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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TUC must be reassured to continue support for CAIAB after February 24 demonstration
Brixton
eyewitness

Diary
6.30 pm Wednesday December 13 1995.

ABOUT 150 PEOPLE assembled in the cold and rain outside the police station to demonstrate against Wayne Douglas’ death in custody. He was the second young man in the area to die at the hands of the police in 7 months and the sixth black man to die in custody in 2 months.

The demonstration is small and angry—the demonstrators are mainly black, many young, and noticeably, many women of all ages. The number of police at the demo is provocative but the demonstration is peaceful.

Speaker after speaker laments the lack of action taken after the high death toll of young black people who have died in custody since 1969. They speak of the failure of the black community to campaign after these deaths—voices of despair are joined by voices of righteous anger.

The crowd marches down the high street to demonstrate that anger. As I walk up the High Street to join the demo I notice vans loaded of police in riot gear on the side streets.

Brixton Oval 7.15pm.

Police have tried to clear the streets and three police vans with the grills down are lined up across Brixton High Street. The crowd is in a strong position in the middle of a crossroads. Demonstrators are determined to get the message across and intent on not moving.

The atmosphere is charged. It is both therapeutic and dangerous—yet mundane and ordinary. People stand by watching and passers-by ask what is happening. Then someone throws a bottle at the police who are lined up across the road by the Town Hall. "Right—beaten!" shouts the police. They are up for a fight. Later they are seen banging on the sides of their vans to intimidate the crowd.

Brixton Thursday December 14 12.30 am.

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

Brixton Thursday

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

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

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

Brixton Friday

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

Brixton tells the old truth...

No justice for black people

Ellen Moore

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

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

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

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

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

Yet when in May 1995, Brian Douglas died after being hit on the head with a baton only a short distance from the playground where Wayne Douglas being murdered and attacked (those who don’t have those concerns are not representing black communities”).

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

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

Hillingdon strikers stand firm!

Rod Marshall

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

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

Memorial volume honours Bob Smith

Anthony Brain

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

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

Pat Brinn who worked with Bob for many years spoke of his qualities and principles: “It was workers like Bob who kept the continuity of Marxism alive by sticking to the principled ideals of our movement. If the class was given proper leadership it could overthrow the capitalist system”. Ending the Nightmare is a collection of articles on racism and fascism including Ernest Mandel’s ‘Learn the Lessons of Germany’. For your copy of this 128-page book, send a cheque for £4.95 plus 75 pence postage, payable to Socialist Outlook Fund.
Another wall for Fortress Europe

Simon Deville

SOCIALISTS MUST build a broad campaign of all forces opposed to the racist Asylum and Immigration Bill. The bill must be smashed. This is a golden opportunity to inflict a massive defeat on the Tories. The TUC has declared its opposition and pledged to support the national demonstration on February 24. Activists should ensure these words are turned into deeds.

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

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

Unfortunately many Labour-controlled councils are already preparing to implement some of the social security regulations involved in the bill, examples include withdrawing housing benefits or free school meals. Demands must be placed on local councils to resist the bill and the social-security regulation changes. Even if central funding were withdrawn we must demand that refugees are not thrown onto the streets to starve.

Mass movement

The Liberal Democrats, churches and even some Tories are opposing the legislation. This widespread opposition must be turned into a mass movement led by the labour movement in alliance with refugees and black people. The Campaign Against the Asylum and Immigration Bill (CAIAB) is clearly the central focus.

At the moment the priority of the campaign must be for a complete defeat of the whole bill. Local campaigns should be established that bring together and mobilise all the forces opposed to the bill. Many public sector workers will be asked to implement either the bill or the proposed social security regulations.

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

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

All trade unionists should ensure that the bill is discussed at their forthcoming national conferences.

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

Britain has no immediate need for the moment, on maintaining an independent immigration policy from the rest of Europe. Yet both governments are actually proposing legislation that will bring each respective country’s attitude in line with other European states.

Bargaining chip

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

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

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

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

What’s the Asylum and Immigration Bill?

Brian Gardiner

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

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

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

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

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

Criminal offence

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

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

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

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

The Bill increases internal control by giving police and immigration officers greater powers of search and arrest. Certain areas could be targeted, effectively placing all black people and those from ethnic minorities under suspicion.

Employing a person with an immigration entitlement to work in the UK will become a criminal offence.

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

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

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

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

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Photo: Andrew Howard
Labour's National Ireland Secretary during the time, Roy Mason, must be a serious contender for most hated Eng-
land of all time—in spite of the qua-
ility of the operation.
The end of Special Category Status led to the dirty protests and the Hunger
Strikes. The deaths of the ten Hunger
Strikers led in turn to an upsurge in support for the Republicans which shook the whole island.
The strongest card played since Dublin and the Social Democratic and
Labour Party in the North has been the argument that no internal Six County solution will keep militant Republican-
ism at bay. Dublin must therefore have
some role, however token, in guaran-
teeing the position of the Northern Na-
tionalists; otherwise they will turn to
the IRA.
The British demand that the IRA gives up some weapons as a precondi-
tion of all party talks is a watered down
version of the Unionist demand for the IRA surrender. Leader of the Offi-
cial Ulster Unionist Party David Trimble has a new angle.

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

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

For the Sinn Fein leadership, going
along with this plot might be more than politically suicidal.

In time, the new arrangement will be sold as a step towards eventual Irish
unity: to openly go along with it would make it appear as if the results of 25 years of armed struggle is no more
than a vague promise that Dublin will have some say in how the Nationalists are treated in the new ar-
angement, in other words, that their fate will be in the hands of those who left them to fend for them-

Meanwhile the futile war against
drugs will escalate as the armed strug-
gle elements in the Republican Move-
ment declare a proxy war against Brit-
ish intrusiveness, the Peace Process
and, sooner or later, against the Adams
leadership.

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

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

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

Liverpool
Docks Dizzle

Steve Hall

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

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

There is a far de-
gree of suspicion that the T&G’s negoti-
ating team, rather than
supporting reinstatement,
are busy cob-
lings together a payoff deal to
break the strike to a disheartening end.

One reason the solidarity has been
maintained is the emergence and effec-
tive organisation of women in a support
group. Initially assisted by Women
Against Pit Closures, the group is play-
ing an increasingly role in the
overall fight.

Support groups have been set up in
Southampton, Hull, Merseyside and
Greater Manchester. Striking dockers have been toured round workplaces,
trade union branches and trade coun-
cils. In Southampton a picket took
place of Drake International the firm hired to organize docks workers to break the
strike in Liverpool.

Building support ex-
tends well beyond the
dispute itself.

It is about revitalis-
ing the trade union movement after a long
series of defeats. The Labour Party has, not
surprisingly, refused to back the
dispute. Efforts
should be made to
build up this issue in	
side the Labour Party and
the trade union movement and to
perverse the TGWU leadership to
by-pass its resolution.

The dockers desperately need cash
They also need support on their dem-
Onsions and rallies (next one Satur-
day February 3) and on their pickett
lines.

Job Centre
strike escalates

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

EMPLOYMENT Service workers around Britain are
poised to join in CPSA’s cam-
paign over pay.

Offices called out include
Moss Side, Leaonington Spa and
Sheffield, as CPSA General Sec-

etary Barry Reamsbottom suc-
cumbs to pressure from
colleagues members to escalate the
action.

While some activists feel that this is "too little, too late," the
testimony that Reamsbottom has
ted to a victory in itself.

When he threatened to suspend the strike during talks with
ACAS, CPSA’s Leeds HQ was
besieged by strikers, many tak-
ing part in their first dispute, chancing "No sell-out!" and singing
"I’d rather be a picket than a

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

The importance of the dis-
pute can be seen in desperate
management offers of a £500 bo-
ne to anyone willing to break the
strike in Leytonstone office.

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

As a striking casual worker,
she has put her job on the line.
CPSA members owe it to her
be stubborn in their pursuit of
their nine per cent pay claim and
unremittent in their pres-
sure on the union bureaucracy.
Beating back Blairism

Editorial

TONY BLAIR’S recent talk of a “stakeholder society” along with promises to follow in the footsteps of Margaret Thatcher leaves no room for doubt as to the direction of a future Labour Party government. The sheer volume of reactionary speeches from leading figures in the party has been hard to keep track of. Under the guise of radicalism—“thinking the unthinkable”—the shadow cabinet have set about a steady campaign of social comment that capitulates to some of the most backward aspects of the Thatcherite agenda. Straw’s outrageous attack on “wines and addicts” captures the callous flavour of what is in store.

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

Responsibility

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

This is because whichever party wins the next election they face the same twin problems. British capitalism has not the resources to maintain its swollen military machine and finance sector. It remains trapped in an economic and social structure built around empire.

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

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

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

Cutting welfare

It also means that the only way capitalism can increase the level of investment is by driving down the level of wages and cutting welfare spending. A Blair government will be in the same boat.

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

This means that working class resistance to attacks on wages, conditions and costs in the 1980s is expressed through its structures, however indirectly.

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

These difficulties should be seen as our opportunities. Defending the class basis of the Labour Party is a crucial part of defending the British workers’ of the empire as the Conservative Party: as much trapped in the contradictions of a new situation.

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

As well as the fact that such a project has little practical chance of getting off the ground, Arthur Scargill has a mis-understanding of the tasks facing socialists.

The crunch

When the crunch comes it will occur at the heart of the labour movement. Moreover, the organised labour movement is the only force that has the potential power to present an effective challenge to the bosses’ offensive. The left in the trades unions and in the Labour Party—primarily organised in the Campaign Group—has to take up this struggle, linking up with all the forces who abetted.

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

Socialist Outlook 95 • January 20 1996.

Against the bosses
Euro offensive

Will McMahon

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

What was obscured in the fine print of the treaty has come to life because of the government’s attack on welfare provision.

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

Suffering

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

Yet the treaty is critical for large-scale European capital. It is a necessity if it is to engage in inter-imperialist competition with NAFTA and the developing regional trading bloc in the Far East.

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

Those on the Left who abdicated or capitulated over Maastricht need to grasp this fundamental fact. Socialists cannot justify hiding behind the spurious notion that the European Union has "progressive" aspects.

Nori can it be suggested that Britain needs to be part of such a project because it is in some way historically "backward".

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

Demands

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

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

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

Unemployed

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

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

Thus a failure to create an alternative may well leave socialists standing down the barrel of a chauvinist gun.

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

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

As internationalists, the Left’s alternative to capitalist integration should not be to defend national sovereignty. Any campaign that has even the slightest trace of “little England” is unacceptable. A campaign based on chauvinism will fail.

A programme is required for the integration of European economies in the interests of the mass of the population. It needs to ensure a Europe which guarantees full employment, and a welfare state.

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

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

Members of Belgium’s Socialist trade union federation demonstrating against Maastricht’s authority.

70,000 March in defence of public services

Belgium revolts against Maastricht

Duncan Chapple

IT WAS like a scene from years gone by. But the bitter wind blowing off the Scheldt and Meuse, the pouring rain and clouds gathering on the horizon could not dampen the determination of the people marching behind the banner: “We are not for a Europe of the rich. We want a unified Europe of the working class.”

The march, by the workers of Antwerp, Brussels and Liège, was the largest of the week and was accompanied by a larger demonstration of workers from across the country.

The marchers were also joined by trades unionists from Germany, France and the Netherlands who had come to show solidarity with the Belgian workers.

The marchers were determined to press their demands for a Europe that works for the working class. The demands included the withdrawal of the Maastricht Treaty, the abolition of the European Union and the end of EU policies that put profits before people.

They also demanded a workers’ Europe, where the decisions are made by the working class, not by a few rich man.

The march was a powerful demonstration of the determination of the working class to fight against the Maastricht Treaty and to create a Europe that works for the working class.

The march was a call to action for workers across Europe, to come together and fight against the Maastricht Treaty and for a European federation of the working class.
French strikes shake Chirac

“The Streets Have Spoken”

Terry Conway

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

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

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

Concessions

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

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

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

Confidence

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

Milanese was no means confined to Paris. Proportional arrangements of the population in provincial cities such as Rouen and Marseille were involved in actions. Students were a vital component of the fightback. The fight spread from Rouen to other campuses outside and then later extended to the large universities in the capital.

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

The Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire won an eager audience for revolutionary ideas.

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

Strikes

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

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

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

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

The struggles in France have been an inspiration to many workers across Europe, many of whom faced similar assaults on the Welfare State as embodied in the Juppé plan. We no need to turn the anger into action.

Making sense of Maastricht

Maxime Durand

MAASTRICHT is a break with the previous economic process. It goes beyond harmonisation to deregulation. Therefore one can no longer speak of continuity within a coherent economic project.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Maastricht process is therefore contradictory. It underestimates the diversity of different national situations (class relationships, solidity of currencies, industrial policies). This leads to the imminent political problem, with increased fragmentation of various bourgeois orientations and the project of a Europe at several different speeds.

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

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

State austerity measures against social protection and public services. Wage austerity is justified with arguments about competitiveness and defending the national currency.

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

Maastricht Europe is thus a region of unemployment and instability. All the basic documents, such as the White Book, explicitly reject the idea of a general welfare reduction of the working week.

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

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

Supporting a social Europe therefore means opposing Maastricht, which stands for a Europe that is by its very nature anti-social.

The idea of completing, and not supplanting Maastricht is a false perspective, because it ignores the deep logic of the process. Even defending such basic objectives as public housing requires fighting against the dominant bourgeois projects.

To think that we can influence them is a fallacy. 

This is an important point, because our disagreements with reformists have to do so much with the kind of demands or goals to fight for, as with the character and scale of the obstacles we face.

We have to integrate the European dimension into our thinking, because it has become the long term perspective, can be coherent, on which the argument about competitiveness can be centered.

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

Paul Walker

AFTER YEARS of protest against the Indonesian occupation and the multinational exploitation of their land, the Free Papua Movement has sought to bring scientists into custody in order to get international recognition. It is a tactic that has worked. West Papua has now made its way onto the world media agenda.

West Papua was annexed by Indonesia after a ballot by gunpoint in 1969. This opened the way for multinational companies to exploit the island's natural resources. Now Freeport-RTZ (FP-RTZ), a US/UK multinational, is mining the biggest copper and gold reserves in the world. There has been mass resistance among the villagers to the exploitation and the consequent environmental pollution. The problem was worst in 1995 when FP-RTZ granted a new concession. Their interests expanded from 11,000 to over 2.6 million hectares.

This raised the stakes massively for the tribespeople. Displacement of thousands is sure to follow to the lowland Timika area where others have been resettled and have faced human rights abuses and murder. The unit that has detained the scientists is led by Kelly Kwalik who has been active since the late 1970s. The Free Papua Movement has not as yet issued a statement on the detention and the unit is hiding in a remote area.

Since 1994 they have been mounting peaceful actions in the form of flag raising - a traditional way for the West Papuans to express their identity. They have been ignored. In one final attempt Kelly Kwalik organised a flag raising ceremony which in the past had led to the Indonesian armed forces killing those taking part on Christmas Day 1995.

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

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

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

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

Russia: reaction on hold?

Paul Walker

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

The victory is more than just a continuation of election results across the ex-COMECON states. Russia is the home of 1917. The results make late capitalism's triumphalist begin to look somewhat premature. It also cuts across the doom and gloom of those on the left who are abandoning 1917 to the unreconstructed Stalinists.

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

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

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

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

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

Also some voted for the Communists because their lives depend on the Russian military and industrial complex. The fragile position of the Russian military was demonstrated by the near meltdown of Russian nuclear subs when the gas bill was not paid. It is also shown by the political-economic stalemate in Chechnya—a war which the Communist Party has been publicly against.

And the vote also showed that Russia is becoming increasingly fragmented. Moscow and St Petersburg were the heartlands of the vote for capitalism against the regions. It is possible for capital to coherently organise itself in the cities of the west where its representatives can impose the supposed future benefits of a market economy.

But outside these areas reforms mean that wages are not paid and pensions are worthless. There may never be food in the shops but most people have no money to buy it. It does not take a genius to make the link between the land privatisation and the shortage of affordable food.

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

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

Bolshevik leadership of the nation was for a workers' and peasants' republic but was also against capitalism to the West and its emisaries from Nicholas II to Kornilov. In the same way Stalin slandered Trotsky as an agent of imperialism. Now the Communists are able to pose as the defender of Russia against a true agent of imperialism—Boris Yeltsin.

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

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

This is behaviour of a sick man with a severely dented political profile. The effect of the Communist victory has been to push the bulk of reformers towards temporarily slowing down the pace of privatisation and promoting some populist adjustment. They are advancing this strategy to peel off part of the Communist vote to gain 31 per cent needed in the presidential election in the summer.

A new reform programme is being prepared for the election which will talk of the language of the people while also preparing for a carnival of reaction if the Communist Party is defeated. It is then that those without the stomach for the fight will be pushed aside by an iron fist.

An authoritarian candidate is also a real possibility. Populist General Lebed believes that the Pochet alternatve is worthy of consideration.

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

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

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

Yeltsin may have finished with 1917 but 1917 has not yet finished with him. The election results of December 17 1995 have created a situation which revolutionary Marxists can and must exploit. The battle for Russia is now on.
ETHNIC DIVIDES IN DAYTON ACCORD WILL NOT BRING PEACE

NATO ENFORCES BOSNIAN CARVE-UP

Alan Thomett

THE 49-51 per cent partition of Bosnia Herzegovina under the Dayton Accords has not dampened down Bosnian President Izetbegovic’s threat in 21 days of “negotiations”, and now being enforced by 60,000 mainly NATO troops - including 20,000 Americans and 30,000 British - implements what has been the objective of Western/UN policy from Vance Owen to the Five Nation Contact Group: “peace” via the division of Bosnia along ethnic lines.

Formally Bosnia will remain a single state: the Bosnia-Croat Federation - up to now a hollow shell - and a Serb Republic. In reality they will be completely separate states with their own armed forces and a border between them which will be the most fortified and inaccessible in Europe, shaped out of the four-year war. Izetbegovic described it as “not a just peace but more than the continuation of war”. In reference to the pressures put on him he went on: “In the situation as it is, and in the world as it is, a better peace could not have been achieved.”

The deal has created not a just peace but the cessation of the war: an armed truce under Uncle Sam’s big stick. This cynical carve up was signed on behalf of the Pale regime by Milosevic who had decided that 49 per cent of Bosnia was the best that could be achieved; particularly given the effects of the sanctions on Serbia and the growing military strength of the Bosnians.

The deal infuriated Serbian nationalism but not on compromise. Vojislav Seselj, the leader of the neo-fascist Serbian Radical Party, denounced it as “the great treason in the history of the Serbian nation”.

If it lasts the settlement constitutes a serious loss for the Bosnian people who have defended their national rights and multi-ethnic society for four years against near impossible odds - including an invasion by the Yugoslav army and a revolt by a section of the Serbian population whipped up by Milosevic. They fought almost without weaponry and initially without an army, in the face of a highly effective arms embargo.

Izetbegovic described it as “not a just peace but more just than the continuation of war”.

1995: Soldiers loyal to rightist leader Fikret Abdić taking a break from fighting - alongside Serb nationalists - north of Bijeljina.

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

Those who have supported the defence of a multi-ethnic Bosnia must condemn the carve up under the Dayton Accords, but must not condemn the cessation of the war. Only those who must fight such a war can do that.

There has never been a unified western policy, but several policies, within the framework of partition: at times of Srebrenica and Zepa badly damaged the Serbian military infrastructure. The military balance, however, had been shifting for some time. The Croatian army had been reorganised with improved weaponry (although not to the level of the Yugoslav army) and the Bosnian army was better organised with more light weapons.

These factors produced the Bosnian-Croatian offensive in September and October which liberated big areas of western Bosnia and established a division of the country close to the 49-51 partition being advocated by the five nation contact group.

It was at this point the US proposed the Dayton meeting and applied massive pressure on the Bosnian Government to halt the offensive and negotiate.

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

The NATO bombing which followed the bloody events around the fall publicly in conflict with each other and often in complete disregard.

Both offensives and the Dayton agreement have altered the political balance in ex-Yugoslavia enhancing the role of Croatia and the influence of Tadic. The agreement strengthens the expansion of Croatia’s influence in the former Federation - the previous HVO controlled territory of Herzegovina - which will further strengthen the Croatian position.

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

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

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

The UN and the EU were made to look ineffectual. Russian objections were brushed aside.

Srebrenica and Zepa are (shamefully) handed over to the Serbs. The Bosnian Government is to control Sarajevo and the remaining Bosnian enclave of Gorazda is to be linked to Bosnian territory by a land corridor. The Serbs were given land around Mrkonjic Grac in “compensation”. Serb demands for the widening of the Povazina corridor at Breko were unresolved and submitted to international arbitration.

The agreement also covers Eastern Slavonia - the remaining Croat territory occupied by Serbian forces - and Tadic has agreed to its return.

Partition and the violation of national rights are rarely the basis for long term peace - as events in Chechenya currently show.
RISE' OF MILITANT: TALKIN' TAAFFE

NIGEL DANBY reviews ‘The Rise of Militant' by Peter Taffe.

ALTHOUGH I would hesitate to recommend "The Rise of Militant" it is useful in that it illustrates how their flawed approach to politics has distorted their practice over the past 30 years. Their miscalculation rests upon the idea of the Labour Party as being potentially capable of delivering socialism.

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

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

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

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

From Vietnam to Ireland they have had the same theme. On Boosia they have argued that only war mongers would profit from arming the Boosian people. They may as well argue that the only ones to profit from sending a consignment of hardluck to Bonn would be fuhrmengers!

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

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

This is the only way to explain how the "deepest" of evangelists in Britain could drop the key ideas it had fought for decades in order to adopt opposite positions—with an equal degree of éclat!

The strength of this book is that it acknowledges the contribution that Militant members have made as individuals. There are many comrades in the organisation who do not share the sectarianism of the central leadership. These are the people we work with on the ground in day to day struggles. It is only through this experience in the class struggle that they will be broken from the politics of their organisation's leadership.

CULTURE

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ALL SHOW NO SUBSTANCE

BRIAN GARDINER reviews Paul Verhoeven's Showgirls.

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

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

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

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

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

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

At the beginning of the film, we know that Nomi is a person with a past. But because the director and scriptwriter do not reveal anything of this until the end, they deny the possibility of dramatic tension and any shred of sympathy we might conceivably have for the character.

Instead this moment she merely seems a contradictory and inexplicable mix of hard-nosed ambition and extreme naiveté.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Photo: Gold Film Distributor

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

Photo: Gold Film Distributor

Photo: Gold Film Distributor

"Rise' of Militant: Talkin' Taaffe" — Verhoeven with Elizabeth Berkley
When is the time to split?

IT NOW looks increasingly likely that on May 1 1996 the \"Socialist Labour Party\" will be born. At first glance this new party may seem attractive to socialists both within and without the Labour Party—it won\'t be led by Blair and it will almost certainly put forward policies that socialists will agree with far more than those of the Labour Party.

However, this project has several potential problems. The first and most obvious is that past experience holds a legacy of bitterness and hatred throughout history of those groups that have chosen to split from the Labour Party. Now from from the time the SNP had a road to almost certain oblivion for those who have chosen that path. Historically the Labour movement has been almost too clear—they will seek to revive the high profile of this new organisation and to revive the old LPs to enable them to attract small groups who are attracted to the idea of socialism, but have a sound theory of practice and therefore little experience of those groups.

If you come across that statement without noticing the source you would assume it was written by a nazi. In fact, if you look back at Farrakhan\'s letters and speeches up to the last 18 months, when he has been more careful about what he says, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that he is, indeed, a nazi.

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

More recently, Farrakhan has associated with Tom Metzger, leader of Aryan Nations, as well as being chummy with Britain\'s fallen fascist star, far-right National Front leader, Joe Nairn, Southhampton.
Tories in tatters - Labour should show the way

CRACK OPEN TORY SPLIT

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

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

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

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

For the drive to union is still causing cracks in the Tory ranks as wide as that caused by the 1846 Corn Law.

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

Tory division

In other words, there is a division between the majority of British capital and the mass membership of the Tory Party. So when Emma Nicholson and Alan Howarth point to social policy as key reason for their defections this should be taken with a large pinch of salt.

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

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

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

That coalition includes the likes of Nicholson, but it needs to have a labour movement and black leadership. But simply to destabilise Tory rule is not enough.

Welfare state

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

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

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

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

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

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

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