

Militant International Review

No.57 May-June 1994 £1



**The
European
Family**

Militant International Review

Issue 57, May/June 1994. Editor: Lynn Walsh, 3-13 Hepscott Road, London, E9 5HB.

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The prince and the pretender.

The local election defeat widened Tory divisions, the pressure on Major only temporarily lifted by John Smith's death.

POUNDED BY A tide of popular anger, the Tories suffered their worst ever local election defeat on 5 May. Major's leadership is in the balance - while the sudden death of John Smith on 12 May means an unexpected contest for the Labour leadership.

The strong anti-Tory mood was mixed with widespread scepticism towards Labour amongst workers. Yet Militant Labour and Scottish Militant Labour, contesting 32 seats, received magnificent support for the socialist policies on which our candidates fought.

These local results were 4% down on the Tories' previous record low in 1990, at the time of the poll tax struggle. The Tories were beaten into third place in England and Wales and fourth place in Scotland. Of 198 councils up for election, the Tories now control only 15. Their nation-wide share of the vote (adjusted to allow for the fact that only two-thirds of councils were voting) was 27%, no more

than the Liberal Democrats (also 27%).

Labour's share of the vote was about 42%. Converted into parliamentary seats, these local results would give Labour a landslide victory, probably of about 100. But the political tide was anti-Tory rather than positively pro-Labour. This was shown by widespread tactical voting. Voters in many areas supported the party with the best chance of defeating the Tories. In the Midlands and the semi-suburban and outer London boroughs, which are primarily a Tory-Labour battleground, Labour made big gains. Labour took Croydon from the Tories for the first time in over 100 years, and also gained control of Ealing and Enfield (Tory-controlled for over 25 years, and Portillo's parliamentary seat). A third of the 32 London boroughs changed hands, with the Tories losing three to Labour and four to 'no overall control'.

In the South and South West the Liberals made the biggest gains, taking control of Bath, Winches-

ter, Worthing, and Eastleigh - where they are now likely to win the parliamentary by-election from the Tories. The Liberal Democrats lost Tower Hamlets to Labour, with a big upsurge in the Labour vote against both the fascist BNP and the racist policies of the local Liberals (see pp5-6). Yet in other areas Labour lost heavily to the Liberals, losing control of Kirklees, Oldham, and Pendle, and losing seats to the Liberals in cities like Manchester, Sheffield and Southampton.

The Liberals' inroads into traditional Labour support reflects the political rottenness of Labour, especially in cities which they previously controlled for decades. Labour councils have presided over cuts in services and council jobs and come into conflict with local authority trade unions. Council machines are seen as bureaucratic and tainted with corruption, while many local Labour parties are moribund. On a national level, the Labour leaders are offering little to low-paid workers, the unemployed, single parents, black and Asians, or young people in these areas of urban decay and mass unemployment.

Scotland was a Tory massacre. Their regional councillors were cut from 54 to 31, while their share of the vote fell to an all-time low of 13.7% (about half their 1992 general election share). Labour's vote rose to 41.2% (compared with 39% in the 1992 general election). But overall the Scottish National Party (SNP) made the most gains, pushing its share up to 26.7%. Two-thirds of its 30 net gains came from the Tories, mainly in rural areas, but the SNP took a third of its seats from Labour. Contesting six seats in Glasgow, Scottish Militant Labour candidates gained 23% of the vote, in striking contrast to the Tories' 7%.

Overall, in this first-ever all-Britain local election campaign, Militant Labour and SML candidates polled 18,000 votes (with candidates coming second in 12 seats and polling over 20% in nine). Our campaign demonstrated the potential support for farxist policies, with support and sympathy extending far beyond those who turned out to vote for our candidates.

Tory disarray reflects unprecedented divisions over policy.

THIS SHATTERING DEFEAT for the Tories has widened the deep fissure running through the Conservative Party. Attacks on Major's leadership have risen to fever pitch. In a clumsy attempt to defend him, agriculture minister Gillian Shepherd blurted out that a fifth of Tory MPs are opposed to Major, many of them manoeuvring against him. This 'ordinary', grey personality, brought in after Thatcher to restore the party's popularity, is now the most unpopular prime minister since records began. Major's personal blun-



To lose two leaders is carelessness...

ders, indecision, and U-turns are undoubtedly a factor. But the Tory disarray reflects the decline of the party's traditional support and unprecedented divisions over policy.

Since the Tories came to power in 1979 there has been a remorseless grinding down of working-class living standards. The new factor in the situation is the erosion of the living standards of sections who gained under Thatcher in the 1980s. Since 1990 many more white-collar, semi-professional and professional workers have been hit than in previous recessions. Even while the Tory chancellor, Clarke, is proclaiming the wonderful recovery, they too are now being hit by the latest round of tax increases: VAT on gas and electricity, the reduction of tax relief on mortgage interest payments, the increase in national insurance contributions, and the reduction of the married persons allowance (altogether amounting to £8.4bn extra tax during 1994-95). Despite the recovery, there is no 'feel-good factor'.

Any Tory leader would be under siege in these circumstances. Yet Major faces an additional problem: the Tory party is now divided into warring factions, the embryonic forms of separate parties.

The traditional Tory wing is frantically trying to distance itself from the legacy of Thatcherism. Ken Clarke, jockeying for a good starting position in the leadership stakes, now aims to combine 'American enterprise and free market efficiency with the European commitment to the welfare state'. Yet Clarke personally butchered the NHS, before moving on, as chancellor, to further massive cuts in public spending. He still believes that market forces go hand in hand with the widening gap between the rich and the poor, which is 'inevitable and probably desirable'. He opposes Britain's acceptance of the EU Social Chapter. This totally contradictory position reveals the crisis of traditional Toryism.

The other wing consists of the unreconstructed Thatcherites, for whom Norman Tebbit still speaks and who see Michael Portillo as 'their man' in Major's cabinet. They are capitalist 'libertarians', pursuing the free market to its ultimate conclusion,

demanding total privatisation and the abolition of what remains of the welfare state. They are virulently opposed to the Maastricht treaty, denouncing Major and Hurd as traitors prepared to sell out British 'sovereignty' (notwithstanding Major's protestations that he is against federalism and a common currency).

Some Tories believe the party is doomed to defeat in the next general election. Their aim is to oust Major and install a leader of their own choice. They are the embryo of a separate party, an English National Party. A split on these lines cannot be ruled out following a Tory defeat. Britain may well follow France and other European countries with the appearance of two or more rival capitalist parties.

More immediately, will Major's opponents move against him in the next few months? The pressure was momentarily lifted from Major by John Smith's premature death. But the Tories' problems will not go away.

The removal of a second leader within three years could further damage the Tories' standing even among loyal Tory voters. A replacement leader would intensify the pressure for a general election to legitimise the change.

Which pretender, in any case, could unify the party? Heseltine is still deeply distrusted because of his challenge to Thatcher and his recent appeals to the right. Apart from being seen as an immature upstart, Portillo does not have the support of the 'one nation', 'wet' wing of the Tory party. Clarke seems the most likely candidate. Yet he would find it difficult to unite an increasingly unleadable party. Even if he could temporarily reconcile the different factions, Clarke would still lack credible policies capable of reviving the Tories' electoral support.

Major has made it clear that he will fight to keep the leadership. A contest would be bitterly fought - and very damaging. Tory backwoodsmen are in a mutinous mood, but they are also terrified of losing their seats. The uncertain prospect of selecting a leader capable of winning a general election has to be weighed against hanging on and sloggling it out under Major.

THE PREMATURE DEATH of John Smith has added a surprise factor to the political equation - a Labour leadership contest. Until it is concluded, the pressure will be taken off Major, though it will not save the Tories from ignominious defeat in the Euro-elections. The main problem, from the standpoint of working people, is the narrow range of candidates likely to be contending.

Margaret Beckett, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, Robin Cook and John Prescott, are the most likely contenders. They are the joint beneficiaries of Kinnock's purge, in which the leadership expunged socialist aspirations and radical reforms, and drove activists out of the Labour Party. John Smith is now associated with an unusual period of sweetness and light. That is because Kinnock had already

done the dirty work.

There are only fine differences between these potential candidates. They all accept the dominance of the market economy, they all ditched commitment to Labour's traditional reforms. True, they are now rapidly rediscovering the ideas of full employment and a minimum wage (though avoiding a definite rate). Some even may go further than others to win trade union support. Even Tony Blair may be embarrassed by the fullsome support of the Tory press, which presents him as the best candidate to win middle class votes in the south.

There is a growing realisation, reflected in the speeches of Gordon Brown and John Prescott particularly, that in order to win a general election, Labour must reclaim its support amongst working-class voters. Yet Gordon Brown has only very recently rediscovered his fervent support for full employment and a minimum wage. John Prescott, who stands nearest to the trade union movement, uses language that workers can understand, voicing some of their anger towards big business and the Tories. Yet at last year's Labour Party conference, Prescott used his authority to push through the one-member-one-vote proposals of John Smith, a further loosening of the Labour Party-trade union links.

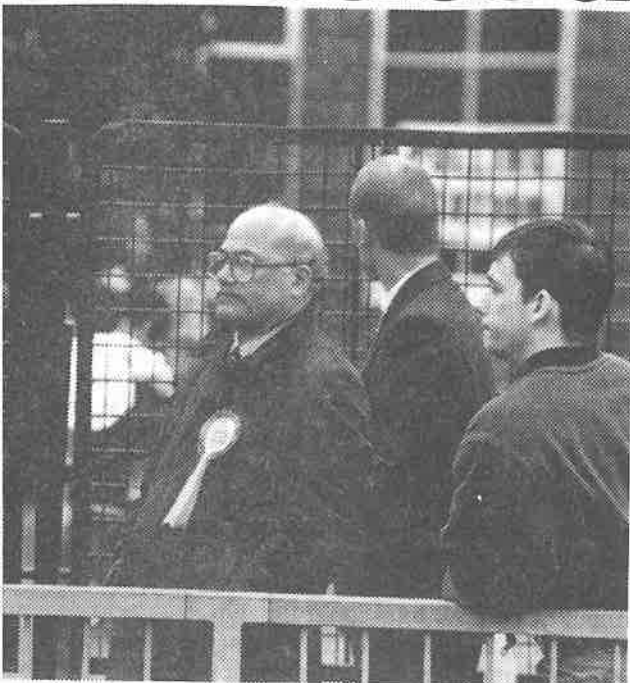
The early death of John Smith is a personal tragedy. At the same time, it has temporarily dented the hopes of millions of workers who cannot wait to get the Tories out. Whatever their previous assessment of Smith's leadership, many workers feel his death as a blow, fearing it may prejudice a Labour victory. This is ironic since Smith had been coming under increasing criticism for his 'slow burn' strategy - of waiting for the Tory apples to rot and fall. The real tragedy for the labour movement is that there will be no candidate offering socialist policies and a fighting programme capable of assuring the defeat of the Tories and their Liberal shadows.

With the anti-Tory tide running high, with another damaging wave coming in the Euro-elections, a defeat for the Tories in a general election, whenever that may come, now seems most likely. Only a soothsayer, however, would predict that it is inevitable. When the prevailing mood is anti-Tory rather than positively pro-Labour, blunders by the Labour leaders can have a disastrous effect.

Yet there is an enormous reservoir of anger, a burning desire for change. The Tories' defeat in the local elections is only a surface symptom of a subterranean mood which has not yet found open expression - because the Labour Party and trade union leaders have acted as a barrier and not as a vehicle for mass opposition and struggle. But as recent events in France have shown, if there is no lead from above there will eventually be an uprising from below. Whatever happens to the tops of the established parties in the coming months, the pressure will intensify for renewed movements of the workers in industry, in the community and on the political plane. □

Howard Clarke looks at the local election results in Tower Hamlets.

BNP defeated



Beackon looks on as voters throw him out.

THE DEFEAT OF Nazi councillor Derek Beackon in May's local elections dealt an important blow to the British National Party (BNP). The BNP hailed last year's by-election victory by Beackon in the East London borough of Tower Hamlets as a breakthrough into the big league of politics... the greatest achievement... of any party within the nationalist (!) movement before or since World War Two". (*British Nationalist*, No.137, November 1993). These megamantic delusions were rudely shattered on May 5. Beackon's victory last September was a vote of anger and despair at the appalling social conditions which exist in the area: the housing shortage, high unemployment, overcrowded schools and poor amenities. It was a product also of the disenchantment with the established parties, in particular the Labour Party, for failing to show a way forward. In such a situation, underlying racist sentiments surfaced, providing an audience for the BNP.

But the BNP's victory in its turn produced a massive reaction, not just in Tower Hamlets but nationally, as millions were alerted to the danger

of fascism. This was reflected in the 50,000-strong mobilisation for the joint YRE/ANL October 16 Welling demonstration, followed by the 40,000-strong TUC demonstration in Tower Hamlets earlier this year.

The Isle of Dogs itself was polarised by the BNP's success. Since the by-election the BNP have picked up support. But they have also provoked a reaction. This was the predominant feature of the May elections with the enormous leap in the Labour vote on the Island being, above all, a vote against the BNP.

This included many middle-class voters in the new private housing developments, who this time voted Labour. There was also a massive turnout of black, Asian and Chinese voters, 20% of the Island's electorate. On the council estates, however, the BNP were vying with Labour for the white vote. The result was an unprecedented turnout for a local election of 67%. The Labour candidates polled more votes than the *total* number cast in the last council elections in 1990!

This mood to defeat the BNP was also the key factor in Labour's victory across Tower Hamlets. The Liberals had blatantly resorted to racism in the past to bolster their position. They were held responsible for creating the climate in which the BNP had grown. In particular the Liberals' system of devolved powers to 'neighbourhood committees' created the possibility that, by winning just two of the 19 wards in Tower Hamlets, the BNP could

Millwall ward (Isle of Dogs) election results, '90 to '94

	Local election May 1990	By-election Oct 1992	By-election Sept 1993	Local election May 1994
Labour	1,665 (45%)	1,275 (39%)	1,473 (34%)	3,480 (52%)
Liberal	1,476 (40%)	1,178 (36%)	1,284 (29%)	830 (12%)
BNP	-	657 (20%)	1,480 (34%)	1,843* (28%)
Tory	276 (7%)	182 (5%)	134 (3%)	250 (4%)
Turnout	42%	37%	44%	67%

*This is the average vote of the three candidates in a ward where each elector has three votes. In fact, Beackon polled 2,041 votes (31%) while the other two BNP candidates polled 1,775 and 1,713 respectively.

The BNP vote in Tower Hamlets, May 1994

Millwall	1,843	28%
St. James	653	22%
St. Peters	889	20%
Holy Trinity	755	19%

have controlled the Isle of Dogs and Globetown neighbourhoods, with a combined budget of over £40m. Consequently, Labour's vote rose by 8,000 compared to the 1990 elections. Significantly, however, underlining the real basis of the swing to Labour, nearly 50% of this increase was achieved in the four wards contested by the BNP.

HOW WILL EVENTS in Tower Hamlets develop? On the surface the elections were a crushing victory for Labour. A majority of 29 Liberal councillors to 20 Labour and one BNP has become a 43-to-seven Labour majority. Previously solid Liberal seats now have apparently equally 'solid' Labour majorities. Yet one certain prediction is that nothing will remain 'solid' in Tower Hamlets in the years ahead.

Tower Hamlets is the poorest borough in Britain, with an unemployment rate twice the London average. Average income levels are the lowest in London: in some areas more than 65% of households receive income support or housing benefit. Eleven per cent of households have more than one person per room, the worst overcrowding in Britain. 45,000 homes, out of a housing stock of 67,000, are in need of repair. These are the terrible social conditions that allowed the BNP to gain a foothold in the borough. Yet this social deprivation is set to worsen in the period ahead.

The Tory government is only likely to concede additional resources to Tower Hamlets if a mass struggle is organised. A mass campaign, however, will not be led by the new Labour council, with only a handful of left-wing councillors. Instead, unless opposition is built in the unions and on the estates, it will go the same way as Labour councils across Britain, passing on Tory cuts and attacking council workers.

Nor would a Labour government pursuing pro-capitalist policies lead to significant improvements in conditions in Tower Hamlets. A Labour government might release some cash to local councils, for example, unfreezing the receipts from council house sales which currently go to service council debts. Before the 1992 general election Labour committed £1bn of these receipts to be spent on new homes. Yet this would only scratch the surface of the problems in the inner-city areas: £1bn spent just in London would still mean less than 650 new homes per borough. Unemployment, another key issue, currently stands at 16,000 in Tower Hamlets - what will it be in four years time?

The most likely scenario then is that the next local elections in 1998 will be fought against a background of four years of battles against the Labour council's cuts. This will certainly be the case if the general election that will have taken place by then sees the Tories re-elected. But equally a Labour government, possibly dependent on Liberal support, will preside over attacks on the working class. Where will the inevitable protest go then?

IT IS CERTAINLY not inevitable that the BNP will build on their present base in Tower Hamlets over the next four years. Firstly, following their electoral setback, a split is possible now between 'electoralists' and those who want to concentrate on street-fighting.

More generally, the ruling class are hesitant at this stage to encourage the BNP even to the limited extent that the NF were cultivated in the 1970s, under a Labour government, as a useful destabilising force against the labour movement. Now they fear that successes for the BNP will radicalise workers and youth, particularly black and Asian youth, into a counter-movement they could not control. Significantly, the *East London Advertiser*, the local paper owned by Tony O'Reilly's international media and business group, switched from favourable coverage of Beackon in the immediate aftermath of the by-election to an 'anti-Nazi' stance by May.

A more serious reactionary force would be a right-wing split from the Tory Party, grouped around the 'Euro-rebels'. Under the last Labour government the Tories were the main electoral opposition to Labour in Tower Hamlets. They were only overtaken by the Liberals as Thatcherism hit home in the early 1980s. Now they have been reduced to a pathetic rump, winning less than 4% of the borough-wide vote this May.

Nevertheless, a new 'patriotic' party, which could not be combatted by a 'Don't vote Nazi' appeal, could certainly sweep up the reactionary core of the Tower Hamlets Liberals. On the other hand, depending on national developments, the local Liberals themselves may recover over the next four years. Whatever the exact course of events, Tower Hamlets will remain an important testing ground for reaction in the years ahead.

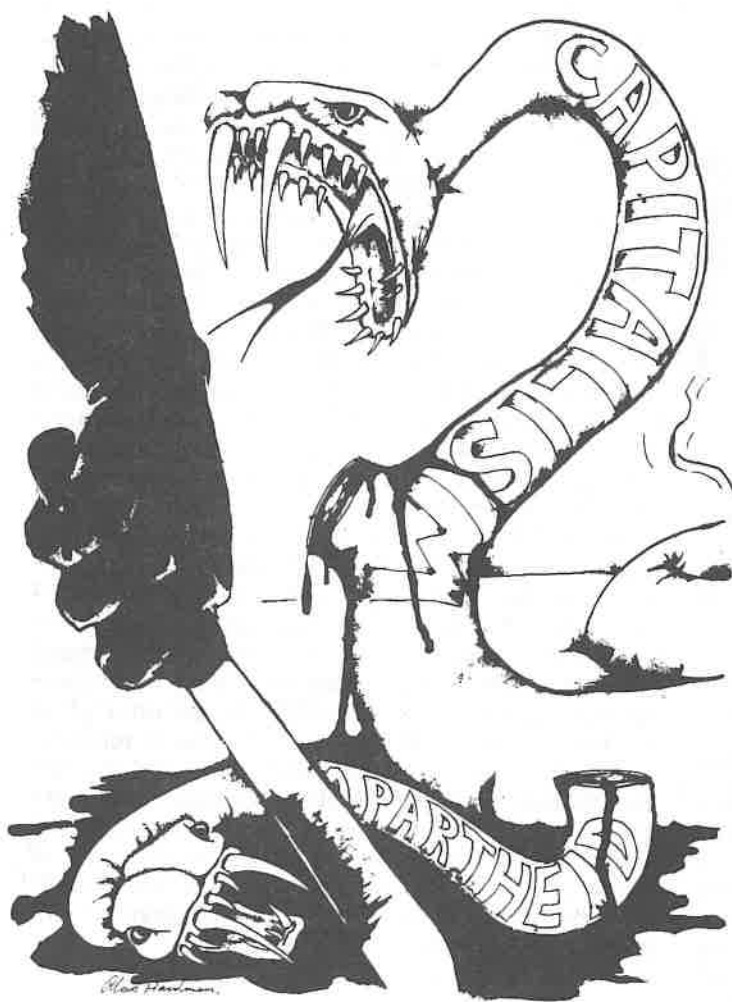
By the same token Tower Hamlets will also be a testing ground for socialist ideas and organisations. Struggles will certainly take place in this inner-city borough. But they will not be organised in the main from forces within the Labour Party.

A local purge of Militant in the early 1990s, combined with the march to the right nationally, has affected the Tower Hamlets party. In a confidential report produced earlier this year council leader John Biggs described the borough party as 'semi-moribund', with many ward organisations 'chronically inquorate'. Symptomatic of how events are more likely to develop was the independent candidacy of a 23-year old Bengali community activist in Wapping. Standing as Independent Labour, with a manifesto quoting from clause four of Labour's constitution, he polled 15% of the vote.

A mood to fightback will undoubtedly develop among the council unions, Bengali youth, tenants organisations and local community campaigns, radicalised by the events of the past few months. Militant Labour in Tower Hamlets will play a key role in organising and giving a socialist direction to this fightback in the turbulent times ahead. □

Nick Wrack looks at what lies ahead after the South African elections.

The new South Africa



THE FIRST EVER elections in South Africa open to everyone marked a tremendous victory for the South African masses, especially the black African working-class whose revolutionary determination has destroyed the old apartheid system. Through the 1980s the black proletariat demonstrated repeatedly its defiance to their brutal racial exploitation by a privileged white minority. In rent strikes, boycotts, education stayaways, but most of all through a semi-insurrectionary wave of strikes and the formation of independent trade unions organised in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU),

the workers and youth shook the South African ruling-class to its core.

The South African state and its monopoly capitalist backers were faced with a mass movement which threatened to sweep away every particle of the oppressive apartheid system, and with it the rule of capitalism itself. When increased repression failed to hold back this tidal wave of opposition the ruling-class was forced to look for a different way to carry out their exploitation of the South African working-class. The more far-sighted representatives of capitalism understood that unless reforms were granted they could lose everything. They therefore sought to win over the pro-capitalist elements in the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) to a programme which dismantled racist apartheid laws but ensured the continued domination of the monopolies.

The ANC has a predominantly middle-class, African nationalist leadership, which has embraced the market and is opposed to socialism, with a mass base amongst the working-class and rural masses who look to it for their liberation. The ideas of socialism and of nationalisation retain strong support amongst the organised working class within

COSATU.

The ANC leadership, headed by Nelson Mandela, dropped all talk of socialism and nationalisation in the course of the negotiations with the previous De Klerk government, to demonstrate their acceptability to the capitalists as the rulers of the 'new' South Africa.

For this reason the elections mark a victory, but not a complete victory, for power still remains in the hands of the same capitalist class as before, albeit with black faces at the head of the government. The social liberation of the South African working-class is a task still to be accomplished.

the working-class supporters of the ANC in SATU and the rest of the black masses have these elections to throw off almost 350 years of white domination. But they are also looking to a new ANC-led 'government of national unity' to deliver massive improvements in their living conditions. The ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), drawn up together with



Mandela: DeKlerk 'one of Africa's greatest sons'.

SATU and the South African Communist Party, seen by the ANC's supporters as a promise to give jobs to the 47% presently unemployed, to guarantee low pay, to build homes for the millions who live in shacks without electricity or running water.

THE ANC WON a massive victory in the elections but there was undoubtedly large-scale fraud in the results in which the ANC leadership has been complicit. The ANC leadership aimed from the beginning to achieve a 'balanced' government, incorporating the National Party (NP) and Inkatha. Mandela made clear his belief at not achieving the two-thirds majority which would have allowed the ANC to draft the new constitution on its own, saying "I am very happy that... we have got 62% and not 66%, which would have enabled us to write our own constitution". By careful engineering of the votes the ANC ensured that it failed to reach this crucial breakthrough figure, giving themselves the excuse to put their supporters that they have to get agreement from the other parties for any constitutional changes. Likewise there was no doubt fiddling to ensure that the NP, the original architects of apartheid, got just over the 20% needed to guarantee

De Klerk a place as one of the deputy presidents. Mandela paid tribute to De Klerk as "one of the greatest sons of Africa".

The new government contains the most pro-capitalist leaders of the ANC, mainly coming from the faction which developed in exile away from the influence and check of the ANC activists on the ground.

It also includes six NP ministers including Pik Botha, the former foreign minister, and Derek Keys who retains his job as minister of finance. The majority of the ANC ministers are quite acceptable to South Africa's capitalists. Winnie Mandela, who still retains a base within the ANC and who has been critical of the concessions made by the ANC leadership in the course of the negotiations, has been given a deputy minister's portfolio in the hope of curbing her criticism and undermining her support. The government as a whole is clearly one designed to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie.

The ANC's failure to win in KwaZulu/Natal, with the 50.3% victory there for Buthelezi's reactionary Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), has had a demoralising effect on the ANC activists who have been waging a battle against Inkatha, with up to 15,000 killed over the past decade. The vote for Inkatha was larger than anticipated precisely because of the conciliatory approach adopted by the ANC and especially Mandela towards it. Mandela promised to recognise the constitutional legitimacy of the Zulu king and was prepared to make massive concessions to Buthelezi. Had the ANC gone onto the offensive against Inkatha in the election campaign and refused to make any concessions Inkatha could have been completely marginalised in the voting.

In addition there was massive manipulation of the vote in Natal to guarantee an Inkatha victory. Despite opposition to the fraud by more militant sections of the ANC, the ANC leadership has given instructions that the result should be accepted in the interests of 'national unity' and to prevent a new wave of violence. But how can there be unity with these vicious thugs who have collaborated with the South African state in waging a civil war against supporters of the ANC, in an attempt to weaken the forces of the South African revolution? In accepting the result the ANC has saved the IFP and Buthelezi from complete disaster. The vote gives Inkatha three places in the cabinet, including home affairs (to Buthelezi) and the ministry of corrections, with control of the prisons. Those ANC activists in prison for fighting against Inkatha will take no comfort from this appointment.

The new government contains the most pro-capitalist leaders of the ANC.

It will not be in the interest of Inkatha to wage a new offensive in the short term because this would only unleash a huge reaction from the working-class, emboldened by the ANC victory at national level. However, Inkatha will try to use their control of Natal to consolidate their strength



Winnie Mandela

and lay the basis for future attacks against the working-class.

The ANC also lost in the Western Cape although here it was their failure to win over the Coloured population that enabled the NP to gain a majority. Although the Coloureds were themselves a minority suffering discrimination under apartheid the NP played on their fear of being a minority under black majority rule. The vote was more anti-ANC than pro-National Party. The new provincial president is Hernus Kriel, the former law and order minister responsible for repression and bru-

talinity, in whom the Coloureds can have no confidence whatsoever.

THE BOURGEOISIE RECOGNISES that the NP can no longer fulfill its past role as the main capitalist party. The far-right Freedom Front of Constand Viljoen received barely more than 400,000 votes for the idea of a white Afrikaner homeland and the forces to the right of this in the neo-Nazi AWB are pitifully small. The bourgeoisie are now looking to turn the ANC into their own party - replacing the National Party as the main party of South African capitalism.

To do this, however, will take skill and caution on their part. The ANC will have to deliver some reforms or else the reaction from the masses will be swift and the ruling class understands this. Reforms will be carried out. It is likely that there will be some investment by international capitalism. Aid has already been promised by the US and Britain. The economy is showing signs of a certain recovery and some aspects of the RDP will be started. However, on the basis of the economy remaining in the hands of big business and run in its interest, against the background of the weakness of the world economy, there is no possibility of the aspirations of the South African masses being met.

Initially the working-class will show the ANC-led government a large degree of patience. There is a

lot to sort out, they will say, we must give it time. But this time will not be unlimited. The black workers will expect to see immediate changes in some things, and an indication of change in others. Already there has been a ten-day long strike of gold miners over the dismissal of a shop steward; strikes have broken out among provincial government employees, and ambulance workers in Pretoria walked out in protest at the proposed privatisation of the city's emergency services. Workers will see the election result as an opportunity to improve their position at work immediately. In a limited series of actions over the last few months the 280,000-strong National Union of Miners has indicated its intention to force concessions from the private mining companies.

Cyril Ramaphosa, general secretary of the ANC, has been left out of the cabinet. No doubt the ANC leaders hope he will be able to restrain COSATU which will inevitably come into conflict with the bosses and with the government. The government has already argued for COSATU to accept lower than the minimum wage to help fight inflation but such a policy will be opposed by the COSATU shop stewards and rank-and-file. The basis for future conflict between the working-class and the government it has brought to power can be seen already. Tensions are likely to widen when COSATU launches its public sector union at the end of June, which is expected to draw in up to 150,000 civil servants.

Although the new government will attempt to carry out the RDP and may go some way in doing so, it will not be able to carry out anything like the steps needed and expected by the black masses. Inevitably the aspirations of the South African working-class will be reflected in struggle and be expressed through COSATU. It will be through COSATU that the question of a new Workers' Party will be once again raised. During the elections this debate was put to one side as the overwhelming majority of the black workers and youth saw their task as getting the biggest possible majority for the ANC. With the ANC now in power the need for an independent party of the working-class will become more and more apparent to the most militant workers. It is most likely that COSATU would form the basis for such a party. The ANC itself will suffer splits under the impact of the class struggle with the working-class activists striving to throw off the dead weight of its pro-capitalist leadership.

The ANC election victory marks the end of one stage of history with the dismantling of apartheid and the end to the national enslavement of the black South African population. But it also marks the beginning of a new stage, one in which the working-class will move again and again to capture the full gains of the struggle for which so many tens of thousands of lives have been given. That can only be through the socialist revolution, when not just white minority rule but capitalist rule is swept away for ever. □

International Notes



boss Fini, fascist graffiti, Mussolini memorabilia and MSI members.

Italy: a fascist revival?

THE FORMATION OF the new Italian government, following the recent general election in which the right-wing coalition gained a clear majority, raises important questions for the labour movement. The inclusion in the governing majority of the neo-fascist MSI has particularly raised alarm bells, with some on the left even heralding this as the 'triumph of fascism'. It is therefore, important to understand that this was an electoral victory for the right-wing capitalist parties and not a decisive victory of a para-military mass movement, as with Mussolini in the early 1920s. Although the election results clearly mark a defeat for the Italian workers, they do not rep-

resent a strengthening of reaction in the country. Nor has there been a shift in the balance of forces between the classes. The huge power of the working class remains intact. In fact the vote for the workers' parties rose by over one-and-a-half million since the 1992 general elections.

The explanation for the defeat lies not in a decisive move to the right in Italian society, but largely in the bankruptcy of the leadership of the old workers' parties. They threw away the opportunity these elections offered to seize on the burning desire for change and take advantage of the discrediting of all the traditional parties of the ruling class.

The elections took place against the background of the

massive corruption exposure. Following the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe there was no longer any justification for the almost total domination of the Christian Democrat (DC) party in Italian government. It was no longer needed as a bastion against 'Communism'. The extent of the corruption was uncovered as politicians scrambled to save their own skins.

Far from feeling confident, the ruling class had to face the elections from a position of weakness. Over a quarter of the previous parliament was under investigation and all their traditional organs of rule, including the state forces and judiciary, were in some way implicated in

the corruption scandals.

Yet the workers' parties failed to step into this vacuum and threw away an opportunity for genuine change. The PDS, the former Communist Party, has not only abandoned its formal commitment to Marxism and the idea of revolution, it has also abandoned the reformist Keynesian ideology of increasing state expenditure to stimulate the economy. The leadership's approach to the elections was to instigate an electoral alliance with parties from the old regime, including those on the verge of extinction. In complete contradiction to the prevalent mood for change, the PDS-led alliance declared its intention to continue with the incumbent prime minister. This, together with proposals for tax increases, did little to inspire or win over new voters.

The Communist Refoundation party (RC) also participated in this alliance. The RC split from the Communist Party when it changed its name and contains some of the best working-class fighters determined to defend the original ideals of the CP. Whilst it had quite a radical programme, it did not launch a bold election campaign to make its manifesto known to the electorate. Instead, the argument of the leadership was that it would fight on these issues once in government.

Paradoxically, therefore, it was Berlusconi's right-wing 'freedom alliance' which appealed to the mood for change. He won because he promised tax cuts and the creation of one million jobs.

It was an irony that the right achieved victory when they had to approach the election campaign with a makeshift coalition of conflicting interests.

Media mogul Berlusconi and his brand new Forza Italia party were obliged to join forces with two parties whose objectives are directly counterposed: the Northern League, which wants a federal Italy of three regions; and the National Alliance (the revamped neo-fascist MSI) which calls for a 'Greater Italy' with

subsidies to the south and the re-annexation of parts of former Yugoslavia.

The big increase in the vote for the National Alliance is, without doubt, a warning to the working class. But at the same time it is important to look closely at what is happening.

*The right
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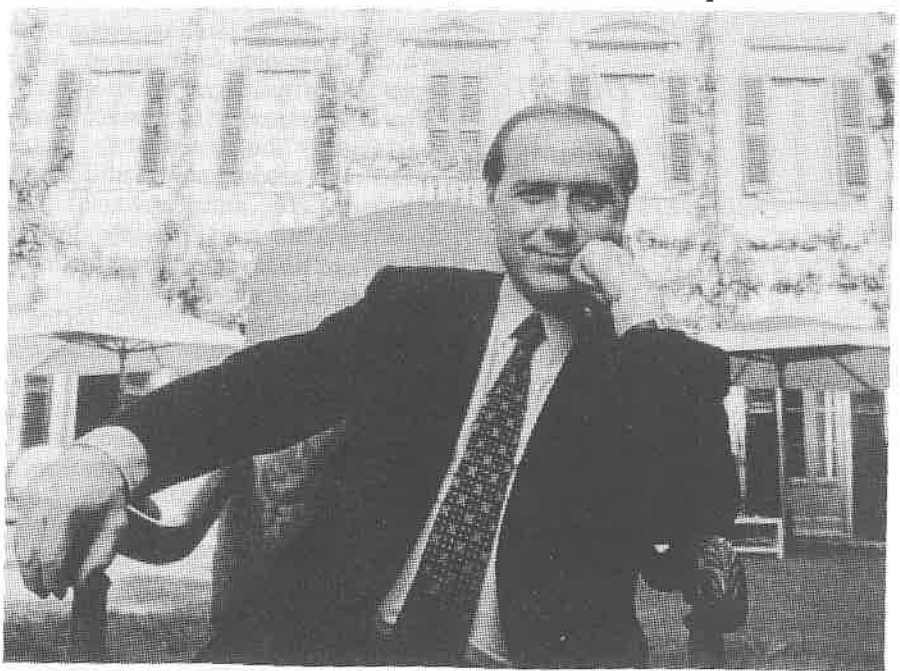
The MSI has changed its name to National Alliance (AN) and is attempting to ditch its old fascist image, playing down the racist elements of its programme, precisely because it does not feel confident to raise its true anti-working class programme openly. Whilst secretly maintaining the support of a periphery of fascist thugs, its leader, Fini, publicly denounces them. His statements

about Mussolini being the 'greatest statesman of all time' are for the benefit of his hardcore supporters.

Political parties are not static organs but are constantly in a process of change. Consequently, their characterisation cannot be fixed in stone. At the moment the MSI is trying to present a 'democratic' face. The party may try to ditch its fascist image altogether; on the other hand, at a later date it may return to it. Whatever the case, it is evident that its election success did not come from championing the image of Mussolini.

In fact an analysis of its vote reveals that the increase came largely from the old Christian Democrat voters in the south. They did not vote for the reincarnation of the DC in the newly-constituted Popular Party because they feared that it would make a block with the PDS after the elections and thus allow the 'communists' into government. To equate the increase in the MSI vote with a return to Mussolini's regime is to misunderstand the present situation in Italy and the historical phenomenon of fascism.

Fascism is a product of capitalism in extreme crisis. It has as its aim the complete atomisa-



Media mogul and premier Berlusconi.

of the working class: denying along the way the trade unions and workers' organisations together with all democratic rights won by the workers. In the 1920s and 1930s the fascists came to power as a result of the economic catastrophe that racked capitalism and the revolutionary movements that shook Europe. The capitalists, fearing they would lose all, turned to the fascist groups. However, it was only possible for fascism to triumph as a result of the defeat of those revolutions and the betrayal of the social-democratic leaders.

The main feature of fascism in the interwar period was that it was able to mobilise and organise the petty bourgeoisie, ruined by the economic crisis, against the working class. The petty bourgeoisie were neither part of the organised working class nor the ruling capitalist class. Today however there is no longer that social reservoir of potential support for the fascists. Only a very small section are employed in agriculture and the urban petty bourgeoisie has been largely absorbed into the working class. These teachers and civil servants who in the past were hostile to the unions have now become organised in trade unions.

The problems are only just beginning for this government.

The ruling class has also learned from the experience of fascism in power and out of their control. In fact since the second world war they have chosen, when necessary, to resort to military-police dictatorships based on the forces of the capitalist state rather than handing power to the fascists. This does not mean, however, that they will not use fascist thugs as auxiliaries or that it is not essential that they

are countered by the labour movement whenever they attempt to organise.

Despite the election victory for the capitalist parties in Italy, the problems are only just beginning for this government. Given the crisis of the Italian economy there is no way that Berlusconi can realise his election promises. He will be forced to carry through the programme of the Confindustria which includes mass privatisation and sackings or he will be removed by the ruling class.

Forcing through these attacks will not be an easy task to achieve. Privatisation implies mass job losses when unemployment is already 11% in Italy and, for the first time in 40 years, the majority of those unemployed are not first time job seekers but workers who have been made redundant. This is likely to be a key battleground in Italian society. One flashpoint will be the likely abolition of the Cassa Integrazione, a state-funded lay-off system which, by subsidising companies to lay-off rather than sack workers, takes them out of the jobs market and prevents them from being used to depress wage levels.

The Berlusconi government also has to face the enormous problems of the Italian economy which have not disappeared despite the first signs of recovery after two years of recession. Exports may be increasing but industrial production is still declining. The conditions of a recent £6.3bn loan from the IMF place considerable pressure on the incoming government: to reduce the budget deficit (10% of GDP) and the huge state debt (120% of GDP).

Consciousness of the difficulties in achieving this economic programme is already apparent in proposals for changes to the constitution to give more powers to the president. The government may also be opting for a more heavy-handed approach towards workers' protests. Police recently ferociously attacked a peaceful demonstration of Sicilian workers



Bossi, Northern League leader.

who have not been paid for four months.

Meanwhile Berlusconi not only faces the economic problems but has to try to hold together his unruly cohorts. Even during the election campaign the three coalition parties were at each other's throats.

The Northern League saw its vote eaten into by Berlusconi's Forza Italia. This has been one of the reasons for the scathing attacks on Berlusconi by its leader Bossi. He has threatened his party's departure from the government and secession if their demands on federalism are not met within six months. The League wants fiscal devolution. It argues that the north produces the country's wealth and that northern taxes should therefore remain in the north and not be swallowed up in subsidies to the south.

At the same time pressure from the National Alliance pulls in the other direction as the bulk of its vote came from the south. Any cuts in subsidies to the south would mean a massive increase in the already huge disparity that exists between north and south: unemployment in the south is three times the national figure of 11%. Whereas in the north 9% of the population live below the poverty line that figure is 26% in the south.

Far from being a sign of the victory of the ideas of reaction,

the presence of the AN in Berlusconi's government is a potentially explosive element, capable of provoking a huge movement of the working class. Every year Liberation Day (April 25) celebrates the defeat of the fascists. This year it became the focus of huge opposition to the government even before it had been formed. Over 400,000 came to Milan from all over to march in the pouring rain and at the same time there were huge local demonstrations in all the main towns.

This demonstration was in

part a response to the provocative attempts to re-write history by the new government, with US archive film of world war two being shown to attempt to make out that the partisans carried out atrocities as great as those of the fascists - the shooting of a fascist spy responsible for the deaths of countless partisans was one example.

The demonstration was initiated by a left-wing newspaper and the workers' parties only adhered later. This is a further indication that despite the election defeat and the ineptitude of

their leaders, the mighty Italian working class is in no way cowed and will not hesitate to take on this government.

It is just over a year since the French right-wing was elected into government and yet it has had to back down on every issue of contention. Far from the election results in Italy heralding the victory of fascism and the establishment of 'the strong state', the French events are just a hint of the future that awaits the Italian ruling class. □

Soraya Lawrence

Sri Lanka

THE SOUTHERN PROVINCIAL council elections on 24 March were a do or die battle for the ruling United National Party (UNP) and Peoples' Alliance (PA), which consists of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and its allies the Socialist Party (LSSP) and the CP. The UNP was defeated very badly - with the opposition Alliance winning over half the votes.

It is a convincing victory for the opposition, for the first time since the UNP came to power 17 years ago in 1977. Up to this provincial council election, so many elections took place which the UNP managed to win using government machinery, rigging and gangsters who worked for the money.

*The crushing of
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peasants.*

But this time, the opposition was more organised than in the

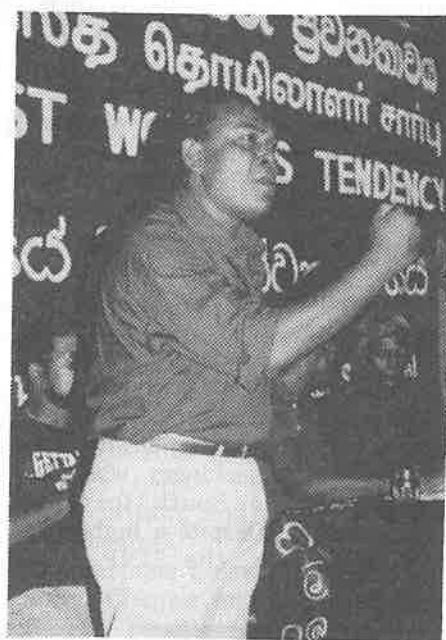
past. More than anything else, people in the South were organised to face up to the UNP thuggery and gangsters. A clear majority (the PA's 54.5% to the UNP's 43.9%) rejected the UNP policy as a whole, including the 'open economy' and so-called 'peoplistation', privatisation Sri Lanka style.

The NSSP (New Socialist Party) did very badly in all three districts. Their campaign concentrated on attacking the Peoples' Alliance without offering a Marxist alternative, and this was seen as sectarian by most workers.

More than anything else, the result revealed the bankruptcy of the UNP's communal politics. The Southern province is 99% Sinhalese. President Wijetunga said he was prepared to 'sacrifice his life' against the division of the Island (that is, independence for the Tamil areas) and he is prepared to defeat the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) in the North and East.

In contrast to this, Chandrika Kumaranatunga (daughter of SLFP leader Mrs Sirima Bandaranaike) who led the campaign, said she wants to bring back the troops from the North and look for a political solution.

The way this election came about is also very important, and



Siritunga Jayasuriya.

shows the undemocratic rule of the UNP. In the May 1993 provincial council elections, a triangular fight in the Southern Province, the UNP got 27 seats and the opposition parties - PA and the DUNF, the breakaway from the UNP formed to oppose Premadasa before his assassination - together won 28 seats. But the provincial governor invited the leader of the UNP to take over the provincial government, which was formed undemocratically. The opposition went to

The Southern provincial council election results, March 1994

District	Peoples' Alliance vote(seats)	UNP vote(seats)	NSSP vote(seats)
Galle	53.4%(12)	44.7%(10)	1.6%/0
Matara	56.4%(10)	43.1%(7)	0.5%/0
Hambantota	54.1%(8)	43.6%(6)	1.2%/0

urt and won the case, forming government six months after the election. But six weeks later, in January this year, the UNP kidnapped a PA member of the council and kept him secretly, preventing him from going to council meetings to vote for the budget. Using that situation, the UNP-controlled governor dissolved the council and fresh elections were ordered.

Three weeks before this election, there was another similar action in the troubled Eastern province. The UNP managed to win using the army, police and the state machinery to vote for the UNP. Nobody took that election seriously.

But the UNP was in real trouble with a mass movement in the South. From president DB Wijetunga and prime minister Anura Kumara Disanayake down, the entire party machinery was involved in the South for the whole month. Despite a high-profile campaign, the UNP was

defeated badly in all three districts: Galle, Matara, and Hambantota. The government declared a day curfew to prevent people from coming onto the streets.

The UNP leaders threw everything into this campaign, which involved Mrs Bandaranaike's son, Anura, who deserted the SLFP and joined the UNP, Gamini Disanayake, who rejoined the UNP after a period in the DUNF, and Ronnie de Mel, the former UNP finance minister, who also rejoined the UNP.

Now all eyes have turned to preparations for the national elections, which will begin very soon. Parliamentary and presidential polls are likely to be held at the end of this year. But the tremors caused by the opposition victory in the South are being felt. The PA leaders feel that they are within reach of power.

The question is, where will this alliance go once they come to power?

It is very clear this Peoples' Alliance is a weaker form of the earlier coalition government which was in power from 1970-77. But it is going to come to power with a lot of hopes from the working class, poor peasants

and national minorities, who have suffered under 17 years of UNP rule, directed by imperialist countries and the World Bank.

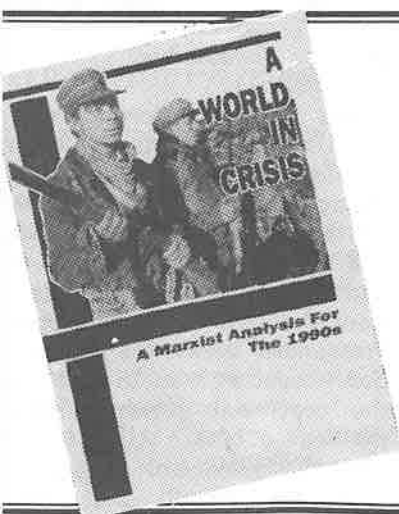
This section of the people, who are supporting left-oriented speeches by Chandrika, will face big conflicts soon after coming to power. Neither the SLFP, nor the LSSP and CP left parties, have an alternative socio-economic programme against the UNP and the imperialists.

But the crushing defeat of the UNP in the South has given big confidence to the ordinary workers and peasants. This was shown by the May Day demonstration, which started at midday and ended just before midnight. Everyone said that it was the biggest in Sri Lankan history, with probably over half-a-million supporting the Peoples' Alliance rally.

The Marxist Workers' Tendency, which is not a member of the PA, was given a place in the PA rally, and also held its own successful meeting, with over 200 present.

The coming months and years in Sri Lanka are crucial for the working class. We must make sure not to make the same disastrous mistakes made by the LSSP and CP in the past. And at the same time, we must intervene in the mass movement and build a leadership - that is the challenge of genuine Marxism. □

Siritunga Jayasuriya



A world in crisis

IN DECEMBER 1993, representatives from Militant Labour met with delegates from Marxist organisations throughout the world in an international conference organised by the Committee for a Workers' International. Twenty-five countries were represented, with a further six unable to attend. In countries such as South Africa, France, Britain, Ireland, Nigeria and Germany, our sister organisations are in the forefront of the fight for socialism.

Now, the conclusions of the conference have been published in a 134-page book. With sections on world relations following the collapse of Stalinism; the former colonial world; racism, fascism and the prospects for reaction; the traditional workers' parties; and the world economy, this book will serve as a handbook for the ideas of Marxism for the next period.

The book costs £4.50, £3 to Militant Labour members. To get your copy, send off now, adding 50p per copy for post and packing (orders of 5 or more post free), to World Socialist Books, 3/13, Hepscoot Road, London, E9 5HB.



Europe isn't working

What has happened to the grandiose Maastricht plans for a capitalist Euro-state? Lynn Walsh writes.

FOR MOST PEOPLE going to the polls on 9 June, the Euro elections will not be primarily about the European Union (EU) or its future. Throughout the Twelve, the vote will be a referendum on the policies of the national governments. In Britain especially the result is likely to be a massive vote of no confidence in the ruling party, an omen of defeat in a subsequent general election. Nevertheless, Euro-issues will also be put to the test - and there is hardly a government in Europe which does not fear a rising tide of anti-EU sentiment.

Throughout Europe there is an inchoate but strengthening mood that the EU is (at least partly) to blame for economic stagnation, rising unemployment, and government cutbacks in social spending. There is undoubtedly a narrow, nationalist strand in this mood - which is being ruthlessly exploited by ultra-right and racist parties striving to divert attention away from the capitalist roots of current problems. But there is also a widespread awareness that the EU is the Europe of big business and state bureaucracies, not the Europe of working people.

In an age of global economy and communications, national economies are outdated entities. But Europe - the Common Market, the EEC, the EC and now the EU - has not delivered the promised miracle of economic growth and prosperity. On the

contrary, since the 1970s Europe had slower growth and suffered from higher unemployment than either the United States or Japan.

Unity, moreover, seems as elusive as ever. No sooner was the ink dry on the Maastricht Treaty than new quarrels broke out between national governments - over GATT, for instance, and the reform of the astronomically expensive and wasteful Common Agricultural Policy (which France fights to retain while Germany, Britain, and others demand reductions in farm subsidies).

The British Tory government, despite gaining an opt-out from the Social Chapter and Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), recently provoked a new row over the distribution of votes between states in an enlarged EU (after the accession of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Austria). Under pressure from the Tory Euro-sceptics, the British foreign secretary, Hurd, began to voice doubts about raising the 'blocking minority' from 23 to 27, which he had previously approved at the Lisbon summit. Then, after several days of wrangling at an emergency foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels, Hurd accepted 27 after all - to the fury of the Euro-sceptics.

In immediate, practical terms, however, the elections to the European parliament, whatever the precise outcome, will make little difference. The European parliament is virtually powerless. Deci-

power lies with the Council of Ministers. This is an inter-governmental body on which, despite qualified majority voting' on issues relating to the 'single market', national governments retain the right veto on decisive issues. Despite the pro-rhetoric of some capitalist leaders the EU is not a supranational, federal body. That would imply the coordination of member states to a central European authority, which is not the reality in the EU.

The Council of Ministers decides policy, and policy decisions are translated into legislative proposals and administrative measures by the European Commission, the Council's guiding bureaucracy. The European Parliament is an advisory body. It has the right to be consulted and to amend legislation. The EU's annual budget, it is true, has to be ratified

by the parliament. But its power to amend or block the budget is, in practice, very limited as EU revenue depends on the willingness of the national governments to levy taxes and make financial contributions.

The Euro-parliament has no power at all concerning foreign and security policy, which is the prerogative of ministers representing national governments. In reality, it is the major powers, Germany, France and Britain, which have the decisive say in this area. The European parliament is the most expensive talking shop in the world.

Maastricht - boom-time illusions

THIS ROUND OF Euro elections was intended to provide democratic legitimacy to the Maastricht measures, and provide another stepping stone towards greater European unity. In the event, they will only help to highlight the illusory character of plans to surmount national differences and unite Europe on the basis of capitalist ownership of production and the anarchy of the market.

What happened to the grandiose plans which issued from the Maastricht summit in December 1991? According to the European vision of Jacques Delors, there would not only be a 'single market' by 1992 but also rapid progress towards an economic and monetary union (EMU), with a single euro-currency and co-ordination of economic policies. Delors, in fact, championed the idea of a federal European superstate, with its own defence and security policy. Even some on the left began to accept the idea that there could be far-reaching, permanent integration of economies across national frontiers, giving rise in the future to a capitalist euro-state.

Apart from the single market, however, this vi-



Euro-rebels at 1992 Tory conference.

sion has now evaporated. EU 'widening', with the accession of Sweden, Norway, Finland and Austria, is unlikely to be accompanied by further 'deepening'. More members will mean more differences.

What went wrong for the capitalist Europhiles? Their moment has passed! The ambitious federalist plans were the product of a particular combination of factors which emerged in the late 1980s, between the 1985 Cockfield proposals for the single market and the 1991 Maastricht summit. The new conjuncture followed a decade of economic stagnation dominated by the slumps of 1974-75 and 1979-81. The 'widening' of that period, with the accession of Britain, Denmark, and Ireland in 1973, was accompanied by paralysis within the EC, with annual quarrels about the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) budget and frequent use of the veto by one or other government to block new initiatives.

A review of the factors which emerged in the late 1980s reveals their temporary nature:

(1) There was a brief spurt of accelerated growth (averaging about 3% per annum, 1985-90), with a temporary fall in unemployment. This was stimulated by low world oil prices after 1986, the speculative Tory boom in Britain 1985-88 (raising demand for imports by 30%) and the 'unification' boom in Germany 1988-90 (increasing import demand by 20%). There is always more room for co-operation between competing national capitalist states in periods of economic growth. This, however, has given way to deep recession, first in Britain and now in Germany and France.

(2) Following the trends set by US capitalism under Reagan, there was a worldwide acceleration of 'free market' liberalisation and deregulation. The growing share of services in the advanced capitalist economies and increased cross-border trade in services, especially finance, insurance, etc (facilitated

advanced communications technology), increased the pressure to reduce state regulation, harmonise tax regimes, and allow international access to domestic markets. The big European multinational companies were eager to broaden their 'home base', to achieve greater economies of scale in order to compete with US and Japanese corporations. For big business, the 'single market' was long overdue - in theory, it should have been achieved under the Treaty of Rome during the 1960s and 1970s.

(3) The 'globalisation' of finance capital and the massive fluctuations in the dollar/yen exchange rate re-inforced the resolve of Germany, France, and the Benelux countries, to strengthen the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) as a haven of stability in a volatile sea of floating rates. Following the ERM realignment of January 1987, there were five years of relative stability for the EMS. At the beginning of stage one of EMU in July 1990, there was a widespread belief that the stable 'parity grid' of EU currencies had become a permanent fixture - an illusion which was shattered by the European monetary crisis which followed the Danes' rejection of Maastricht in June 1992.

(4) After Mitterrand's Socialist Party government abandoned its reformist programme in 1983 and turned towards 'free market' policies, there was a strengthening of the Franco-German alliance. A firm Franco-German axis was the precondition of any strengthening of the EC. The representatives of French capitalism believed that through enhanced EC structures France could exert decisive political influence in Europe, in spite of the greater economic strength of Germany, whose political influence was limited under the post-second world war settlement. With the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, however, the attention of German capitalism has shifted from 'deepening' within the EU to 'widening', especially to draw in Germany's Eastern neighbours. This and other developments have produced tensions in the Franco-German alliance.

(5) The favourable conjuncture gave the EC Commission exceptional room for manoeuvre, which President Delors skillfully exploited. Linked to the 'single market' proposals, qualified majority voting was introduced in the Council of Ministers, breaking the log-jam previously caused by national vetoes. Intermixed with the 1992 proposals, which were rapidly implemented, the Commission introduced 'federalist' proposals, for monetary union and steps towards political union. The increased economic interpenetration of the EC economies appears to have induced a romantic, utopian strain in the thinking of some capitalist politicians, who for a while naively believed that EC structures could permanently transcend the national interests of rival capitalist economies. Even Thatcher, who welcomed Euro-liberalisation but opposed federal-



EU Commission president Delors.

ism, appears to have underestimated the scope of the Commission's plans - at least until the Danish referendum, which triggered the beginning of the disintegration of the Maastricht project.

Diagnosing the economy: 'Euro-sclerosis'

WHILE THE SHORT-LIVED economic expansion of the late 1980s allowed increased co-operation between the EC states, the re-emergence of crisis since 1990 has sharpened the tensions between national states. It has also released centrifugal forces within the nation states - nationalism, regionalism, linguistic particularism - as well as stimulating xenophobic and racist currents diametrically opposed to the idea of 'European unity'.

These problems reflect the limited, one-sided character of the 1980s boom in Europe. Over the whole 1979-89 period GDP growth averaged only 2.2% per annum for Western Europe as a whole. A major factor behind this slow growth has been the policies of German capitalism. Germany is the dominant EU economy and was, until recently, the most prosperous. Yet haunted by the fear of renewed inflation, the German capitalists doggedly adopted highly restrictive monetary and budgetary policies. Through its dominant economic position,

and especially through the ERM, German capitalism imposed its slow-growth policies on its European neighbours. The ERM acted as a straight-jacket for EC members.

Despite the recovery of big business profits, which have returned almost to 1960s levels, there has been a steep, ten-year decline in investment, with only a modest recovery after 1985. This failure to expand capacity, combined with the effects of labour-saving technology, has produced a long-term growth of structural unemployment. Unemployment in the EC states has been higher than in the non-EU West European states. In the EU the percentage of the labour force unemployed rose from 2.8% in 1954-73 to 4.8% in 1974-79 and 5% in 1980-89. The comparable figures for the non-EU states (Austria, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland) were 1.6%, 1.8%, and 2.7%. The employment figures for the EU were partly



How is the Maastricht 'vision' now?

led up by high levels of unemployment in the poorer, south-European states: Spain, Portugal, and Greece. Nevertheless, the slow-growth policies imposed by German capitalism undoubtedly resulted in higher levels of unemployment in Germany, France, and other 'core' countries.

During the 1980s growth-spurt, investment was concentrated in the most prosperous areas, while the older, heavy industrial regions and the predominantly agricultural regions continued to decline. The ten poorest regions (out of 180) have a per capita GDP less than a quarter of the richest regions, like Hamburg, London and Lombardy. Moreover, even in the richer countries there is high unemployment amongst young people in the urban areas. Since the beginning of the slump in Germany and France after 1993, unemployment in those countries has soared to over four million, pushing the EU rate to over 11%.

A large proportion of this unemployment is structural, that is permanent rather than cyclical, not merely temporary unemployment caused by

the current recession. However, deep recession and very slow recovery aggravates the problems of mass unemployment and regional decline. The growth rate in Western Europe for 1989-95 is projected to be only 1.2% - that is, below the 1.5% per annum growth of 1929-38, the period of 'Great Depression'.

The limits of the national state

THERE ARE CONTRADICTIONARY forces at work within the EU: some pushing towards greater economic interconnection, others tending to accentuate national differences and other forces of disintegration.

The interpenetration of trade, especially in manufactures but increasingly in services, has continued to rise. Over 70% of the major EU countries' trade is now within Europe. Through their subsidiaries and partners, most of the big multinationals now operate on an all-EU (or all EU-EFTA) basis. Finance capital flows freely across the EU's internal borders.

This process of increased economic interpenetration will continue, irrespective of political and institutional arrangements, inevitably putting pressure on national governments to continue their efforts to harmonise their markets. This trend arises from the inner logic of contemporary capitalism - and is irreversible, short of a massive slump and a turn by the major capitalist powers to beggar-thy-neighbour policies, which will develop at a later stage. This would provoke a catastrophic economic collapse and social crisis.

A section of British capitalism, for instance, represented by the Tory 'Euro-sceptics', fear that competition within the EU will accelerate the decline of the feeble British economy, a fear which is amply justified. The saner representatives of British capital realise that for Britain to withdraw now, when the Nordic and East European states are pushing to enter the EU, would result in an even more rapid decline of British capitalism.

Countering the 'unifying trends', however, are powerful disintegrating tendencies. Underlying all of them is the historic reality that capitalism is organised on the basis of national states, which remain the fundamental unit of the capitalist system. The fact that EU states no longer publish figures for their trade with their EU partners does not mean that economies cannot fall behind in terms of capacity and productivity, or that they can no longer have trade or capital deficits with their EU neighbours.

While the capitalists generally feel that they are gaining from EU participation, they will continue to support further integration and co-operation. But



Danish anti-Maastricht demo, 1992.

when their interests begin to be seriously undermined by competition from more powerful EU rivals, the attitude of sections of big business will change. This is reflected in the opposition to the Maastricht Treaty of a number of capitalist parties in France, Germany, and Britain's Tory Euro-sceptics.

Given the overwhelming dominance of the world market and the extreme division of labour internationally, there can be no possibility of 'capitalism in one country'. But while capitalism can partially surmount its national limits through international investment and trade, ultimately the capitalist class cannot transcend the limits imposed by their national roots. The territorial basis of private property, the long historical evolution of bourgeois classes with their own national culture and language, and capitalism's organic links with national state machines rule out planning on an international scale, which is now a prerequisite for progress in the development of science, technology, and production. In short, the national state remains a fetter on social progress.

Capitalist governments have to attempt to balance the national books in the broader sense. If large sections of the population suffer a decline in living standards - accentuated by competition within the EU - capitalist leaders will face growing social instability and political upheaval. The begin-

ning of such a movement was reflected in the Danish referendum. Rejecting the policies of all the major parties in Denmark, a majority rejected proposals which they identified with growing unemployment, cuts in public expenditure, and other measures designed to achieve the 'convergence conditions' for participation in the EMU.

The Danish vote forced the modification of the Treaty, the beginning of the unwinding of the grandiose plans for economic and political union. Since then, opposition to the EU has grown even in Germany and France, where capitalist politicians previously assumed massive support for the idea of European integration.

Uneven development within the national states, with declining regions blighted by unemployment and poverty, has stimulated a tendency towards national decomposition. In Britain, this has aroused national sentiment in Scotland and Wales and underlies the conflict in Northern Ireland. Ironically, the idea of a federal Europe, despite regional hostility to central authority, has only fuelled the fire. Why should not Scotland, Lombardy and Catalonia, stand on a par with Denmark, Ireland and Portugal?

Denouncing the folly of a federal Europe, as advocated by some politicians, William Rees-Mogg (*The Times*, 11 April 1994) says: "In such a Europe there could easily be as many as 60 states... The nations put together in the 19th century, particularly Belgium, Germany and Italy, would disintegrate into their separate regions. The work of Bismarck and Cavour would be undone... Spain without Barcelona and Catalan industry would be bankrupt".

Rees-Mogg consoles himself with the thought that, "as with everything about Maastricht, one can see that this is something which cannot happen". Certainly, capitalist states which cannot be sure of maintaining their own national unity on the basis of harmony and prosperity do not have the capacity to secure the unity of Europe. But on the other side, defence of national sovereignty against EU encroachment will not prevent a tendency towards internal disintegration.

The end of the 'social' market

WHAT DEGREE OF integration has actually been achieved by the European capitalists? What are the prospects for the EU?

The EU is not a single, unified project. There are different elements, reflecting different trends within capitalism and the disparate aims of national capitals and even fractions within the national capitalist classes.

Within the 1992 Maastricht package, there are two major projects, which are intertwined but are ultimately contradictory:

(1) There is the neo-liberal, laissez-faire project for the realisation of a 'single market' through liberalisation and deregulation with the EU acting

'ringmaster';

(2) And there is the federalist project for a 'social' Europe, in which a supra-national EU government, on the basis of the single market, would promote economic and social welfare throughout the EU.

The neo-liberal internal market

BEFORE 1992, tariffs had been reduced to negligible levels. The 'internal market' measures were aimed at removing non-tariff obstacles to free trade: abolishing 'technical barriers' (quality standards etc), harmonising tax and insurance laws, and opening up public-sector purchasing to non-national suppliers.

Many of these measures are now being implemented. But some governments are dragging their feet. Only about half of the 230 single market measures have been implemented throughout all 12 states, and in some they are not being rigorously enforced. Tax harmonisation is still a long way off, although big concessions have been made to the multinationals. Plans for EMU are also linked to the neo-liberal project. Big business, the argument goes, will not be truly free to invest, produce, and trade across frontiers unless they are assured of exchange-rate and interest-rate stability. But such stability requires 'convergence' of money, budgetary, and other economic policies. And the logic of such co-ordination is the establishment of a single currency regulated by a European central bank - the EMU.

Even if all these steps could be taken, however, the project would still face a fundamental contradiction. Intensive profit-driven competition between the big multinational corporations in a free market would inevitably accelerate the polarisation of wealth.

Investment and growth is inevitably concentrated in the more prosperous areas, aggravating the decline of the poorer areas. Poverty and unemployment inevitably fuel protests from regions and national minorities against the destructive social effects of the centralised European market. In the face of mass protest, national governments sooner or later attempt to soften the effects of the unfettered market - by resorting once more to protectionist measures.

The collapse of the ERM in the currency crisis of 1992-93 was itself the result of the growing divergence between the economies, which widened

with the onset of recession. The pegging of the pound at the unsustainable rate of DM2.95 forced the Tory government to maintain high interest rates in the midst of a deep slump, increasing unemployment and postponing an upturn. The Danish referendum raised doubts over the whole EMU project, and the massive flow of speculative 'hot money' against the 'overvalued' pound and Italian lira brought down the whole ERM edifice.

Britain and Italy remain outside the ERM, while the participating currencies have settled for the wider 15% fluctuation band. Not one EU state currently fulfills all four EMU criteria. The German public-sector debt in 1995 will exceed the EMU convergence target of 60% of GDP because of subsidies to the former East Germany. While Greece is considered a 'basket case', with a national debt of 114% of GDP, this is exceeded by



Heading for a divergent Europe?

Italy (116%) and Belgium (138%).

Throughout Europe, there are now capitalist parties denouncing the EMU plan as a grave threat to national sovereignty. This now includes Germany and France, where the capitalist leaders were previously overwhelmingly advocates of monetary union.

2. The 'social' Europe

THE OTHER PROJECT, championed by the French social democrat, Jacques Delors, embraced the 'single market' and EMU, but linked them to plans for a federal Euro-government, which would implement the 'Social Chapter' and administer regional subsidies to compensate for uneven growth.

Under the Social Chapter, there would be 'harmonisation upwards', spreading the most favourable employment conditions and welfare benefits from the richer economies (Germany, France, Belgium, etc) to the poorer economies (Britain, Spain, etc). When the Maastricht plans were being formulated, big business in Germany, France, etc, favoured equalisation. They did not see why they should be obliged to compete with bosses in other countries who got away with much lower employment costs and social contributions. But in Britain Major and his Euro-sceptic opponents were united in their virulent hostility to the Social Chapter, and Major secured an opt-out so British bosses could pay poverty-level wages and abandon protective legislation.

With the economic downturn in Germany and France, however, the attitude of big business has changed. The bosses are now blaming the crisis on 'labour rigidities' and demanding 'flexibility': the scrapping of national agreements in favour of plant bargaining; job flexibility, flexible hours, cuts in bonuses, holidays and pensions; and the curbing of health and safety and other protective legislation.

The Euro bosses, in other words, are abandoning the 'social market' or 'welfare state' which developed under pressure from the labour movement during the postwar upswing and are now taking the Reagan-Thatcher road: low pay, part-time and casual working, minimum worker protection, minimum employment and welfare benefits. The capitalists in Germany, France, Belgium, and also in the prospective member-states once famous for their welfare provision (Sweden, Norway, etc) are now turning to the same crisis-policies adopted by the US and British capitalists during the 1980s. Regardless of the promises embodied in the Maastricht Treaty, Delors' social democratic vision of a united Europe is now being abandoned. In addition

to high unemployment (now over 11% of the labour force), the workers of Europe will be offered low pay, insecurity, and poverty.

Subsidies to the poorer regions, through the 'structural funds', will also be increasingly squeezed. At the 1992 Edinburgh summit, it was agreed to raise these regional funds by 35% in real terms by the year 2000. Even if achieved, this would still be less than 0.5% of total EU output of goods and services. German capitalism, moreover, is no longer prepared to provide additional funds for an ambitious regional policy. The polarisation between the rich and poor regions will continue, in parallel with the growing polarisation between the classes in all the EU states.

For a Socialist United States of Europe

THE MAASTRICHT TREATY is now "less a monument to European unity than an embarrassing white elephant", writes a commentator in *The Times* (Janet Bush, 5 January 1994). This is not to say that the EU is about to break up. A Europe of autarchic capitalist states would not be viable. Driven by the logic of the market, the European economies will no doubt take further steps towards an integrated single market. But there will also be frequent resort to national protection.

The Maastricht plans are in tatters, and no doubt they will be shredded by the time of the EU summit in 1996. Again, this is not to say that there will be no further attempts to refurbish the EMS or to strengthen political co-operation. But capitalism, which can no longer assure growth, prosperity, or democratic rights within the national states, will not be able to achieve the harmonious integration of Europe's economy or lasting co-operation on federal lines. Given a further 20 or 30 years of economic upswing, European integration could go further. But in a period of economic depression and growing social crisis, the prospect is for fissure and conflict between the European states - which will eventually erupt in crisis.

The unification of Europe is beyond the historic capabilities of the capitalist class. The task must be taken up by the working class, which, in opposition to the Europe of big business and their oppressive state machines, must raise the banner of the Socialist United States of Europe. This will be accomplished on the basis of a socialist planned economy and workers' democracy, which will enable society to travel far beyond the cramped allotments of capitalism. □



French protests at Euro food policy.

Economic Focus

By Pete Watson

UK Short-Termism Inc.

IN 1927 THE Austin Motor company issued a licence to Dixi Wereke AG of Eisenbach, Germany, to produce a left-hand drive Austin Seven. This licence was passed to the Bayerische Motoren Werke company, makers of aircraft engines and motorcycles. The first BMW was an Austin, forerunner of today's Rover Group. It is an irony therefore that in January this year that same company bought Rover from British Aerospace, thereby finishing British owned volume car production - that is, unless the Reliant Robin is about to make a comeback!

This sale was a successful coup for BMW. A rival car producer is cut out while they gain profitable models particularly in the four-wheel drive Land Rover/Range Rover/Discovery range. Rumoured to having spent £2bn in attempting to develop a rival four-wheel drive model, they get it for £800m!

BMW may invest in four-wheel drive and in the small and sports car sectors of Rover production. There is little sense however in boosting production of the 600 series Rovers that compete directly and are starting to outsell BMW rivals.

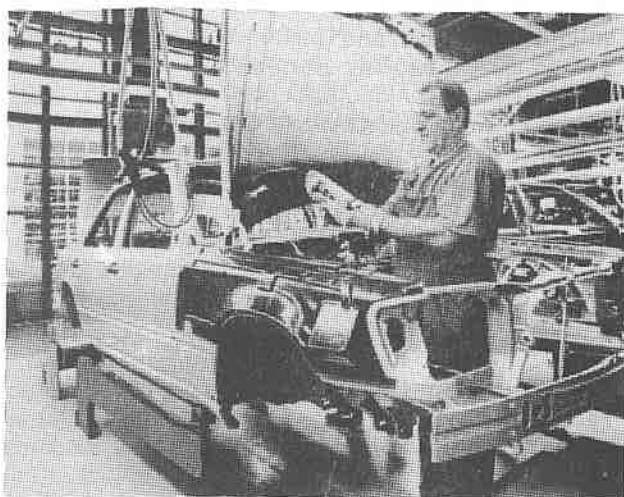
With workers in British manufacturing on wages of 65-75% of their German brothers and sisters, BMW may shift car component production to Britain. It is unlikely however that the huge cost of heavy investment in new product lines will follow.

The second success for BMW bosses lay in the take-over's ef-

fect on Honda. It represented a humiliating defeat for the Japanese car-maker. Honda's world strategy had been to buy into local car production, lending technology and know-how in return for a profit share. In the case of Rover, success was based on Japanese technology. The 200, 400, 600 and 800 series cars all used Honda engines or transmissions. Honda owned 20% of Rover and earned £400m a year from that investment.

With the development of the European Union, Japanese companies have sought to avoid tariff walls by setting up shop inside Europe itself. Britain has taken the most: 38% of inward investment into Europe up to March 1993. Now, Honda's reaction may hasten the end for volume car production at Rover, ending its technological support which has been the key to Rover's success. Rover's models reach the end of their product life soon. Without Japanese help a crisis will develop. At the same time, Honda intends to create a new rival, boosting production at its Swindon plant to 100,000 by 1995.

However, while BMW has now become a bigger player in world car production, this bigger fish could still become beached. Both Rover and BMW had a similar output, selling about 360,000 models in West Europe last year, 6.4% of market share. But the



world car industry has faced a crisis since the late 1980s. Europe's car giants are equipped to make up to 3.5m more cars per year than they currently sell. Volkswagen made a \$1.4bn loss last year. Fiat is running at 55% capacity and Ford of Europe has been losing money since 1991. And Japanese companies expect to sell one million cars in Europe by the end of the decade.

British Aerospace's decision to sell Rover was not however motivated by these long-term strategic problems. Rover was a success - BAe's desires lay nearer the shrine of share prices and short term bank balances.

Rover for them was an asset stripping operation. They bought it from the government for £150m, receiving £57m in 'sweeteners'. Under the conditions of the rules of sale they were unable to sell the company until the end of last year. When the time was up, Rover was sold. BAe made \$650m as well as profit from land and property that Rover formerly owned. Here we can see the real vitality of the British ruling class!

The excuse given by capitalist commentators is that BAe

shed to consolidate its aerospace business through this sale. At its commercial airliner business is a drain on BAe, losing £1bn between 1981 and 1992. The latest noises from BAe suggest that it will not boost investment here but in defence. Commercial aircraft and jet engine production in Britain may be the way of car production.

BAe lost £237m over the last year. Compare this performance with the National Westminster Bank that made nearly £1bn profit in the same period.

Here lies the special crisis of British capitalism. A highly developed financial system can be a progressive feature in the development of capitalism. It allows profits to be shifted rapidly to where investment can make the best return. New sectors at the most advanced technological 'edge' of the economy benefit. Export of

capital leads to finance playing an international role. Imperialism, the rule of finance capital and multinational monopolies, takes control of the world.

Profitability is however the name of the game. Low profitability in manufacturing leads to finance searching for new homes to make money. The early development of Britain as a world imperialist power has meant that this separation of industry and finance is more extreme than elsewhere. The City of London is a world finance centre developed historically from the surplus extracted from the workers and peasants of the former British empire. British manufacturing has been underfunded and in decay for decades. British bosses think in terms of short-term share prices, currency speculation, balance sheets with no long term view on the development of

industry. Britain is now 18th of 22 OECD countries in terms of productivity. It is the only West European country to run a deficit on merchandised goods.

A final word on British Aerospace. It is now likely to retreat almost solely into arms production, linking up with GEC to do so. This will mean that the core of British manufacturing will be hiding behind the windbreak of government contracts and sweeteners.

Britain is an economy exploited for its low wages and as a market for overseas multinational companies. The present character of the British ruling class is probably best summed up by *The Economist*, an authoritative journal of British capitalism, which declared that those who opposed the sale of Rover to a foreign company were 'deluded'. □

Mexico's New Dawn

THE SIGNING OF the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, Mexico and the USA was heralded by Mexico's rulers as a new dawn for Mexican capitalism. Jobs and wealth would flourish as North American investors flocked to Mexico. The world saw a different kind of dawn, however, when the Zapatistas rose in revolt in southern Mexico. That uprising is partly linked to NAFTA. The

Mexican government are seeking to force the poor peasants to let or sell their land under the terms of the agreement.

Now new figures have been published that cast a further gloom over the

bosses. Mexican economic growth stands at a seven year low. It grew only by 0.4% last year with manufacturing shrinking by 1.5% from 1992. Mexico currently has a strong currency and high real interest rates. Like a number of Latin American countries this has led to a balance of payments problem. Exports are more expensive and imports are cheaper relative to other countries. Mexico's trade was in the red by \$65bn for 1993.

The government has pinpointed the 'restructuring' of the



Life in Mexico City.

private sector as the reason for the problems. For 'restructuring' read 'redundancies and closures'. NAFTA free trade arrangements already are hitting home based industry. US capital will benefit.

The World Bank has called for a more 'flexible labour market' in Mexico. They bemoan union agreements that workers have forced upon employers. The battle lines are being drawn between US capital and the Mexican workers and peasants. The Zapatistas' struggle represents the opening shot. □

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From Bosnia to Greece, **Tony Saunois** looks at the developing crisis in the Balkans.

War clouds over the Balkans

THE APRIL BOMBINGS carried out by NATO forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the subsequent events which were an humiliation for the imperialist powers, marked a new stage in the crisis in the Balkans. There is a developing cloud of nationalism throughout the region which has now spread to Greece, in dispute with both Albania and the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. The whole of the Balkans seems poised once again to be plunged into a whirlpool of national and ethnic conflict.

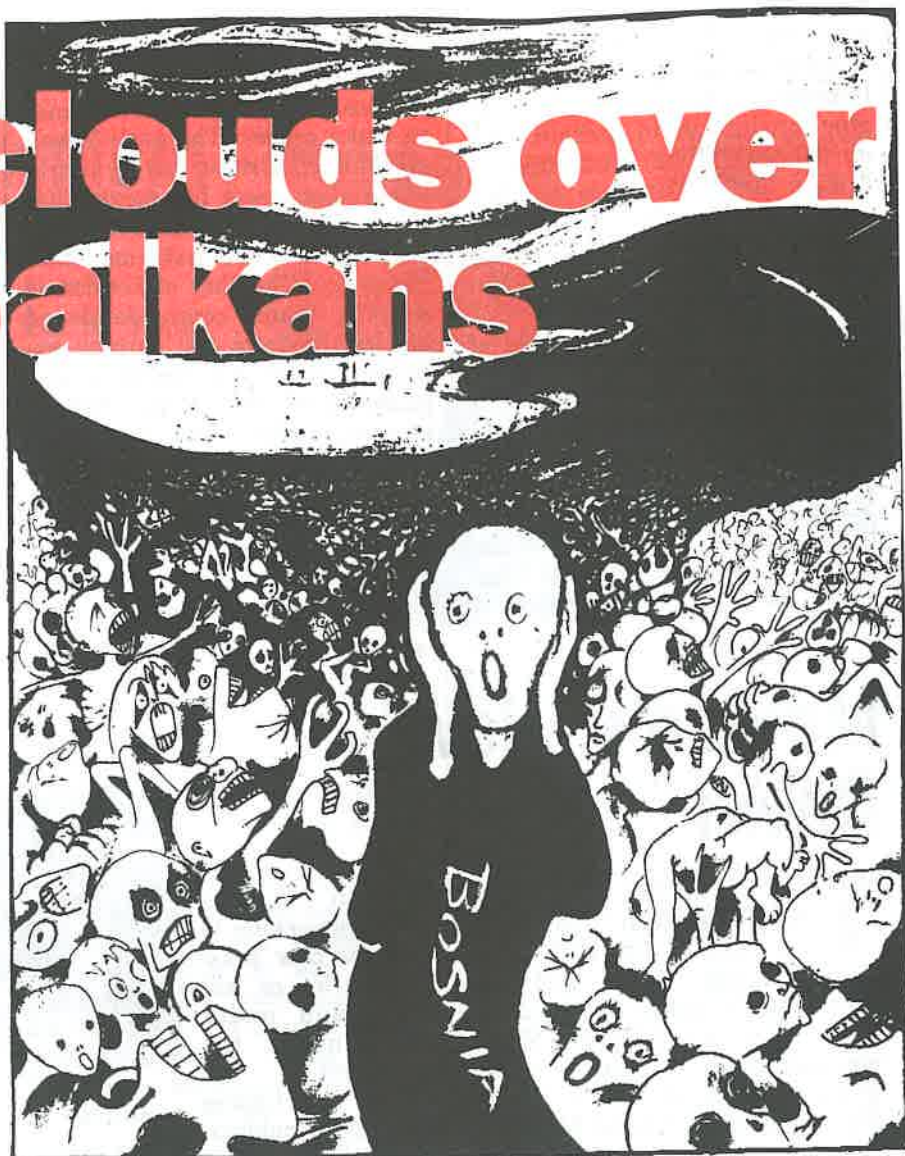
The consequences of these events will be felt throughout Europe. The processes at work in this area, when put alongside

the tremendous mass movements which have rocked France, Germany, Italy and other countries of Europe, graphically illustrate the contradictory nature of the new epoch.

Yet it is important to emphasise that the current wave of nationalist/ethnic reaction in the Balkans, however brutal and vicious it appears to be, will not last indefinitely. After suffering a decade of carnage in the Lebanon the proletariat re-emerged with a general strike in 1993. In Serbia there is already a widespread opposition

developing to the regime. Although contradictory, the beginnings of a movement of the proletariat can be seen, reflected in such developments as the formation of the 100,000 strong trade union organisation, Nezavisnost (Independence).

THE COLLAPSE OF the Vance/Owen plan, and now the crumbling of the peace agreement which emerged from the siege of Sarajevo, illustrate the impossibility of imperialism imposing a stable solution on this



MUNCH *The Scream* 1893

Alan Hardman *The Scream* 1994

conflict. Since April 1992 three peace initiatives have been attempted and each has broken down. At the same time, a temporary balance can be established for a period. Indeed, it appeared to be the case as the Bosnian Serb bombardment of Sarajevo was ended. Within days, however, there still existed potential points of conflict around which a further conflagration could explode.

Gorazde was one such point of conflict. The Bosnian Serbs undertook the offensive around the city and put it under siege, because of its strategic importance. They sought control of the Drina river and the important road north. In doing so they expanded their territory,

taking more from the Bosnian Muslims. This situation did not suddenly arise but had been developing over a period. There are other potential points of conflict, such as Tuzla. These could erupt into open conflict even if a new agreement is reached, provoking a general conflict between Serbs and the fragile Muslim/Croat alliance which has been formed with the encouragement of Western imperialism.



Albanian protest in Kosovo.

The current wave of nationalist/ethnic reaction will not last indefinitely.

Serbia and Croatia originally arrived at an agreement for the partition of Bosnia as part of their parallel objectives of establishing a greater Serbia and a greater Croatia. Croatia established a 'mini-state' in western Bosnia. In the east, Serbia launched a military offensive in Srebrenica in defiance of the Vance/Owen peace plan as part of its objective of establishing a de facto 'Greater Serbia'. The attack on Gorazde was part of this general objective.

Imperialism's interests are best served by continuing the Bosnian conflict. Thus the Western powers have attempted to establish a three-way division of Bosnia, and acquiesced to the Serbs taking Srebrenica. We commented at the time that this "could be quickly followed by the Serbian forces taking the southern Muslim enclaves of Gorazde and Zepa". (MIR No.51, May/June 1993). Since then Croatia has switched sides and formed an alliance with the Bosnian Muslims, following intense pressure from Western imperialism. The Croat forces now believe they will secure a

better deal from this alliance and are also looking for a counter-weight to Russia's imperialist aspirations in the area.

If the conflict escalates, with further clashes between Muslim/Croat forces and the Serbs, it will inflame still further the nationalist fires which are already burning in other parts of the Balkans. This is especially true in relation to the conflict between Albania and Greece, which is linked inseparably to the explosive cocktail which exists in Kosovo.

The Serbian attack on Gorazde provoked NATO to launch limited air strikes. Imperialism wishes to try and check Serbian expansionism and teach them a lesson. They hope also to warn other countries in the region against adopting an expansionist policy, which would further destabilise the area. At the same time, they are also reflecting the pressure of public opinion which has been demanding action to stop the slaughter. Through being seen to take effective action, the imperialist powers hope to be able to defend their own prestige and avoid appearing impotent in the face of a crisis on the European mainland.

Another factor in the calculations of US imperialism was the need to regain the initiative following the deployment of 800 Russian troops to Sarajevo after the peace agreement. The Russian initiative, reflecting the emergence of a more aggressive Russian imperialism (though still a lesser power than the US), clearly wrongfooted the Western powers.

The intervention by the Yeltsin regime into the war in Bosnia marks an important development, confirming the previous analysis made by the MIR of post-Stalinist Russia. Although an economically weaker power than US or German imperialism, Russia is still a powerful military force, with its own imperialist ambitions within its sphere of influence. It has already asserted this role in some of the republics of the former USSR. Russia's in-

tervention in this crisis shows how its interests will come into collision with those of other, more powerful, imperialist powers.

The Russian initiative clearly wrongfooted the Western powers.

Yeltsin, increasingly isolated in Moscow, is compelled to look over his shoulder at the extreme nationalist forces in Russia. The depth of the crisis in Russia is preparing the way for Yeltsin's downfall - probably sooner rather than later. It is likely that he will be replaced by a more strident Russian nationalist regime, possibly led by Rutskoi. This development would prepare the way for an even more aggressive Russian foreign policy. The extremely powerful traditions of Pan-Slavism, which links Russia and Serbia, together with the traditional Orthodox Christian alliance which also includes Greece, are important ingredients in the processes unfolding in the Balkans.

This may even result in the eventual military involvement of Russian forces (possibly under the cover of mercenaries), should the conflict involving Serbian forces accelerate. After initially welcoming the deployment of a small Russian peace-keeping force, US imperialism is now recognising the potential danger for the future symbolised by this initiative.

THE PROBLEM THAT the imperialist powers now confront is how to proceed. Air strikes alone will not achieve their objectives. They have only served to polarise the situation further and pushed the Bosnian Serbs to adopt a far more aggressive policy towards the UN/NATO forces. At the same time, the Muslim forces have demanded further action. Moreover, the bombings increased the tensions between NATO and Russia and have strengthened the ultra-nationalist forces in Russia. In every respect, NATO tactics have only served to worsen the crisis, confirming that imperialist intervention in the area will not end the suffering of the masses in the Balkans.

The dilemma facing imperialism, however, is that to do nothing, allowing the Serb forces to continue their assault unchecked, will further expose the impotence of NATO and the UN, and undermine the apparent propaganda victory gained through lifting the siege on Sarajevo. Despite the escalation which has taken place around Gorazde, it is still possible that the Serbian regime will try to secure an agreement and the crisis will be defused - for a time.

The Milosevic regime is confronted with a massive crisis at home due to the war. War weariness

is gripping the population. The Serbian state's military forces are conducting the war without the enthusiasm of the population.

The economy has been pushed to the point of collapse by the war and the breakdown in trade. Industrial production fell by 40% during 1993 and gross domestic product (GDP) now stands at only a third of its 1990 level. As a result, agriculture now accounts for more than 50% of GDP. 750,000 workers - 25% of the workforce - are registered as unemployed and a further 1.2 million are on paid leave. In February, pensioners were told that they would only be paid just over 50% of their state benefit. The regime is faced with the prospect of mass opposition and social unrest.

It would be a mistake to conclude that the Bosnian Serbs are forces beyond Milosevic's control. The Serbian regime is controlling the tap supplying them with arms and supplies. As capitalist commentators have pointed out, when the Sarajevo peace agreement was concluded, the guns stopped firing without delay.

If it were only a question of logic the Serbian regime would move to defuse the situation and, if possible, reach an agreement. Serbia, having won control of 70% of Bosnia, has in many respects achieved its war objectives but now confronts an economic catastrophe. Imperialism is desperate to contain the crisis and maintain some prestige. There are ingredients, however, which prevent a simple 'logical' solution.

Imperialism has attempted to develop a strategy of forging a new alliance between Croatian and Muslim forces. This has been successful up to the present. The Western powers hope to use this federation to counter-balance the areas now under Serbian rule. They are also exploring the possibility of using Croatian/Bosnian Muslim forces as a bulwark against the Bosnian Serbs. If the situation escalates, it is possible that imperialism will arm Croatian and Muslim forces and conduct a struggle against the Serbs by proxy. This could lead to further, extremely bloody conflict.

According to recent reports (18 April), around Gornji Vakuf (where formerly Muslim BiH forces were in conflict with the Croat HVO), the BiH has withdrawn and moved north towards Zepce and begun assaults on the Bosnian Serbs. HVO artillery has been moved into position to support the BiH offensive. The Croat/Muslim agreement has been greeted with enthusiasm at this stage. But, at a later stage the alliance could break down, in some areas, or the Croatian forces could split.

A major conflict between the Bosnian Serb forces and the Croatian/Muslim forces, backed by the Western imperialist powers, would be an extremely bloody struggle. Both sides would rather avoid such a conflict, but the situation could nevertheless spiral out of control. The growing possibility of such a development vindicates our position of opposing the demand to 'arm the Muslims'. While supporting the right of all minorities to arm and defend them-



UN demonstration in Sarajevo.

ves from attack, we could not support a demand which would, in reality, mean the arming by imperialism of Muslim leaders with the aim of 'thering the interests of the Western powers. Imperialism, if it does arm these forces, will ensure that the arms are under the control of a Muslim elite. Those grouplets which have simply used the call 'arm the Muslims' now face the prospect of being left as attorneys for an alliance backed by the Western imperialist powers.

THE EVENTS IN Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia are part of a series of developing national conflicts throughout the Balkans. Recently the upsurge of national tensions has emerged especially sharply in Greece, where a nationalist wave has been whipped up. It is centred on the issue of Macedonia, but increasingly the conflict with Albania has come to the fore.

Coupled with other developments, Greek nationalism could possibly slow the rhythm of struggle of the Greek proletariat. The relatively dormant but deep-rooted nationalism of Greek society is in the process of being unleashed. It has been spearheaded by the leadership of PASOK and the workers' organisations, and reinforced by the bourgeoisie. They are now competing with each other as to who can shout their Greek nationalism the loudest.

One of the biggest demonstrations ever held in Greece, over one million strong, took place in Salonika in April. A surge of propaganda has been organised, ranging from the appearance of the head of Alexander the Great on coins to videos being shown on all the flights of the national airline. Police now wear Star of Vergina emblems, the symbol associated with Alexander the Great. The Orthodox church has begun to unleash an orgy of

reactionary propaganda of Christian Orthodoxy with Slavism, thereby linking Greece to Serbia and Russia, in opposition to the non-Christian Muslims. This has been fuelled by the election successes of Islamic fundamentalists in neighbouring Turkey, Greece's traditional opponent, which recently stopped all building on the Greek Orthodox cathedral in Istanbul.

The extreme nationalist sentiments propagated by the church are the ideological clothes of a reactionary minority in Greek society. By appealing to such sentiments, the leadership of PASOK has attempted to divert the attention of the proletariat from the pro-bourgeois austerity policies of the government. Similarly, the PASOK leaders have taken measures against the Greek monarchy, which, although we support them, are a secondary issue.

There is a powerful anti-imperialist sentiment amongst the masses in Greece. However, the current nationalist wave is of a reactionary character. This campaign has been unleashed against the background of a severe economic recession in which 30% of all businesses are on the brink of bankruptcy and, according to some estimates, up to 40% of the economy goes through the black market.

These factors come together after nearly two decades of intense struggle by the Greek proletariat. Because of the policies of the PASOK leadership the issue of nationalism is set to dominate the situation for a period. This may delay a powerful movement against the measures of the PASOK government. Papandreou has taken this direction with the reluctant support from the most far-sighted sections of the Greek ruling class. They fear that he may trigger a situation which they will not be able to control.

Macedonia, with a population of two million, has provided the initial catalyst for the nationalist fervour. Papandreou imposed an embargo on the 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' (FYROM) in response to US recognition of FYROM. Greece has opposed the republic adopting the name Macedonia, objected to it using the Star of Vergina on its flag, and denounced its constitution on the grounds that it implies a territorial claim over northern Greece. Behind this are the historical fears of the Greek bourgeoisie of territorial claims being made against it. Greece regards its own northern territory as 'Macedonia', within which is a Muslim minority.

The rapid escalation of the dispute is a measure of the instability of the region. The Greek ruling class and PASOK only a few months ago were moving to accept a compromise. Macedonia itself accepted that it would change its flag, amend its constitution and call itself New Macedonia. Without

consulting Athens, however, the US announced its recognition of FYROM. Papandreu immediately relied with the imposition of an embargo. The Macedonian government responded by exploring other trade routes through Albania and Bulgaria.

The rapid escalation of the dispute is a measure of the instability of the region.

This dispute has brought the European bourgeoisie into open conflict with their Greek counterparts. The imperialist powers fear the effect that the destabilisation of Macedonia will have in the Balkan cauldron. Before Greece imposed its embargo, GDP in Macedonia had fallen by 30% since 1991. A severe drought cut agricultural output last year by over 20%. There is a fear that the developing economic crisis will increase demands from the Muslim minority within Macedonia. This could push the Slav layers of the population into the Orthodox Christian camp, involving Serbia and Greece. (Macedonia's population designate themselves to be 65% Macedonian, 21% Albanian, 10% Serbs, 5% Turk and about 100,000 as Vlahoi, a Greek minority).

CONTAINED WITHIN THE dispute with Macedonia, with its Albanian Muslim minority, are the seeds of a potentially more explosive conflict with Albania itself. Linked to this is the powder-keg which exists in the republic of Kosovo (as it is known to the Albanians) or Kosmet (to the Serbs) - known throughout the region as the 'Balkan Tinderbox'. After a period of autonomy it was forcibly re-integrated into Serbia in 1989. With 90% of its population Albanian, it is ruled by a ruthless Serb minority which rests upon the might of the Serbian regime.

Kosovo has a crucial place in the history of both Serbs and Albanians. It is regarded by the Serbs as their 'Jerusalem' and the 'hub' of their culture and history. It is not an accident that Milosevic launched his bid for the leadership from Kosovo. For Serbia it is also a source of mineral wealth. For the Albanians it has a similar historical importance.

If Kosovo erupts, it would ignite the bloodiest conflict in the Balkans. The Albanian government publicly recognises that it does not have the strength to intervene in Kosovo and directly confront Serbia. However, if an uprising of Albanians in Kosovo takes place, it would inevitably raise the prospect of a movement of Albanians to form armed militias and cross into Kosovo. Even before the

recent crisis, the attempts by the Albanian regime to reassemble its conscript army, found up to 100,000 troops concentrated on its northern and eastern borders with Kosovo.

Up to now, the leadership of the Albanians in Kosovo have prevented an explosion taking place, adopting a 'Gandhian' resistance to Serb rule. They have been able to maintain this because of the fear of the consequences of a rising. At the same time, 'a wait and see how Serbia fares in Bosnia' mood has existed. The key question is, how much longer can this policy last?

Thousands have been tortured and hundreds killed under Serbian rule. An alternative Albanian society has developed, which even includes underground schools and hospitals. A boiling cauldron of Albanian rage is bubbling away.

Recently, a more aggressive and determined leadership amongst the Albanian minority in Macedonia has emerged. It has been encouraged by the regime in Albania, where the aspiration for a 'Greater Albania' is still to be found. This development is reportedly serving to strengthen a more militant wing amongst Albanians in Kosovo. Moreover, as events in Bosnia have demonstrated, Turkey would lend support to Muslim minorities, especially those involved in conflict with Greece.

A FURTHER INGREDIENT in the tinder box is the Greek minority in southern Albania, Northern Epirus, who are calling for the area to be incorporated into Greece. According to the Albanian regime, there are 60,000 Greeks involved, 300,000 according to Greece, out of Albania's total population of 3.3 million.

Up until now, the clashes have been minor, reflected in a raid, allegedly by Greek commandos, on an Albanian border post. The raid itself, in which two Albanian soldiers were killed, was claimed to be the work of the recently formed Northern Epirus Liberation Front. It was possibly undertaken with the tacit support of a section of the Greek military. This provoked the mutual expulsion of diplomats from both Greece and Albania.

Fear of the escalation of this conflict has resulted in Albania stepping back and apologising to Greece. However, the rapid sharpening of tensions, in part fed by the conflict in Bosnia, illustrates the dangers which exist for the development of a broader conflict in the Balkans. This is viewed with horror by the imperialist powers, who will apply massive pressure to try and prevent it.

The EU is threatening action against Greece over its embargo on Macedonia. The EU is also threatening to withdraw subsidies from Greece. Fearful of the acceleration of the conflict and its likely repercussions, the European bourgeoisie is trying to bring the Greek ruling class into line. Neither the ruling class in Greece nor Albania want a major conflict to develop. Greece is formally stressing that it has no claims upon Northern

Epirus.

However, the situation is not fully under their control. One fear is that Serbian forces may now begin to supply arms to militias in Northern Epirus. The danger lies in the unleashing of forces which neither imperialism nor the indigenous ruling classes can control. This unquantifiable factor must not be underestimated, especially in such an explosive arena as the Balkans. A further potential point of conflict which could develop lies in the Serbian minority in Hungary which would also be drawn in should a generalised conflict erupt.

A major conflict is posed as a serious possibility over a period of time. More likely in the short to medium term, however, is an escalation in tensions and the outbreak of border clashes. These in themselves can assume a serious character. To this will also be linked a general rise in nationalist poison and persecution.

In Greece this could see a rise in discrimination and attacks against the estimated 200,000 Albanians. Most are illegal immigrants who have flooded over the border after the collapse of the Stalinist regime. They now constitute one of the most down-trodden sections of poverty-ridden Greek society.

A measure of the vicious form this can take was demonstrated during 1993, under the government of New Democracy. Following the expulsion from Albania of a Greek priest who had distributed maps showing Northern Epirus incorporated into Greece, 30,000 Albanians were rounded up by the police and deported.

WHILE RECOGNISING THE complex situation which is developing in the Balkans, we must also emphasise that this wave of nationalism will not be the dominant feature indefinitely. At this stage it represents a setback for the proletariat in the area, but it will be a temporary phase. The developing opposition to the regime in Serbia will be of decisive importance in shaping events throughout the Balkans. It will be an important factor in checking how far the nationalist conflicts can develop. Strikes involving miners, rail and transport workers broke out at the beginning of 1994. A strike in February involving 12,000 metal workers was only averted when the government conceded their demands.

The nationalist wave in Greece will subside at a certain stage. It will particularly be affected by the struggles of the proletariat in Europe. Whilst a more generalised movement of the Greek proletariat may be delayed under the PASOK government, big upheavals, such as the current struggle of the tobacco workers in northern Greece, can still break out.

The power of the Greek proletariat has not been broken. Whilst it may pause for breath after the last two decades of struggle, a renewed offensive is inevitable. As it unfolds, the diminishing illusions which exist in the PASOK leadership can

result in the movement assuming an even more explosive character. The eventual opposition of the Greek proletariat and youth to those leaders who have tried to deliver them into the jaws of nationalism should not be under-estimated.

Xekinhima, Militant Labour's sister organisation in Greece, by energetically combating the existing nationalist fervour, can place itself in an important position to reap big gains when the mood changes. *Xekinhima* have already stood out on the issue of Macedonia, defending the right of Yugoslav Macedonia to adopt the name decided by its people and opposing the embargo imposed by the Greek government. A further issue of increasing importance is the defence of the rights of the Albanian minority in Greece.

Xekinhima have also demanded that the workers' organisations in Greece take concrete steps to establish links with the workers' movement in the Balkans to cut across nationalism and chauvinism. This we have linked to the struggle to establish a Socialist Federation of the Balkans as the only means of resolving the national conflicts and defending the democratic rights of all minorities.

Even now, important layers of Greek youth are in opposition to the current nationalist wave. They look with horror at the slaughter which has developed in Bosnia. By resisting the pressures of nationalism and ethnic conflict we can act as a clear pole of attraction and steel important forces, around which big layers of the proletariat throughout the Balkans can be won. □



Macedonians celebrate independence, 1991.

Book Reviews

this issue we review Helena Kennedy's indictment of the British legal system; biographies of two central figures in the history of the British Communist Party; and a controversial new novel by black author Phillip Baker.

Eve Was Framed

By Helena Kennedy

*published by Vintage UK Press,
1993, £6.99*

Reviewed by Claire Bradley

THIS IS A book packed with case after case of how women have been dealt with by the British legal system. It is also a biographical, telling of Helena Kennedy's own struggle to work as a criminal lawyer in a male - and class - dominated legal profession. It is a highly readable book although some of the points made are repeated over and over, and I have the feeling that it would be a far punchier indictment of the archaic British legal system if it were half the length.

Helena Kennedy opens the book explaining that the recent miscarriages of justice have rocked the legal system. Subsequently, she calls for a series of reforms which she feels would redress the problems. But she does not draw any conclusions from the fact that key aspects of the British legal system, like the House of Lords, are integral parts of the capitalist state, perpetuating the existence of the class system under which we live. The book's title comes from the author's belief that all women in the legal system must live up to the example of the Virgin Mary, including that Eve was framed before she ever embarked on her journey on earth.

The book poses the question of why society feels differently about men who commit crime. "Terror is a man but wickedness is a woman" - women are witches or mad, mad or bad, constantly stereotyped. Crime is seen as an

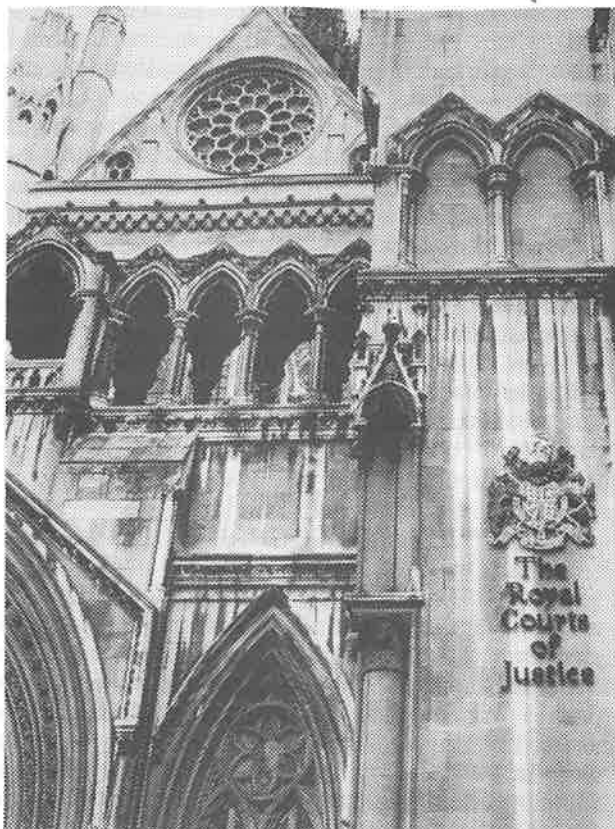
inevitable extension of normal male behaviour, whereas women offenders have breached sacred notions of what is deemed as truly female.

All her points are backed up by case studies and statistics. Women are imprisoned with fewer convictions than men - 53% of women have two or fewer convictions than men when they are imprisoned. Three times as many women go to prison for a first offence than men. In the West Midlands 27% of women first offenders are placed on probation compared to 13% of men. Yet

women commit less serious offences. Most women in prison are there for non-payment of fines.

Black people are treated even worse - 5% of the British population are black and Asian, yet 22% of the prison population and 29% of women prisoners are black. Black defendants are more likely to get immediate custodial sentences, 35% compared to 21.4%, and longer sentences.

The book highlights the stereotyping of women, quoting the judge who said that there are three types of women, mothers, wives and whores! The history of the legal system, relying on 'common law' rather than a US-style



constitution, dates back to the Middle Ages and even to Roman law, when women and children were placed under the jurisdiction of the head of the household and deemed to be *his* property.

The book also looks at the archaic traditions of legal training, why there are few women judges and why 82% of lawyers are men. She points out the hypocrisy of the courts, lauding the family and motherhood whilst refusing to acknowledge the social and economic support needed to sustain a woman in motherhood. She points out, using example after example, that the law does not protect women and how with marriage the

law actually sanctions abuse of women and children.

Helena Kennedy's concluding chapter explains that "the law mirrors society with all its imperfections and therefore reflects the subordination of women, even today". She calls for reforms, and a written constitution, arguing that the English legal system basically has a high level of professional competence and integrity.

My conclusion is that the book really is worth reading and the cases she quotes are an indictment

not just of the courts but of the capitalist system we live under. But in its present guise the legal system is not reformable as such because too much of the class system is invested in the Old Boys' club. The United States of America needed a revolution to throw off the control and power of the British ruling class before they could write their constitution!



□ There are few women judges.

Rajani Palme Dutt: A study in British Stalinism

By John Callaghan

Published by Lawrence and Wishart, 1993, £19.99

Harry Pollitt

By Kevin Morgan

Published by Manchester University Press, 1993, £40.00 hbk

Reviewed by David Turner

FROM THE 1920s to the 1950s Rajani Palme Dutt and Harry Pollitt were the two most important leaders of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). Authoritative biographies of both are long overdue and these two books go some way towards filling the gap, although the authors' political analyses leave much to be desired.

The tragedy of the CPGB was that its pioneers inherited the feeble tradition of early British Marxism and were, therefore, dependent upon Moscow for money and ideas. Lacking the ability to think critically and independently, the CPGB's leaders failed to recognise the bureaucratic counter-revolution that took place in the Soviet Union with Stalin's rise to power. Consequently, the likes of Dutt and Pollitt changed from sincere but unseasoned revolutionaries into time-serving mediocrities, running errands for the Stalinist bureaucracy. Unfortunately, neither Callaghan nor Morgan come anywhere near understanding this process.

Dutt is usually seen as a cold,

humourless robot who cynically carved out a career as the Kremlin's chief British yes-man. Nevertheless, he began as a brave and genuine revolutionary. While at Oxford University Dutt joined the Independent Labour Party. During the first world war, he refused to be conscripted, for which he was briefly imprisoned. In 1917 he became an enthusiastic supporter of the Bolsheviks and was sent down from Oxford because of his revolutionary activities.

Pollitt was a communist of a very different type. He was a boilermaker from Lancashire, drawn to communism by the Russian revolution, as he later recalled: "The thing that mattered to me was that lads like me had whacked the bosses and the landlords, had taken their factories, their lands and their banks... These were the lads and lasses I must support through thick and thin".

In the 1920s Pollitt led the National Minority Movement (the CPGB-influenced rank and file trade union organisation) and he served as the party's general secretary from 1929 until 1956 (with one brief interregnum).

Despite their contrasting backgrounds, Dutt's and Pollitt's careers ran closely together. In 1929 both were central figures in a Comintern-inspired coup in the CPGB, designed to ensure support for Stalin's ultra-left 'Third Period' policy. Pollitt nevertheless had misgivings about Moscow's call to by-pass the established trade unions, a policy which proved so

disastrous that a qualified retreat was soon proposed (which Dutt resisted).

Callaghan notes in his account that in this controversy some of Trotsky's supporters in the CPGB were strongly behind the ultra-left line on the trade unions and were encouraged in this by Dutt. "Thus, from these puerile beginnings", sneers Professor Callaghan, "was British Trotskyism born". The pioneer British Trotskyists were certainly gravely mistaken on the trade union question at this time, but to portray them as no better than 'Third Period' Stalinists is a grotesque distortion.

The centre-piece of 'Third Periodism' was the denunciation of reformist socialists as 'social fascists', a policy which split the German workers and allowed Hitler to power. Trotsky and his supporters opposed this and advocated a workers' 'united front' against fascism. It was for this 'crime', and for distributing Trotsky's writings about Germany, that the British Trotskyists were expelled by Pollitt and co. in 1932.

During the 1930s both Pollitt and Dutt defended Stalin's infamous frame-ups and murders of his enemies, including many old Bolshevik leaders. Rose Cohen, a British communist who had married a Comintern official, disappeared in Russia during the purges. She had been a close personal friend of Pollitt, who tried in vain to discover her fate. However, he still dutifully supported the purges, in the deluded belief that in doing so he was standing by

the lads and lasses' who had made the October revolution.

In 1939 Dutt and Pollitt had a major falling out. When Britain declared war on Germany the CPGB leadership unanimously agreed to support the war. But orders quickly came from Moscow to oppose it, as a result of the pact that Stalin had signed with Hitler. Dutt, typically, embraced the new line with questioning enthusiasm. Pollitt argued against it in the CPGB's central committee and was temporarily deposed as general secretary. Following the German invasion of the USSR in 1941, however, the CPGB switched back to supporting the war and Pollitt was reinstated.

In 1953 Stalin died. In 1956 Khrushchev condemned some of the

crimes of Stalin, causing uproar in the world's CPs. Dutt reacted with typical equanimity but Pollitt was unable to stomach the criticism of his long-time hero and retired as general secretary, ostensibly on grounds of failing health.



Pollitt died in 1960. Dutt lived on until 1974, finding himself at odds with a younger generation of CP leaders. In 1968 the CPGB condemned the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and for the first time Dutt broke party discipline, supporting the Soviet action in the pages of *Labour Monthly*. However, the new CPGB leaders were not evolving away from Stalinism towards genuine Marxism. They were merely taking through to their logical conclusion the nationalist and reformist policies that Dutt and Pollitt had dutifully accepted from Moscow. The process was finally completed in 1991, when the CPGB explicitly renounced Marxism and dissolved itself. The CPGB was dead, but it had died as a revolutionary party long before. □

Blood Posse

By Phillip Baker

Published by Picador, 1994, £5-99

Reviewed by Aaron Taylor

CURRENTLY SERVING A 15-year prison sentence for drug offences, Phillip Baker, a Jamaican-born writer who moved to New York as a child. His recently published book, *Blood Posse*, relates the gang fights over control of the drugs trade between African-Americans and Jamaicans. Supposedly an accurate reflection of the period, Baker revels in the blood and gore: the body count by the second chapter is in three figures and rising. The characters are caricatures; the plot is marginal to the description of violent death. *Blood Posse* fits into the racist judgements held by many in the literary establishment; it is violent, sexist and homophobic. All told, *Blood Posse* is a poorly written, violent, bad book.

Why then bother to review it at all? Because *Blood Posse* is just the latest in a slew of books claiming to reflect Afro-Caribbean life on the streets of Britain and the US. In Britain, the trail was

blazed by *Yardie*, the story of Jamaican drug traffickers by Victor Headley, and its follow up, *Excess*.

When they first appeared, the literary establishment went wild. Here were two novels telling it like it is, written in the language of the streets. Hard and violent, they told the story of the Yardies, the gang battles, the drugs, the clubs, the music. Yet there is a subtle racism behind the white media's fawning at the feet of the new black writers. What, a Jamaican who can write?! How perfectly amazing! And so they paternalistically pat him on the head, and ignore the literary merit of the writing, ignore the fact that the books bear little resemblance to the real lives of Jamaicans in London or New York, ignore the almost complete lack of story, characterisation or writing ability in the books - and ignore the vast amount of poetry, literature and autobiography, that has been written by blacks in Britain and the US for years, but which don't fit into their preconceptions of what Jamaican life is like.

The US forerunners of this style were Robert Beck and Donald Go-

ines. Under his pseudonym of Iceberg Slim, Beck wrote a whole number of novels all very much the same: the men were all big and hard, the women all beautiful, working the streets to get money for drugs for their men. Goines wrote a series of violent novels before being killed in a drug connected attack. With both writers, plot is secondary to the description of violent death, characterisation is virtually nil. Yet, they have both become cult writers, allowing particularly white readers to shore up their stereotyped image of the pimp and the drug pusher.

This is not to say that no novels can be written about the drugs and violence that are a part of many people's lives. In Britain, the recently published *Iced* by Ray Shell is a frightening, brilliantly written novel on drugs and black youth. Yet, like *Yardie*, *Blood Posse* will be seized on by the reviewers, ignorant of the reality of African-American, West Indian and black British writing that is there below the surface. Hunt it out, track it down and read it - the real explosion in black British writing is still to come. □

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