

Indonesian call for workers' party

Despite a relative period of calm since the toppling of president Suharto in May, mass spontaneous economic and political activity continues to send tremors through all layers of Indonesian society. The democratic movement demands and presses for real change - 'total reformation' - for elections, for the trial of Suharto and the confiscation of his plundered wealth.

Strikes are breaking out around the country. Peasants are demanding land. And the underground independence movement in Timor and West Papua is finding the courage to come out into the open. Also taking advantage of the new political space, recently released union leader Muchtar Pakpahan has called for the formation of a workers' party. This can only be a positive development.

The pressures of change reached near boiling point in the capital, Jakarta, last week as the military, under Jakarta's military commander, major general Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin, prevented a mass workers' demonstration going ahead. It had been organised by the recently legalised Indonesian Prosperity Labour Union (SBSI), which Pakpahan leads. The mobilisation, planned for June 24, was to demand the resignation of president Habibie.

The noises from the military in the lead-up to the demonstration were ominous. According to the *Jakarta Post* on June 23, the Jakarta military commander said that the army would break labour protests and strikes that were politically motivated. "I have warned them several times already. If they continue, I will cripple them," he told reporters. Twenty-five thousand military personnel had been deployed in Jakarta during the week. "Anyone who wishes to disrupt security will confront my troops. I have given them orders to warn the protesters first, and then cripple them if they have to," Sjafrie said.

While these words point to a potentially bloody situation, encouragingly for the mass democratic movement, they also point to ongoing divisions in ruling circles. The crackdown on the demonstration was in contradiction to the public pronouncements of president Habibie to allow street protests to go ahead. Habibie has been attempting to enshrine himself in the presidential role with the offer of limited reform, allowing the movement to let off steam, while fully cooperating with the IMF. But sections of the military have been pushing for a crackdown.

Recent killings of civilians by the military in East Timor, the former Por-

tuguese colony brutally annexed by Indonesia in 1975, have sparked mass demonstrations in Jakarta and Dili, East Timor's capital. These demonstrations, which would have been impossible under Suharto, are being tolerated in the present climate. The largest demonstration in Timor - 10,000 strong in a city of 120,000 - followed the shooting of an East Timorese man by Indonesian soldiers on June 16, near the village of Manatuto, 50 kilometres east of Dili. Herman Soares was collecting wood by the roadside when he was fired upon.

While making no real concessions to the self-determination movement, Habibie has met with East Timorese bishop Carlos Belo, and said he will release Timorese resistance leader Xanana Gusmao, if his organisation (Fretilin), the United Nations and the international community recognise Indonesia's annexation of the former colony. On June 10, Habibie made the extremely limited 'offer' of granting "special status" to East Timor. This was rejected by Fretilin.

Limited and cosmetic as these offers are, they seem too concessionary for some elements of the military. On the other hand, far from sating the hunger for change of the mass movement, every offer from Habibie can only spur on and raise the sights of the movement for democracy and self-determination.

Rumours of a conservative backlash are growing, including the unlikely suggestion of a Suharto comeback. Mysterious, well-made banners have appeared on Jakarta streets, warning people to stop criticising Suharto or risk bloodshed. And liberal Islamic 'reformer' Amien Rais has been met with counter-demonstrations in several towns. They are widely suspected of being orchestrated by the military.

Within the government party, Golkar, Suharto loyalists have headed an internal struggle that may well see the removal from its chair of Harmoko - among the first of the 'insiders' to move against Suharto. While speculation about a Suharto comeback is pure fantasy, it seems clear he and his cronies are organising to defend their power and colossal wealth. It also shows that there are those in the ruling circle preparing for a counterrevolution, should the masses become too threatening.

In an interview with the Australian *Green Left Weekly* (June 24), Max Lane, coordinator of Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor (ASIET), reported the words of radical novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Toer warned students that if they "stopped their protest actions and

reduced the offensive against the regime, 'they would all be massacred'." He emphasised that the Indonesian military was "still murderous and that only mass pressure could fend them off". The cost of stopping the revolution halfway could well be its bloody beheading. The lessons of the Iranian revolution of 1979-81 cannot be learned too thoroughly.

President Habibie himself has given the go-ahead for demonstrations and has been giving 'encouraging' words to moderate students. Habibie is happy to support the 'responsible', reform-minded students - while doing his utmost to prevent any link-up with a burgeoning economic and increasingly political strike movement.

The forced cancellation of the June 24 demonstration in Jakarta has occurred in a period of general industrial unrest across Indonesia. On top of this is the worsening economic crisis. The IMF has recently renegotiated the rescue package for the Indonesian economy and the World Bank's director for Indonesia, Denis de Tray, has warned: "The conditions the people of Indonesia are facing are extremely serious. The real impact on the working class is just beginning." He said urban Indonesians were facing the double burden of soaring prices and the collapse of the labour market, citing a 21% increase in unemployment in Jakarta last month alone (*Sydney Morning Herald* June 23).

A strike wave, spurred on by the desire for thoroughgoing political change, is sweeping key industrial centres. According to Reuters (June 25), in the second largest city, Surabaya, the army more than doubled its presence at a strike-hit factory complex last Thursday (June 25), as union protesters gathered around the local parliament.

Surabaya has been paralysed by a strike by dockworkers since June 17. The 6,000 dockers walked out demanding that their basic wage be increased from 7,000 rupiah to 15,000 rupiah an hour (about US\$1 an hour at current exchange rates). Mobilising its troops, the army fears that the strike movement and the SBSI's political campaign against the anti-union laws could merge. On June 22, 10,000 workers from another plant, the Kasogi shoe factory, descended on the main streets of Surabaya, further adding to the tension in the city.

Major strikes have also broken out in the factory belt surrounding Jakarta. In Karawang, 2,500 workers from PT Texmaco Perkasa Engineering walked out demanding a wage raise, and improvements in overtime pay, annual

holidays and food allowances. Most of the 1,500 workers at the PT Kukdong factory were also on strike. Their demands included a reduction in the taxes deducted from their wages, more holiday money and allowances for food and transportation. Another strike hit the PT Sandang Mutiara Era Mulia factory, where most of the 1,200 workers walked out. Workers also staged a strike at the government's main currency printing plant, protesting at excessive overtime and demanding higher pay and benefits.

While the demands being put forward around these strikes are economic in form, there is no doubt that they are being flamed by the ongoing democratic movement. The actions of the military show they fear the conscious unity of the political and economic movements which are gathering confidence throughout the archipelago.

Muchtar Pakpahan's call for the formation of a workers' party must be seen against this backdrop. However, according to the Indonesian paper *Kompas* (June 25), Pakpahan has asked former Indonesian Democratic Party leader Megawati Sukarnoputri to head the party. Sukarnoputri is the daughter of ex-president Sukarno and has presidential ambitions herself. Nevertheless, the call for a workers' party by the country's most prominent union leader promises to provide an excellent opportunity for revolutionaries to bring political consciousness to the democratic movement.

Max Lane recently visited Indonesia and met with members of the still banned Peoples Democratic Party (PRD), as well as student and union activists. In his interview with the *Green Left Weekly* he said: "The success of the mass mobilisations in forcing an unwilling Suharto to resign and an unwilling New Order establishment to allow his resignation has emboldened many people. There is a very strong and sustained attack on Suharto and his family and this attack is steadily expanding to include Habibie. Almost every day there are declarations of new political parties, reflecting the long suppressed tradition in Indonesia of political party activity. I counted at least 15 new parties declared while I was in Jakarta and others have been declared since I left."

This fluid political situation, where many of the most militant demands of the democratic movement are becoming widespread and popular, provides a perfect setting for the establishment and rapid growth of a workers' party. It offers the working class the possibility of wresting the leadership of the

revolutionary democratic movement from the wavering (and in the last analysis counterrevolutionary) elements such as Amien Rais and Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Many of the most militant demands firing the democratic movement have become the key elements in what is now referred to as the 'total reformation' movement. These include: the repeal of all the repressive political laws; the resignation of Habibie; the abolition of the MPR, the Suharto-imposed upper house; immediate elections; and the confiscation of the assets of the Suharto clan and the trial of the former president. According to ASIET, many student groups - not to mention pro-reform worker and urban poor groups - have moved into political action as a result of the influence of the PRD, whose platform has included many of these demands since its formation in 1996.

While ASIET and its backer, the Democratic Socialist Party in Australia, remain uncritical supporters of the PRD, the DSP leadership has good contacts with the underground movement and its observations carry weight. However, the DSP seems to be motivated more by the good, old-fashioned 'diplomatic internationalism' of the old 'official communist' parties than a healthy Leninist proletarian internationalism.

According to comrade Lane, "The most impressive forces remain those organised underground through the PRD. The PRD is still banned, despite all Habibie's noises about reform, and PRD leaders remain in jail, but the underground seems very strong."

He continues: "The organisation seems to have grown remarkably over the last period. It is quite clear that it remains the only force with a solid mass base, which is steadily growing. The PRD activists are still working under very difficult conditions because of the ban. While Budiman Sujatmiko, Dita Sari and other PRD leaders remain in jail, the PRD must assume that any of its members will be liable to arrest. At the same time, they are already testing out the regime's ability to suppress the PRD if it surfaces."

In the absence of any other conscious revolutionary forces, the role and the subsequent development of the PRD - including possible splits - assume the greatest importance. That the organisation is growing is not surprising in this period. Its reaction to Pakpahan's call for a workers' party and his invitation to Megawati Sukarnoputri will provide the PRD with an immediate test.

Marcus Larsen



Party notes

Craig agonises

I know that Dave Craig of the Revolutionary Democratic Group will be reassured by my comments in this week's column. The comrade has been featured twice in our letters page agonising over the "big hole" that has appeared in the CPGB's practice of revolutionary openness. What has occasioned the comrade's pain is the fact that we have not so far reprinted the replies by comrades Mary Ward and Nick Clarke - two comrades who recently resigned CPGB membership - to my 'Party Notes' column of March 26, which touched on their departures. He fears "spin doctoring". All the Provisional Central Committee and its reps have given us so far is "petty trivia about hard times and comrades' personal problems", perhaps even a nervy attempt to "sweep things under the carpet" (all quotes from Dave Craig, Letters *Weekly Worker* June 25).

The comrade contradicts himself in the space of one of his very first paragraphs. Correctly, he notes that "openness does not and cannot mean that any and everything must be printed in the central organ". Quite right. Yet, in rather clumsy fashion, his next sentence suggests that "a 'right of reply' in the letters page ... is a minimum requirement ...". Thus he complains that the "Dundee comrades" (Ward and Clarke) have "had no choice" about our decision to delay publication of their letters. It was "imposed on them".

First, if comrades have left our organisation, they can have no rights in or claims on it. Even a moment's thought reveals the opposite idea as thoroughly uncommunist. Our paper is the collective weapon of *our* organisation. This has nothing to do with petty proprietorial concerns. This publication has been collectively produced - at the price of a great deal of effort and sacrifice over the years - to further the project that *this* organisation is in business to serve.

There is nothing remotely 'sectarian' *per se* about this. Clearly, it depends on what the nature of our project actually *is* - in other words, a political estimation must be made as to whether our ultimate goal is sectarian. Manifestly, ours is not. This paper has an unparalleled reputation for honesty and openness. This approach flows from our aim - a mass communist party, constructed not on the shibboleths of this of that theorist or leader, but on the principled programmatic unity of the advanced section of the class itself.

But the paper remains a *weapon* to be deployed in this fight. The notion that any organisation (or individual, as comrade Craig implies) has an automatic 'right' to use our paper as a bulletin board for their own particular hobby-horse project is antithetical to Leninism.

At its most extreme, what if such a reply consists of personal abuse, threats and offensive references to people's families? This is the type of foul invective we have had from some wayward comrades in the past (I underline that *none* of our recent departees have behaved in this despicable way)? Did these renegades have the 'right' to have their bile reproduced in the pages of our Party press? Comrade Craig must see that this is nonsense.

Each and every item that appears in the pages of this paper is there because it has been assessed politically, not according to some inviolate abstract 'right'. In this, we fully accord with Lenin's approach to the question.

A few years after having Bogdanov expelled from the Bolshevik faction, he attacked the *Vpered* group to which the man belonged in the Bolshevik paper *Pravda*. Bogdanov sent a reply, which was published. Outraged, Lenin wrote to the editors telling them that their decision was "so scandalous that, to tell the truth, one does not know whether it is possible after this to remain a contributor" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 19, p173). Lenin saw no 'right' for Bogdanov - the leader of a trend which proposed the dissolution of the Party - to be accorded space in the pages of the Bolshevik press to propagate these views, even if responding to a polemical attack. Right or wrong, he assessed it *politically*, in other words.

Then we come to the specifics of the particular decision not yet to publish these two very short letters (together, they amount to just over 1,300 words). I reiterate - none of our recently departed comrades have raised a single issue of political substance. In contrast, Dave suggests that our setback is "a result of [our] intervention in Scotland" around Blair's referendum in September of last year and tells us "we need to find out ... the real politics of the situation".

If I were being unkind, I might suggest that Dave Craig appears to have an 'etch-a-sketch' memory. Did the comrade not read our press, where the interpretation of the Scottish referendum was extensively and *openly* debated? Was he asleep in seminars and Party aggregates (RDG comrades have a standing invitation to attend these meetings) where this question was exhaustively explored by both sides?

Comrades should not be too puzzled, however. I believe that Dave has been made intensely uncomfortable by the perfectly correct assessment of this organisation (not just PCC 'spin doctors') that - whatever faults and weaknesses we manifest in our day-to-day practice and political ideas - the recent spate of resignations are an expression of the implosion of individual communists in a period of profound world reaction.

This is not "petty trivia about hard times and comrades' personal problems" which we need to "get rapidly away from", as Dave suggests. Comrade Craig must tell us how the politics of the Scottish question have been obscured by the non-publication of these two brief letters. He has read both of them. What new insights into our practice do they contain? What would they bring to the debate? Apart from some spurious notion of a 'right to reply' in our paper, what are the *political* merits in favour of their appearance in our press?

The leadership of the Party took the perfectly correct and mature decision to delay possible publication to allow for period of calmer reflection and the preparation of a substantial reply that took these comrades and our history of common work and struggle *seriously*. Dave should beware of setting himself up as the attorney for backwardness in and around our organisation.

Comrades from the RDG - not just comrade Craig - now have both the original critical letters from our Dundee comrades and the reply. In the spirit of revolutionary openness that animates comrade Craig's concerns, I am sure I speak for all comrades when I say we would be interested to hear their opinions on this exchange.

Mark Fischer
national organiser

Basic logic

I was pleased to read Roy Bull's letter (*Weekly Worker* June 25). A prominent figure in the SLP, who at its last congress made a bid for vice-president, he is a regular and distinctive contributor to *Socialist News*, the SLP's paper. For instance, the latest issue contains *two* articles by comrade Bull. This is not unusual. And no doubt the comrade will continue to shape and influence *Socialist News*. In all honesty, comrade Bull's contributions tend to liven up a generally dull publication.

It is also worth pointing out that comrade Bull has had a long career in the revolutionary movement. He was a paid activist for the Workers Revolutionary Party and prior to joining the SLP he was leader of the grandly overnamed International Leninist Workers Party, a tiny Stockport-based organisation he founded. He is now editor of the inimitable *Economic and Philosophical Science Review*, a publication tolerated by the Scargill leadership despite the SLP constitution banning organisations with "distinctive and separate propaganda" - a rather understated way of describing the *EPSR*'s contents.

There is certain irony in comrade Bull's somewhat mild response to the Don Preston column on drugs ('No politics please, we're Bullites' *Weekly Worker* June 11). The *EPSR* is, it has to be said, a 'frothy' publication which specialises in venomous attacks against the CPGB. The comrade continually bashes "the CPGB Trots" for our supposed leftism - which we are led to believe is merely the flip-side of our 'objective' anti-communism, psychotic hatred of Leninism and the workers' states (sic). Sometimes these sentiments, albeit diluted and reformulated, find their way into *Socialist News*.

Yet if you look at comrade Bull's letter to the *Weekly Worker*, and his original article in *Socialist News* ('Legalisation won't solve the problem' May-June), what do you find? In a word, *anarcho-economism*. Not the healthy anarchism of younger or inexperienced revolutionary elements, quite rightly disgusted by opportunism, reformism, parliamentarianism, etc. Such leftism can be corrected if we are patient and diligent - a point emphasised by Lenin in *Leftwing communism*. No. Comrade Bull's world view derives from a combination of economism and mechanical materialism which excuses bureaucratic socialism and eschews *political* struggle.

Future students of history will look at comrade Bull's letter as a textbook example of anarcho-economism. They will read the following: "Campaigning about any 'legal' reform which does not challenge capitalism is a reformist diversion. More pressing tasks face communists than exposing 'illogical' cannabis laws. All capitalist law is crap ... Capitalist society is not going to get *anything* right - *ever*, no matter how many bourgeois write to the UN. All social problems will continue to degenerate ... Alienation cannot be reformed away. It can only grow relentlessly."

All very r-r-revolutionary. But comrade Bull's demands for 'instant socialism' - which is actually what he is arguing for - can only serve to tail the existing (bourgeois) consciousness, and prejudices, of the workers. In comrade Bull's mechanical schema, there is no need for struggle and there is no need to fight for and organise around *political* demands. No need to make the workers into a *political* class which can rule society. No need for a programme, in fact. Politics is "crap", in other words. Alienation will "grow relentlessly", apparently. "All social problems will continue to degenerate" - or so comrade Bull thinks. Hurrah! The combined forces of social decay, despair and alienation - plus the inevitable crisis of capitalism, of course - will do our job for us. Socialism will inevitably emerge from the grim and semi-apocalyptic scenario sketched out by comrade Bull. (In this respect, this almost eager anticipation of the 'lumpenisation' of our class is reminiscent of middle class leftists like the Revolutionary Communist Group.)

If comrade Bull really believes all this, then he is no Leninist. Leninist politics consists of a struggle to organise the workers into a Party and thus a class which takes up all democratic questions and tasks facing society. Does comrade Bull recognise this? I am not so sure. In his letter comrade Bull mocks us for getting "excited" about the long list of eminent bourgeois figures who recently wrote an open letter to the UN general assembly about the futility of the 'war against drugs'. For comrade Bull, even to make reference to this is an example of sowing yet "more reformist illusions". This just demonstrates comrade Bull's resounding non-Leninism.

Lenin rightly stressed over and over again that communists strive to master the politics of *all* classes and groups in society, not to become fixated by the (spontaneous) activities of the workers, or some final economic crisis. Why? In order to exploit *any splits and divisions* within the ruling class or ruling bloc. That is why comrade Don Preston, quite correctly, highlighted the open letter to the UN. The bourgeoisie is dividing and quarrelling amongst itself over the 'war against drugs' - it could be *our* opportunity, not theirs. Comrade Bull does not or cannot grasp these basics.

The funny thing about comrade Bull's *method* is that it is very selective. The pages of *Socialist News* are filled with trade union and strike news. Articles expressing solidarity with workers in struggle. Demands for higher wages and better working conditions. Quite right. But comrade Bull does not apply his 'instant socialism' method here - no ringing denunciation of the SLP, or Arthur Scargill, for sowing "more reformist illusions". No demands for the *instant* abolition of the wages' system. 'Everything or nothing!' should be the response of comrade Bull to everyday demands by workers - *if* he was consistent.

Workers in struggle at the workplace are OK, says comrade Bull. But as soon as they leave the hallowed workplace and smoke cannabis, have gay relationships or attend CPGB meetings - try to live a rounded life - then they suddenly become non-people, if not the problem.

Finally, a note of basic logic. Comrade Bull claims that "nowhere" in his drugs article did he call "for their banning". Seeing how recreational drugs - except tobacco, alcohol etc - are *illegal*, to *oppose* their legalisation is to ... endorse the current anti-drugs laws. Therefore to support the current criminalisation of drugs-users. If we had adopted comrade Bull's method in the 1960s, abortion and homosexuality would still be illegal. In our 'what if?' alternative world, comrade Bull would have counterposed his 'instant socialism' to their suffering - told the workers' movement that all this gay/women stuff was a "reformist diversion".

I wonder what other SLP members make of all this? Their views can be freely expressed in the *Weekly Worker*, if not *Socialist News*.

Eddie Ford
South London

Solidarity

Recently we have seen how popular demonstrations overthrew the Suharto pro-IMF autocracy in Indonesia. In South America the oldest dictator is Roberto Kenyo Fujimori. In July 1990 he won the elections, but less than two years later he trampled on the constitution, and launched a coup. He imposed draconian legislation. He militarised the universities and half of the country. Thousands of people have been killed.

Fujimori does not have his own party. He rules through the support his own all-powerful Gestapo: the SIN (National Intelligence Service) and the army.

Now Fujimori is trying to use state funds and the army to have himself re-elected for another five-year period. A series of demonstrations have been held. Last month 20,000 students marched through Lima, protesting the new law that gives Fujimori a third term. The students resisted brutal attacks by state forces for several hours.

Student protests sparked Suharto's downfall and Fujimori is now afraid. Tanks and machine guns are threatening the students on the campuses. Hundreds of students had been kidnapped, tortured or murdered.

Fujimori has also eliminated job security. Workers are forced to work more than eight hours a day for miserable wages that hardly cover the cost of food. Union leaders have been victimised and sacked, and long jail sentences have been imposed.

The army is occupying the largest shanty towns in Lima and Callao. Under the 'anti-terrorist' legislation anyone suspected of aiding anti-imperialist guerrillas faces a life sentence. Short trials are often presided over by masked military 'judges'. There are more than 5,000 political prisoners held in conditions that, as Fujimori proudly admits, are like "living tombs".

There have been assassination attempts on several MPs. Others have been beaten by the police or the army. Hundreds of crimes have been committed by paramilitary gangs. Peru is becoming one of the most socially polarised of societies. Millions are becoming poorer by the day.

We call on our brothers and sisters in the English-speaking countries to denounce Fujimori and to act in solidarity with the massive street demonstrations in Peru.

Poder Obrero
Lima, Peru

Parxism

Tina Werkmann says that the greens want capitalism - only with parks (Letters *Weekly Worker* June 18). Indeed. But she could have added that it is possible, although by no means automatic, that capitalism and public parks can coexist. The labour movement in the 19th century fought long and hard not only for parks, but also for public entertainment in them on a Sunday.

One wonders whether Tony Abse, who you report as proposing a red-green political amalgam (*Weekly Worker* June 11) for the London Socialist Alliance, is about to unveil his plans for a modern-day theory of class struggle around parks or, as some might unkindly call it, Parxism.

Charles Murray
North London

From **The Call**, paper of the British Socialist Party, July 4 1918

Litvinov accuses Kerensky

The plenipotentiary representative of the Russian Federative Socialist Republic of Soviets defends the Revolution

The chairman of the Labour Party conference has withheld from me the opportunity of conveying to the delegates the greetings of the Russian working class and their representative body, the government of the Russian Socialist Republic. He has moreover deemed it fair and just to allow Mr Kerensky to make a calumnious attack on this republic, without permitting me, as its accredited representative, to reply to his charges, in spite of my own request and that of many delegates ...

Whom does Mr Kerensky represent? ... It is natural to suppose that delegates or visitors officially invited to Labour conferences should represent the interests of labour. Does Mr Kerensky now represent those interests? Does he even pretend to represent them? Mr Kerensky in his speech made no mention of the working classes; he was honest enough not to speak on their behalf, but appealed on behalf of the intellectuals, on behalf of officers, on behalf of "Russia".

It should be remembered that the Russian Revolution was not merely a political revolution - it was, and is, also a social revolution. And as such it necessarily sharpens the class struggle, which has now reached its extreme point, having divided the country into two opposing, completely irreconcilable components ... The different shades of political opinions and parties faded into insignificance, leaving on the political arena two parties - supporters and opponents of the soviets (councils of workers' and peasants' delegates).

I maintain that labour, whether in or out of power, is more than any other class entitled to speak on behalf of its country. And this is especially true in Russia, where the labouring masses are in full and indisputable control of the state apparatus, themselves forming the central and local government of their country. And when anyone speaks in the name of Russia, he must be asked point blank whether he speaks in the name of those who, after eight months of the bitterest struggles, have defeated their enemies, consolidated their power, and are now the only guardians of the political and social gains of the great Russian Revolution; or whether he speaks in the name of those who, having used the foulest means at their disposal to overthrow the authority of the workers, have failed to achieve any success in Russia itself, and are now invoking the name of foreign powers, looking for support now to Germany, now to the Allies.

Mr Kerensky, like our opponents,

makes the bold statement that the soviet government does not represent the bulk of the population. But when faced with the pertinent question, 'How then has this government maintained its power if it be against the will of the people?', he finds no reply. The continuance of a government in time of revolution for eight months, without a standing army except voluntary detachments ... without police, without press censorship ... struggling against internal and external difficulties greater than any which have ever before confronted a government in the history of mankind, can only be explained by the unlimited enthusiastic support of the great majority of the people.

To obscure this striking truth Kerensky was only able to make misty allusions to Germany's desire to tolerate the soviet regime. This absurd assumption ... certainly does not explain why the Russians themselves ... have not been able to overthrow the soviets, if they desire to ...

But the most striking reply to Kerensky's false allegation as to the unpopularity of the soviet regime comes in a message from Russia, telling us that at the elections of this month to the Petrograd Soviet 233 supporters of the soviets (221 Bolsheviks and 12 Socialist Revolutionaries of the left wing) and only five anti-soviet candidates were returned. And this in Petrograd, in the most famine-stricken city in Russia, where dissatisfaction might have naturally reached its climax.

When Mr Kerensky promises in exchange for this intervention in Russian internal affairs to recreate a Russian army for the resumption of the war on a large scale, I take it upon myself to declare that *this is the merest political charlatanism* ...

No! The re-creation of the Russian front is not the purpose of the much talked of Japanese or Allied intervention. The real object is of course the crushing of the workers' government and of the Revolution, the spread of whose influence to other countries is a standing menace to international capitalism ...

Do not allow yourself to be misled by the presumption that Kerensky pleaded for one labour party in Russia against another. The overthrow of the Bolsheviks *cannot* mean that any other socialist or even democratic party will take over power. The soviet government, if overthrown at the present juncture, can only be superseded by the most brutal and barbarous military dictatorship, resting on foreign bayonets, with the inevitable subsequent restoration of tsarism.

Is British labour going to be a party to these dark schemes? Is the British proletariat prepared to take upon itself the responsibility before history for the crushing of the great Russian proletarian revolution? ●

Maxim Litvinov

Tameside solidarity

Following the mass sacking of 250 Tameside careworkers last month, solidarity is beginning to grow in the north west. A 150-strong public meeting on June 30 resolved to create a support group, within which most of the Manchester left are involved.

The dispute took a new turn when careworkers at 12 elderly persons' homes in Tameside, near Manchester, received dismissal notices on June 3 after three months of strike action against pay cuts. The 250 workers, members of Unison, are employed by Tameside Care Group, an 'arms length' private company to which Tameside's Labour-controlled council transferred the homes in 1990.

Acceptance of the transfer was urged upon the workers by their then union, Nupe, which secured a single-union recognition deal as part of the package. The workers were given an assurance that their nationally negotiated pay and conditions would continue to apply. TCG is part-owned (16.6%) by the council, the remaining nominal shares being held by a 'Tameside Community Care Trust'. Current trustees include Andrew Bennett, 'left' Labour MP for Denton and Reddish; and Jack Thornley, a former Labour councillor and solicitor who does substantial business for the Transport and General Workers Union.

The rationale behind the transfer was that advantage could thus be taken of the Thatcher government's more generous funding of newly admitted residents to private, as against council-run, elderly persons' homes. It all went horribly wrong. In February 1993, it was revealed that the firm was in financial difficulty, blaming cuts in grants from the council and a slower than expected turnover of residents. An emergency aid package from the council and the Cooperative Bank bought time for talks on refinancing. Negotiations concluded, in 1994, with Unison securing a majority approval from its members for their removal from local government pay and conditions onto locally negotiated terms, with drastic cuts in sick pay and shift pay rates, together with a goodwill gesture of a 10%, across-the-board pay cut for six months.

The annual pay negotiations produced no rises for the following three years. By 1997 the workers had had enough. They lodged a three percent pay claim and voted overwhelmingly for strike action when it was rejected. The company directors reacted preemptively. Announcing that Tameside Council and the district health authority had dropped a bombshell - a cut in grant funding for 1998-99 of £395,000 - TCG issued 90-day notices to terminate the contracts of all the company's workers. On offer,

from May Day, would be new contracts in which the hourly rates of care assistants would be cut from £4.50 to £3.60; of night care assistants from £5.65 to £3.60; and of domestics from £4.05 to £3.25. Holidays would also be cut and the company sick pay scheme would be deleted entirely. If the workers did not sign the new contracts they would be deemed to have sacked themselves.

The threat failed. Following another overwhelming majority, the workers began strike action on March 30. Picketing started and the firm resorted to staffing agencies to supply scab labour. The workers' resolve has clearly shaken the leadership of Tameside council, which has now miraculously discovered that it is able to restore £330,000 of the grant cut - but for one year only. The workers have voted overwhelmingly to reject this 'solution', and when a minority union, GMB, ordered its 44 members back to work on the strength of the offer, 29 of them resigned their membership in protest and transferred to Unison.

This group of workers is new to industrial action, but has learned fast. However, the stakes are high and it is vital that the action is continually and rapidly escalated if a victory is to be gained. In this respect the role of the scabbing agencies is crucial. When students and unemployed workers supporting the strike initiated the tactic of occupying the offices of scabbing agencies, the strikers were advised not to participate by the Unison branch secretary, Socialist Party member Noel Pine. Brother Pine cautioned that, if strikers were seen engaging in such action, then they may be victimised by management after a return to work. This reasoning could not be more false, but it is typical of an approach which attempts to keep the dispute tame and respectable. If this shortsightedness is not overcome, it will lead to defeat. Thankfully, the workers appear to have rejected comrade Pine's advice. Picketing and occupation action has so far secured the withdrawal of two scabbing agencies, Apex Healthcare and Taylor-Brooke, from TCG work.

Unison's national conference last month agreed that there would be a national demonstration in support of the TCG workers, on Saturday July 4. The main speaker will be Unison general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe. The demonstration commences at 12.15 pm, from the Stamford Park entrance, Astley Road, Ashton/Stalybridge boundary.

A victory for the TCG workers, in a period when there have not been too many victories, would give an important boost for the working class as a whole ●

John Pearson

Support the careworkers

Demonstration - Saturday July 4.
Assemble 12.15pm, Stamford Park, Astley Road, Ashton/Stalybridge boundary

Messages of support and donations should be sent to: Tameside Unison, 29 Booth Street., Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 7LB. Cheques payable to "Unison, Tameside branch". Phone 0161 308 2452 for details of pickets and other strike activities.

action

■ CPGB seminars

London: **July 5** - 'Marx and Blanqui' in the series on Hal Draper's *Karl Marx's theory of revolution*.

For more details call 0181-459 7146.

Manchester: **July 13** - 'Reaction today: revolution tomorrow'.

For more details call 0161-798 6417.

■ Party wills

The CPGB has forms available for you to include the Party and the struggle for communism in your will. Write for details.

■ London Socialist Alliance

To get involved, contact Box 22, 136-138 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS, or ring Anne Murphy on 0973-231 620.

■ Scottish Socialist Alliance

To get involved, contact PO Box 980, Glasgow G14 9QQ.

■ Hillingdon hospital workers fight on

The Hillingdon strikers in west London, deserted by Unison, still need your support. Send donations urgently, payable to Hillingdon Strikers Support Campaign, 27 Townsend Way, Northwood, Middlesex UB8 1JD.

■ Irish political prisoners campaign

Downing Street picket - first Sunday of every month, 12 noon to 1.30pm. Release the prisoners! For more details contact: Fuascailt, PO Box 3923, London NW5 1RA. Tel: 0181-985 8250 or 0956-919 871.

■ Summer Offensive meal

Celebration to mark the end of the 15th Summer Offensive, Saturday July 11. Places at the meal are £20 minimum, £50 solidarity price. For details ring Anne Murphy on 0973-231 620

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1918

Russian Revolution
this week 80 years ago

London Socialist Alliance

Inclusive democracy is key

London Socialist Alliance stands at a crossroads. Members and affiliates attending the July 5 general meeting have before them two roads. The 'amalgamated' motion points to sectarian exclusion, faddism, and localist fragmentation. The motion presented by the CPGB (see back page) points to the continuation of inclusive democracy and strength through principle. Obviously which road is taken will have profound implications for the whole project, not only in London but throughout the whole country.

Elements in the Socialist Party, Socialist Outlook and the Socialist Democracy Group have congealed into what can only be called a rotten 'amalgamated' bloc. The twofold effect of their motion would be to wind down the LSA and ingratiate the greens. According to news leaked by Nick Long (Lewisham SA), the 'amalgamated' bloc have also got together with people from the Green Socialist Network (a wing of the Democratic Left), the Independent Labour Network (around MEPs Hugh Kerr and Ken Coates), and the Movement for Socialism (the rump of the Workers Revolutionary Party). This weird amalgam exists to present a slate of candidates for an LSA committee, seemingly with the sole purpose of excluding those associated with the CPGB ... "first they came for the communists".

A number of different and often contradictory motives are in operation. It is not that the CPGB has proved a hindrance or is unwilling to take on the burden of work. Since initiating the LSA our comrades have played an active and constructive role on the ad-hoc committee. There has been no domination. Nor attempt at domination.

However, certain forces fear and loathe the CPGB simply because we engage, as a matter of principle, in open polemic ... and not only in the *Weekly Worker*. The SP rep on the ad-hoc committee vehemently objected to the circulation of an article of mine in the regular mailing - thankfully af-

ter a sharp exchange censorship was rejected. Now along with their allies in Socialist Outlook and SDG they presumably think debate can be avoided by exclusion.

There is also the fact that we and other comrades seek to build the LSA through elections - the biggest slate of SA candidates for the May 7 local elections in London was fielded by the CPGB. Perhaps the SP does not want another left force standing candidates, especially one that finds interpretation in the sectarian mind as a 'diversion' from the task of building the "small mass party". Certainly, having just lost his largest region, comrade Peter Taaffe dreads another Scotland. Does this explain why SP is determined to stop the monthly LSA meetings and wants to disorganise our activists into "existing campaigns" and localism? Surely a grossly irresponsible proposal in the long run up to the London Assembly, mayoral and European elections. We should be concentrating, centralising and upping the tempo of our small forces, not scattering them. Whatever the SP's exact reason, it receives *opportunistic* support from Socialist Outlook - still organically tied to Tony Blair and auto-Labourism.

Finally there is the green question. The greens are a petty bourgeois movement happily containing within themselves a wide spectrum, ranging from the critical-utopian to the overtly fascist. Its best thinkers have written savage indictments of capitalism which supply wonderful ammunition for the class struggle. Despite that most green ideas are confused, naive and at the end of the day reactionary. There is an underlying neo-Malthusian assumption which sees human beings as the fundamental problem. A general prejudice also exists against economic growth and technological progress. The world's ecological problems are to be solved through an impossible return to nature - itself, of course, a social construct.

Needless to say the CPGB is not opposed to the affiliation of green organisations and individuals who de-

clare themselves socialists. Indeed such affiliations are to be positively welcomed. But it does not follow that the CPGB is committed to a red-green alliance. We envisage a united front of socialists. Not, it should be stressed, on some lowest-common-denominator basis. Nor in order to end polemical exchanges. The CPGB fights for the highest organisational and political unity. That necessarily requires constant political debate, criticism and self-criticism.

Our conditional attitude towards greens has its malevolent antipode. Socialist Outlook and in particular David Lyons of the SDG are intent not only on orientating towards the greens, but making the SAs acceptable to them by purging the extreme left: ie, the CPGB. Comrade Lyons, it should be pointed out, is not only a member of SDG, but the Green Socialist Network (ironically he walked out of the SP last year in the most capricious manner, waving the flag of revolutionary Marxism).

Both Socialist Outlook and comrade Lyons, are via separate factional channels, joined to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (which has well known sympathisers in Arthur Scargill's SLP in the shape of the Fisc witch hunters). This school of thought is notoriously eclectic and tailist. Socialism is viewed not as the self-liberation of the working class. Initially at least, the socialist transformation begins as the result of forces from on high.

In the 1950s the unconscious vehicle for a *mechanically* inevitable socialism was the Red Army, Broz Tito and Nye Bevan; in the 1960s Maoism, Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro; in the 1970s student foci and third world guerrillas; in the 1980s Tony Benn, municipal social democracy and Solidamosc. Now, in the 1990s, with capitalist triumphalism and the collapse of 'official communism' and Labourism as any sort of alternative social vision, it would appear that the banner of human liberation has passed to other hands. This time it is the neo-social democratic parties of 'recomposition' and the greens. Put another way, the ideologically weak search for something that appears materially powerful. Having been identified, no matter how undemocratic and morally barren, it is to be venerated, excused and emulated. The result is a travesty of Marxism and, as in the case of the LSA, a distinct rightist, bureaucratic, not to say liquidationist, trajectory.

The LSA is at a very early and therefore vulnerable stage of development. No one is, or should be, content with existing affiliations, individual membership or level of support and activity. We have a long way to go. That said, it would be wrong to underestimate or dismiss, let alone jeopardise, what has been done thus far. Indeed there is every reason to build on our real strengths, which at present derive from three mutually reinforcing pillars.

Firstly unity. The LSA is a rudimentary united front. The appointment of Anne Murphy as coordinator and Ian Driver as chair took place in that spirit - the former from the CPGB, the latter from the SDG. The recent SWP break from auto-Labourism and the crisis of the Labour left create excellent conditions for broadening and deepening. Blair's stubborn maintenance of anti-trade union laws also means trade union affiliations are quite possible in the short to medium term.

Secondly politics. In the midst of

Blair's de-Labourisation of his party the SAs can provide an alternative for masses of traditional Labour voters. That has nothing to do with re-inventing Labourism. It is an opportunity to renew genuine socialism, both in terms of theory and as a class movement - social democracy and all variants of national or bureaucratic socialism are bankrupt and anti-working class. Our willingness to challenge Labour in the ballot box with a revolutionary manifesto is therefore correct.

Thirdly democracy. The LSA is an inclusive project. Unlike Scargill's SLP there has been no exclusion and witch hunting. Our ad-hoc committee has been open to all groups and individual members. Sectarianism has been combated on the field of practice, not by voting through a resolution allowing for the barring of minority opinions. Everything has been conducted in a spirit of principled unity and democratic tolerance.

It is not only the 'amalgamated' bloc which seems intent on pulling away these pillars. The LSA is a vital part of an all-Britain network. Developments in the LSA take place in this wider context, and the fact is that there exists at the top an unspoken agenda to close the Socialist Alliances as a militant and inclusive united front ... at present this takes the form of bureaucratic manoeuvre against the CPGB.

Dave Nellist suggested at the Coventry conference of the SAs that we in London send a representative to the Liaison Group of the Network of Socialist Alliances - itself a very ad-hoc body. Our coordinator, Anne Murphy, was elected unopposed in March. A decision not to the liking of a certain John Nicholson - coordinator of Manchester SA and the network. On the phone he darkly suggested to comrade Murphy that her election was invalid. Unnamed persons in London had raised unnamed objections. To clear up the matter beyond a shadow of doubt the question of the London rep was again put on the agenda in April. Again unopposed, comrade Murphy was confirmed. Again Nicholson objected. This time however, instead of inventing some excuse he resorted to a stonewalling silence ... and intrigue.

None of comrade Murphy's numerous telephone messages, e-mails or letters have been deigned with a reply. London - which is absolutely essential for the whole Socialist Alliance project - can elect anyone it wishes ... as long as it is not comrade Murphy. So much for uniting on the 80% where we are supposed to agree while tolerating those who have disagreements.

Unfortunately comrade Nicholson has come to personify the worst in intolerance and Labourite-type plotting. With the help of an unholy coalition of Socialist Outlook, the SP and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, he staged-managed a democratic coup against democracy in Greater Manchester SA. Its May 16 annual conference threw out the principle of inclusion - along with representatives and supporters of the CPGB.

Comrade Nicholson ran the meeting in a fashion that would have made even Scargill blush with shame. Originally billed as an all-day event, it was arbitrarily cut in half. Naturally the time he allowed himself was not reduced. Nor was that of the 'guest speaker' - Spencer Fitzgibbon of the Green Party. But, no doubt as intended, it did spell disaster for 'debates' on motions and amendments. They were limited to *one minute* per comrade. The clock was also used to prevent those stand-

ing for committee elections from addressing the meeting.

The Manchester events show the 'amalgamated bloc' and comrade Nicholson's outrageous treatment of comrade Murphy in their true light. This trend within the SAs is against any revolutionary challenge to Labourism in elections, eschews frank and open debate and wants to reinvent Labourism by way of a transmutation of green politics. Instinctively it recognises the CPGB as its most intransigent and dangerous enemy.

The CPGB is determined to defend and advance democracy. We say London should be able to elect whatever rep it so chooses. We also stand by inclusion. That is why there is no CPGB-sponsored slate of candidates which will result in any defeated minority being excluded. Our motion aims to formalise the structures of the LSA in the manner of the flexible, combative and inclusive democracy practised by the soviets - or workers' councils - during the 1917 Russian Revolution.

Every affiliated organisation should have the *right* to send one *instantly recallable* delegate - that would include borough alliances, political organisations, trade unions and progressive campaigns (we are open to suggestions on a tiered system which accounts for big differences in numbers or political weight). Crucially our proposal allows for the speedy and full reflection of growth, success and change. A new affiliate will not have to wait a year before finding whether or not this or that majority will permit it to take a seat on our committee. Nor will it have to rely on cooption - which is prone to terrible abuse by a determined clique (a majority of one can be turned into something totally unassailable by cooption). It would moreover be organisations, not individuals which count. So if a comrade is assigned to another task by their union committee, they can be replaced without fuss or bother by that organisation at a moment's notice. There would be no need for an annual general meeting and the generosity of the majority.

We apply the same flexible practice to officers. Treasurers, editors, chairs, coordinators, trade union organisers, etc should be elected when and where needed, not according to some snapshot popularity poll by an atomised membership. They should be elected by and accountable to their peers. We need hard grafters, not finicky stars. The mayoral or presidential system has no place in our tradition. Officers should be elected and replaceable by those whom they work alongside. If a comrade has to drop out of activity because of illness or family pressures, another can easily be substituted. By the same measure those who fail to carry out agreed tasks can be replaced without the need for cumbersome general meetings - mainly they ought to be called for the purposes of broad discussions and decisions, not details of day-to-day organisation.

Our proposals also allow political alterations at the base of the organisation to be immediately reflected. If below there is a shift to the right, that will see a shift to the right above. The same applies if there is a shift to the left. So the CPGB is for the right of the minority to become a majority and the right of the majority to take the leading positions ... but not through exclusion ●

John Bridge
CPGB representative on London SA
ad-hoc committee

Harpal Brar invite

Several scheduled debates at this year's Communist University will touch on the historical experience of the USSR. We have invited comrades from a wide variety of political backgrounds to present views on this historically unique social formation.

Notable amongst those invited is Harpal Brar, editor of *Lalkar*, member of the leadership of the Socialist Labour Party and one of this

country's leading defenders of Stalin. His session should be one of the most lively of the entire school. Those comrades who dismiss the influence of 'Stalinism' in this country show a narrow insularity. Among exile and émigré populations such as those from Turkey or the Indian sub-continent, these ideas live, mutate and have a relatively mass political audience ●

Communist University '98

A week of intensive debate and discussion for all socialists and communists.

Includes specialist discussion groups on the Soviet Union and the fight for a mass party.

August 1-8, Brunel University, Uxbridge, West London - ten minutes from Uxbridge Tube. Residential (self-catering): £75. £25 deposit secures your place. Non-residential: £30 for the whole week or £5 per day at the door ●

Liberal democracy - as far as it goes!

Dave Craig comments on the rapprochement process

In the current period of defeat, retreat and reaction, the Revolutionary Democratic Group advocates two forms of rapprochement - broad and narrow. I will use the terminology of Bolshevism and Menshevism borrowed from the Russian movement at the beginning of the century to explain the difference.

Broad rapprochement means seeking to unite Bolsheviks and Mensheviks into a single party. The RDG have promoted broad rapprochement using the slogan of a "communist-Labour party". This is why we supported the formation of the SLP and identified it as a political location for rapprochement.

Narrow rapprochement is seeking to unite all Bolsheviks into a single tendency, with the aim of becoming an independent revolutionary party in the longer term. For this aim, we advocate a revolutionary democratic communist tendency. These two aims are compatible, if we take account of the state of our movement and the interests of the working class.

The revolutionary democratic communist platform provides a basis for narrow rapprochement. It is agreed by the CPGB, the RDG and - if somewhat at arms length - the *Marxist Bulletin*. The platform is not a programme. Indeed there is a lack of programmatic agreement between the three groups. This is one reason why, as yet, we are unable to create a politically centralised tendency. We are no more or less than autonomous groups of revolutionary democratic communists. We have no common programme or perspective or joint organisation. That is a fact of life and not something to boast about.

The platform is like a magnet. It attracts some and repels others. It helps identify revolutionary democratic communists, who should come together and work for rapprochement. This means beginning serious programmatic discussions. Certainly the RDG and CPGB have had programmatic discussions and debates over a period. *Marxist Bulletin* should join such discussions, as an equal partner, bringing in its own programmatic positions.

On the other hand, Ian Donovan of the bulletin *Revolution and Truth*, and a former supporter of *Marxist Bulletin*, is opposed to revolutionary democratic communism (see letters *Weekly Worker* June 4). Ian is on a completely different trajectory. We can certainly debate with him. But we must not sow any illusions that we could form any common tendency.

We would have no problem in working with Ian in organisations like the SLP or the Socialist Alliances, where we can work with all sorts of centrists and ultra-lefts. But narrow rapprochement is neither possible nor desirable. At present Ian is outside our tendency and opposed fundamentally to it, as we are fundamentally opposed to his ideas. It is worth remembering that his ideas on democracy are representative of a broad strand of economism within the British Marxist movement.

Ian begins by saying that "the four points of the platform of the 'Revolutionary Democratic Communist Tendency' have the quality of 'apple pie and motherhood'". In other words, they are so obviously good that nobody can disagree with them. If this were true our tendency would be massively supported. In fact it is not true, and Ian soon explains that he does not agree with point one. He agrees with motherhood but does not like apple pie.

"What," says Ian, "does a revolutionary democratic attitude mean?" A fair question, but also a revealing one about Ian's own politics. Neither does Ian agree with the point that "the working class can become the leading force within society by championing the struggle for democracy". He seems to have forgotten that the Russian working class did exactly that with

Lenin's leadership. It was Lenin who called the working class "the vanguard fighter for democracy".

Ian's confusion and disagreement over point one takes us to the heart of the matter. You can be a revolutionary democrat and not a communist - for example Robespierre and Cromwell. But you cannot be a genuine communist if you are not a revolutionary democrat. They go together like motherhood and apple pie. All communists must oppose any attempt to separate one from the other or identify revolutionary democracy as the private property of the bourgeoisie.

Revolutionary democratic communists have a definite attitude to every question of democracy. This can be captured by words such as 'consistent', 'revolutionary', 'resolute' and 'militant', as opposed to 'inconsistent', 'vacillating', 'liberal', 'half-hearted' and 'soft'. But more precisely, it involves taking a definite view of both bourgeois and proletarian democracy.

First we want to replace bourgeois democracy with proletarian democracy, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this we are replacing a lower form of democracy based on parliament with a higher form based on soviets or workers' councils. We reject any notion that establishing a workers' state can mean swopping one set of bureaucrats for another. A 'bureaucratic workers' state' is a contradiction in terms.

This does not fully define a revolutionary democratic attitude. It does not deal with the tricky problem of bourgeois democracy itself. Bourgeois democracy is not a fixed quantity. Like everything it is subject to constant change, as a result of the class struggle. What attitude should workers take to such change?

At one extreme are those who ig-

nore it. The anarchists for example want to blow up bourgeois democracy rather than utilise it for class struggle. Ultra-left communists are bound to the same idea. They want to blow up bourgeois democracy, not with bombs, but words. 'Proletarian democracy is better than a bourgeois republic.' If these words are repeated often enough and with a very large megaphone, bourgeois democracy will collapse, regardless of the level of class consciousness and class struggle!

It is the same megaphone that advises workers, striking for higher pay, that under communism we will abolish the wages system. Why change wages when our aim is to abolish them? Why change bourgeois democracy, when it is also for the chop? Why seek a solution to the national question now, when under socialism we will abolish nation states? Ignore the struggle for change because eventually we will have socialism. This can be made to sound very 'left', it is in fact simply conservatism.

At the opposite extreme are the centrist communists. They think the ultra-lefts are silly and utopian to ignore bourgeois democracy. Instead they want to support every petty democratic reform that the bourgeoisie hands down. 'Something is better than nothing,' is their pathetic 'battle cry', as they prostrate themselves before the bourgeoisie. Bourgeois democracy belongs to the bourgeoisie and we must do nothing to challenge them. This was how Scottish Militant Labour recently supported Blair's devolution plans for Scotland.

The ultra-left and centrist communists are twins - two sides of a single coin that Lenin termed economism. One of the essential foundations of Leninism is the distinction between revolutionary (social) democracy and economism. This line is drawn very

clearly in *What is to be done?* and repeated throughout his work. A revolutionary democrat approaches every question of bourgeois democratic rights as a consistently militant democrat. It was for revolutionaries to help train the working class, by means of political exposures, to become the "vanguard fighter for democracy".

We can get the flavour of this, for example, in Lenin's articles on the national question in 1915 (*CW* Vol 21, p408). Lenin attacks comrade Parabellum, who "in the name of socialist revolution scornfully rejects a consistent revolutionary programme in the sphere of democracy. He is wrong to do so." Parabellum was wrong because he was acting as a "leftist" not a revolutionary democrat. Lenin goes on to explain that "We must combine the revolutionary struggle against capitalism with a revolutionary programme and tactics on all democratic demands: a republic, a militia, the popular election of all officials, equal rights for women and the self-determination of nations."

Lenin is not indifferent to bourgeois democracy in the name of socialism or a workers' republic. Neither is he prepared to accept a few democratic crumbs thrown down by the capitalists. He says: "It is inconceivable that the proletariat as an historical class will be able to defeat the bourgeoisie unless it is prepared for that by being educated in the spirit of the most consistent and resolutely revolutionary democracy."

Such a quotation is not some crazy aberration. I could produce hundreds of quotations to indicate the same "spirit". Unfortunately Ian cannot educate the working class in this "spirit" for it is entirely lacking in himself. It causes him to wonder out loud, "What is a revolutionary democratic attitude?"

Economism is not revolutionary democracy. It is the opposite. It is liberal democracy. It is Paddy Ashdown hiding behind a red flag. When Paddy was a young radical he wanted to blow up bourgeois democracy in the name of individual freedom. When he grew up he abandoned this leftwing childishness. He wanted to defend bourgeois democracy - that is, in Britain, the constitutional monarchy - and give more rights to women and blacks. But there must be no republicanism or mass revolutionary struggle for democratic aims.

Let us consider what Ian says about bourgeois democracy. He says: "Of course Marxists defend the rights of the working class that have grown up under bourgeois democracy, against reactionary attack." Ian will defend what we have. But there are strict limits. He says that "The working class in general and revolutionaries in particular must become the most consistent fighters for democratic rights of specifically oppressed groups. But that is as far as it goes."

Apart from the last sentence, in general, I would agree with that very limited statement. Except that he reveals his attitude, accidentally, in the phrase about workers' democratic rights "that have grown up", instead of 'which were won by class struggle'. I am sure that Ian accepts that democracy did not 'grow up' like magic mushrooms,

but was a product of class struggle. But he leaves the impression that although it was correct for the working class to win democratic rights in the past, there is really no need for that sort of thing today. He is therefore really quite complacent about democratic rights. We have the full set, unless you are an oppressed minority. The phrase, "That is as far as it goes", tells us a lot about Ian's position. He wants to place strict limits on how much democracy we can have and who is permitted to fight for it. He is in favour of more rights for women within bourgeois democracy but a republic is ruled out as a step too far. The very idea that we should extend bourgeois democracy to its limits by revolutionary mass action is certainly beyond limits.

This sums up Ian's attitude to "apple pie". In general he wants nothing to do with it, unless the bourgeoisie tries to take it off the table. Then he will fight tooth and nail to keep it there. But he is not a greedy person. He only wants a slice more and not the whole pie. As he assures us, "that is as far as it goes". So he is in favour of proportional representation but not a republic. This is something that all our liberal democrats are agreed on. The last thing either Ian or Paddy Ashdown want is mass revolutionary struggle - or indeed any struggle - to win a republic. A bit more democracy, please - but that is as far as it goes. This is what unites Blair, Ashdown, Scottish Militant Labour ... and finally Ian Donovan.

As I mentioned before (*Weekly Worker* May 28) our proto-tendency suffered a setback as a result of the departure of Scottish comrades from the CPGB. This has created a minor disagreement between the CPGB and RDG over how to deal with the resulting situation. My initial response was to refer to a "Dundee Group" which I argued should remain part of the proto-tendency. However I mistakenly implied that the "Dundee Group" was already in the tendency. From the angle of correct and agreed procedures the CPGB had every right to object. But politically, after following such procedures, it would be wrong to object.

Having reflected further on this, it is important to consider the politics from a different direction. In the present climate with the growth of Scottish nationalism, it is problematic and dangerous for the CPGB to be reduced to an organisation based in England. This is equally true for the RDG and for the revolutionary democratic communist tendency. We must do everything possible to unite revolutionary democratic communists in Scotland with those in England into a single tendency.

To put it another way, the dispute between the CPGB and revolutionary democratic communists in Scotland must not be allowed to weaken the fight against Scottish nationalism. To say otherwise would be to adopt a sectarian course - placing the interests of a small group above the interests of the class. I am confident the PCC would not do that.

In the present situation in Scotland, time is of the essence. It is vital that the RDG and PCC come to agreement on this now. I am sure that when the PCC have considered the situation more fully we will be in agreement to do what is necessary ●

Revolutionary democratic communism

1. For revolutionary democracy

We hold a revolutionary democratic attitude to all questions of bourgeois democracy (eg, civil liberties, women's rights, national question, racism, constitutional change, etc). We utilise bourgeois democracy, defend it against all anti-democratic forces, including the capitalists and the fascists. We seek to extend all democratic rights by mass struggle and revolutionary action. We consider the working class is the only genuinely democratic class under capitalism. We consider that the working class can become the leading force in society by championing the struggle for democracy.

2. For workers' power

We support the democratic self-organisation of the working class in trade unions, workplaces and communities. We are in favour of workers' control of all industries and services. We are in favour of replacing parliamentary democracy

with a more advanced form of democracy, based on workplace and workers' councils electing delegates to a workers' parliament. This must be defended by an armed working class organised as the state (ie, the dictatorship of the proletariat).

3. For international socialism

Socialism cannot be built in one or a few countries. It must be developed by the international organisation of the working class. Socialism is the transitional period between world capitalism and communism.

4. For world communism

Our aim is to abolish the world market system of capitalism and replace it by world communism. Communist society is a classless worldwide community based on global planning, cooperation and mutual solidarity between the people of the world ●

Around the left

Fiddling while Rome burns

All those committed to workers' unity and genuine socialism should be dismayed by recent events in Scotland. The decision of the Scottish Socialist Alliance, taken at its annual conference on June 20, to liquidate itself into the Scottish Socialist Party clearly represents a shift to the right - not least in that it confirms Scottish Militant Labour's embrace of narrow nationalism.

But despair or pessimism is not the proper response. The experience of the SSA can ultimately be used to help cohere and buttress the revolutionary left - if we learn the lessons. Why do we need a party? What is socialism? How should the united front tactic be employed? What about election work? All these fundamental questions are posed by the SSA's demise as a vehicle for united struggle. Communist politics can make good out of bad. Unprincipled and opportunist politics just stumble from disaster to disaster.

Thus, the "democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist ecologist" Socialist Outlook - to quote from its 'where we stand' column - has an attitude to developments in the SSA which has more in common with liberalism than working class principle. Unfortunately, *Socialist Outlook* is a monthly. The June issue is all we have available. Nevertheless, its political trajectory is not too difficult to fathom, nor its intentions.

In the article 'Time for a new workers' party in Scotland?', comrade Dave Hudson offers his views on the battle - now convincingly won by Alan McCombes - between the SP (England and Wales) and the 'left' Braveheartian SML. The introduction to comrade Hudson's article states: "The SP and SML, its Scottish organisation, are engaged in a major discussion about launching a new workers' party in Scotland. This discussion is

important for the whole of the socialist left in Britain, including the revolutionary Marxist organisations. Socialist Outlook comments on this discussion because of the important issues it raises for the left within a perspective of recomposition of the workers' movement. Also, because the outcome of these discussions will in the short term materially affect the development of the class struggle not only in Scotland, but across the British state."

Fine sentiments. However, comrade Hudson adopts a sanguine, if not enthusiastic, attitude to the liquidation of the SSA and the nationalist birth of the SSP. The comrade appears to think it is a potentially positive development. The article ends up betraying his, and SO's, inability to grasp the real political issues.

Comrade Hudson presents us with a summary of the current state of play, as SO sees it. It is interesting to observe the ideas of SP/SML, as refracted through the political - and sympathetic - lens of an SO loyalist. Comrade Hudson writes: "The controversy in the SP concerns the proposition made by SML that, under today's conditions, with the present development of the SSA, a new mass workers' party to the left of Labour is both needed and can be built ('a small mass workers' party'). This is presented as a qualitative development which would supersede the present collection of left groups and tendencies in Scotland."

"The political framework of the SML comrades is determined by three features. First, is the existence of a rightwing and bourgeois Labour government and Labour Party [SO called for a Labour vote last May, as it always does - DP], both dominated by Blairism. The Blairite phenomenon represents for them a sharp break from social democracy, and has trans-



Alan McCombes: happy to be egged on by Socialist Outlook

formed the class character of the party from one based on and closely linked to the working class, to one based directly on the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. The comrades of the SP sometimes say that this process of bourgeoisification is already complete, although this is sometimes left unclear.

"The second feature they raise is the Scottish national question and devolution, and the preparations for elections by PR to a Scottish parliament, scheduled for 1999. This scenario, argues SML, represents a significant political opening if a credible left party existed that could seize the opportunity. Third, there are higher levels of class consciousness and mobilisation in Scotland than exist in England. This is in part due to the entwining of socialist issues and the struggle for national self-determination. Linked to this are the more advanced levels of socialist organisation, particularly through the SSA."

"The specific combination of these three features (to which the comrades would add the global crisis of both Stalinism and social democracy) creates the opportunity for a new breakthrough in Scotland. Already SML has had some preliminary and informal discussions about launching a new party, possibly called the SSP, with various prominent individuals and tendencies within the SSA. They say in their text, *Initial proposals for a new Scottish Socialist Party*, that there are other socialist organisations they would like to approach for discussions about the formation of a new socialist party. These include the Communist Party of Scotland; the Socialist Labour Party, the Communist Party of Britain, the Socialist Workers Party, and socialists within the Labour Party, the SNP and the Green Party."

So, what does comrade Hudson himself actually think of all this? In a nutshell, he gives the thumbs-up to the McCombesite project: "We in *Socialist Outlook* are fully persuaded that the situation in Scotland is more politically advanced than in England or Wales, and with greater opportunities for socialists for broadly the same reasons that the SML outline. Allowing for some exaggeration by the comrades, we also believe that a serious electoral challenge by a class struggle or revolutionary party would be very significant and would

undoubtedly change the political terrain on the left across the whole British state" (my emphasis).

SO, according to comrade Hudson, is "fully persuaded" that the creation of a reformist-nationalist SSP is a step forward. How foolish. The SSP will certainly "change the political terrain on the left across the whole British state", as the comrade correctly predicts. But it will not be quite in the way comrade Hudson hopes or expects. That is guaranteed.

Confronted by an urgent political problem, which poses all manner of dangers for the working class, the comrade goes into 'philosophical' agony instead. Hudson is so intent on trying to squeeze the SP/SML/SSA and the Scottish question in general into his Trotskyist categories that he does not appear to notice the reactionary nationalist aim of the SSP project - the chimera of an "an independent socialist Scotland". Comrade Hudson asks: "Do the SML comrades envisage that this new party will be a transitional formation/party, a kind of proto-party? In other words, will it be founded on a limited action programme, of a type discussed by Trotsky in 1935, but with the aim of its transformation, through a common experience and debate over a short period, into a revolutionary party? Or do they think the new party, which they hope will include the broad forces listed above, will be a revolutionary party from its foundation?"

"If it is the former, then it seems to us incumbent on the revolutionary Marxists to maintain some organisational and political independence within it, to wage the necessary political struggle. If it is the latter, then it has to be shown that the party is founded on a revolutionary programme - a very difficult task in this political conjuncture, even in Scotland. To put it another way. The one principle that is absolutely central is that the organisational dissolution of the revolutionary Marxists into a new party first requires the political conquest of a revolutionary programme. Or, it must be founded with the expectation, due to the rapid evolution of the forces involved, that such a programme will be adopted in the short term (this was the scenario in the USA in the late 1930s). If, on the other hand the basis of unity of the new party is a more limited, 'class struggle' or 'action programme' (because of the diverse character of the forces involved - or are likely to become involved in the future), and therefore requiring considerable further development before it adopts a revolutionary programme (ie, similar to the 1938 *Transitional programme*), which seems most likely, then organisation remains essential. To genuinely dissolve under these conditions would be nothing less than the liquidation of the Marxist programme."

He continues: "Organisation within a broad leftwing socialist party could take the form of a recognised tendency or faction, legitimated by the party constitution. Office resources could still be handed over to the new party as a gesture of goodwill, but the Marxists must retain the capacity and the right, if it becomes necessary, to transform themselves into a faction to fight for the leadership of the party - with the recognised consequence that if it fails, it may split, taking what it can with it. This understanding should be transparent and above board in the negotiations" (my emphasis).

A clear case of fiddling while Rome burns and the SSA bites the nationalist dust. The SSP's 'programme' is a living negation of the universalist project of Marxism - only a political illiterate could fail to see that. Naturally, we recognise that SO is falling behind events in Scotland. Perhaps, when confronted by the grisly reality of the SSP, it will come good. Perhaps the next issue of *Socialist Outlook* will bend the stick the other way. But for now comrade Hudson - and presumably SO - is content to embrace the 'socialist' facade of SSP and ignore its essentially anti-socialist nature.

Comrade Hudson goes on to inform us that the "programme of the SSA [*Charter for a socialist Scotland*] is neither a revolutionary programme nor a transitional programme like the 1938 *Programme*; it is an 'action programme'. This is fine as far as it goes, and as long as revolutionaries do not confuse it with the Marxist programme of socialist revolution No one is arguing that a full revolutionary programme must be presented publicly at all times: that would be absurd sectarian propaganda, and is why the method of the *Transitional programme* was developed by Trotsky. However, as night follows day, these quite different programmes and perspectives will condition the priorities and methods of activity of the new party, and finally decide its character as either reformist or revolutionary."

Time will tell, according to comrade Hudson, whether the SSP will turn out to be "reformist or revolutionary". Communists can cut through the Gordian knot. A reformist SML can never give birth to revolutionary organisation. As Jack Conrad wrote of the SSP in last week's *Weekly Worker*, "In form and content it will be a reformist-nationalist sect."

After his lengthy deliberations, comrade Hudson delivers his equivocal judgement: "To conclude. The SML has a good analysis of the Scottish political situation, a drive to take advantage of a new fruitful situation and healthy appetite for tactical flexibility [sic]. It would be a tragedy if their project could not be carried through whilst maintaining the integrity of revolutionary politics intact." He adds: "What is certain about the Scottish debate is that the establishment of a genuinely broad-based small mass party with a revolutionary current integrated into its leadership, and which adopted a developed action programme at its founding conference, would be a significant step forward for the Scottish working class. Nonetheless, for such a party to play its potentially historic role in the struggle for socialism, the revolutionaries will have to continue as a distinct tendency within it in order to transform it into a revolutionary party."

The real "tragedy" lies in the fact that organisations like SO have allowed themselves to become fellow travellers of a project which pivots on the central idea that there is a distinctively Scottish road to socialism. Indeed in Scotland, SO's comrades have joined the extreme nationalist wing of SSA/SSP. Hence the disinterested advice SO proffers SML on the dangers of liquidationism should be read as a plea to its own people. You can sprout any reactionary nonsense you want ... but please, please, keep paying your subs. That appears to be the message ●

Don Preston

Summer Offensive '98

Spitting distance

The two weeks remaining before the Saturday July 11 celebration meal to mark the end of the CPGB's 15th Summer Offensive fundraising drive must be fully utilised to push the £10,516 raised so far up and over the £20,000 target.

The fight for Partyism and communist organisation against the present tide of reaction is not simply a theoretical task, but a practical one. Only communist practice can create communists and communist organisation, just as only independent money can secure the right to independent working class politics. The struggle to raise the funds necessary to arm our organisation and finance our paper is a practical test which steels both individual comrades and the organisation as a whole. It is a struggle which makes communists.

The two months of May and June have only been sufficient to reach 53% of target, but this has more to do with the 'late start syndrome' than our real ability to raise funds. Another £554 from commer-

cial print jobs at the Party's printshop in week eight was matched by £536 raised on street stalls organised by Manchester comrades. Some of our veteran fundraisers, because of other pressing political tasks, have barely got up steam yet, and left everything to do at the last minute. But do it they will, I am sure, especially given the extra two weeks' grace. Comrades who have already fulfilled their pledges should use the time to push the collective results higher. The £20,000 will not be met unless we redouble our efforts.

New pledges of £1,500 were added this week by Party supporters joining in the campaign, and an extra £600 was promised by comrades already involved. This brings the total pledged to £16,200, putting us within spitting distance of our target.

Places at the celebration meal are £20 minimum, £50 solidarity price. For details ring Anne Murphy on 0973-231 620 ●

Stan Kelsey

Northern Ireland Assembly

Drumcree threat to peace deal

The imperialist-sponsored peace process made another tentative step forward last week with the elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Although 80 out of the 108 candidates elected belong to parties which formally support the British-Irish Agreement, that does not mean that its implementation will now be plain sailing. Under the terms of the deal, elected candidates must declare themselves to be unionist, nationalist or "other" and all decisions made must be backed not only by an overall majority, but by a majority of both unionists and nationalists separately. Unfortunately for Blair the pro-agreement majority among unionists is very slender indeed.

The June 25 elections, conducted under the single transferable vote system, resulted in the Social Democratic and Labour Party receiving the highest number of first-preference votes (22%). Sinn Féin also increased its share - to 17.6%, beating its previous all-time high in last year's Six Counties local elections, when it gained 16.9%. The SDLP, with 24 seats, and SF, who won 18, will constitute a solid pro-agreement nationalist bloc in the assembly.

However, on the unionist side there is a different story. David Trimble's Ulster Unionist Party, despite gaining only 21.3% of first preferences, ended up with 28 seats, thanks to the transferred lower preferences of defeated candidates. Trimble has put his political future on the line by backing the agreement and managed to ensure that almost all of his assembly members are at least reluctant supporters of the overall settlement. Firmly in the pro-agreement camp alongside the UUP are David Ervine and Billy Hutchinson, both former Ulster Volunteer Force prisoners who represent the Progressive Unionist Party.

Opposed to these 30 are 28 'Ulster says no' loyalists, headed by Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party. But to describe this majority of two as fragile would be a huge understatement.

The UUP is split down the middle over its attitude to the British-Irish Agreement. Six of its 10 Westminster MPs sided with Paisley in the May referendum, and many other prominent UUP supporters also campaigned for a 'no' vote. One of these, Jeffrey Donaldson, whose selection as a UUP assembly candidate was blocked by Trimble, is now threatening further divisions. If the party agrees to participate in the new Six Counties administration alongside SF before IRA arms decommissioning has begun, Donaldson has said he will lead yet another unionist breakaway.

The reaction of even the most 'enthusiastic' pro-agreement UUP assembly representative will be instinctively hostile to the release of 'terrorist' republican prisoners, and active cooperation with the likes of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness will go very much against the grain. The setting up of cross-border institutions will also give these defenders of the union

severe problems of presentation. Clearly Trimble will have an impossible task in trying to control his ranks to ensure an assembly unionist majority on all issues.

The UUP leader has blamed his present predicament on the British Conservatives, who, despite their own internal divisions over the question, refused to back the government's Northern Ireland (Sentences) Bill at its third reading two weeks ago. The Tories suspended the traditional bipartisanship of the imperialist parties over Irish questions and demanded that IRA prisoners should not be released early unless decommissioning had begun. Trimble himself was also forced to vote against the bill because of the Tories' antics, but he would have preferred the matter to have been passed over with the minimum of fuss. He regards their decision to 'make a stand' on this issue as playing into the hands of those loyalists who want to wreck the whole deal. The Tories did not realise "the damage they were doing in the election timetable", he said. "They were more interested in making short-term party political gains." As a result, said Trimble, "we have to continue to drag behind us this dead-weight of people who have difficulty moving into the future".

The decision of the Alliance Party not to register its six elected members as "unionist" for the purpose of assembly voting was another blow for Trimble, although it could hardly have been unexpected. Whereas the Alliance - like the Women's Coalition, who won two seats - picks up the overwhelming majority of its votes from middle class protestants, both groups claim to be "non-sectarian": ie, they call for the national question to be dropped from the political agenda - in effect backing the status quo and the union. They have placed themselves firmly in the "other" category, despite intensive pressure on the Alliance from the British government to join forces with the UUP/PUP assembly grouping. The Alliance leader, Lord Alderdice, did however agree to act as the assembly's 'presiding officer' - the speaker. Despite unionist divisions Trimble was elected first minister by a majority on both sides of the assembly earlier this week. The SDLP's Seamus Mallon was confirmed as second minister.

Another *de facto* unionist grouping was the Socialist Party, whose three candidates were, like the Women's Coalition and the Alliance, also even-handed in their equal condemnation of both loyalist death squads and republican anti-imperialists. However, they did rather less well than these more respectable, British-backed, bourgeois "non-sectarians". While the SP's Johnny McLaughlin won 570 first-preference votes (1.2%) in Tyrone West, his comrades in Belfast West and Mid-Ulster could manage only 28 (0.1%) and 91 (0.2%) respectively.

Both the SP and the Socialist Workers Party - in Britain as well as Ireland - call on republicans to end all armed resistance to the British occupation. "Then the politicians of Northern Ire-

land can start behaving like politicians everywhere else ... developing policies to improve their voters' lives, arguing over issues like health and education." No, the phrasing is not quite what you will read in *The Socialist* or *Socialist Worker*, but replace the words 'politicians' and 'voters' with 'workers', and you could be forgiven for confusing this *Observer* editorial (June 26) with the pleas of our economic friends.

Their calls for Irish anti-imperialists to forget their nationality, their revolutionary opposition to the state, and take up 'normal' trade union-type questions dovetails perfectly with the bourgeois consensus. For example, David McKittrick of *The Independent* welcomes "the important sign of the developing new civil society struggling to come into existence alongside the old tribal patterns" (June 29).

The Socialist Party in the Six Counties at least had the imagination to realise that the electoral system adopted allowed for a potentially effective left intervention. With six candidates elected in every constituency, only 14.3% of first-preference votes guaranteed success. Many of those elected received under 10% of first preferences, as voters had to decide which of three or four candidates representing the same party would receive their initial backing. This left the way open for a single candidate from smaller groups. In fact, after receiving the transferred lower preferences of eliminated candidates, the lowest successful candidate in each of the 18 constituencies needed the backing - no matter how grudging - of only around 12% of voters to be elected.

This system was carefully designed so as to ensure that smaller groups with a modicum of support could be represented in the assembly. In this way British imperialism hoped that groups associated with paramilitaries would be encouraged into mainstream politics and would reject unconstitutional methods. Despite Blair's best intentions Gary McMichael of the Ulster Democratic Party (political wing of the Ulster Defence Association) narrowly failed to make it. Although he gained eight percent of voters' first preferences, he finished only seventh in Lagan Valley.

The left failed to take full advantage of the opportunity. The possibility of promoting the idea of working class independence should never be spurned by communists. If a platform can be won in a bourgeois parliament, so much the better. Yet the Irish Republican Socialist Party, despite its claims of adherence to revolutionary socialism and of grassroots support, once more refused to contest elections. Rather than put its ideas to the test in this way, it preferred to announce its continued existence through its military wing, the Irish National Liberation Army, who exploded a bomb just before polling.

While we unconditionally defend the right of anti-imperialists to take up arms to win self-determination, it is legitimate to criticise such actions. In present circumstances, when

clearly the great mass of the republican/nationalist population is in the process of giving its consent to being ruled in a new way, we are seeing the end of a long-drawn out revolutionary situation. Armed actions by Inla, the Continuity Army Council or the Real IRA are at present more likely to receive the condemnation of the republican/nationalist community than any degree of support. The peace process has aroused hopes and expectations, however misplaced.

Now more than ever the prime task of revolutionaries must be a programmatic/strategic one. A token bomb is no substitute for the painstaking development of new political means, the patient winning of support for the idea of workers' self-liberation. Isolated from any popular backing, republican groups who continue to try to physically blow the peace process apart risk becoming mere bandits. Moreover both the state and IRA/SF are claiming a mandate to press ahead and will no doubt cooperate to end the irritation of republican armed opposition.

SF/IRA have made it abundantly clear that all military resistance to the British occupation is to be abandoned. "It is time for justice; it is time for equality," said Martin McGuinness as the results came in. "It is time for Sinn Féin to go into government," he added. SF will not look kindly on anything that destabilises the process by which it hopes to get there.

An immediate obstacle to SF's ambitions of bourgeois respectability is the insistence of unionists, both pro- and anti-agreement, that IRA decommissioning must first be "underway". While McGuinness once again dismissed this as a "red herring", we should not be surprised if a few items of outdated weaponry were suddenly handed over to the relevant commission. Such a move would pull the ground from under the unionists' feet.

Meanwhile, with the assembly election safely out of the way, the government has moved quickly to re-route Sunday's Drumcree Orange march. The Parades Commission, having allowed a smaller march to follow its traditional route in Belfast last weekend, despite the opposition of the catholic residents of a cluster of houses it passed, announced that the Portadown march would not be permitted into the nationalist Garvaghy Road. In contrast to last year, when it was the unionists who had to be kept sweet in preparation for SF's entry into the all-party talks, Blair calculates that the peace process's momentum is swinging against die-hard loyalists. However, this is about to be put to the test, as the Orange Order immediately announced it would defy the ban.

This situation puts enormous pressure on Trimble, who was elected UUP leader on the basis of his record of stubborn defence of Orange 'rights', including those of the Drumcree marchers. Nothing would ease his task in his bid to marginalise the Paisleyites more than a well timed decommissioning gesture from the IRA ●

Jim Blackstock

What we fight for

● Our central aim is to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain. Without this Party the working class is nothing; with it, it is everything.

● The Communist Party serves the interests of the working class. We fight all forms of opportunism and revisionism in the workers' movement because they endanger those interests. We insist on open ideological struggle in order to fight out the correct way forward for our class.

● Marxism-Leninism is powerful because it is true. Communists relate theory to practice. We are materialists; we hold that ideas are determined by social reality and not the other way round.

● We believe in the highest level of unity among workers. We fight for the unity of the working class of all countries and subordinate the struggle in Britain to the world revolution itself. The liberation of humanity can only be achieved through world communism.

● The working class in Britain needs to strike as a fist. This means all communists should be organised into a single Party. We oppose all forms of separatism, which weakens our class.

● Socialism can never come through parliament. The capitalist class will never peacefully allow their system to be abolished. Socialism will only succeed through working class revolution and the replacement of the dictatorship of the capitalists with the dictatorship of the working class. Socialism lays the basis for the conscious planning of human affairs: ie, communism.

● We support the right of nations to self-determination. In Britain today this means the struggle for Irish freedom should be given full support by the British working class.

● Communists are champions of the oppressed. We fight for the liberation of women, the ending of racism, bigotry and all other forms of chauvinism. Oppression is a direct result of class society and will only finally be eradicated by the ending of class society.

● War and peace, pollution and the environment are class questions. No solution to the world's problems can be found within capitalism. Its ceaseless drive for profit puts the world at risk. The future of humanity depends on the triumph of communism.

We urge all who accept these principles to join us. A Communist Party Supporter reads and fights to build the circulation of the Party's publications; contributes regularly to the Party's funds and encourages others to do the same; where possible, builds and participates in the work of a Communist Party Supporters Group.

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CPB's Rosser stands down

The factional struggle in the so-called Communist Party of Britain came to a head at the June annual general meeting of the People's Press Printing Society (the cooperative which owns the *Morning Star*). Since then a messy purge has been going on, largely behind the scenes. As this is not accompanied by open debate, not least in the columns of the *Star*, political clarification cannot be achieved. Consequently the unity achieved *against* the deposed management committee majority cannot be consolidated in a positive way.

When the CPB political committee discussed the new regime at the *Star* on June 20, all it had to report to the paper's readers was that "good sales ... at trade union conferences ... were no substitute for increased regular daily readers", and that it pledged "CPB support" (*Morning Star* June 22). The first meeting of the new PPPS management committee warranted a similarly anodyne report in the same issue. Ken Cameron, Fire Brigades Union leader, was elected chairman, Carolyn Jones deputy chair and Ann Green fund organiser. Supporters were urged "to make a speedy success of the £120,000 special appeal to launch a daily 12-page paper at the TUC in September".

Those who were hoping to read of the summary dismissal of chief executive Mary Rosser for sacking editor John Haylett and causing the five-week journalists' strike were sorely disappointed. We had to wait until June 26 to learn that she had stood down as PPPS chief executive and secretary, and from the management committee - but only after a replacement had been found. (The missing sport and TV, and the black masthead on that day, were entirely unconnected, being caused by "problems at our typesetters", we were told.)

Rosser started work on the *Star* as fund organiser in 1976, was appointed secretary in 1980 and chief executive in 1983, alongside then editor Tony Chater. In those days it was not the chief executive, but the editor, under the political guidance of the 'official' Communist Party of Great Britain political committee, who was in charge. Rosser was Chater's subordinate, and remained loyal to *him*, not the Party, when he declared independence, dubbing the then Eurocommunist-led CPGB "an outside body" from which he would no longer take instructions. Most of the centrist opposition followed suit, transferring their loyalties to the section of the Party bureaucracy around Chater and Rosser, which subsequently formed the Communist Campaign Group and then the CPB.

The CPB's manner of birth - as a support organisation for the *Star* - determined the inverted relationship between 'party' and paper. In principle, a party needs a paper as its means of expression, to "agitate, educate and organise". In this case, the *Morning Star* needed an organisation of supporters, while the CPB is formally committed to *not* controlling it politically. The tail wags the dog.

Jenny Williams, a management committee member from 1977 to 1995, has agreed to take over as chief executive in August. Once a member of the 'official' CPGB executive committee, she is currently a La-

bour Party member, as is PPPS chairman Ken Cameron.

In Rosser's letter of resignation, she says, "After 22 years, I remain committed to the paper and its future and will, if the committee so wishes, stay and train a successor." Although Rosser and those who supported her against Haylett have acknowledged defeat - "the shareholders have spoken" - some semblance of unity has been maintained in front of the readers. The PPPS special general meeting for the express purpose of *removing* unwanted management committee members failed to materialise: less than 600 signatures were gathered, falling well short of the required 800 or so. At the AGM, Haylett shared the platform with Rosser and Pat Hicks, and spoke of unity, not vengeance.

No one on the staff has been sacked, although Rosser's son-in-law, Paul Corry, resigned as deputy editor immediately after the AGM. The advertisement for a new deputy editor has been replaced by one for a mere news reporter, as Bill Benfield (ex-NCP and now a CPBer) and Mike Ambrose (ex-CPGB and now Labour Party) have both been promoted to the status of deputy. They are responsible for production and news respectively, on the basis of "professional merit rather than political allegiance". Business manager Bob Newland resigned his post after the strike had won Haylett's reinstatement.

Of the "unhealthy elements" on the management committee - those who backed Rosser's sacking of Haylett - Joan Bellamy and Francis Wilcox, both CPB executive committee members, have resigned since the AGM. Only Terry Herbert, Kumar Murshid and Anni Marjoram remain. The latter two are said to be associated with the Socialist Action group and Ken Livingstone.

Shortly after the PPPS AGM Bob Newland also resigned his CPB membership, as his position had been "made impossible". Veteran Peter Pink is one of many others to quit the CPB during the conflict. It remains to be seen whether Mary Rosser, Pat Hicks, Francis Wilcox and North West district secretary Peter Ritman - all suspended in May - wait around long enough for the mid-July CPB executive meeting to decide their fate.

The idea is peddled by the new leadership - both in the CPB and in the PPPS management committee - that the differences were purely personal, that there was no political cause of the *Star*'s recent crisis. In truth the 'revolutionary' reformist *British road to socialism* programme which worships the power of the state *necessitates* the bureaucratic suppression of views and *generates* personal cliques and fiefdoms. The revolutionary struggle for collective self-liberation, on the other hand, requires the open, public conflict of ideas and elevates principle above personal loyalties.

The denial of a political cause, unfortunately, guarantees that one will not be found. Further destructive battles between new rival leadership cliques can be expected a little further down the *British road* ●

Ian Farrell

London Socialist Alliance Unique opportunity

The forthcoming period is an important one for the left in Britain. We face a Labour government which is the most rightwing in history. It has managed almost without opposition to maintain the anti-working class measures of Thatcher and Major. New Labour has openly committed itself to market capitalism and is confident in the belief that its constitutional revolution from above will make it the natural party of government in place of the Tories.

As far as Tony Blair is concerned, the working class is dead. But his smug confidence should not make us despondent. We know that sooner or later there will inevitably be a clash between the masses and their rulers. A financial crash in Japan, say, could produce this remarkably quickly. Our job therefore is to make sure that when that time comes the working class has a viable alternative to Labour - one in which revolutionaries can work alongside reformists, and have the opportunity of becoming the majority. The LSA is a bridge to such a united front.

Auto-Labourism is in deep crisis. The SWP has already declared its intention to stand in elections. Despite the ingrained sectarianism of its leadership, it may be possible to draw this group into cooperation, particularly in the forthcoming elections for a London mayor and assembly. The fact that the SWP has

committed itself to standing against New Labour is a tremendously positive move. It gives us - the rest of the anti-Blair left in London - the chance to involve these comrades in joint work and future unity in the LSA.

There is also a wide body of opinion within the Socialist Labour Party that is not convinced by Scargill's brand of go-it-alonism. Individual SLP members are already active in the LSA. Everyone - not least the SWP and SLP - knows that to be effective in the forthcoming London Assembly, mayoral and Euro elections the left must have unity. With PR we can actually win seats if we field a united slate - the LSA provides a perfect and ready-made vehicle.

To allow our forces to be divided would be a tremendous mistake. Unity can only bring us rewards, especially since no single group can hope to break through alone. On the other hand the 10% threshold for the election of a London Euro MP is within our reach if we forge a united campaign.

Some have said that Ken Livingstone deserves the backing of the left if he stands for mayor. He has an undeserved 'left' reputation from his days of running the Greater London Council. But Livingstone offers nothing apart from a diluted Blairism. More than that, he looks increasingly unlikely to run. He has been using the last few

months in a very effective way. Pushing the claim that he is the most popular choice for London, he is actually angling for a position in government.

Livingstone would be more than willing to relinquish his stated aim of becoming mayor in exchange for a junior position in the reshuffle rumoured to be imminent. Blair might be tempted to offer him something in transport, for example. That would allow Livingstone to build his kudos. More importantly it could help Blair sidetrack any opposition, especially in regard to the privatisation of London Underground. Who better than 'brother' Livingstone to negotiate with the RMT - just when militancy is beginning to bubble.

What concerns us then is not so much the internal shenanigans of the Labour Party as the urgent preparation of a socialist alternative for the forthcoming European and London elections.

The London Socialist Alliance is certain to be the strongest SA in England. We can help in moving forward the whole project if we work together to overcome sectarianism with inclusive democracy, strength through principle, and openness. The general meeting on July 5 will be an important test of our ability to do that. An inclusive project with representation for all organisations and shades is vital. That is what the CPGB motion seeks to achieve ●

Anne Murphy

Motion to the LSA submitted by CPGB

1. The London Socialist Alliance is a united front of socialists. It is open to affiliation from individuals, borough Socialist Alliances, trade union bodies, political and other working class organisations. The Alliance is committed to democratically agreed campaigns on any issue of relevance to furthering the cause of socialism.
2. The Socialist Alliances are not yet party organisations. The structure of the Alliances are based on inclusive not exclusive principles. Minority views are tolerated and given the opportunity to become the majority. The London Socialist Alliance shall hold general meetings to discuss the direction of the Alliance and debate political questions.
3. The London Socialist Alliance steering committee will provide overall political direction and administrative coordination. It will consist of:
 - One delegate per affiliated political organisation.
 - One delegate per borough Socialist Alliance.
 - One delegate per other affiliated organisation.
 - Steering committee meetings shall be open to

non-voting attendance by individual members. All delegates shall be instantly recallable and replaceable by affiliated bodies. The Steering committee shall elect its own officers who are instantly recallable and replaceable.

4. The London Socialist Alliance is committed to a principled orientation to socialists within the Labour Party and progressive political organisations not affiliated to the Socialist Alliance.

5. The London Socialist Alliance recognises no contradiction between building and organising the Alliances in either a bottom-up or top-down manner. Borough Socialist Alliances have full autonomy to organise their own political campaigns and to implement London Socialist Alliance campaigns as they see fit. In addition the London Socialist Alliance will build the Alliances through initiating its own campaigns and where appropriate following the lead of the National Network of Socialist Alliances.