

Inla calls 'complete ceasefire' New strategy

The peace bandwagon is gaining momentum.
The response of communists and revolutionaries
will be crucial

The two weeks since the Omagh bomb have seen a clear strengthening of the British-Irish Agreement and the forces that back it, together with the complete marginalisation of anti-agreement republicans.

Far from wrecking the Good Friday deal, as the bombers had hoped, the August 15 attack has boosted its chances immeasurably. The sheer weight of nationalist opposition to its action forced the Real IRA to make a 180-degree turn. It went within 24 hours from talking of the "ongoing" war against the British occupation of the Six Counties to the "suspension" of military operations. Another factor influencing the ceasefire decision was pressure from Sinn Féin/IRA. According to a republican quoted in *The Guardian*, "They were made an offer they couldn't refuse." With the Real IRA in complete disarray - along with its allies in the 32 County Sovereignty Movement - there is little doubt that its ceasefire will be permanent. The Irish National Liberation Army also announced a "complete ceasefire".

The Sovereignty Movement was founded last year on the rejection of the peace process and the necessity of armed struggle to achieve a united Ireland. Yet last week its co-leader, Bernadette Sands-McKevitt, rang an Irish radio phone-in to profess her belief in a "peaceful route" to Irish unity. She said of the Omagh bombing: "It is condemned. We will not condone it. The loss of innocent lives cannot be justified." But this statement was not enough to prevent the hounding of herself and Michael McKevitt from Dundalk, renowned for its traditional support for intransigent republicanism.

The peace bandwagon is gaining momentum. SF/IRA's central role is becoming more and more explicit. No longer the 'mindless thugs' with allegedly no support in the community, the IRA has become the 'acceptable face of terrorism'. SF is well on the way to achieving the bourgeois respectability it craves.

Tony Blair went out of his way to clear both organisations of any connection with Omagh. Indeed he implied that their transition to

exclusively peaceful means was complete. Writing in the Belfast *Irish News*, he said: "Some want to say it is all really the work of Sinn Féin/IRA. But it was the RUC chief constable, a man of utter integrity, who told me yesterday that they were not connected with it, either explicitly or implicitly, and that there was no evidence it was their material that was used for the bomb. And indeed the purpose of the renegades is clear: to wreck the process we have started, to stop the Good Friday agreement, to portray Sinn Féin as traitors to the cause" (August 18).

David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, had earlier attempted to imply the kind of link so clearly rejected by Blair. If only the IRA had decommissioned its arms, he said, Omagh would have been "impossible". However, in reality this is yet another plea for the IRA to make at least a symbolic hand-over of weapons. That would help relieve the pressure he has been feeling from Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party and his own right wing. Such a gesture would clear the way for SF to participate in the Stormont government, as provided in the British-Irish Agreement.

The combination of Blair's praise and Trimble's cajoling could well have the desired effect. After all, as *The Guardian* states, SF's condemnation of the Omagh bomb "is seen as a step on the way to breaking the impasse over the proposed Northern Ireland cabinet" (August 19).

Notwithstanding his attempt to besmirch SF/IRA with the Omagh mud, Trimble went out of his way to attend the catholic funeral in the Republic of three boys killed by the bomb. He sat just a few metres from SF president Gerry Adams in the Buncrana church. His presence was doubly significant in that he could have chosen to attend instead a protestant funeral in the Six Counties. It symbolised not only the all-Ireland nature of the imperialist settlement, but also its inclusion of imperialism's former enemies.

It is not only intransigent nationalists who have been marginalised by the Omagh shock waves. Extreme un-

ionists have also been wrong-footed. Their call for the early release of IRA prisoners to be abandoned seemed particularly inept and out of place. Peter Robinson, the DUP deputy leader, even made a pathetic call for the Irish border to be sealed - flying in the face of the peace consensus epitomised by Trimble's solemn appearance in Buncrana.

The Daily Telegraph too seemed to have lost all sense of reality, declaring that "everyone can see that terrorism is winning in Ulster" (August 22). Despite acknowledging that the Good Friday agreement is likely to produce an imperialist stability, the *Telegraph* cannot bring itself to accept that imperialism was unable to inflict a military defeat on the IRA. It called on Blair to "halt the prisoner releases, and insist on decommissioning". But these two demands are not necessarily linked, since "to turn loose convicted murderers, many of whom sympathise with the dissidents who planted the Omagh bomb, is madness". The *Telegraph* wants to wish away Blair's inability to forcibly disarm the IRA, apparently believing that decommissioning can steam ahead without a single IRA prisoner being set free in exchange.

Ironically, calls for the introduction of the type of measure long advocated by *The Daily Telegraph* are now finding a ready response in the aftermath of Omagh. Both the British and Irish parliaments are to be recalled next week in order to rush through new legislation. According to the Irish taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, the proposed measures will be "extremely draconian" - ie, thoroughly anti-democratic. Northern Ireland secretary Mo Mowlam boasted that the changes would result in the "strongest ever anti-terrorist measures across the whole of the island".

In addition to the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which already gives the police wide-ranging powers to stop and search, arrest, question and detain suspects, a new batch of measures are to be introduced. Speaking in Belfast, Blair declared a further assault on the right to silence, together with what is euphemistically described as 'lowering the standards of

proof' of membership of an illegal organisation. This actually means that no proof at all is required to convict - merely the sworn statement of a chief superintendent in the Six Counties. In other words, it amounts to internment under another name.

In the Republic of Ireland internment is still on the statute book, although it was never used during the revolutionary situation that gripped the Six Counties from 1969. It is the isolation of the dissident republican minority which has made these measures not only possible, but workable. Whereas the imprisonment without trial of 600 nationalists in 1971 only succeeded in boosting recruitment to the IRA, today only a handful of Real IRA and Continuity Army Council militants would be lifted. As Ian Aitken wrote in *The Guardian*, "What we are talking about now is, by common consent, a few score at the most. Even the ordinary citizens of Dundalk know who they are, and want to see the back of them" (August 25).

Aitken was not the only one to sing the praises of internment. Trimble called on the British government to follow the Republic's lead and reintroduce it in the Six Counties - otherwise 'terrorists' would simply move up north to escape detention. He was of course implying despite himself that greater institutionalised north-south coordination was desirable.

Like Trimble's UUP, SF is banking everything on the Good Friday deal. That is why Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness were at first extremely reluctant to oppose the anti-democratic measures. Not wishing to appear to protect the Real IRA, they contented themselves with questioning the wisdom and necessity of the proposals. No doubt recalling how their own comrades have previously borne the brunt of the state's onslaught, they later expressed more forceful opposition. Despite that, today, far from waging war against the British state, SF is on the verge of participating in its institutions at the highest level - the Stormont government.

SF/IRA's abandonment of revolutionary anti-imperialism has left a vacuum. The Real IRA and the CAC have clearly demonstrated that individual acts of terror and 'business as usual' nationalism are at present unable to fill the void. The Irish Republican Socialist Party seems at last to have recognised this.

Its military wing, the Irish National

Liberation Army, announced that it had "accepted the advice and analysis" of the IRSP in declaring its "complete ceasefire". To underline the finality of this announcement Inla apologised for "grievous errors in the prosecution of the war". Quite rightly however, the statement added that Inla "had nothing to apologise for in taking the war to the British and their loyalist henchmen".

Belatedly recognising the ending of the revolutionary situation ("the political situation has changed"), the Inla leaders correctly stated that "armed struggle can never be the only option for revolutionaries". Unfortunately all too often in the past self-declared Irish socialists have relied almost exclusively on military methods, in practice constituting themselves as no more than the left wing of nationalism.

IRSP leaders have declared themselves in favour of Marxism, Leninism and the working class. They are formally committed to the idea of a Communist Party. They, along with all Irish revolutionaries and socialists, must ensure that 30 years of struggle are not wasted. In the new situation, just as much as before, their central task is the striving for working class hegemony, building on the achievements of the last three decades. However, the Inla and IRSP statements contain no hint of the strategy necessary in the changed circumstances. Inla refers to allowing "the working classes the time and opportunity to advance their demands and their needs". The IRSP talks vaguely of a commitment to "agitate for and represent Irish working class interests" (see p6 for full statements).

For revolutionaries who recognise that the armed struggle has reached a dead end, for those who want to break out of the sterile confines of nationalism, there is a logical next step. The ending of the revolutionary situation in the Six Counties, and therefore its possible spread to the south, means that Ireland is no longer the exception to the rule. Communists must as a first principle organise against their own state.

There must be a political struggle, uniting revolutionaries against the British state on both sides of the Irish Sea. The working class must lead a single struggle for democracy, for a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, for a united Ireland. We need a Communist Party of the United Kingdom ●

Jim Blackstock

Party notes

Perspectives '99

The next Party aggregate in mid-September will take two reports which represent the beginning of our discussions around *Perspectives '99*, our annually produced outline of the tasks facing us over the coming year. One will examine our work in the Socialist Alliances in the aftermath of the important Network launch conference in Rugby on September 5. The second, linked to this first item, will look at the challenges facing our organisation in the key field of elections as they loom in Scotland, Wales and London.

Traditionally, the *Perspectives* documents do not minutely dissect the tasks and prospects set out in the previous year's plan. This is not - as rather insidiously suggested in the past - because the authors of *Perspectives* have a vested interest in blocking post-mortems of Party actions. The leadership has been accused by some malcontents of wishing to avoid drawing up proper balance sheets of past activity, of consciously failing to properly weigh the positives and negatives in our work.

In fact, the critical evaluation of our ongoing work should not be stored up for an annual internal document. This should be a constant process, both via internal material and in the pages of our open press, promoted by every level of the organisation. The *Perspectives* document for any given year thus attempts to build on and incorporate constructive criticisms of the weaknesses identified by *continual* self-evaluation over the preceding 12 months.

Certainly, this column honestly attempts to air problems in our Party that the leadership, or sections of it, identify in regular reviews. But realistically, we must say that members at every level of the Party remain too passive, reflecting a lack of active engagement. This is a fault that we will pay ongoing attention to.

Numerically, our Party has suffered some setbacks over the past year or so. Most disappointing was the sub-political implosion of two leading comrades in Scotland, weakening the work of communists there during this important period. Opponents of our organisation, bruised by us in other tussles, have rubbed themselves into little paroxysms of glee as they point out "dwindling numbers, resignations, calls for liquidation and stalled unity" (Nick Long *Weekly Worker* August 20). In fact, I believe that the project that this organisation is in being to promote - that of a reformed Communist Party - has actually made some quite important advances over the last year.

We cannot boast of numbers, although it would be too easy to exaggerate the extent of our losses. We have made *important* new recruits over the recent period and have a small new layer of *active* supporters around our ranks that we must look to integrate quickly. However, our real strength is our strategic positioning in relation to the crisis of the rest of the left and the evolution of social democracy. This could be summarised under two headings:

● *For democratic centralism!* As meltdown overtakes one section of the left after another, the need for genuine democratic centralism - defended uniquely by this communist collective - becomes more glaringly apparent. Far from this being a technical question, as foolishly suggested by so many groups we polemicise with, it is in fact a key *political* prerequisite of the fight for a genuine communist programme. As the glass-bubble unity of sects begins to fracture under the intense atmospheric pressure surrounding them, partisans of the working class are left blinking at the truly dismal picture of the endless multiplication of smaller and smaller mono-idea grouplets (logically leading to 'organisations' based on one household or one individual). The revolutionary left must start to take its responsibilities to the working class more seriously. Democratic centralism - a political principle of communist organisation championed by the CPGB - is the answer.

● *For independent working class politics!* The struggle for proletarian independence is characteristic of Leninism. The evolution of Blair's Labour away from links with working class politics of any kind poses a problem to much of the British left. Sections have characteristically responded by thrashing around to find something else to tail - whether it be Scottish and Welsh nationalism, or the greens. Since our origins as a faction in the Party in the early 1980s, the struggle of Leninists in the CPGB has been to re-equip the vanguard of our class with a genuine revolutionary programme. The fight to defend and advance this process has taken some important steps forward since the last *Perspectives* discussion, notably around the struggle for clarity, openness and democratic inclusion in the Socialist Alliances.

The leadership has not yet itself discussed *Perspectives '99* at any length, but there are a few points around which it has developed a consensus already.

First, the ongoing struggle to develop the theory of the organisation is critical. Opportunities for communist intervention in wider forums or movements are strictly limited at the moment, whatever the befuddled and tail-chasing elements of the left tell us. This allows us a certain 'luxury', a space in which to deepen our understanding of Marxism. Thought must be given to broadening Party education and more general theoretical work over the coming year.

As reported in last week's column, the leadership believes that this year's Communist University actually presented us in outline form with our "real theoretical and programmatic task" for coming years - "the struggle against *economism*" (*Weekly Worker* August 20). The emphasis on developing the theory of the Party, at least in part in struggle against this degenerate form of 'working class politics', is not counterposed to developing the infrastructure of our organisation in 1999 - the two should be symbiotic, after all. A relative weight on the systematic development of Party theory is key, however.

We are hardly happy about our numerical weakness and - as I always warn in this column and elsewhere - we must avoid the danger of becoming sanguine about it when we look at our other strengths. Recruits *must* be assiduously fought for, the structures of the organisation tenaciously built and members retained. Nevertheless, our ideas and the fight for them have ensured that we are well positioned politically and this will be the key to our longer-term success.

To focus comrades' minds, centre will ensure that cell secretaries are supplied with written discussion materials relating to this debate. Cell secretaries must ensure that *Perspectives* discussions are on agendas before the September aggregate, even if not yet as a major item ●

Mark Fischer, national organiser

Setting our own agenda

In his letter ('Protect young' *Weekly Worker* August 20) comrade Martin Jennings suggests that the removal of the age of consent will open the way for the sexual "exploitation" of the young by those who are more "advanced than they are in their sexuality" and that the presence of a law will protect them from such abuse. Not only is this a dangerous misconception; it also misses the main point for raising the demand in the first place.

The sexual "exploitation" of youth would still continue even in the unlikely event that the present ages of consent for straight and gay sex were equalised at 14. So communists should not get involved in juggling with a 'correct' age of consent - the 'correct' time to indulge in any sexual activity will be different for each individual, but they themselves should have the right to decide when they are ready. Anyway, who is to say that individuals at 18 are not still open to sexual exploitation by others more "advanced" in their sexuality? How do we counteract this? *Raise* the age of consent? Indeed, should we allow the state itself to determine what exactly exploitation means? No. The state must not be allowed to set a political agenda which determines who should sleep with whom and under what conditions this should take place.

It is also important to point out that the CPGB makes the call for the abolition of the age of consent not as any isolated, single-issue campaign, but one which is linked to wider political demands to transform our class - from the position with which it accepts the understanding that it needs to be governed to one that elevates itself to a governing position. It gives workers in Britain the politics to challenge the capitalist class and transforms our class into a *new* ruling class. This is an important point to grasp. We do not campaign for the ruling class to grant our demands so as to strengthen official Britain. We campaign for these demands to be won using our methods, ranging from protest meetings and strikes to workers' councils of action. We fight for democratic rights on our terms - the age of consent representing one of the most basic of these demands.

Bob Paul
East London

SWP communist

Being a lifelong communist I don't see the reason why the far left is split into fractions and ignoring the words of Karl Marx, "Workers of the world, unite".

Though being a member of one of these 'fractions' (the Socialist Workers Party) I am an advocate of practically all far left organisations as they all strive for the same thing: peace, socialism and internationalism.

The question that I am trying to put across is why is the left split. Is it due to differences in ideals and how to get them, or is it because of ambitious career politicians we are so used to seeing in the major parties?

Carl Taylor
Nottingham

Cuba invites

Please thank the participants in the Communist University '98 for the warmly received revolutionary greetings which they sent to the 11th conference of the International Communist Esperantist Collective (IKEK).

Our organisation aims to link communist Esperantists together and to

use the international language to assist international relations in the labour movement, especially the communist parties and other class struggle parties. IKEK and its bi-monthly journal *Internaciisto* are open to all tendencies in the workers' movement.

I am pleased to invite readers of the *Weekly Worker* to learn Esperanto, contribute articles to *Internaciisto*, and participate in the 12th conference of IKEK, which will be held in Cuba at the end of 1999.

Mayra Núñez Hernández
IKEK secretary
Cuba

Injury to all

The rationale given by the US imperialists for bombing the Khartoum pharmaceuticals factory is because of its 'capacity' to create components for VX nerve gas.

What the US government doesn't - and won't - tell you is that components for this particular type of nerve gas can be made at any pharmaceutical facility. VX is one of the simpler chemical weapons to make, which is why it is a favourite of terrorists. This medicine factory is located in the middle of the industrial district of the Sudanese capital. It was considered a 'showpiece' of the economic growth of eastern Africa, and foreign dignitaries - including those from the US - often toured the site on official visits.

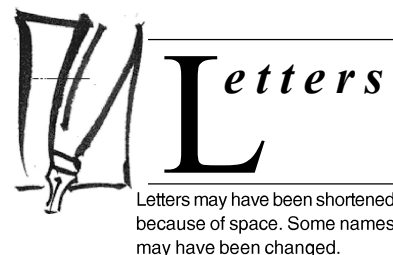
According to the Sudanese information minister, the plant was privately owned, financed partially by the Nairobi-based Preferential Trade Area Bank, and commissioned two years ago. Osama bin Laden had no role in the functioning of the pharmaceutical company. The closest possible links involve the construction company that built the building.

Many people have felt compelled to question the timing of this attack in light of the ongoing investigation into Clinton's private affairs. At the beginning of this week, people around the world saw Clinton finally admit that he had a sexual relationship with former intern Monica Lewinsky. Much like the weeks before, this week's headlines were dominated by stories about Lewinsky, the Clintons, independent prosecutor Kenneth Starr, etc, *ad nauseam*. And, of course, the US military strikes do mean that Lewinsky may very well be relegated to inside pages.

Because of this, many people viewed the bombings as a real-life version of the movie *Wag the Dog*. In the movie, a US president is caught in a bedroom with a girl scout. But there is an important difference between the movie and real life here. In real life, the bombings were real, the deaths were real; there is no Hollywood magic littering the streets of Khartoum. There are no blue screens, no matte overlays, no wardrobe department - except that of Clinton himself.

Often times, in the rush to demonise a foe, the media in this country - acting as the mouthpiece of the imperialists - suffers from a selective memory loss. In analysing the origins and history of bin Laden, one finds very interesting details hidden under the media fury.

What do bin Laden and Manuel Noriega, former leader of Panama, have in common? Both of them were at one time on the payroll of the CIA. In fact, bin Laden received much of his military training and equipment from the US government. His CIA training comes from his days working as an intermediary between the US and the mujahedin terrorists in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Many of these mujahedin terrorists were trained at the very air base Clinton



bombed on Thursday. In light of the links between bin Laden and the CIA, one can only look at the bombings on Thursday as a case of a falling out among thieves.

Malcolm X referred to the Kennedy assassination in 1963 as a case of "chickens coming home to roost". In many ways, the emerging conflict between bin Laden and his former paymasters is also a case of chickens coming home to roost. Bin Laden served his imperialist masters well during the 1980s. But he became disillusioned with the US after the Gulf War, and went into business for himself. The US instantly labelled him a "terrorist," ignoring the fact that he was still in the personnel files of the CIA.

And all of this culminated Thursday when, without any direct evidence linking bin Laden to the bombings, the US sent missiles into Sudan and Afghanistan.

The Marxist Workers' Group condemns the US terror bombings in Sudan and Afghanistan. At the same time, we also stand against the car-bombings of the two imperialist embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The attacks on both embassies, designed to attack only the US, succeeded in killing innocent workers at and near each facility. Hundreds of office workers, maintenance personnel and embassy staffers native to Kenya and Tanzania were killed in the blast.

This is the usual fruit of individual terror - the deaths of workers. For this reason, we can give no quarter to individual terrorism, which represents the methods and ideology of the ruling class. However, we must point out that it is the long track record of imperialist domination and oppression that led to the development of such groups in the first place.

The working class worldwide must rally to the defence of these semi-colonial countries against US imperialism. We must understand that such US government terrorism is really intended to bolster American imperialism in its quest for continuing world domination. But the working class has much more in common with its brothers and sisters internationally than with its 'own' imperialist ruling class. As the imperialists murder innocent workers in Sudan and Afghanistan, they are also attacking workers at home. While they bomb a main medical supply facility in a country wracked by famine and disease, they are cutting welfare and medical benefits to poor people here. And while they search the globe for cheap, exploitable labour, they cut jobs, wages and benefits in the US.

But the working class, united in struggle around the world, could fight back against all of this. The historic principle of the labour movement, "an injury to one is an injury to all," must be raised once again to the forefront of working class struggles. And it must be made international.

Whenever imperialism seeks to oppress working class people internationally, including by attacking impoverished semi-colonial countries, workers here must respond with their most powerful weapon - the ability to shut down production.

It is the working class that built this country and it is the working class that can shut it down. Strike action in defence of our working class sisters and brothers around the world is a more powerful weapon than anything the imperialists can pull from their arsenal.

Marxist Workers' Group
Detroit, USA

From **The Call**, paper of the British Socialist Party, August 22 1918

The Russian workers in power

Great interest was occasioned by the publication recently in *The Call* of Lenin's article on 'What are the soviets?' We are privileged to publish the following additional exposition of the fundamentals underlying the soviet form of administration, specially written by a well informed Russian socialist.

The form of government which is now established in Russia and is known by the name of 'soviet government' is remarkably characteristic, and differs entirely from the usual parliamentarianism of western Europe. One must study it, or rather watch it, in order to grasp all the details of the regime, all its merits and its shortcomings.

... The soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasants' delegates came into being at the time of the revolution of the Russian democracy in the struggle for its rights. To begin with, they were organs of revolutionary struggle, and when this struggle ended in a victory for the workers and peasants, the soviets became organs of government. The soviet government is the organ of the dictatorship of the working class and peasantry.

Every government is the dictatorship of one or more classes of society over the others ... In a society divided into classes the government is always an institution with whose help the ruling and exploiting classes invariably assert their powers over the oppressed and exploited sections of society. Therefore every government takes the form of a dictatorship, open or veiled, strict or lenient ...

Thus the government of soviets is an instrument of the dictatorship of the workers and peasants over the classes who until recently had exploited them - ie, over the capitalists and big landowners. The Russian revolutionaries openly acknowledge this. They recognise that this dictatorship cannot and must not disappear until the power of the counterrevolution is completely broken, until an end is made of the division of society into classes - in short until the socialist order is firmly established.

Until then a regime of dictatorship is unavoidable, be it a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over the workers and peasants or vice versa. In all the belligerent countries of western Europe, where freedom and liberty have been so drastically curtailed, a regime of bourgeois dictatorship now prevails ...

Being an organ of the dictatorship of the workers and peasants, the soviet government does not recognise the political rights of any but these classes. Consequently the right to elect delegates to the soviet and be elected is restricted to those who earn their living by productive or social work ...

Each town or village elects its soviet of workers' and peasants' delegates. The government in this town or village is entirely in the hands of this soviet ...

The soviets and congresses meet only periodically for the decision of questions of paramount importance. For less important business the soviet or congress elects from its own body a rather large executive committee ... The delegates to all the soviets are elected for three months only, after which they must present themselves for re-election. The elections in factories and works are carried out in proportion to the number of workers. The unemployed ballot separately. Delegates may be recalled at any time and replaced by others.

At first every three months and, according to the new rules, now every six months, there is an All-Russian Congress of Soviets ... The All-Russian Congress elects from its own body a central executive committee of 200 members, which governs the country during the periods between the meetings of the Congress. This executive committee has full power while it holds office ...

These institutions are a product of the Revolution, and only in this setting can they exist and further develop their activities ●

1918

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Russian Revolution
this week 80 years ago

Scottish Socialist Alliance

The fantasy world of Dave Craig

Dave Craig's article 'Open letter not published' (*Weekly Worker* August 20) is but another example of the tendency to substitute hard reality with wishful thinking when it comes to questions of political organisation and principle.

Apparently we are to believe that the two-strong Campaign for a Federal Republic is one of the "three main affiliated component organisations of the Scottish Socialist Alliance". This makes it appear as though the CFR - which, being a closed organisation devoid of a revolutionary programme and the perspectives to carry it out, can only but be at best a democratic-reformist campaign - is the third force in the SSA. Clearly a fantasy. Comrade Craig did not attend the recent SSA conference to see for himself where the CFR is heading. Neither however does he appear to have studied the reports published in the *Weekly Worker*. Significantly he ignores the events of March this year when Mary Ward and Nick Clarke - who now grandly call themselves the CFR - left the CPGB and in truth ceased to occupy any position of influence within the SSA.

Comrade Craig is critical of the fact that the Socialist Party sees the SSA as "only SML and the rest"; that all non-SML forces are "presented not as definite tendencies with particular policies, but a grey, amorphous blob". But, notwithstanding this 'natural' attitude of the SP, how can it be doubted that SML has been and continues to be the *main* driving force behind the SSA? Moreover any study of reality would leave you in no doubt that SML is also in the driving seat when it comes to political questions.

SML has since its foundation plied a course directly to a nationalist socialism broadly along the lines advocated by Joseph Pilsudski in Poland - against Luxemburg and Lenin and their international socialism he stood for a break-up of the tsarist empire. All other currents - including those comrade Craig omitted - have actively

connived at this strategy or been swept along in its wake. Not only Allan Green, the Scottish Socialist Movement rump, the tattered Communist Party of Scotland, the Red Republicans and a clot of ex-SNPer; but also the CFR - who pre-empted and anticipated SML's split with Peter Taaffe and the Socialist Party by resigning their CPGB membership, citing the period of reaction and the pull of bourgeois life - ie, political burn-out.

What of comrade Craig's 'second force' in the SSA? The Red Republicans are in truth 'red' nationalists. They have no problem with a separate Scottish organisation - in fact they positively advocate the organisational break-up of the British working class. Their only criticism of the proposed SSP stems from economism and a pseudo-leftist opposition to taking seats in parliament. They positively advocate a separate Scotland. They might want it to be called a "Scottish workers' republic", as opposed to SML's "independent socialist Scotland", but in reality they are both covers for national separatism. Both the Red Republicans and SML argue that the break-up of Britain along national lines will unleash the forces for socialism. They are nationalists first and socialists second. The contradiction is obvious.

Meanwhile the CFR sends letters off to the Socialist Party in England and Wales in the vain hope that it will side with the Campaign's opposition to the formation of the SSP (predictably the SP refuses to print them in *The Socialist*). Funny that Dave Craig does not consider this trajectory not only as a bit of joke, but something *demanding* criticism. Comrade Craig should take sides: against right liquidationism; for Partyism. After all he has seen these two comrades resign from an all-Britain revolutionary organisation in the midst of an energetic struggle against separatism in Scotland. They condemned our categorisation of SML as

'national socialist' - for these 'Leninists' it was too harsh and counterproductive. They deserted their former comrades, complaining of "an intolerable internal regime" - we use terrible words like "foolish" and "opportunism", and operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Were they right or wrong?

SML, the SSA majority and the SP watched them lay down arms. Indeed at a meeting on the SSP earlier this year, Allan Green, secretary of the SSA, assured those present that there would be no more threat to the SSP project from the CPGB as the Dundee comrades had resigned. In effect the coast was now clear for the project of nationalism to proceed. Now the CFR pathetically appeal to comrade Taaffe to come to their aid. This is very revealing. Comrade Taaffe not only gave the go-ahead for SML in the first place, but he has an *explicitly reformist* programme himself.

Despite lacking an organised arm in Scotland, the *Weekly Worker* remains the only principled and effective opposition to the nationalism of SML. We have a history of involving it in open struggle - something which is actually quite alien to its culture.

Comrades Mary Ward and Nick Clarke walked away from their duties and responsibilities as CPGB members in order to constitute themselves as a ginger group in the SSA/SSP. How can they now convince anybody? They have degraded and belittled the fight for a federal republic by separating it from the revolutionary programme and the fight to reforge the CPGB - to which everything should be subordinated.

Dave Craig has the best of intentions, I am sure. He wants to draw these comrades back from the wilderness. But that will not be done by flattering and elevating two embittered lost souls. It is practice that shows the truth, not labels ●

Anne Murphy

action

■ CPGB seminars

London - August 30 - 'Anarchism - Bakunin model', using Hal Draper's *Karl Marx's theory of revolution* as a study guide.
For more details call 0181-459 7146.

Manchester: September 1 - 'The commodity', in the series on Karl Marx's *Capital*, vol 1, chapter 1.
For details, phone 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.

■ Southwark Socialist Alliance

Public meeting on 'The fight against poverty pay in the NHS'.
Horseshoe pub, Melior Place, Snowfields (at the back of Guy's Hospital, Bermondsey. 7-30pm, September 8.
Speakers: Ian Driver (former Southwark socialist councillor), Glenn Kelly (national secretary, Campaign for a Fighting Democratic Union).

■ Haringey Socialist Alliance

Public meeting - 'Privatisation: what is it and should we fight it?'
September 1, 7pm. Prince of Wales pub, Finsbury Road/Trinity Road (off Bounds Green Road), London N22.

■ Scottish Socialist Alliance

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■ Hillingdon hospital workers fight on

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Economic struggle

Ian Donovan of *Revolution and Truth* replies to 'Trotskyite economism or revolutionary democracy?' *Weekly Worker* July 30

My critique of the 'Revolutionary Democratic Communist' platform has evidently struck a raw nerve, judging by Jack Conrad and Dave Craig's lengthy attempts to refute its central points. Their replies only underline the convergence of the tendencies represented by these comrades, despite their different origins in Stalinism and Cliffism, how the Stalinoid methodology of Jack Conrad complements comrade Craig's 'democratic' caricature of Leninism. Given his non-Stalinist background, one wonders what comrade Craig thinks of the title 'Trotskyite economism or revolutionary democracy?' under which his reply was published. No doubt he will feel some embarrassment that this title includes the infamous Stalinist swearword 'Trotskyite', with its overtones of Stalin's *Short Course*. Jack Conrad can not deal seriously with Trotskyism without revealing his ingrained anti-Trotskyist prejudice.

One of the most insidious aspects of Stalinism was the manufacturing of a cult of Lenin, his elevation to virtual sainthood, the mummification of his body and all. Jack has not broken from this. The CPGB have often accused 'Trotskyites' of quoting Trotsky as if he was a god. Yet here are comrades Conrad and Craig quoting Lenin's words as holy writ, about matters far removed from the questions at stake in this discussion. Comrade Conrad refers to himself as a 'Leninist' - indeed, the predecessor publication of the *Weekly Worker* was titled *The Leninist*. So why does he not refer to himself as a 'Leninite', in the same manner in which he dismisses 'Trotskyites'? Because for Jack Lenin is a secular god, whose words, irrespective of context, are the ultimate trump-card in discussions with 'Trotskyites'. Thus he states on the subject of bourgeois-democratic revolution:

"Indeed, comrade Donovan seems convinced that the democracy in an 'advanced bourgeois democracy that is today's Britain' resulted from what he calls the 'bourgeois-democratic revolution': ie, a historically necessary and predetermined stage between feudal and capitalist society. No doubt Lenin too took the bourgeois democratic revolution as axiomatic. But he never let a bad theory get in the way of a good revolution. His thought was rich and dialectical, his revolutionary will was unequalled. Fixed categories were an anathema. Hence the 'bourgeois democratic' revolution in Russia would in his programme be carried out against tsarism and the bourgeoisie by an alliance of the proletariat and peasantry."

Jack is on dangerous ground, in this explicit defence of the strategy of the 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'. Firstly, however, his statement that Lenin's revolutionary will was "unequalled" cannot go unchallenged. How does one measure revolutionary will? Was the will of Lenin, who had the opportunity to lead the revolution (and did it splendidly) in a period of revolutionary upswing, greater than those such as Trotsky who struggled against the stream in the face of the greatest defeats in history, which Lenin did not live to see? I think not, and comrade Conrad's gushing phraseology is alien to genuine Leninism.

In order to lead the October Revolution, Lenin had to abandon his theory of the 'democratic dictatorship', the aim of which was a provisional revolutionary government of workers and radical peasant parties that would inaugurate the unfettered development of capitalism in Russia. Lenin advocated a bourgeois-democratic revolution of a special type, in which the role of revolutionary government of the Jacobin type (clearing out the medieval barriers to capitalist development) would be played by the 'democratic dictatorship', while only after a whole *stage* of capitalist development would socialist revolution become materially possible. In 1905 he wrote:

"The democratic revolution is a bourgeois revolution. The slogan of a Black Redistribution, or 'land and liberty' - this most widespread slogan of the peasant masses, downtrodden and ignorant - is a bourgeois slogan. But we Marxists should know that there is not, nor can there be, any other path to real freedom for the proletariat and the peasantry, than the path of bourgeois freedom and bourgeois progress. We must not forget that there is not, nor can there be, at the present time, any other means of bringing socialism nearer, than complete political liberty, than a democratic republic, than the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry..." (*Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, Peking, p123).

This is a theory of *stages*: first a bourgeois-democratic revolution (though due to the cowardice of the bourgeoisie, carried out in a novel way by the proletariat and the peasantry) laying the basis for capitalist development under 'democratic' conditions to 'bring socialism nearer'. The 'democratic dictatorship' was thus synonymous with 'bourgeois freedom and bourgeois progress'. In other words, with a bourgeois-democratic republic. Lenin held this position until the outbreak of the February revolution of 1917, when it was proved wrong. Wrong, because a bourgeois republic had been achieved, and yet the main democratic questions that affected the peasantry were unsolved, with the support for the *status quo* of the 'democratic' representatives of the peasantry. This proved to Lenin that it was impossible to solve the democratic questions by means of a 'democratic' dictatorship - thus he wrote the *April Theses*, setting a course for the establishment of something rather different from the 'democratic dictatorship' - the overthrow of the bourgeoisie - in order to begin socialist tasks straightaway, side by side with democratic tasks. When Lenin returned to Russia and began advocating this strategic change in the programme of the Bolsheviks, many of his comrades (who still adhered to the 'democratic dictatorship') believed he had simply gone mad!

Indeed, Lenin "never let a bad theory get in the way of a good revolution". But the 'theory' concerned was the '*democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry*'. What was established in November 1917 was a proletarian *class* dictatorship, supported by the peasantry, whose aim was the wholesale uprooting of capitalism in the cities, concurrently

with carrying out democratic tasks. Lenin did not develop a theory to replace the 'democratic dictatorship'. But in practice, he had embraced the *permanent revolution*, that had earlier been formulated by Trotsky and Parvus in 1906:

"*The proletariat in power will stand before the peasantry as the class which has emancipated it.* The domination of the proletariat will mean not only democratic equality, free self-government, the transference of the whole burden of taxation to the rich classes, the dissolution of the standing army in the armed people and the abolition of compulsory church imposts, but also recognition of all revolutionary changes (expropriations) in land relationships carried out by the peasants. The proletariat will make these changes the starting point for further state measures in agriculture."

"... The very fact of the proletariat's representatives entering the government, not as powerless hostages, but as the leading force, destroys the borderline between maximum and minimum programme; that is to say, it places *collectivism on the order of the day*. The point at which the proletariat will be held up in its advance in this direction depends on the relation of forces, but in no way upon the original intentions of the proletarian party."

"For this reason there can be no talk of any sort of *special* form of proletarian dictatorship in the bourgeois revolution, of *democratic* proletarian dictatorship (or dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry). The working class cannot preserve the democratic character of its dictatorship without refraining from overstepping the limits of its democratic programme. Any illusions on this point would be fatal. They would compromise social democracy from the very start."

"Left to its own resources, the working class of Russia will inevitably be crushed by the counterrevolution the moment the peasantry turns its back on it. It will have no alternative but to link the fate of its political rule, and hence, the fate of the whole Russian revolution, with the fate of the socialist revolution in Europe. That colossal state-political power given it by a temporary conjuncture of circumstances in the Russian bourgeois revolution it will cast into the scales of the class struggle of the entire capitalist world. With state power in its hands, with counterrevolution behind it and with European reaction in front of it, it will send forth to its comrades the world over the old rallying cry, which this time will be a call for the last attack: *Workers of all countries, unite!*" (*Leon Trotsky Results and Prospects*).

As a prediction of the actual course of the revolution, these passages are far superior to Lenin's 'democratic dictatorship'. Thus the main organiser of the insurrection was Trotsky, while 'old Bolsheviks' like Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev (who adhered to Lenin's old schema) played a marginal role, and at worst broke discipline (in the latter two cases) and *denounced* the plans to seize power. So when Jack recommends the approach to 'democratic' questions of the 'democratic dictatorship', against 'economistic Trotskyites', he is behaving as a Stalinist-trained philistine. The thought of both Trotsky and Lenin developed through contradictions

before 1917, notably in Trotsky's case with regard to what kind of party was necessary to carry out the permanent revolution. In Lenin's case, there was non-linear development on the nature of the party and the revolution itself. These happened at different times and over different events, but neither of these great Marxists should be treated as infallible.

Comrade Conrad then underlines that the RDCT platform, with its 'revolutionary democratic' emphasis, is closely linked to third campism. He refers to Max Shachtman and Tony Cliff as 'post-Trotsky revolutionaries'. Does he also think Karl Kautsky was a 'revolutionary'? For Kautsky was the real originator of the social democratic theories of an 'exploitative' USSR, and in terms of political profile, his career runs parallel with the others. While Kautsky only maintained token opposition to World War I on social-pacifist grounds and later supported the anti-Bolshevik cause in the 1918-21 civil war, Shachtman's theory of 'bureaucratic collectivism' led him to support US imperialism's invasion of Cuba in 1961, since western 'democracy' was allegedly better than totalitarian 'bureaucratic collectivism'. Cliff supported British troops being sent into Northern Ireland in 1969, and later, in a manner reminiscent of Shachtman, supported the Afghan 'holy warriors' backed by the west against 'bureaucratic state capitalism' in the 1980s. I do not consider such positions 'revolutionary', and if that is the way Jack is heading it is no wonder he is eager to make overtures to Sean Matgamna (another hero of the 'third camp'), hailing his marginal, pale pink stance over the Irish 'peace process' as "principled", etc. As Steve Riley noted, this points to a "disturbing uncommunist future" (*Weekly Worker* July 30). This is particularly visible when Jack opines that "... workers refused to lift a finger to save the Soviet Union. It isn't worth fighting for", they said." Thus, though he refrained from answering my point that the PCC's new position implied that it was correct to support Solidarnosc, others may be disturbed by this remark.

Jack Conrad lambastes me for having "such difficulty with the derisive term 'bureaucratic socialism' when we attach it to the Soviet Union. It is, comrade, a contradiction in terms, an oxymoron, which, yes, accurately describes the paradoxical reality of the Soviet Union under Stalin and onwards. In the name of socialism the bureaucracy ruled." And Conrad goes on: "It is taken for granted, if not gospel, [by Trotskyites like comrade Donovan - ed] that the Soviet Union was a form of workers' state. Yet by his own admission democracy was completely absent. The comrade is thereby drawn inexorably to dismiss or downplay the centrality of democracy and self-activity for the whole socialist-communist project. Where Marx and Engels declared that 'the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves', comrade Donovan considers that, initially at least, another social force can substitute ... The theory of deformed workers' states underlines the point. 'Socialism' was, according to our Trotskyite comrades, brought to eastern Europe, China, Vietnam, North Korea, Cambodia, etc not by the self-activity of the workers themselves. It followed either the tank tracks of Stalin's Red Army or the car-tyre sandals of peasant party armies."

Oh, the zeal of the neophyte! This has been the staple of Cliffism for 50 years. 'Bureaucratic socialism' was indeed a contradiction in terms, but it is outrageous to contend that 'Trotskyists' had anything to do with such fallacies. *Jack* may have characterised the Soviet Union, China, etc as 'bureaucratic socialism', but no Trotskyist ever did. When he states that according to Trotskyists "socialism" was brought about by Russian tanks and "peasant party armies", he is projecting his own Stalinist understanding onto those who opposed him at the time. Indeed, he *still* doesn't really understand why Trotskyists opposed 'socialism in one country', otherwise he could not attribute to Trotskyists the fallacies of his own former 'world communist movement'.

It is understandable why comrade Conrad should, given his origins in ultra-hard-line Stalinism, express sensitivity about "the centrality of democracy and self-activity for the whole socialist-communist project". Here the neophyte is talking again. But Trotskyists have always been well aware of the centrality of the working class, its class consciousness and its irreplaceable role in socialist revolution. However, that never led us to abandon the defence of gains of the working class, however deformed and damaged they were or are. Under socialism (the lower phase of communism), class-based social antagonisms no longer exist and the only social inequalities are in the sphere of 'bourgeois right': ie, distribution between the associated producers on the basis of individual inequalities in labour power, these not being totally overcome until the division of labour is transcended in the higher stage of communism.

In this regard, 'bureaucratic socialism' (Jack's earlier, euphemistic term for Stalinism) is an oxymoron. But a workers' state is not socialism, and even the most healthy will be separated from socialism by decades. Such states can degenerate due to isolation, blockade, backwardness, etc, because the only way even the 'lower phase of communism' can be reached is through the joint efforts of the victorious proletariat of several advanced countries: ie, the international proletarian revolution. In the absence of this, other, similar bureaucratically ruled workers' states were created by nationalistic guerrilla movements, often in 'communist' clothing, in some backward countries. These were led by sectors of the petty bourgeoisie, who as a result of a political vacuum created by the absence of a class conscious labour movement, and alienated from the bourgeoisie's 'comprador' dictatorships, saw a role as 'liberators' of their nations, as a petty bourgeois bureaucracy based on a collectivised economy. These anomalies were only possible because of the boost that the existence of the USSR had given to anti-imperialist struggles during the post-World War II conjuncture, where Stalinism was strong and the independent forces of the working class were weak. They were by-products of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution. But they were never 'socialist'.

A bureaucratised workers' state is no more a contradiction in terms than a bureaucratised trade union. The job of revolutionists is to fight to *cure* the deformations, to mobilise the working class to oust the bureaucrats, not abandon these states because they are not 'democratic' enough. To attribute to Trotskyists the idea that 'so-

above democracy

cialism' was created by the Soviet Army or Castro, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, etc is to reveal philistinism about the Trotskyist movement, worthy of the most ignorant Cliffite novice: 'You don't think it's capitalist? Therefore you must think it's socialist!' As some in the CPGB realise, this leads away from revolutionary politics.

The anti-Marxist nature of Jack's 'new thinking' is shown by the explanation that he gives as to how the USSR was "exploitative":

"... the bureaucracy did not socially reproduce themselves as a ruling stratum primarily through bribery, corruption and other illegal means. These were vital, though secondary features of the system. The social formation and the bureaucracy rested upon the surplus product systematically pumped out by the workers. Unlike capitalism this was achieved through political, not economic means."

A remarkable inversion of basic Marxism! In the last analysis, notwithstanding all kinds of complex mediations, every class society rests on an economic base, except, it appears this one, where exploitation was through "political, not economic means". Jack is fond of quoting Lenin. However Lenin, as is well known, believed that "politics is concentrated economics" and there is no way that Lenin (or Marx, or Engels, or Trotsky) would have argued that an exploiting class could reproduce itself by "political, not economic means". Jack, like Kautsky and Cliff before him, in the absence of evidence that the driving force of the bureaucracy was 'economic' exploitation, re-invents 'exploitation' in a manner that is divorced from economics, and turns Marxism on its head.

Comrade Conrad is grasping at straws. He says that the driving force of the bureaucracy was 'exploitation', while at the same time flirting with the ideas of Hillel Ticktin - that there was no mode of production in the USSR. Of course, Ticktin's theory that the Soviet economy was based on the production of 'waste' is a means of writing off the USSR as a retrogression from capitalism, and hence another form of third campism. Yet it is true that the Soviet Union under the bureaucracy was not representative of a distinct mode of production, certainly not a socialist one (even the capitalist mode of production was not really born until the advent of large-scale industry in the 19th century, despite the predominance of bourgeois property relations during the preceding period of manufacture). To believe otherwise is to endorse the theory of socialism in one country. Rather, the bureaucracy's role in raising the economic level of the country was limited to the period of the importation of basic capitalist technologies, based on coal, iron, steel and the like - at a time when more sophisticated technologies were beginning to eclipse them in the capitalist world - and their application on a nationwide scale by means of the socialised property forms. In other words, despite the progressive property relations, in terms of 'mode of production' the Soviet state was engaged in dragging itself up to the level of advanced capitalism - a task that was objectively impossible without the spread of revolution to advanced countries, to which the bureaucracy was a hostile obstacle. Once the Soviet economy confronted the need for more advanced technologies, the bankruptcy of the bureaucracy was revealed. Its political despotism was no substitute

for economic forms of exploitation and led to its collapse, along with the socialised property that it leached off.

Comrade Conrad gives a long and obfuscatory lecture on the supposed lack of role of the bourgeoisie in the bourgeois revolutions of the past:

"There have certainly been bourgeois revolutions - that is, revolutions led by middling elements. England 1642 and France 1789 are classic examples. However, it would be profoundly mistaken to imagine that what was in both cases a bourgeois class-in-form was a class of industrial capitalists or that their victory was over feudalism and directly ushered in capitalism.

"Those who led the English revolution were commercial farmers, well off gentlemen and the lesser nobility. In France it was lawyers and office holders. They did not overthrow feudalism. *That society was long dead.* As a system in western Europe feudalism originated in the collapse of the Roman empire before invading Germanic barbarians and had given way to centralised kingdoms and commercial trade by the 14th century - fief and vassalage characterised a military society where the elite were bound by ties of 'personal' fidelity" (my emphasis).

He cites the unification of Germany by Bismarck, the importation of capitalist industry by the tsarist state, etc. Of course, if the feudal system were already "dead" (as opposed to just having outlived any progressive role), one wonders why the aristocracy was able to fight back after Cromwell, why there had to be another semi-revolution in 1688 for the bourgeoisie to establish mastery over the political system, why even then it had to compromise, etc. One wonders why aristocratic reaction against the bourgeois republic in France survived to the eve of the 20th century, nearly erupting into civil war over the Dreyfus case.

The truth is that capitalism, a system of generalised commodity production qualitatively more dynamic than previous systems of economy, is capable of 'permeating' earlier and more static social formations and altering the economic interests of some members of older ruling classes. The bourgeoisie won them over *economically*, or compelled them to adopt its methods in a desperate attempt to survive. But how does this prove that feudalism was already dead? Comrade Conrad's fantasising about the Levellers and radical *sans culottes* is antimaterialist - their struggles were *anticipations* of the struggles of a class that was only being born, the proletariat, and could not have been more at that time. Jack's purpose is to obliterate the qualitative distinction between the bourgeois-democratic revolution that made the bourgeoisie into the economically and politically dominant class, and the proletarian revolution whose task is to destroy the *class rule* of the bourgeoisie. The religious citation of Lenin, from a period where he had not clarified the relationship between bourgeois and proletarian tasks in the Russian revolution (let alone any other part of the less advanced world, such as China, where the 'democratic dictatorship' was later revived by Stalinism, in a debased form, with tragic consequences for the Chinese proletariat) does not clarify the relationship of democratic and 'economic' demands in a revolutionary programme today.

There is a vital difference between the place of democratic demands in a bourgeois revolution and a proletar-

ian revolution. It is really quite simple - in a bourgeois-democratic revolution, obviously democratic demands predominate, aimed at smashing pre-capitalist obstacles to the development of capitalism and thereby to the growth of the proletariat. But it is different where both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are fully developed as the dominant classes in society. In such a situation, democratic demands play only a secondary role to the proletariat's 'economic' *class* demands, whose ultimate expression is the demand for the 'economic' expropriation of the bourgeoisie. Comrades Conrad and Craig scream that this is 'economism', but in doing so they turn Marxism on its head. Comrade Conrad lets slip more than is wise when he writes of "the CPGB's championing of democracy under capitalism as the way forward to socialism (which we view not as completely distinct from capitalism, rather as a transition - socialism, especially to begin with, retains many features of capitalism)."

And comrade Craig backs him up: "What is at issue here is not simply this or that wording, but a fundamentally different approach to politics. It is the difference between a revolutionary democratic and an economistic method. Our historical reference point is international revolutionary social democracy. Bolshevism was not simply a Russian trend, whose methods were peculiar to tsarism. The words 'revolutionary' and 'democracy' were not some strange deviation from Marxism. On the contrary, they captured an essential aspect."

I have earlier dealt with the 'democratic dictatorship'. But it is interesting that comrade Craig sees his reference point as "international revolutionary social democracy". One assumes he means the Second International before 1914. It would be interesting to know *which* sections of the Second International apart from the Bolsheviks comrade Craig sees as being "revolutionary"? The German? Well, that party proved its mettle in August 1914. The Luxemburgists? Well, comrade Craig has spent considerable time digging out quotations from Lenin attacking "imperialist economism" which as a trend was closely associated with the rigidities of Luxemburgism on the national question. So he does not seem to rate them much. So who? The Bulgarian Tesnyaks were also rigid and 'economistic' in comrade Craig's terms, which is why were known as 'narrow' socialists. Is he talking about Engels? Well this is stretching things a bit - he died just as these questions were beginning to become disputed in the imperialist epoch. That doesn't leave much! Trotskyists, while not rejecting *everything* that was done by the Second International, see as their fundamental 'historical reference point' the first four Congresses of the Communist International, and then the struggle of the Left Opposition against Stalinism, culminating in the struggle to found the Fourth International. We are not uncritical of these 'reference points' but regard them as products of a *qualitatively superior* revolutionary experience than the centrist, heterogeneous pre-1914 social democracy (from which Bolshevism became a revolutionary *left* split). But it is not surprising, if the comrades are coming together on the basis of pre-1914 social democracy as their 'reference point', that comrade Conrad can espouse "democracy under capitalism as the way forward to socialism" as a 'revolutionary' strategy. I

hope I will not be accused of being 'economistic' when I point out how Karl Kautsky would have welcomed this formulation.

In his definitions of 'economism' comrade Craig is playing with words. He criticises my statement that economism is the "separation of economic and political struggle" and instead recommends Lenin's *What is to be done?* definition of Russian economism as "lending the economic struggle itself a political character". There is no contradiction, since, as Lenin explained:

"... As a matter of fact, the phrase 'lending the economic struggle itself a political character' means nothing more than the struggle for economic reforms. And Martynov himself might have come to this simple conclusion had he only pondered over the significance of his own words. 'Our Party,' he says, turning his heaviest guns against the *Iskra*, 'could and should have presented concrete demands to the government for legislative and administrative measures against economic exploitation, unemployment, famine, etc'... Concrete demands for measures - does not this mean demands for social reform? Again we ask the impartial reader, do we slander the [economists] ... by calling them concealed Bernsteinians when they advance, as their point of *disagreement* with the *Iskra* thesis, about the necessity of fighting for economic reforms?"

"Revolutionary social democracy always included, and now includes, the fight for reforms as part of its activities. But it utilises 'economic' agitation for the purpose of presenting to the government not only demands for all sorts of measures, but also (and primarily) the demand that it cease to be an autocratic government. More, it considers its duty to present this demand to the government, not on the basis of the economic struggle *alone*, but on the basis of all manifestations in general of public and political life. In a word, it subordinates the struggle for reforms, as the part to the whole, to the revolutionary struggle for *liberty* [my emphasis] and socialism ..." (*What is to be done?* Peking, pp76-77).

Here is comrade Craig's ridiculous schema, based on applying Lenin's views on autocracy and seemingly impending bourgeois revolution in Russia in 1902, to bourgeois-democratic, thoroughly capitalist, Britain in 1998. To substantiate his accusation of "economism", he would have to demonstrate that my main activity is simply calling for social reform, for "government measures against economic exploitation, unemployment," etc. That will be hard, since in my view while it is completely principled to call for capitalist governments to implement particular 'economic' reforms (such as a minimum wage) or 'political' reforms (such as the abolition of a discriminatory age of consent for gays), the main task of revolutionaries today is to combat any concept that the working class can really achieve its objectives without the revolutionary dissolution of the bourgeois state.

For comrade Craig the situations regarding the monarchy in tsarist Russia and Elizabeth II's Britain are qualitatively the same, and we need a 'democratic' revolution to achieve "liberty and socialism" (in that order). The theory of the 'democratic dictatorship' is very visible in the above-quoted passage, three years before that theory was fully elaborated. To

be blunt - in tsarist Russia the bourgeoisie was tied to, and a slave to, the state of a pre-capitalist despotism that was using the bourgeoisie and bourgeois economic methods to preserve its own, historically doomed power against its foreign capitalist rivals. In Britain today, however, the monarchy is an appendage and a tool of the bourgeoisie, and while the demand for its abolition is an important democratic demand, in itself it has no revolutionary content, since it leaves the main oppressors still in power as a class, with only the forms of capitalist power shifted around a bit. In this context, comrade Craig insults the intelligence of his readers when he pontificates that I divide "the world into two types of countries - good and bad. Bad countries lack democracy. Here the struggle for democracy would be a good thing. Ian fully supports the importance of the struggle for democracy there. But Britain is a good country. It is advanced, not backward. We already have computers and the internet, not like tsarist Russia ..."

This is degrading political polemic to the level of the Teletubbies. In 1917, "computers and the internet" did not exist, in either Britain or backward Russia, whereas today they are available to elites in semi-colonies, as well as the imperialist countries! In countries where capitalist development has been stunted by imperialist domination and the survival of older forms of class society, often resulting in unique 'combined' forms of exploitation and oppression, the permanent revolution retains its full force, and democratic questions will play a fundamental role. However, such questions will only be solved by the proletariat in power. In advanced capitalist countries with bourgeois-democratic regimes, where the dominant classes are the fully developed bourgeoisie and proletariat, it is utter nonsense to say that the 'struggle for democracy' is the main axis of the class struggle. The fact that the CPGB and RDG cannot see the difference between the two goes a long way to explaining their scandalous position of equating the Nato powers with Iraq in the 1991 war, and thus refusing to take a side with Iraq.

In conclusion, it is necessary to understand more about the context in which Lenin was writing, and the limitations of his understanding. Lenin was right about much: in particular his contribution on the revolutionary party (which evolved through contradictions, though a process of political struggle and a degree of 'trial and error'); his leadership of the struggle against the social patriotism that destroyed the Second International; and of course, his indispensable contribution to the building of the Bolshevik Party (even if he did not often understand the importance of his own actions in this regard). But his understanding of the revolution in Russia was often flawed, and for comrades to quote material that contained flaws when it was written, to justify their own practice today, is obfuscatory. Comrade Conrad makes much of the draft programme that the CPGB produced several years ago and counterposes this to my "Trotskyist economism", and indeed a Trotskyist critique of this document is overdue.

However, I think before comrades Conrad and Craig in future put pen to paper, it would pay them to study a bit more about the real course and driving forces of the Russian Revolution, and engage in schematic out-of-context citation a little less ●

'Time to silence guns'

Inla ceasefire declaration

We have accepted the advice and analysis of the Irish Republican Socialist Party that the conditions for armed struggle do not exist. The Irish National Liberation Army has now shifted from the position of defence and retaliation to the position of complete ceasefire. We have instructed all our units to desist from offensive actions from noon today. The Irish National Liberation Army is now on ceasefire.

We take this historic opportunity to pay tribute to our fallen comrades who gave their lives in the struggle. To their families we share their pride and sorrow. We wish to praise first the courage, loyalty and commitment of our volunteers. For nearly 25 years they have been in the forefront of the anti-imperialist struggle and have upheld the principles of republican socialism. In armed combat, in prison protest on the blanket in hunger strikes, in prison escapes, on picket lines and in mass demonstrations they have at all times upheld the right of the whole of the Irish people for self-determination.

To the wider public who through support and solidarity in such committees as the Relatives Action Committees, the National H-Block and Armagh Committees, Relatives for Justice and other solidarity committees around the world, we thank them for the support they gave to our prisoners.

To those prisoners in gaol, in Portlaoise and Long Kesh, we offer our heartfelt thanks for their loyalty and steadfastness throughout the years. Though scorned, slandered and derided, marginalised and demonised, they stuck by the principles of republican socialism. We salute their courage.

We also acknowledge and praise the role played by the families and friends and supporters of our members. Through no fault of their own they have had to suffer much over the years. We applaud them and fervently wish they never have to endure such suffering again.

In calling this cessation we recognise that the political situation has changed since the formation of the Inla. We recognise that armed struggle can never be the *only* option for revolutionaries. In the new conditions prevailing it is only right to respond to the new conditions. Those conditions demand a ceasefire.

Although we for our part believe that the Good Friday agreement was not worth the sacrifices of the past 30 years and are still politically opposed to it, the people of the island of Ireland have spoken clearly as to their wishes. The working classes have borne the brunt of the consequences of the war for the past three decades. They have also suffered repression, social deprivation, unemployment and poverty. We recognise their desire for a cessation of violence expressed through the referendum and for a peaceful future. The onus is now on all political parties, governments and observers to ensure that the democratic wishes of the Irish people are upheld. This includes all armed groups. Therefore we have taken this ceasefire decision to take account of the people's desires.

Now we turn to the consequences



"In the forefront of the anti-imperialist struggle"

of our part in the war. We acknowledge and admit faults and grievous errors in our prosecution of the war. Innocent people were killed and injured and at times our actions as a liberation army fell far short of what they should have been. For this we as republicans, as socialists and as revolutionaries do offer a sincere, heartfelt and genuine apology. It was never our intention, desire or wish to become embroiled in sectarian or internecine warfare. We accept responsibility for our part in actions which hindered the struggle. Those actions should never have happened.

We have however nothing to

apologise for in taking the war to the British and their loyalist henchmen. Those who preyed on the blood of nationalists paid a heavy price. However, the will of the Irish people is clear. It is now time to silence the guns and allow the working classes the time and opportunity to advance their demands and their needs.

In the new conditions prevailing we will support the politics of the IRSP, who have our full confidence and support. In the words of our founder, Seamus Costello, when speaking about his class, the Irish working class: "We are nothing and we shall be everything" ●

August 22 1998

For the Irish working class

IRSP statement

The Ard Comhairle on behalf of the membership of the Irish Republican Socialist Party strongly welcome today's statement from the leadership of the Irish National Liberation Army of its decision to call a genuine and sincere cessation of its military campaign.

For our part we salute the volunteers, both past and present, of the Inla. Over the past 23 years they have shown themselves to be both tenacious and courageous for a 32-county socialist republic.

In the present changed political climate in Ireland, the Inla has also shown that it possesses both the leadership and vision necessary to provide the momentum required to continue the pursuance of that aim by peaceful methods. We also note and welcome the Inla's continued support and confidence in the Irish Republican Socialist Party in pursuance of working class liberation.

We make no apology for stating that we oppose what is euphemistically termed the Good Friday agreement. We believe that the 'agreement' does not address the core political issues, therefore does not contain the political dynamic or momentum to deliver peace that the people of Ireland so overwhelmingly voted for in the referendum.

Let us state clearly today that the IRSP believe that the six-county state and its agencies are irreformable. It will not be reformed by tricolours fluttering from lampposts, bunting across the roads or Gaelic street signs. It will not be reformed

by the economic policies of the capitalist alliance represented by the political parties signed up to the Stormont agreement.

An American fast food carry-out on every street corner does not represent either the empowerment or liberation of the Irish working class. These are backward steps. Democracy or socialism have yet to be achieved for the Irish working class. Our class remains marginalised, disenfranchised, demonised and exploited on a huge scale.

The signals to an end to cultural and religious discrimination in the Six Counties are to be welcomed, but that alone will not liberate the working class. In fact it could act as a mask to cover the continuing levels of multi-deprivation inflicted on the working class. Those who claim that cultural and religious freedom will free the Irish working class mislead those people they purport to represent.

The capitalist alliance of American, European and British imperialism, coupled with home-grown Irish capitalism, still remain the single biggest barrier to political and economic equality for our class. Real empowerment of the Irish working class will come from within our class, our people and our communities.

For our part, the Irish Republican Socialist Party pledge ourselves to continue to agitate for and represent Irish working class interests - that is our task. We are acutely aware that this will be a difficult and long-term task. It is a task that we will not shirk.

"We owe our allegiance to the working class" - Seamus Costello ●

Militant Australia courts DSP

Not so long ago, Scotland was the jewel in the crown of the Committee for a Workers International. Now, Scottish Militant Labour has evolved from the economic centrism of the Militant Tendency to a revolting open embrace of nationalism. The unprincipled autonomy granted to the Scottish section of Militant Labour - now the Socialist Party in England and Wales - is almost complete. The long, opportunist rope which comrade Taaffe allowed SML has become a noose around the CWI's neck. In one sense, Scotland is dropping off the CWI body politic.

Yet Scotland is not the only place where the CWI shows signs of advanced decay. An international faction has recently been declared, led by the Pakistan section. Its platform includes proposals for the democratisation of the international organisation, the readmission of the expelled US minority and a clear demarcation between the international executive committee and the executive committee of the Socialist Party.

Whether comrade Farooq Tariq's intentions in Pakistan are sincere, or whether he is constructing yet an all too familiar political escape pod, I do not know.

Another potential spot of bother is in Australia. On May 26, Stephen Jolly, national secretary of Militant (Australia), wrote a letter on behalf of its national committee to the national executive of the Democratic Socialist Party. The DSP - the largest left group in Australia - was a member of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International until the early 1980s.

In part, the short missive states: "We would like representatives of your party to meet three of our NC members to discuss the rights and responsibilities Militant members would have in a merged organisation; perspectives and strategies for our work in a post-united situation; any issues you may want to discuss."

Militant in Australia - a few dozen strong compared with the DSP's almost 300 - recently split after a less than successful fusion with two small Melbourne-based groups, Communist Intervention and Solidarity. The DSP proposed exploring the possibilities of a merger in 1996. Yet, boosted by its increased profile resulting from its role in the occupation of Richmond Secondary College in Melbourne, and having just incorporated the two smaller groups, Militant must have judged it could go it alone.

Now that a merger with the DSP is back on the table, not surprisingly one of the main issues under discussion is Militant's relationship with the CWI. The bulk of the June 23 letter from the DSP deals with this question.

The group is unequivocal: "As long as the DSP is not affiliated to the CWI, no individual member of the DSP can have any other relation to the CWI than that of the DSP as a whole."

The DSP has only recently taken up any sort of contacts with the CWI and it is very unlikely that it would ever affiliate. Militant would clearly have to end its formal relationship with the CWI before it could join the DSP.

The DSP's response is careful to point out that the merger of two revolutionary organisations is not the

Socialist Party in crisis



same as the creation of a broad formation. But neither group has theorised the necessity and implications of communist rapprochement in what is still a difficult period for revolutionaries. Regroupment is analysed through the sect-like prism of the James Cannon school of party-building adhered to by the DSP. The necessity of genuine democratic centralism - ie, a *non-ideological* or *non-confessional* Party based on openness - is not even contemplated. Typically, the DSP's 28-page weekly paper is silent on the whole negotiation process.

Size is not the main question for a revolutionary organisation. Fusion in and of itself will not produce the desired result. After all, opportunist fusions, followed by sectarian splits, followed by fusions are hardly new to the Trotskyite world. The DSP's level of theorisation on the question of revolutionary unity is summed up in two letters to Militant (July 22 1996 and June 23 1998). In 1996 it wrote: "The left and progressive public does not understand why there are so many separate socialist groups. It is not possible to combine everyone [but] there is an objective basis for uniting our two organisations."

On June 23 this year, the DSP said: "This of course does not mean that we are asking you to give up any of your ideas or that you would be admitted to the DSP simply as individuals. We recognise that you constitute a distinct political tendency with representation on the national ... leadership." Further: "Like all other DSP members you would have the right to constitute a faction within the party to promote such a position [as affiliation to the CWI]." But, in line with the gospel according to Cannon, this faction will have no public face.

Apparently the international affiliation of a revolutionary party is not really the business of the working class. Militant and the DSP both come from the tradition of 'democratic centralism' - ie, bureaucratic centralism - which enforces a strict demarcation between the real arguments carried in internal bulletins and the brain fodder fed to the working class in open publications.

The period of reaction, combined with the opportunist theory and practice of the left, is giving rise to a variety of unprincipled splits and mergers. The actions of the CWI's Australian affiliate is creating yet more tensions within the crisis-ridden SP ●

Martin Blum

Documents from the Socialist Party's Members Bulletin July 1998

Delegation to Scotland

1. The European meeting of the CWI that was held with the EC of SML in London on May 18 agreed that a delegation visit Scotland. This delegation was organised between June 26 and 29. The members of the delegation were: Murray Smith (Gauche Révolutionnaire - France), Dermot Conolly (Socialist Party - Ireland), Gaeten Kayitare (SAV - Socialist Alternative - Germany), Laurence Coates (Justice Party Socialists - Sweden), with Per Olsson and Tony Saunois representing the International Secretariat of the CWI.

2. During this visit the entire delegation met twice with the SML EC, attended an extended meeting of the Scottish Committee of SML and also discussed with members of SML and the SSA. The entire delegation met with two leading members of the SSA who are not members of SML - Bill Bonnar, who is a leading member of the Communist Party of Scotland, and Allan Green, the national secretary of the SSA. In addition to this meeting members of the delegation also met SSA members in Glasgow, Dundee and Edinburgh.

3. In Glasgow LC and MS met with four members of the SSA, in Edinburgh TS and GK met with one member of the SSA and in Dundee PO and DC met with two SSA members.

4. At the meeting of the Scottish Committee of SML, following a debate, the SML EC proposals in 'Proposals for progress on the new Scottish turn 1998' were voted upon. The debate was introduced by LC (Sweden) and Philip Stott (Scotland) and replied to by TS (IS) and Alan McCombes (Scotland). An amendment moved by comrade Ronnie Stevenson was defeated by five votes to 31. The SML EC proposal was carried by 35 votes in favour, three against, with four abstentions. (There was no separate vote taken of members of the NC and the visitors.)

5. After participating in these meetings and discussions the CWI delegation reached the conclusions that are explained below. This report does not attempt to develop the political basis that led the delegation to reach its conclusions. It is being circulated for consideration and discussion by the IS, IEC, CWI sections and World Congress.

6. The majority of the delegation supported the proposal known as Option 1 suggested by the EC of the British section. The majority of comrades thought that because of the forces involved in the SSA (both numerical and political) this option is justified and would not be a sectarian turn. This view was endorsed by DC (Ireland), GK (Germany), LC (Sweden), PO (IS) and TS (IS). MS (France) did not agree with this conclusion.

7. If SML proceeds to launch the SSP as a broad party the delegation agreed that the following steps are necessary for a functioning section of the CWI in Scotland and should be discussed with the comrades.

(i) That CWI branches must be established and meet on a fortnightly basis as a minimum. The frequency of SSP branch meetings should be discussed further.

(ii) There must be a delegate congress to discuss international and national perspectives and programme. This congress should elect a NC from which an EC is elected. All members of the CWI and our public representatives should be accountable to the elected leading structures of the section and the International.

(iii) An internal bulletin for CWI members should be produced regularly and used along with the CWI member bulletin.

(iv) The CWI section should organise its own public meetings and activity apart from those called in the name of the SSP.

(v) A CWI publication should be produced for use both inside and outside the SSP. This should be at least a monthly publication. If the *Scottish Socialist Voice (SSV)* is to become the journal of the SSP, then to facilitate a CWI publication it may be necessary to produce the *SSV* monthly rather than fortnightly, as the comrades are proposing. (MS is of the opinion that the CWI journal should be monthly but that the *SSV*, as a journal of the SSP, should be fortnightly and weekly when possible.)

(vi) The CWI should have the right to have closed branch meetings for members and to circulate documents to members, although we would not function as a secret faction inside the SSP. (MS expressed reservations about the CWI having branch meetings for members only.)

(vii) There should be strict control of subscriptions in any unified party. Members of the CWI should maintain their existing subs to the CWI section and also ensure payment of international subs to the CWI are made on a regular basis. (MS is of the opinion that the question of subscriptions payments needs to be discussed further with a view to taking into account the needs of the SSP, CWI section and international affiliation.)

(viii) In order to ensure the organisational and political functioning of the CWI section it will be necessary to ensure that in Glasgow two full-timers work exclusively for the CWI. In Dundee and Edinburgh, whilst the full-timers (one in each city) could undertake work for the SSP, they should spend at least 50% of their time on work directly related to building and developing the CWI section. (MS is of the opinion that the question of the work of the full-timers needs to be discussed further with a view to taking into account the needs of the SSP and CWI section.)

(ix) The CWI section should ensure that it has its own targets for recruitment, sale of material and fundraising. (x) The comrades have proposed that the centre and equipment of SML be given over to the SSP. If it is done then ownership of all properties and equipment should remain within the CWI section. It could be done on the basis of leasing all properties and equipment to the new party with trustees appointed who are committed and tested members of the CWI. (MS is of the opinion that this issue requires further discussion.)

(8) Following the debate that has taken place with the comrades in Scotland, a full discussion should take place with SML members on the question of the CWI, its programme, perspectives, history, work and structures and methods of functioning.

(9) The IS, in consultation with IEC members, the British section and SML, should discuss the question of the timetable for launching any new programme with a view to reaching an agreement about this.

(10) The British Congress, IEC and forthcoming World Congress should discuss all related issues arising from this discussion.

Tony Saunois, Gaeten Kayitare, Per Olsson, Dermot Conolly, Laurence Coates, Murray Smith

Resolution to Scottish Committee/Aggregate

This committee agrees to continue the discussions on the SSP/CWI.

Should Option 1 from the British EC be discounted, then the 'Proposals for progress on the new Scottish turn 1998' from the SML EC should be discussed with the following amendments:

Paragraph 1 - Change "August" to "autumn".

Paragraph 5 - change to read: "Propose changes to SML constitution to change the name of SML to 'International Socialists, the Scottish section of the CWI - IS (SCWI)', or better name to be decided."

Make immediate changes to the branch structure to reflect the needs of the IS (SCWI) in 1999/2000. The branches should meet at least fortnightly.

Maintain full-timers of the IS (SCWI) - at least two in Glasgow, one in Dundee and one in Edinburgh. Their main function will be building IS (SCWI) and developing the political understanding of the comrades whilst recognising that a significant part of their public work will be within the SSP.

Produce a fortnightly paper called *The Socialist* of at least eight pages and regular bulletins/newsletters.

Allow our current paper, the *SSV*, to become the paper of the SSP. Make suitable joint funding arrangements between IS (SCWI) and the SSP for our offices and allow cheap access to our equipment to allow the SSP to produce written material.

(five votes for; 31 against)

Proposals for progress on the new Scottish turn 1998

We have already conducted an intensive political discussion on the New Scottish Turn over recent months: on the SML EC; SML conference; SML branches and regional/district committees; in debates in England and Wales; at the British NC and in meetings with representatives of the IS and European sections.

From the outset and throughout this debate, the SML EC have argued we are proposing these measures for dual purposes. To build and strengthen the organised forces of revolutionary, international Marxism in Scotland, the Scottish section of the CWI; and to organise and build the forces and appeal of socialism in Scotland.

But timing is crucial in politics. We therefore propose the following steps:

1. To hold the decision-making SML conference in August, prior to the SSA conference on the issue.

2. Subject to agreement at SML conference, to go ahead with the proposals to launch the new Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), in collaboration with the Scottish Socialist Alliance and other forces prepared to support its launch.

3. To actively pursue the most developed, rounded-out socialist programme that can be agreed by the forces launching the SSP; and to pursue an SSP structure based on 'democratic unity', with the right of openly organised tendencies, as explained more fully in previous documents.

4. To make a systematic appeal for SSA members; trade unionists; other socialists; to launch the SSP in the

autumn 1998, with launch rallies and meetings, a recruitment drive, etc, to make maximum impact before Christmas, in preparation for the pre-election campaigns of early 1999.

5. As previously stated, we will organise our revolutionary tendency inside the SSP, as the Scottish section of the CWI. This to initially comprise the existing SML membership, added to by new recruits.

The Scottish section of the CWI (previously referred to as the 'SCWI', but with a better name to be decided) will be organised as a Marxist tendency with the methods of 'democratic unity', and will also serve to ensure accountability of the leadership.

The main forms of organisation of our Scottish tendency would be:

a. monthly branch meetings at city/area level, open to SSP members, with political discussion; international reports from the CWI; collection of subs for the CWI and its Scottish section; recruitment to the 'SCWI'; and regular reviews of our work in the SSP.

b. additional meetings as and when new and/or controversial political issues arise within the SSP.

c. an annual conference, which would elect the national leadership of our tendency.

d. an elected coordinating committee or executive committee of eight to 12 members. In addition, a larger, elected Scottish Committee which would meet quarterly.

e. one of the current SML executive committee to be elected as the (full-time) convenor/organiser of the Scottish CWI section.

f. production of a (Scottish CWI) bulletin for distribution in the SSP, and a CWI members' newsletter.

g. use of other publications of the CWI, including international bulletins, *Socialism Today* and pamphlets.

It is not possible to foresee the precise evolution of the SSP, particularly the timescales. Over a long period of working together, with the advantages of an SSP party structure which facilitates political debate and development (as well as it being a socialist combat party), it may be possible to achieve principled affiliation of the SSP to the CWI through agreement on programme, perspectives, analysis and methods.

Meantime our tendency within the SSP would be the affiliated Scottish section of the CWI with representation on international bodies and conferences, and collaborating with other CWI sections. It would openly advocate CWI affiliation within the SP.

We therefore ask that the IEC/IS and British EC/NC set time aside in late 1999 - one year after the launch of this New Scottish Turn - to fully evaluate and review the experience and results of our work in the SSP, plus prospects, strategy and tasks for the future.

Meantime we call on the IEC/IC and British EC/NC to give the Scottish organisation the opportunity to go ahead with the proposals as outlined, to have the freedom to make the best possible impact with a strategy of building the SSP, building the influence and membership of the CWI within it, developing the CWI section and the SSP membership politically and organisationally.

We appeal to the IEC/IS and British EC/NC to give the Scottish organisation the latitude over this next year to evaluate the situation in Scotland at each stage and to take steps to maximise our success in building the forces of socialism and of the CWI.

(35 votes for; three against)

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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US raids backfire

On August 20 the United States deployed between 70 and 100 Tomahawk cruise missiles in attacks on targets in Afghanistan and Sudan. This blatantly adventurist intervention, unthinkable in the era of Soviet power, may well have unforeseen and serious consequences, not only for the region, but for the world as a whole.

The term 'adventurism' is used here to describe military operations undertaken purely or primarily with short-term, tactical objectives. Characteristically they are politically motivated demonstrations of brute force that reflect recklessness and an absence of long-term vision.

Of course, if we believe the US state department, then these cruise missile strikes constituted a legitimate act of retaliation. They are a measured, speedy and effective answer to the terrorist bomb attacks against US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania earlier this month, in which 12 Americans and several hundred Africans were killed. According to the state department, the targets were carefully selected on the basis of "compelling evidence": ie, from their intelligence services' reports.

Even if we were to accept this explanation at face value, however, the fact remains that in every single particular this operation was a conspicuous failure. Leaving aside for a moment the official justification for this act of retributive violence, what short-term goals can we identify that might have led the US president to approve measures of this kind?

Unsurprisingly, much of the bourgeois press, even some of the broadsheets, were content to see the whole episode as being little more than what might be called the 'war of Clinton's penis'. According to this reading of events, the strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan were nothing but a diversionary exercise designed to distract attention from 'zippergate'.

Some of these papers, having gorged their readers on every salacious and prurient detail of the whole tawdry saga of Clinton's relationship with Monica Lewinsky, even went so far as to accord the president a measure of grudging admiration for the sheer boldness of his counterstroke - after all, why should the killing of a few Afghans and Sudanese be allowed to get in the way of a good macho story?

Bizarre as it may seem, there may be some justification in looking at the American attacks against Afghanistan and Sudan in this light. Who knows what goes on in the minds of Clinton's advisers? Given their obsessive, introspective focus on the world of public relations, perhaps these goons really did believe that life could be made to imitate art, and that the solution to Clinton's problems was to be found in the plot of a one-joke, second-rate movie called *Wag the Dog*, in which a paedophile president was



Conspiracy at the top

extricated from his dilemma by the invention of a virtual war in Albania. It remains true, of course, that if these attacks were motivated by a desire to draw attention away from Clinton's legal difficulties, then they did not fail. Americans love a strong leader who does not hesitate to wield the cudgel abroad. Opinion polls indeed indicate that the cruise missile attacks did Clinton no harm at all as far as his domestic constituency was concerned - quite the reverse.

Nevertheless any analysis of US foreign policy that goes no deeper than the consequences of Clinton's libido must clearly be woefully inadequate. Very real interests are at stake. The attacks occurred at a time when capitalism is beset with intractable difficulties - not least the economies of Russia, Japan and the so-called Asian 'tigers'. Some say the system is on the verge of a global financial crisis greater than any since the great crash of 1929.

No matter that the targets of attack were a paltry pharmaceuticals plant and a couple of terrorist training camps - the important thing under these circumstances for the myopic Clinton administration was for the US to flex its muscles. It has no economic answers to the world's problems. But it does have military might: the cruise

missile, not a Marshall plan. The New World Order means undisputed US hegemony over small countries. The US will justify this whenever necessary by reviving an old, spectral threat - international terrorism, this time farcically depicted as being under the control of a single, evil individual.

Unfortunately for Clinton, the US attacks on Sudan and Afghanistan are widely and correctly perceived as having failed. The Sudanese government's reaction to the bombing of a supposed chemical weapons factory in the northern suburbs of Khartoum suggests that, not for the first time, the US acted on the basis of false intelligence. Embarrassing also is the fact that in Afghanistan they failed to kill the man whom they have chosen to demonise as public enemy No1, the supposed godfather of international terrorism, Osama bin Laden. According to some reports, the actions of US diplomats in Islamabad were so clumsy as to give ample warning of an impending military operation against his headquarters.

The whole case of bin Laden is, of course, replete with irony. Here is a disaffected Saudi multi-millionaire whom the CIA once recruited and trained to lead Afghan 'freedom fighters' in their campaign against Soviet armed forces. When he and his fellow

bandits were killing Soviet pilots and soldiers Mr bin Laden was a great hero, but now it appears that he is biting the hand that once fed him. We are led to believe that he is now the tarantula at the centre of an international web of terrorist conspiracy.

Of course, the consequences of this US operation go much further than mere embarrassment. At a stroke, the Clinton administration has done a great deal to unify and consolidate the forces of militant islam throughout the Middle East. For each person killed in Khartoum or Afghanistan, you can reckon that a thousand volunteers have entered the ranks of those actively pledged to attack US citizens and interests wherever they can do so.

The adverse consequences on some of the United States' key allies in the Gulf must also be very profound. Take the case of Saudi Arabia: a year ago the oil price stood at \$24. Now it is around half that, and the political and social tensions arising from vastly depleted oil revenues were already there for anyone to see. Even optimistic western analysts admit that the Saudi regime, which lacks any social base outside the extended royal family, is very vulnerable to subversion and eventual destruction by the forces of islamic fundamentalism. This

internal threat to the stability of one of the USA's most important clients can only have been deepened as a result of the recent attacks, and the same can be said for other Gulf states.

In the sphere of international relations and politics these attacks represent a significant development: outside open warfare, they were of unprecedented severity and were conducted without any prior reference to bodies such as the United Nations Security Council. Since the demise of the Soviet Union the US can strut across the world stage in its role as global gendarme doing exactly what it likes. Any state small enough not to be able to resist US aggression can expect to meet similar treatment as and when this suits the policy objectives of the White House.

Many bourgeois liberal commentators believe the US action was not only against international law but also morally reprehensible. Yet few have gone beyond the expression of mild concern. But no doubts whatever appear to have crossed the mind of Tony Blair. He is Margaret Thatcher's star pupil when it comes to giving supine approval to US military intervention wherever it takes place. No sooner had the missiles exploded than Blair was telling the world of his full support and making it clear that he personally (for some inexplicable reason) had been consulted by Clinton beforehand. And to show that he too could wield the stick he stated publicly that, although he *could* do so, he had decided not to authorise the assassination of members of the so-called Real IRA by British special forces. This must surely have been a slip of the tongue, as it would appear to give weight to the suspicions recently strengthened by the Shayler-Tomlinson fiasco that the British government does indeed resort to assassination at home as well as abroad.

Finally, what reaction should we expect from the left to this latest demonstration of US aggression? By the time these words are printed some groups will have declared their unconditional 'military' support for the Taliban militia against US imperialism. Such a position is, of course, politically wrong. The Taliban that currently rule Afghanistan represent the most medieval and barbaric form of religious fanaticism and reaction. Their 'anti-imperialism' has nothing whatever to offer the Afghan peasantry - and the Afghan working class in so far as it exists - except oppression and violence.

We unreservedly condemn US state terrorism and its Tomahawk diplomacy. But we do so knowing that the immediate political beneficiaries of this bellicose action will not be such embryonic revolutionary movements as exist in the Middle East, but the reactionary forces of islamic fundamentalism ●

Viktor Melor