-
prehensive schools has shown it to be a huge success story, with the-figure suc-

cesses in Scotland where the comprehen-
sive system is most developed. It has also shown that despite Blair's concessions, grouping pupils by ability is no guarantee of improved exam results.

Blair's speech had little to do with edu-
cation and everything to do with his politi-
cal plans. As one Labour MP told the Evening Standard, this latest policy shift seems like another loyalty test, to check how much further to the right MP's will allow Blair and Co. to go.

Focusing the debate on the abstractions of teaching methods rather than on the grill realities in today's crumbling class-

rooms, enables Blair's team to slide away from the crucial questions of funding and teachers' jobs.

Without more cash for schools to main and increase their staffing levels and hold down class sizes, none of the available teaching methods will deliver quality edu-
cation.

Blair's latest comments have been cor-

rectly snatched by Charlie Hidy of the National Union of Teachers. The NUT must now implement its own conference and to call a national demonstration this autumn, piling on pressure for Labour to adopt a progressive policy on education in the run-up to the general election.

Road to resistance

GEORGE THOMPSON

spoke to Phil Mcleish, who was the last resident of Claremont Road on the M11.

SO: When did you get involved in the M11 road protest?

Phil: I got hooked during Operation Roadblock which was a sustained month of direct action, occupying the building sites etc. It was so exciting, the sheer intensity of just being out and doing something.

SO: Why did you see the campaign as important?

Transport's a key issue and shows the connection clearly between green and so-
cial issues. The inter-governmental Confer-
ence on Climate Change is taking place even with the true-blue electorate of his own Hun-

nigan constituency, who have drawn out plans for the biggest local comprehensives.

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Disarm the police

SIMON DEVILLE

spoke to Helen Shaw from Inquest which has been campaigning around deaths in custody since 1981.

Scolaire: Inquest deals with the system after someone has been killed. How can we try to prevent deaths happening in the first place?

Helen: There is a much wider issue than deaths in custody, and that is of racism in the police, which we do take up on our own as a kind of quasi-political, but that really needs to be ad-

ressed by the anti-racist movement and the left as a whole.

These deaths are just the tip of the iceberg, we really need to look at the whole way communities are policed, what happens to people who are involved in these killings, the fact that no one has ever been prosecuted except for one case after a white man was killed in 1978.

Scolaire: Inquest has had to take on the role of an activist organisation in recent years?

Helen: Inquest always had that perspec-
tive. It's just we don't see black deaths as being among wider number of deaths in custody because there are particular issues of institutional racism and police brutality.

Scolaire: Do you think the police are any more accountable now than they were before?

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Ireland’s British problem

THE Manchester bomb has proved the occasion of a return to the post-ceasefire media hysteria towards Republicanism. But behind the empty posturing the British strategy is proving remarkably durable.

The British state claims it has “no selfish strategic or economic interest” in Ireland. With the end of the cold war there is less of a threat in the Western Approaches of the North Atlantic.

The Common Agricultural Policy has put an end to Ireland’s traditional role as what Marx called “an agricultural district of Britain”. But Britain still has a crucial political interest in Ireland.

This is not just because of the presence of 18 MP’s from the North of Ireland in the British Parliament, but because the British government has a strong and continuing interest in stable bourgeois rule on the island of Ireland.

It shares with the Dublin ruling class the desire, as one Dublin commentator put it, “to eradicate the cancer of republicanism from the island of Ireland” because of the threat it poses to both of them.

John McAnulty of the Irish group Socialist Democracy assesses the long-term effects of the latest developments and Socialist Outlook’s David Coen examines the role of Ireland in British politics and the importance of the question to British socialists.

Despite the financial cost of the bombing campaign, Britain still has a crucial political interest in Ireland.

Neither peace nor war

John McAnulty

The recent elections to the new Northern Ireland assembly represent a tactical problem for Britain and a triumph for the Adams leadership of Sinn Fein.

However, as the longer term the British have won important strategic advantages.

Now the short-term setbacks and the more general problems of the conservative administration in Britain mean that we face a period of neither peace nor war.

The British began by proposing that new initiatives must have broad support.

They then adopted an election strategy that only unionists supported, declaring that they would solve all problems and act as a “gateway” to all-party talks. Of course, they were nothing of the sort.

Even with almost half the nationalist vote and 15 per cent of the overall vote, Sinn Fein are to be excluded unless there is a new IRA ceasefire. Behind this condition lie others like the decommissioning of weapons—essentially calling for the surrender of the republican forces.

A major British aim was the creation of a new assembly. This is a neat talking shop, but it establishes the shape of the outcome: the British plan—a transformed parliament that will be able to garner some support from the Dublin government and sections of the Catholic middle class.

The new body also represents a trump card—an embryo solution that the British will be able to threaten to implement unilaterally if the Irish capitalists prove hesitant in falling into step.

The outcome was very revealing. A voting figure of 65 per cent despite boycotts showed massive illusions in the “peace process” on the part especially of nationalist workers. Yet within this vote was a major turn to Sinn Fein—one of the better results for Sinn Fein in Northern elections.

Nationalists are very angry with British foot-dragging. They blame them for the breakdown of the ceasefire.

Rather than feeling divided and demoralised and ready to accept whatever the British hand out they have enormous expectations.

The overall message of the election is that the Irish question is far from being resolved. Britain has won major advantages but has a long way to go if it is to implement a decisive defeat on the nationalist population.

The implied threat will be felt most sharply by bourgeois nationalism.

This was most clearly shown in West Belfast, where Sinn Fein took four of the five seats after Joe Hendron, the sitting SDLP MP, called them a sectarian and fascist organisation.

This is a major upset. Much of the dynamic of London-Dublin collaboration since the Hillsborough agreement has involved the need to suppress the Sinn Fein electoral threat to the SDLP following the hunger strikes.

Now they obtain their highest vote ever. Implicit in the vote is a serious challenge to the hegemony of the SDLP.

It also poses a threat to the Dublin government. They can only see an agreement if they are not seen as openly selling out the Northern nationalists.

Yet the framework document involves such a sell-out and going on to deny the democratic rights of the Irish people as a whole.

The role of capitalist Ir-Amerika, represented by the involvement of US Senator George Mitchell and his team, cuts much less ice than was supposed.

Unfortunately this development is innocent of any conscious revolutionary dynamics. The Sinn Fein leadership entered the election as the “peace party” explicitly to preserve the unity of the “nationalist family”.

So the immediate political future is quite clear. Unconcerted positions are hardening and they will not agree even to reform of the existing system without substantial pressure from the British.

There is no possibility of such pressure being mounted at any level by a British administration which needs unilateral support in the Westminster parliament.

All this began to play itself out in the voting for position before the all-party talks that the election government was supposed to open.

Like the hallmark of mirrors the door to the talks keeps receding. It is now made clear if they were not clear all along—that only formal opening positions will be taken and the talks kicked into touch for September. But the talks are not waiting for the collapse of IRA determination not to surrender.

The presence of the US means that a settlement of restrainable partition will be attempted. It will be thoroughly uneconomic and will remain no weapon republican participation or not. The demand for surrender is a confession in advance that the settlement cannot be squared with the programme of republicanism or the democratic rights of the Irish working class as a whole.

The republicans see much of this and have now adopted a longer term strategy. They will not wait for a new government in England, not dependent on unionist voters and a return of a Fianna Fail government in the 26 counties.

In the meantime Sinn Fein will create more space between itself and the IRA in the hope that its electoral mandate will force the British to eventually admit to a talks.

They hold to the illusions of British disinterest and of bourgeois nationalism support for a united Ireland, that US and European imperialism can play a progressive role, to the idea that they can go back to an illusory strategy that failed and maintain a strategy of secret diplomacy that has sharply eroded its activist base.

The situation in Ireland is familiar to socialists in many areas of the world—the political offensive by imperialism for its strips its physical impact.

Real progress will be made when and only when a long period of recoupment by the class within traditional structures but no real independent self-organisation or leadership. Given the difficulties of imperialism and the lack of any real reform on offer there will be further opportunities to regroup and nibble.

A programme for the Irish revolution

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Supporting self-determination

David Coen

SOCIALIST Outlook supports the republican’s demand for British withdrawal and self-determination. Only the Irish working class can lead the fight for self-determination. This struggle needs to lead not to the creation of a United Irish Republic but to a workers’ republic.

Last year workers had no interest in unity with a sectarian 26-county state. They will not be won over by a phony demand for national independence.

Secondly we believe the Republicans have been the leading force fighting British imperialist in Ireland. If successful the struggle could only lead to the break up of the British state. This would be a huge step forward for the workers movement. It does not matter that Britain is no longer number one imperialist power. Defeat and dismemberment of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland would be of world-wide significance.

Socialism in Britain requires that the British working class breaks with reactionary chauvinism and supports Irish self-determination against the enemies of the class.

The reason for the present failure of the republican movement lies in its almost wholehearted embrace of reformist policies. Once it became clear that military force would not drive the British out Sinn Fein threw in the lot with the Southern ruling class in a pan-nationalist front.

This failure should not however blind us to the fact that working class nationalists, North and South, support Sinn Fein because they see this as a way of advancing their class interests.

Opposition to discrimination in jobs and housing is at the root of their demands. But these reforms cannot be achieved within the context of a future Northern state.

Now can they be achieved within a framework of direct rule from London, a situation which has been in place since 1972 when Stormont was abolished.

Large numbers of the nationalist working class have come to see that reforms can only be achieved in the Republic. This is why they voted in tens of thousands for Sinn Fein, the only party which up until now has consistently met their demands.

But even in a unified state which ended discrimination, the nationalist working class would still come up against local and multinational capital.

They would still face the problems of unemployment, emigration, low wages and sweatshop conditions.

This would immediately put them into conflict with a Republican politics which has no answer to such problems. It would also force them to recognize that the Protestant working class are their allies in this struggle against capital.

Independence and self-determination are therefore cast in completely different light. The demand for reform leads to the demand to end partition which in turn leads to the question of the character of a new Irish state.

The dynamic is towards revolutionary politics. The only organisation capable of leading such a struggle would be a revolutionary socialist party.

Unworkable union

Hume’s European solution

Since at least the time of Gladstone the British ruling class has had a strong desire to “demystify” the “Irish Question” from British politics. Since the mid-nineteenth century Ireland has been a continuing source of deep division and even sometimes outright warfare among the bourgeois.

One of the most serious examples of this was the Curragh Mutiny in 1914 when the army rebelled rather than move against Sinn Fein’s republic.

The question of the union has always had at its core the problem of the British bourgeoisie. This has been demonstrated again only recently with significant numbers of officers of the Royal Irish Fusiliers stating that defence of the union is a re-signing matter.

It is likely that the Irish question will remain close to the centre of the fight for the future of the Tory Party.

The 1913 partition treaty was an atempt at a neo-colonial settlement. In the South this was relatively successful. Its failure in the North was mainly due to the fact that power was left in the hands of those who had previously been the instruments of imperialist oppression— the Unionists.

The main founding block of the sectarian voice of Ulster was discrimination. The Unionists ensured their own survival by perpetuating divisions in the working class along religious lines and creating a powerful cross-class alliance based on the Orange Order.

The perceived threat from the South was used to cement this popular front. But after 1926, when the creation of Fianna Fail brought forth a new constitutional republicanism, that threat was nothing more than fantasy.

The neo-colonial solution also failed in the North because of the area’s economic dependence on the British empire and the close political integration, expressed in a 1933 only recently abolished—The Conserva-tive and Unionist Party of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

At the same time this very geo-political and economic closeness became an obstacle to the kind of state terrorism required to defeat the IRA. The British bourgeoisie were unable to mount military operations on the same scale as those ignominiously called insurgents in Aden, Kenya and An-nawi.

In the post-war period, as the British Empire disintegrated, the ruling class was generally able to impose solutions, even if that meant sacrificing the interests of some of their own.

In the case of Ireland this has never been possible. Major cannot do it now without dividing the Tory Party from top to bottom.

The irony is that leaving aside the general world view of the British Conserva-tive Party, a bourgeois solution to the Irish problem is now more than ever in sight. Unionism is fragmenting and important sections of capital, North and South, while not necessarily favouring radical constitu-tional solutions, at least favour economic ones.

Ireland’s economy is one of the fastest growing in the European Union and Irish capital across the market investment opportun-ities which will arise following a political and economic settlement.

UNIONIST Backbencher: Mr. James Craig, a Unionist MP, said that the government had a duty to use the army to maintain the peace.

Sinn Fein: continuance to win support away from Hume’s GUP

JOHN Hume of the Social Democratic and Labour Party has played a key role in the current “peace” process. He persuaded Gerry Adams that Unionist consent rather than the British state was the main obstacle to Irish unity.

Hume’s solution to the impact of nationalist politics was to use the European Union to downplay the importance of independence in his concept of a “European Regions”. This closely linked in with the perception that internal economic borders were being dismantled in Western Europe as European capitalists geared itself to compete with the US and Japanese Blocs on a world scale.

In a world of trading Blocs, trans-national capitalism and massive international capital flows, “self-determination” appears less relevant.

Hume’s concept of Northern Ireland as a semi-autonomous region within the EU; opportunities for British and the South has found some favour with both the British and Irish governments.

But what seems rational from the point of view of the ruling class in a whole may not appeal to some of its key sections.

The right wing of the Tory Party cannot stand Hume’s ideas, especially now they have been taken on a pact with Sinn Fein and the Left.

Hume’s concept of Northern Ireland will ensure that the British state will be crucial to the debate about the future of Europe.
Russian elections resolve nothing

Gerry Foley

It is clear that the elections have not "demonstrated democracy" in Russia or resolved any of the problems that the society is facing. None of the major contenders represent the working class—the only force that can solve the economic and political crisis in Russia and that can end the economic and social chaos. None of the major candidates offers a programme in the interests of the Russian workers, or seeks to mobilise them. In the first ten months of 1995, non-payment of wages increased by 156 percent, according to the Russian trade union federation, and social expenditures fell by 30 percent. This tendency is continuing. A new wave of strikes is in April. At the same time, the only instrument controlling the workers by force, the army, continues to function. Thus, the social situation is not likely to be defused by the elections.

The bureaucratic fractions contending for the mantle of electoral legitimacy have carried demagoguery to dizzying heights. Of course the most adept and best placed to play this game was the incumbent Boris Yeltsin. His popularity demagoguery has been exploited to the top of the bureaucratic heap in 1991, when it was already obvious that the old Stalinist system could not go on. He promised that under his management the perestroika reforms would not hurt the working people. But since he assumed political power the reforms have had a more devastating impact on the living standards of the Russian people than even the destruction of World War Two.

"Reformers" Communist parties have been winning elections in country after country in Eastern Europe on the basis of a mass rejection of capitalist restoration. These reforms are identified chiefly with the so-called democrats—the self-proclaimed anti-Stalinist sections of the old bureaucracy. The defeat of the old-line Stalinists acceptance of the restoration of capitalism.

In the post-Soviet republic Russia of Belarus a popular socialist party, the Belarusian Social Democratic Party, recently scored a sweeping electoral victory over all other "democrats." So Yeltsin has been running scared. He announced an end to military conscription, obviously to appeal to the young voters, who are less inclined than their elders to look back to the Soviet era as a "lesser evil." Up until now, the under-25s have tended to support Yeltsin. Yeltsin's recent appeal to a council in Chicago, followed by a tour by the president himself, was a stroke of demagoguery worthy of the historic masters of electoral manipulation. A Polish daily reported how in the first Chelsea town he visited Yeltsin "touched" the computer room of a local school with electronic goodies.

This bureaucratic lied beautifully also promoted to build a "socialist" factory to employ women from the neighbouring villages in the process of restoration, the Russian textile industry has been reduced to nothing less than one-fifth of what it was before.

On the next leg of his journey, Severny airport outside the Chechen capital of Grozny, Yeltsin promised 90,000 rubles to each school and the local Chuchh ish leader's wife to pay all back wages before June 15, which just happens to be the day before the elections. After agreeing to talks with the Chechen leaders—this he had vowed never to do—he did proclaim to Russian troops in Chechnya both that he was "bringing them peace," and that they had already won a war against the Chechen rebels. Supposedly, only small bands of Chechen rebels remain, which had to be "exterminated"—but presumably not removed.

Yeltsin's security chief, General Aleksandr Korzhakev, who recently proposed calling off the elections-declared that the Chechen leader Zelimkhan Yandukhov had not been informed of Yeltsin's visit, so that the latter could not claim credit for the Russian president's security in Chechnya. Actually the Chechen chief had already issued a personal guarantee of Yeltsin's safety as a prelude to the talks in Moscow that led to the ceasefire. Yandukhov's safe conduct for Yeltsin was in return for the guarantee from the Russian president that the Chechen leader could attend the Moscow talks.

However, the Chechen fighters, who have the support of the population but are heavily outgunned and outnumbered by the Russian army, can understandably see a repeat. And there is no obvious reason for them not to play along with Yeltsin's electoral manoeuvre, since his main challenger, Gennadi Zyuganov of the "reformed" Communist Party of the Russian Federation, would be no better and could be worse. As the campaign proceeded the contradictions in Zyuganov's line have become more apparent—the CPRF's economic programme was only published on May 25.

The CPRF's most prominent economist Tanya Koryagin described their programme as similar to Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal to save American capitalism in the Great Depression. CPRF has made "restoring the Soviet state the cornerstone of their programme," it is allied with extreme and aggressive Great Russian nationalism. The old-line Stalinists indeed believe in Yeltsin's not having cracked down on the Chechens enough, but State-controlled capitalism is not in sync with the "liberal" offensive of the Western capitalist class. The New York Times denounced the CPRF programme as "the most right-wing in Russia and the West, the plan is closer in spirit and theory to the Soviet command economy of old," however, Nezavisimaya Gazeta, once the main "democratic" paper, published one article in its front pages denouncing the CPRF programme. It described it as "high quality and literate" and "for all practical purposes," "a reversion to Marxism Leninism." For a considerable time now intelligent pre-capitalist economists have been saying that some rationalisation and government intervention into the economy are necessary in order to smooth the path for the transition to capitalism. The Russian business magazine Vek asked "Why should we wait for the Communists to rationalise?", concluding, "Privatisation has not led to a competitive private industry but rather to the decentralisation of state property.

Programmatic differences have appeared in the Blue bloc Yuzhny, which includes the VTB, one of the most prominent by Victor Avtylev of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Yavlinsky has criticised Yeltsin for being weak in opposing the puritan capitalist, especially the hardliners. A recent reply that Zyuganov's programme also has to get the support of the new Russian capitalists.

Besides the unsurprising record of the new Russian bourgeois in the economy, there is the experience of the slightly reconstituted, old-line Stalinists politicians in Belarus. They were more than once into office in a vast wave of rejection of the reforms. This crisis, in other words, recently when he criticised the Belarus regime for its political repression, although he is aligning himself with it to bring Belarus back into a new union with Russia.

An article in the "Post Socialist Transformations in Eastern Europe" in the Center for the Study of Civil Society, Francisco Browne Infante noted that the political changes in Eastern Europe have brought more support than the economic changes which have been associated (over 60 percent as opposed to less than 40 percent). classified programme of the Chechen "rebels" remains is a serious threat to strong-arm methods than in the case of the "reformed" CPRF which have won elections.

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Maastricht: the cat's out of the bag

François Vercammen

The OECD, the organisation of the main Imperialist states, has broken a taboo in its latest report. It admits that Germany and France will not meet the terms set by the Maastricht accord.

The 'pact for jobs' of Germany's Chancellor Kohl outlines the prospects for the whole European Union—frontal assaults against social security.

Maastricht is running into ever bigger problems.

Someone suggested that one day the forecasters of the official institutions should be dragged before the courts, just like manufacturers who make dishonest adverts or put false information on the labels of their products. The prosecution would have to act quickly. Everyone locked up for petty crimes would have to be freed in order to make space for those responsible for the economic situation which has developed over the last 15 years.

Not so long ago we were being told that economic growth was just about to re-start, and that the problem was temporary. They said 1993 was a good year, 1994 would be much better.

Right-winger Jacques Chirac won the French presidential elections on the back of these reports. He had been able to go to the G7 summit in Lille and present himself as the champion of all forces joined up in the fight against unemployment.

There was the same refrain at the G7's Washington summit a few weeks later. 1997 would be a year of strong growth, explained Le Monde back in April, "the fundamental economic indicators remain promising". However the only countries with these results are those that have given up obeying the Maastricht plan and do not intend going back to it in the short-term: Sweden, Britain and Italy.

The chief economist of the International Monetary Fund Michael Mussa has had impudent remarks around his head and great and good for pointing out this troublesome truth.

The facts speak for themselves, and Mussa has simply put his finger in them. His team, made up of one expert from each major government, predicted back in April that the German economy would grow by one per cent this year. Last year it grew 1.9 per cent.

Just a few days later the 'wise men' who advise the German government cut that prediction in half—growth would be just half a per cent. That respectable institution also reaffirmed that the single currency should not be introduced until the criteria had been modified.

A few days after that statement, the OECD announced that neither France nor Germany would fulf ill the criteria on time.

These 'reports' have very little to do with science and everything to do with political tactics. Since 1993 their tactics have revolved around the question they dare not ask in public—when and how can they tell the truth?

The truth is that it is impossible to introduce a single currency within the timetable fixed at last December's Madrid summit. It is quite a problem for the most powerful classes. To come out with the truth now would deprive them of the most powerful argument they use to justify their austerity policies.

Yet the closer it is to the end of 1997, the more any admission would embarrass the financial markets and put the single currency even more in danger. A special Inter-Gov enmental Conference at the start of 1998 will assess the situation, studying statistics from the different countries.

On top of all this, the financial markets threaten to refuse speculating in currencies. If the Euro comes too late, or even not at all, one kick-on effect will be a spectacular appreciation of the value of the Deutschmark, with all its negative implications for German exports and the balance of the whole European Union.

UP AGAINST mass unemployment, rampant employers with no social protection, and a new form of imperialism, the working class in Britain faces a real crisis—a avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

There exists to build a new type of working class leadership, based on class struggle and revolutionary socialism. The capitalists, driven by its own crisis, and politically allied by its need to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has had determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal Tory High Command. The Tory state has been able to strangle the unions, and to fragment and weaken the resistance, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time. In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the staple rituals of ‘new realism’, effectively total retreat politics of ‘new realism’, with fat-tongued professionalism of ‘maverick’ beloved by armchair academicians, but the revolutionary tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

OUR SOCIALIST alternative is not based on parliamentary elections or illusions of peaceful legislative change. We fight to mobilise and unleash the power of the working class to topple the corrupt and reactionary capitalist state and establish its own new one.

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

Groomed Out is above all an internationalist current, in solidarity with the Trotskyists Fourth International, which organise in 40 countries. Unlike some other left groups in the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. This degenerates into sectarian posturing and avarice over small struggles in the labour movement, playing into right wing hands.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland, Ireland and Wales should be left to await revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now for their demands, which are at the core of the struggle for socialism. But propaganda alone, however good, will not bring about the necessary changes. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politically educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we must press for urgent first campaigns on key issues such as racism and feminism — in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while respecting different views. Boycott, for instance, is a common tactic, and we encourage all the left groups you see in Socialist Outlook, and want to join with us in the construction of new, socialist, revolutionary groups meet in cities across the country. Contact us now, get on the picket line get in the struggle now.

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feedback
German workers defend welfare state

HUNDREDS of thousands of German workers assembled in Bonn on Saturday 15 June for the largest trade union rally since the Second World War.

Called by the unions and supported by the Social Democratic Party, they were protesting against government plans to cut public spending and social benefits.

The rally was a climax to weeks of protests and brief strikes by public sector workers which have taken place since Chancellor Kohl announced plans for £21.7 billion of cuts in April.

The background is a familiar story across Europe: forecasts for next year predict that Germany's public spending benefit will exceed the three per cent limit set by the Maastricht Treaty. There are growing doubts as to whether Germany will be able to meet the strict criteria required to qualify for European Monetary Union.

Kohl has been careful to argue that the cuts are about making German firms competitive and cutting unemployment rather than securing Germany's place in Europe. But the unions are in a bind.

Kohl has promised only a two-year pay freeze in the public sector. However, the unions demanded 4.5 per cent and it looks like they will settle for a 1.3 per cent increase. This will increase the pressure on Kohl to push through the cuts.

There are even doubts about whether the cuts proposed by Kohl are actually enough to bridge the budget deficit, given the fact that the economy is unlikely to grow by more than half a per cent this year--less than the European average.

On top of the job losses that have taken place recently in major German companies, these public spending cuts look like producing the class conflicts which the German capitalists have long sought to avoid by their sham of 'social partnership'--drawing union leaders into joint decision-making about jobs, pay and conditions.

The strength of the German unions could well prevent Kohl's cuts and set another example, after the French one, to workers across Europe about the real meaning of European Union and how to fight it.

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Euro march to challenge Maastricht

Harry Sloan

TWOC key political meetings take place in Florence next week.

One will hit the press headlines. The EU's IGC, Inter-Governmental Conference, will attempt to map out the steps for implementing the Maastricht treaty and moving towards a single European currency with or without John Major's 'cooperation'.

The other meeting will be out of the limelight, but potentially vital for the European workers' movement. Trade unionists and employed activists will discuss an ambitious series of marches against unemployment, from capitals and big cities, converging in Amsterdam in June 1997.

Sobered by the success of the international protests in France and the plans of Maastricht-determined France to freeze public sector pay in 1997, more talk is now being planned.

Spain's new right-wing government has also moved swiftly towards cuts in education and new charges for health care, while in Austria government cuts from 4.4 per cent to three per cent. Britain's deficit runs at five per cent. The Maastricht target implies a cut of £4.5 billion. That is the equivalent of the NHS hospitals budget and the education spending. The need to cut poses sharp difficulties for the Conservative government and any future Labour party government.

The plans for a single currency have openly split the Conservative party in half. Major's 'best way' aims to heal the rift. Most of the European ruling class now thinks that Labour leaders Tony Blair and Gordon Brown are more likely to deliver the euro.

A new Labour government would be a tool for European capitalism. It could not reverse the 17 years of asset stripping by the Conservative government. Instead Labour would have to cut deeply into the welfare state with new 'Maastricht' cuts. The Maastricht restrictions prevent governments from reducing the official EU total of 20 million unemployed. Saving welfare rights are attacked while 50 million live in poverty.

The Euro march is proposed for next Spring when the British general election campaign is under way. The striking gives socialism and trade unions throughout the EU an opportunity to challenge the capitalist logic of monetary union with the politics of solidarity and socialism.

The proposal was made in April by Italian, Spanish and German ministers at a meeting in Turin organised by the city's unemployed branch of the CGIL union federation. The activists called for wider discussion of possible European initiatives against unemployment.

A European conference, or common initiatives in every European city, is also possible. The appeal was endorsed in France by ACI, Act together against Unemployment, which organised five successful marches across France in 1994 which converged in a 30,000-strong march through Paris.

ACI has drawn up plans to deal with the technical and organisational problems and extract the maximum advantages of a similar series of marches across the EU. A full-time staff would coordinate the campaigns. A Europe-wide leadership team would travel throughout the EU to address planning meetings and campaign rallies.

The political gains of the marches would repay campaigners who build up resources and practical support along the route. The marches will highlight the need for full employment and the work of the international opposition to the Maastricht process. They will give the best conditions to unite trade unions, working-class parties and campaigns.

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