

# European workers' unity is still vital

PROBABLY THERE will not be a single European Union currency in 1999, as the Maastricht treaty of December 1991 prescribed.

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and other European leaders have been talking up their determination to press ahead, but probably only because that is the only way to avoid immediate collapse of the project. In general and in the medium term, European capitalists want a single currency: it will cut their transaction costs and enable them to plan cross-European operations with greater confidence. But it is certainly not make-or-break for them to do it in 1999, and a lot of breakages could be caused by a rush for the deadline.

Only Luxemburg currently meets the economic conditions laid down in the Maastricht treaty for the single currency. The finances of France, Italy and Belgium are very shaky. Substantial sections of the German ruling class — and the German

population at large — are dubious about scrapping the stable Deutschmark for a Euro-currency whose stability could be jeopardised by heavy spending and borrowing by other European Union governments. The balance is heavily weighted towards delay.

If European capitalists, in their majority, are groaning or wincing, should European workers cheer? No. A sizeable minority of European capitalist opinion is anti-Maastricht, for various different reasons, and the example of the Thatcherites in Britain proves that they are no less reactionary than the pro-Maastrichters. The Maastricht criteria involve cuts in social spending, but no alien force imposed those cuts on the various European Union governments. They wrote those cuts into a treaty because they all already wanted to impose them.

Single currency or no single currency, the capitalist economic integration of Europe will progress, slowly, crabwise,

fumblingly — short of a catastrophic collapse back into warring nationalisms. The job of the working-class movement is not to obstruct the integration of Europe, or defend barriers between nations, but to counterpose Europe-wide workers' unity to the Euro-plans of the capitalists.

Current cuts in social spending, and the moves to "marketise" sectors like telecommunications, all across Europe should be the first targets for a united European workers' fightback. In the 1970s and '80s, the steelworkers and dockers of Europe fought separately, country by country, against a coordinated European capitalist offensive, and were defeated separately. In the 1990s, it is possible and necessary for public-service workers, telecom workers, rail workers and others to unite round demands for a European 35 hour week and for Europe-wide public services, run as public services, and levelled up to the best standards across Europe.

## Tories use government to sell death

THE SCOTT report on arms sales to Iraq is due to be published about a week after we go to press. Unlike the Tory government ministers sent pre-publication extracts months ago so that they could prepare their counter-attack, we do not know what it will say. But five things are clear.

Firstly, between 1985 and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Britain exported a vast range of military supplies to Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, including materials for chemical and

nuclear weapons. This trade continued unhindered while Saddam's terror against Iraq's Kurds was exposed.

Secondly, the Tory government claimed all along that it had banned arms sales to Iraq. Ministers were advised by civil servants that the exports broke the government's own rules, but they continued to claim in public that the rules were in force.

Thirdly, when bosses of the Matrix Churchill machine-tools company were brought to court for selling mili-

tary supplies to Iraq, ministers signed certificates to try to prevent them proving that they had acted with government approval. Only the collapse of that cover-up saved the Matrix Churchill bosses from jail and led to the Scott inquiry.

Fourthly, it looks very much as if the government will try to deflect the Scott report by scapegoating ex-minister Alan Clark, now no longer active in politics.

And fifthly — the Tories still pursue the same policy of promoting arms sales wherever they are profitable, whatever the cost. Their current attempt to deport Saudi dissident Mohammed al Mass'ari, on the explicitly stated grounds that his criticisms of the Saudi regime may disrupt arms deals, is proof.

Once again, the arms merchant rules — OK?

## France: a second wave?

PRIME MINISTER Alain Juppe promised to deflect the French workers' anger expressed in the great strikes of November-December 1995 by decisive action on jobs.

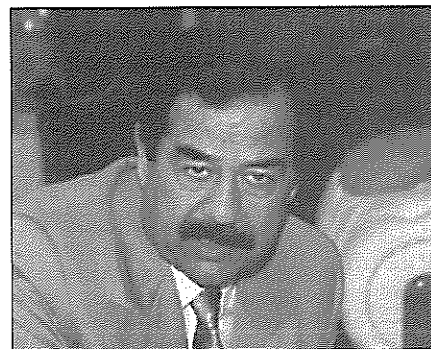
In fact he has done little more than offer new tax breaks to the bosses — this time supposedly to help the depressed working-class suburbs of the big cities. Unemployment has climbed above three million.

Juppe has also retreated on some minor aspects of his plan for cutting social security, but most of it remains, including the proposed amendment to the French constitution which will allow Parliament to override the administration of the social security budget by employers' and trade-union representatives and impose curbs on spending.

The trade unions have called a new round of days of action in early February, and a number of small disputes have shown how the movement of November and December increased workers' self-confidence.

As the French weekly *Lutte Ouvrière* puts it: "It remains for the whole working class to impose, for the immediate reduction of unemployment, the channelling of the State's money into the creation of genuine jobs, useful to society, by requisitioning businesses and hiring new workers for the public services useful to the population. There is no shortage of needs."

"The job is to prepare the second wave of struggles. They are impoverishing us more and more, and the sooner the workers react, the better."



Hussein, armed by Britain