

CAMERON VERSUS EUROPE

by Caroline Colebrook

THE LABOUR front benches in the House of Commons were in an uproar of hilarity last Tuesday at the expense of Prime Minister David Cameron after he came back from Europe and had to try to explain why he did not use his veto to stop the 25 nations of Europe signed up the to new fiscal treaty from using the apparatus of the European Union, when last December he had tried to veto the whole thing.

The 25 nations went ahead with their fiscal plan anyway – they were desperate to try to sort out the problem of the Greek debt – leaving Cameron alone on the sidelines. He had hoped for some support in his veto but so far only the Czech Republic backed him up.

But his stance in December did win him support from his own Euro-phobic backbenchers. Now they are totally bewildered.

The fiscal pact has the status of a mere agreement between 25 European nations but it seems now, with Cameron's acquiescence,

its terms can be enforced by the European Court of Justice.

Labour leader Ed Miliband is cock-a-hoop and has been showing uncharacteristic assertiveness in the House. "With this Prime Minister, a veto is not for life, it's just for Christmas," he quipped and also called it a "phantom veto" that does not stop anything except Britain having any say in the fiscal agreement.

Cameron tried to assure the House that the pact "places no obligations" on the Britain but he would take "legal action" if the

future role of the European Court threatened UK.

This has shaken Tory backbenchers who have accused Cameron of weakening the stance he took in December.

slippery

Tory MP Bill Cash asked whether the UK was on "a slippery slope" and the fiscal pact could eventually be "folded into the EU treaty".

Cameron said it "cannot be folded back into the EU without the agreement of every member state", and because he had vetoed

a new EU treaty "we're not in danger of that happening".

Bernard Jenkin questioned why "a subset of member states can by-pass a veto and hijack the institutions for their own purposes".

Cameron accepts that the European Court of Justice can be used to enforce the new fiscal rules. But, he told his backbenchers, he reserves the right to challenge this legally if he feels that Britain's national interests are being threatened by the new eurozone-plus group.

For example, eurozone



• We need principled opposition to the EU from the left.

countries could insist that certain complicated financial products should be traded only within the eurozone. This might help growth within the eurozone but it would devastate the City of London.

defend

When he used his veto in December Cameron claimed it was to defend the historic and powerful position of the City of London. Germany of course wishes to usurp the old power of the City of London for itself, as the strongest economy in the European Union.

The main advantage for the workers of Britain is that this further undermines Cameron's position at the head of a shaky and disintegrating coalition.

His Liberal Democrat allies are angry that he has offended Europe and left Britain excluded from the negotiating table. And his own backbenchers are unhappy that he has backed

down to some extent from his defence of the City.

Cameron has faced a series of defeats in the House of Lords on his welfare Bill that will cut the benefits of hundreds of thousands of unemployed, sick and disabled people. And many of the amendments came from Lib-Dems and even Tories who should have been on his side.

Soon his flagship Bill to speed up the privatisation of the NHS will be in the Lords to face a similar shredding.

Cameron is on very weak ground now; a few more good pushes – for example more national strikes by public sector workers in defence of their pensions – could see him ousted altogether.

Cameron is trying to appease his opponents with feeble gestures, like the withdrawal of Fred "The Shred" Goodwin's knighthood. It's not enough. We need to get rid of the whole system.

Russia and China resist the imperialist drive against Syria

by our Arab Affairs correspondent

RUSSIA and People's China are resisting a new imperialist drive at the United Nations to topple the Syrian government. Rabid imperialist calls for Syrian President Bashar al Assad to resign and hand over power to self-appointed opposition leaders, who do the bidding of the oil princes and the Western powers, have been translated into another Nato-sponsored draft resolution at the UN Security Council that would give UN sanction for a Libya-style Nato attack on Syria.

Russia and China vetoed a similar imperialist resolution on Syria in October. This week the Kremlin made it clear that they'll do it again if the Nato powers force a vote.

Russia and China are the only veto-powers on the Security Council refusing to back the resolution submitted by the feudal Moroccans and endorsed by the Arab

League, a front for Arab oil princes in the pay of the big oil corporations. They had their fingers burnt when they abstained over the Libya "no-fly zone" which only applied to the Libyans and not to Nato aviation last year. Nato brushed aside subsequent objections to the use of their air armada, which hammered the Libyans into the ground and enabled puppet rebel militias to seize power and overthrow the Gaddafi government.

Russia will not bargain with the West over the fresh draft resolution on Syria, says Russia's deputy foreign minister Gennady Gatilov. The draft in its current form ignores the Russian position and therefore has no chance of being accepted, he told the media in Moscow on Monday.

"It is not part of our political practice to trade our principles," Gatilov declared. "We don't bargain, but seek consideration for our positions and our vision, which are based on our knowledge of regional realities and our historical experience.

"Russia can only support the resolution if it meets

Russia's principled approaches, which I have mentioned and which are shared by many other countries," he added.

Russia's ambassador at the UN Headquarters in New York says that the "international community" should not meddle in Syria's domestic conflict. Vitaly Churkin stated that sanctions could risk heating up the conflict, and called for both sides to cease violence. "Moscow rejects any sanction approaches, any attempts to use the Security Council instruments to fuel the conflict, to justify a military intervention," Churkin said. "The Council cannot dictate parameters for an internal political settlement; it has no authority for it."

This has been echoed by the Chinese who have told the UN that further sanctions would only complicate Syria's situation. The Chinese delegate states that the Syrian people's request for reforms must be respected – but with the involvement of both sides in the conflict.

Russia has offered to mediate and Syria has agreed to take part in Rus-

sian-sponsored talks with opposition groups in Moscow. But a senior member of the "Syrian National Council", a Muslim Brotherhood front based in Turkey, said that no invitation had been received from Moscow and that it would be refused anyway.

We'll see. Arab political analyst Doctor Hisham Ghassib told the Russian media that the Syrian opposition is not a monolithic bloc, and the decision of any one group to come to the negotiating table will ultimately depend on its geopolitical alliances.

"This is a good initiative on Russia's part, but I don't think it will succeed because of this external opposition [the West and groups based outside of Syria]. The internal opposition – the opposition I call the patriotic progressive opposition inside Syria – will ultimately agree to such an initiative. Unfortunately, the rest of the opposition, those who are organising the armed gangs, I don't think it is in their interest to accept such an initiative."

FUND

The January appeal closed this week with £915 in the post. A great boost to the fighting fund but sadly not enough to hit our target for the month. The grand total for January totalled £2,720, nearly £300 short of the £3,000 mark we aim for every month to guarantee the continued production and expansion of the *New Worker*.

Many thanks to all who dipped in to help us on our way including a south London supporter who sent in £35, an Essex friend who posted a tenner and a Slough reader who sent in £20.

The February appeal starts now. Our target is £3,000 and we need to hit it to ensure that our communist voice is heard throughout the working class. The big chill may keep people indoors but it doesn't freeze our bills. And unlike the bankers we cannot rely on anyone to bail us out apart from our readers. Every pound guarantees the continued publication of the *New Worker*. Make sure of it by sending your financial contribution to the struggle to: *New Worker* Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ.