

Jail Pinochet

Straw agonises - workers must act

These days, life is just not the same for your average geriatric dictator. Once upon a time you were guaranteed a comfortable and luxurious retirement, normally bankrolled by western imperialism. Now it is harassment, abuse and downright disrespect. What is the world coming to? Thus, we see the sorry sight of a sick, 83-year-old man kicked out of his hospital bed and forced to take accommodation elsewhere.

Well, not quite. General Augusto Pinochet had to leave - quickly - his £300-a-day private clinic on Tuesday night after David Cole, director of the Grovelands Priory Hospital, threatened to sue Pinochet for trespass on the grounds that he had "outstayed his welcome". Apparently, the general was a bit of a malingerer and a troublesome patient to boot. Indeed, doctors at the clinic said there was absolutely nothing wrong with him. The ex-dictator is now languishing in Virginia Waters mansion, which is located on the exclusive Wentworth estate in Surrey. Neighbours include Bruce Forsyth and Russ Abbot. Anyone for a Sunday barbecue?

All this follows the dramatic decision of the law lords last week - by three votes to two - which stated that Pinochet can be extradited to Spain. Previously, Lord Thomas Bingham, England's lord chief justice, ruled that the general enjoyed legal immunity as he was only giving orders, not obeying them. Jack Straw, the home secretary, now has until December 10 to agonise over a fundamentally *political* decision. It is an insult to our intelligence to pretend that Straw is confronted only by a legal decision. To extradite or not? In a sense, Straw is damned if he does and damned if he does not. However, Straw would surely be *more* damned if he decided not to extradite Pinochet to Spain and let him return to Chile. By taking a 'pro-Pinochet' stance Straw would run the very big risk of earning the odium of a vast chunk of his party and progressive opinion in general.

In recent days there has been talk of a possible 'compromise' - which is to send Pinochet back to Chile for trial. The socialist Chilean foreign minister, José Miguel Insulza, rushed to Britain in order to lobby for Pinochet's return. Insulza's dangled carrot is 11 outstanding law suits against Pinochet. Give us back our dictator and we will sort him out - maybe.

Of course, as things stand, there is no chance whatsoever of Pinochet facing any sort of trial in Chile. In 1978 he granted himself immunity from all and any legal retribution. Since coming to power in 1990 with the good grace of the military, the centre-left coalition government of Eduardo Frei - which includes members of the Socialist Party - has respected the authority of general Pinochet. All in the name of 'national reconciliation'. And by no stretch of the imagination is Pinochet some fading ex-dictator going into his dotage. He appointed himself senator for life and remains a powerful political figure.

Chile is a democracy - so long as the USA likes it that way. In some ways Chile provided the model for South Africa and its the Truth and Reconciliation Committee. Oppressors and oppressed, left and right, united in national harmony. All bitterness laid aside for the common

good. If you get your information from the bourgeois media there is a chance you would actually believe this nonsense, which august organs like the BBC have assiduously promoted. Inside the *real* Chile society is deeply divided, to put it mildly, over Pinochet and the bloody events of 1973. The demonstrations and clashes in Santiago when the English law lords' decree was announced show how one spark could easily combust Chilean society. Indeed there is a brewing constitutional crisis.

This is something that Eric Hobsbawm - former 'official communist', and now social democratic guru and supposed expert on all things Marxist - is acutely aware of. In a letter to *The Guardian* he loftily informs us that "the regretful view among leaders of the Chilean left, including survivors who were in office in 1970-73, is that the return of an inevitably discredited and humiliated Pinochet would do the least harm to the chances of democratic progress in their country" (December 2). In other words, Hobsbawm favours what will do the "least harm" to *official* Chilean society and thus limit the chances of the working class - in Chile and throughout the world. Just like in 1973, when he and his 'official communist' allies sided with those who sought to placate the counterrevolution. Such a policy demobilises the masses - and thus strengthens the right. Hobsbawm is still preaching the popular frontist class collaboration he imbibed during his youth and has hung on to like grim death ever since.

One of the more revolting aspects of the whole Pinochet affair has been the reaction of the conservative right in Britain, which is dripping in mealy-mouthed hypocrisy. Of course, they are against human rights abuses, terror, the 'illegal' seizure of power, etc. Not very civilised. Not very British, old chap.

But when pushed and prodded the likes of *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* - not to mention Baroness Thatcher and her supporters - always manage to conjure up the most wretched apologies for Pinochet and his regime. A classic example was provided by Bruce Anderson of *The Spectator* on Radio Four earlier this week. It is all very well for liberal dogooders to bleat on about human rights abuses, blustered Anderson, but you have to remember that in 1973 Chile was "facing a communist dictatorship". At the end of the day Pinochet may be a bit of a monster, but at least he is *our* monster.

Unlike in 1973, we are now in the imperialist New World Order. There is only one superpower - the United States. Therefore, time for an image change. Imperialism is now very keen to disassociate itself from dictatorships - ie, from its former clients and supplicants. Particularly so if they are associated with small or weak countries. Look at the way United States imperialism in Congo switched its support away from the autocrat Mobutu to the ex-'Marxist' Laurent Kabila, the former comrade-in-arms of Che Guevara.

The New World Order finds general Pinochet a bit of an embarrassment. One problem for the US is that there are many CIA skeletons rattling away in the Chilean cupboard. Nevertheless, the US government is doing nothing to stop



Pinochet and Allende: before the 1973 coup

Pinochet facing interrogation. There are divisions at the top within the US political establishment. The Clinton administration is about to release intelligence details of atrocities under Pinochet - no matter what embarrassment it will cause to the likes of Henry Kissinger.

Another regrettable - though almost inevitable - consequence of the Pinochet controversy has been another bout of near hero-worshipping of Salvador Allende, the socialist president from 1970 until his death at the hands of the Pinochet coup in 1973. He is viewed by all bourgeois liberal-left opinion as a democratic icon - if not a saintly mixture of Jesus Christ, Gandhi and Karl Marx (with possibly a dash of VI Lenin). This myth has to be punctured. The 'Marxist' Allende and his Popular Unity government - particularly his Socialist Party and Communist Party of Chile backers - are primarily *to blame* for the bloody debacle of 1973. While the forces of counterrevolution plotted away, Allende pursued his suicidal policy of reform, which involved courting the patriotic 'anti-Yankee' bourgeois ... including one Augusto Pinochet. As the generals and the CIA fine-tuned their murderous plans, Salvador Allende, unbelievably, wrote that the "great characteristic of the armed forces of Chile has been the obedience to the civil authority, their unquestioned regard for the public will as expressed in the ballots, for the laws of Chile and for the Chilean constitution" (S Allende *Chile's road to socialism* Harmondsworth 1973, p135).

Far worse - and criminally - the *Bonapartist* Popular Unity government did everything it could to *disarm* the worker class and poor peas-

antry physically and politically. It opposed land seizures. It allowed military goons to terrorise and torture workers and peasants who attempted to defend themselves. In other words it attacked the masses and paved the way for Pinochet's violent counterrevolution. The CPC, and the 'official' world communist movement, backed Allende to the hilt. If anything, the CPC was more rabid than Allende and his SP in attacking what it termed 'ultra-leftism' - ie, any manifestations of workers' power. The CPC leadership opposed strikes, illegal occupations, the buying of guns, agitation inside the armed forces, and so on. Nothing that could unbalance the Allende regime and upset the right was to be permitted.

We must treat with contempt the weasel words of those fake friends of democracy in the liberal press. For all its supposed love of human rights and the 'rule of law', *The Guardian* can climb into the McCarthyite gutter with the best of them. An editorial called upon Jack Straw to "forget his earlier student activist self", and damned the "blood lust on the part of former leftwingers whose gods failed but whose appetite for Jacobin procedure is unabated" (November 30).

Yes, we are fully in favour of "Jacobin procedure" when it comes to Pinochet and all those like him. We have no faith in bourgeois legality. But we do have faith in the impact the masses can have on bourgeois legality. Communists call for mass demonstrations in Britain, Spain and Chile. The masses can make a difference - Pinochet must be extradited to Spain, tried and found guilty ●

Eddie Ford



Party notes

Splitting the pack?

Socialist Worker of November 28 has at last officially announced the Socialist Workers Party's intention to stand Paul Foot in the London mayoral elections in 2000 if the candidacy of Ken Livingstone is blocked by Blair. Previously, the London left had been kept abreast of developments through the pages of *The Guardian* or Radio Four. At least any ambiguities around Foot's intentions have been removed, although new problems are raised.

Despite the fact that this report quotes Livingstone's effective endorsement of Blairism - "I agree with 95% of what this government is doing" - the SWP is explicit that it will *unconditionally* support him in the (unlikely) event that he stands, "because [ordinary people] see him as a leftwing opponent of Blair's pro-big business policies".

Last week, we noted that all of this has been foisted on the London left without open debate or consultation. Despite negotiations around the formation of united slate for the European elections next year, the SWP has simply *informed* other organisations of its intention to stand *the* "socialist candidate", Paul Foot, in the event of Livingstone's bid being blocked. The SWP now *further* announces that Paul Foot is actually "part of a slate of socialist candidates for the London assembly" - a "united socialist list".

Although there appear to have been some backroom haggling over such a slate, the SWP is in effect pre-empting any open, properly constituted discussion of a united left challenge in the London elections in 2000 by this announcement.

What are we to make of this move? We seem to be seeing an attempt to

cut free of the pack in the field of electoral contest. As the largest organisation on the left at present, the SWP may be attempting to monopolise the field of opposition to Blair's Labour, given the pretty parlous state of the rest. Its nearest rival - the Socialist Party in England and Wales - is in a state of near-terminal collapse and may indeed be grateful to be taken under the SWP's wing. Other rivals, such as the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, Socialist Outlook or the Communist Party, may have influence here and there, but even combined come nowhere near the numerical strength or political weight of the SWP.

Thus, if this is indeed an attempt to impose itself as *the* opposition, there are those who might say - as a friend of mine on the periphery of the SWP did - "who can blame them?" It would be perfectly understandable - all of us belong to a particular political organisation because of what we believe are its unique qualities, its superiority to others. Nobody should therefore begrudge the SWP's move in *this* sense - if we were its size, we might very well do the same. The question is whether such a hegemonic move is attempted in a *sectarian* way - totally excluding other forces representing different viewpoints - or in a genuinely *incorporative* manner.

Whether the SWP is in the process of abjuring sectarianism must be extremely debatable, given everything we know about its history and contemporary practice. This is not a foregone conclusion, however. Other left forces in London must join with the Communist Party to press for *inclusion*, not exclusion ●

Mark Fischer
national organiser

Socialist voice

Socialist Worker of November 28 urged its readers to campaign for the resolution below in "trade union branches, student unions, community organisations and campaign groups". We should all back this resolution, but with the amendments suggested (text to be amended in heavy type; suggested replacement in square brackets).

"This branch/group/region

● Notes:

1. Cuts in public services have continued over the last 18 months since New Labour won the general election. London underground and air traffic control face privatisation. The private finance initiative is being used to undermine the NHS. Pay awards to teachers and healthworkers are at unacceptably low levels.
2. Tony Blair is pursuing big business policies.
3. New Labour leaders are trying to silence leftwing opposition within the party while giving the Liberal Democrats a greater say in government.

● Condemns:

New Labour's undemocratic attempts to stop Labour Party members voting for Ken Livingstone to be the party's candidate for mayor of London even though nine out of 10 Londoners think he should be on the shortlist.

● Believes:

1. There should be a socialist voice, arguing for workers' interests, in the London mayor election.
2. Such a campaign, based on trade unions, Labour Party wards and community groups, could help build resistance to the cuts, job losses and attacks working people face.

● Further notes:

1. Ken Livingstone is calling for people to

write in to New Labour headquarters backing his right to stand.

2. Campaigning journalist Paul Foot is also prepared to stand as a socialist candidate in the election for London mayor, in the event of Ken Livingstone not standing.

● Resolves to:

1. Support Ken Livingstone's fight to stop the Blairites stitching up the selection of Labour's candidate for mayor and to write to the headquarters of the London Region of the Labour Party supporting his right to stand.
2. Back Paul Foot standing for mayor as part of a slate of socialist candidates for the London assembly **if Ken Livingstone is prevented from standing by Blair and the Labour Party** [Delete and insert: "where such a slate is democratically negotiated and agreed by the left in London"].
3. Call on **New Labour leaders in London to debate their policies publicly with Ken Livingstone, Paul Foot and other socialists and trade unionists** [Delete and insert: "the SWP in London to debate its policies openly with other left organisations, socialists and trade unionists. Any united socialist candidate must be prepared to stand on a minimum platform politically endorsed by the left and be adopted democratically at an open meeting where questions can be addressed directly to him/her]."

Is honesty harmful?

In the November 12 issue of the *Weekly Worker* there is a report on the CPGB's school 'Against economism', which comrades of the *Marxist Bulletin* attended.

If the CPGB comrades are serious about their so-called 'Partyism' and moving forward to a higher degree of political clarity resulting in organisational recomposition, then they are going to have to deal with the real basis of our political differences rather than the misrepresentations for which they are increasingly well known on the left. Unfortunately this article on the economism school continues that fine CPGB tradition of misrepresentation.

To justify their claim that we are "economistic", something they were unable to do during the day we were present at the school, the article refers to our recent supplement on the current action by railworkers and in particular the defence of victimised unionist Steve Hedley. Comrade Hammill says in his report: "We are informed that 'railworkers need what all workers need - secure jobs, good pay, strong unions, decent free healthcare, good education, and more leisure time'. Not a mention, you notice, of what workers really need so that they can take control of their own lives - political power to make a revolution." Damning stuff indeed - if that was all the leaflet had to say on the question ...

But interestingly the very next sentences in the text of the leaflet read as follows - "But militant trade unionism by itself is not enough to get what we need. Any major strike of workers against the bosses comes up sooner or later against the cops, courts and government - the forces of the capitalist state. Instead of trumpeting the virtue of the rank and file in and of itself, we need to build caucuses in the unions around a political programme for working class power that can successfully meet the assaults of the bosses." The leaflet ends with the call, "Break with the New Labour traitors! Union funds only for pro-working class candidates! For a workers' party funded by the unions to fight for a workers' government!"

Perhaps comrade Hammill should take the time to actually read the leaflets he comments on rather than, as we suspect, just 'report' on an ill-thought out comment made by a CPGB speaker during the discussion.

Another example of the CPGB's fine polemics can be found in *Weekly Worker* (November 19). In an article which announces that the "next phase of the Indonesian revolution has begun", we find further proof that the comrades of the CPGB simply do not understand what the Trotskyist programme stands for.

Comrade Marcus Larsen writes: "In the hands of the Trotskyites, the 'bourgeois democratic revolution' has divided the world in half. In their rigid schema, democratic tasks are to be undertaken primarily by the bourgeoisie. The working class's task is an abstract 'socialism' which is arrived at through transitional demands, which for the Trotskyites are *separate and different* from democratic demands." Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact the core of Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution is that in the colonial and neo-colonial world the democratic and socialist tasks are

closely connected and there is no 'Chinese wall' between them. These tasks can only be carried out by the proletariat, at the head of all the oppressed masses, against the opposition of the national capitalists and their imperialist backers. The combining of the democratic and socialist tasks is also applicable in the imperialist heartlands, and once again we would refer your comrades to the actual text of our RMT leaflet for an example of how the method of the *Transitional Programme* combines democratic demands for reforms with more advanced demands up to and including for a workers' government.

The CPGB's recent polemics against what they perceive as Trotskyism are either a deliberate distortion of our views or evidence of their inability/unwillingness to grasp political views other than their own. If comrades of the CPGB wanted to find out what we really stand for we would recommend you read our publications! Maybe you want to start with our pamphlet *Building the revolutionary party and united front tactics*.

Alan Gibson
Marxist Bulletin

Critical support

Traditionally there have been two western European nationalist movements which shared many features in common: the Basques and the Irish. Both the IRA and ETA are armed movements backed by significant support amongst the most oppressed layers of the native population. Both fought against the former larger colonial powers, and combined nationalism and republicanism with socialist rhetoric. The pro-IRA Sinn Féin and the pro-ETA Herri Batasuna are the third largest legal parties in their constituencies and receive electoral support of between 15% and 20%.

Over the last year the Spanish conservative government has mobilised millions in the streets with the aim of crushing the Basque republicans. This was the response that they made when 500 Basque prisoners were on hunger strike and against ETA's actions. Later Aznar jailed the entire HB leadership and proscribed its daily, *Egin*. Although the Spanish rightwing and 'socialist' parties supported the repression against these 'terrorists', the HB's front increased its vote to around 18%, and more or less 60% voted for pro-independence parties.

We should call on ETA volunteers not to disarm themselves in a 'peace process', but to subordinate their actions to the decisions of rank and file workers' assemblies.

Most of the British left unconditionally defends ETA and HB against repression. However, LRCI/Workers Power is not doing that. Despite claiming to have comrades in Spain, they have never opened their mouths to give the slightest solidarity to the Basque anti-imperialists.

Even worse, they have straightforwardly condemned them. In *Trotskyist International* No6 the LRCI wrote that the Basque struggle could not be critically supported and described ETA as "totally reactionary". "A continued guerrilla struggle against the Spanish state has degenerated into individual terrorism, does not have a democratic or revolutionary character, and cannot be supported by Marxists."

Marxists reject the nationalists' strategy and tactics, but they are obliged to defend the Irish or Basque republicans against imperialism.

John Stone
LCMRCI

Left unity

At the second conference of the Scottish Socialist Alliance, I moved, on behalf of the Paisley branch, a motion calling for Socialist Workers Party supporters and Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party to establish left unity consisting of united fronts, open democratic forums and the drawing up of united left slates of candidates for elections. Conference passed it unanimously.

Unfortunately, 18 months on, both SWP and Scottish Socialist Party activists (the SSP being the new SSA) are now leafleting each other's meetings proposing terms for unity which are unacceptable to each other, and are so far being blatantly and ludicrously unreasonable. Both organisations are, along with the SLP, currently on course to collide spectacularly, allowing the unapologetically pro-business parties, especially the Blairites and the tartan Blairites, to make it safely over the finishing post while we languish in the gutter, all badly bruised, some possibly fatally injured.

Sectarians in all three organisations can, and will, take comfort in having deprived 'the competition' from getting any foothold in the Scottish parliament despite the historic opportunity PR gives us. All genuine socialists, however, will feel justifiably bitter. Due to sheer blockheadedness workers, the unemployed, pensioners, students and the homeless will have not a single representative in parliament to give us a voice, to approach every issue from the perspective of putting people before profits, putting welfare before warfare.

As things stand today there would appear to be no way out. Or is there?

The recent 'Socialism in Scotland' series of debates at Caledonia University included a long-overdue debate between Alan McCombes of the SSP and Chris Bamberg of the SWP. The entire series of debates was sponsored by many trade union branches, including RAH Unison and Paisley University EIS. One way out of our unhappy impasse - I suspect, the only way out - is for the SWP, SSP, SLP (possibly others) to present their candidates to the broad workers' movement.

Let all socialist organisations attempt to approach every union branch affiliated to the TUC. Let us all unite to convince every worker to help us put together a united left slate as a legitimate challenge to the pro-business parties of New Labour and the SNP. Let all members of participating organisations agree to unite to campaign for whichever candidate is chosen. Let those who refuse to sign a petition calling for such a left slate exclude themselves from determining who our candidates shall be. Let the candidates be chosen following debates at mass meetings organised by union branches (preferably joint workplace meetings with pensioners, students and the unemployed invited). And let every individual who poses as an honest advocate of left unity in the hope of being chosen as the left unity candidate, only to scab on the slate once his/her hopes are dashed - let these individuals be made pariahs in our movement.

Tom Delargy
Paisley

Simon Harvey of the SLP

Fisc in a quandary

The demoralisation within the ranks of our party following the election of Roy Bull as vice-president last month provides fertile ground for rumours of all kinds. The latest to surface within some quarters concerns the man he replaced in the job, comrade Pat Sikorski.

Sikorski, it was said, had decided to call it a day. According to the rumour, he had resigned his SLP membership. He had after all seen his hopes for a British ‘party of recomposition’ dashed by the humiliating replacement of his Fourth International Supporters Caucus as chief courtiers in the court of king Arthur by an alliance of ultra-Stalinist and rabid homophobes at last month’s special congress in Manchester.

You can see how such tales come to be believed. Firstly, Fisc does not believe in openness. You can only guess at what they are planning. For example, only their close contacts and those around Scargill were aware in Manchester that Fisc had already launched an ‘Appeal for a special congress’, which had at that time received the backing of 53 signatories. Although Fisc, along with Terry Dunn and Helen Drummond, had correctly called for a fully democratic, two-day congress, instead of last month’s rally, where no membership motions were allowed, amazingly they did not utter a word about it from the floor.

The same can be said for comrade Sikorski’s recent criticism of Scargill’s “over-centralised” running of the party - ie, his autocratic rule. He circulated it only amongst a handful of supporters and trusted allies, and it was only through the *Weekly Worker* (November 12) that most SLP activists came to know of its existence.

Last week however, fellow Fiscites Brian Heron and Carolyn Sikorski launched what was by their standards an extremely up-front campaign. Comrade Heron moved a resolution at the London regional committee (LRC) meeting calling on Scargill to remove Bull, editor of the homophobic *Economic and Philosophic Science Review*, from the vice-presidency. It was a pathetic, undemocratic demand, but at least it is out in the open. Heron, the London regional president, is to circulate all the London branches with copies of the resolution (see *Weekly Worker* November 26).

At the LRC meeting comrades Heron and Sikorski described the election of Bull, along with three other *EPSR* supporters, as “a disaster”. If there was a big dispute in the RMT - a union where the SLP has a high profile - the press would seize hold of Bull’s rantings to discredit the whole party. This is a particularly disturbing prospect for Pat Sikorski, who can envisage not only RMT action being undermined, but his own career in the union going up in smoke through being tarnished with the Bullite brush.

At a meeting last week of the SLP-sponsored Reclaim Our Rights campaign to repeal the anti-union laws Scargill triumphantly announced that Bob Crow had at last decided to oppose Jimmy Knapp in the contest for

general secretary of the RMT. Comrade Crow, who was not present, let it be known as soon as he found out about Scargill’s remarks that this was just another of our general secretary’s fantasies. Since Bull’s election he is even more reluctant to make such a move.

■ Fascist scuffles

Talking of the *EPSR*, I was interested to read the comments of Bullite Adrian Greenman in the last issue of the *Weekly Worker*. Greenman complains about the “fascist” provocations after the Manchester special congress. Apparently comrade Dunn was “shouting bad language”, while *Weekly Worker* supporters and comrade Heron “stood menacingly close

in a ring”. Just how fascists behave.

Speaking as a witness to the incident, I have a slightly different recollection. Heron stepped in sharply between comrade Dunn and *EPSR* man Dave Roberts, after our Terry had called him a “homophobe”. It was Greenman himself who looked more likely to lash out, while comrade Heron remained stoically calm.

But surely all this complaining about violence is misplaced? After all, “Angry scuffles are [not] alien to British labour movement meetings ... they are completely routine.” No, I have not taken leave of my senses. I am just quoting an article which was published on March 11 1997 in ... the *Economic and Philosophic Science Review*. The author? A certain “RB” ●

Fighting fund

Paradox

Unlike Russia, the *Weekly Worker* is not selling its soul to satisfy IMF demands for ‘market reform’ to obtain multi-billion dollar loans. But unlike Russia, we are likely to get our cash on time. Communism may not be in fashion just now, but we are not seeking to maximise sales by watering down our ideas. On the contrary, our struggle is funded by comrades who recognise the para-

doxical necessity to reforge the Communist Party our class needs to free itself and all humanity from the rule of money.

Our £400 December fund starts with £45 from comrades BT, PD and JS ●

Ian Farrell

Ask for a bankers order form, or send cheques, payable to CPGB

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Caste of millions

Steven Spielberg Antz general release

Woody Allen as the leader of a ‘victorious workers’ revolution? As the man himself might have said, ‘You can’t be serious’. Yet this is what the Socialist Workers Party would have us believe when they reviewed Steven Spielberg’s entertaining production (*Socialist Worker* November 21). Perhaps this tells us all we need to know about the SWP’s view of a ‘revolution’.

‘Antz’ is the very enjoyable animated film from Spielberg’s Dreamworks company. It is set in a strictly hierarchical ant colony, with clear and impregnable physical, cultural and political divisions between different component castes. Worker ants work and can under no circumstances mix with soldier ants. Soldier ants are order-following fanatics, all built like brick outhouses. Sitting on top of this multi-millioned organic and highly organised society is a benevolent but basically out-of-touch monarch.

The action opens with the main character, Z (features and voice lent by the brilliant Woody Allen), agonising on his psychiatrist’s couch about his place in society and his speck-like insignificance. We follow Z as he works, socialises and dreams of something better.

He meets by accident a lovely princess and - like you do - falls in love. As he lives a deeply alienated, bored

life, he makes this princess the focus of his aspirations for happiness and fulfilment. He disguises himself as a soldier in order to be closer to her and through a series of accidents gets lost with her in the outside world.

Fellow workers think he has consciously broken his chains to go and find ‘Insectopia’, a place that is paradise. When it dawns on them that he is also a worker just like them, that he has broken society’s rigid demarcations, they go on strike.

This presumably is what gets the SWP’s juices flowing. The strike movement does not however formulate any independent political demands - like ‘Abolish the monarchy’ for instance; ‘For a constituent assembly’ (sorry); or ‘Replace the army ants with armed worker ant militias’ perhaps - and thus is easily derailed by a few economic sops thrown to it by an establishment demagogue.

To make a long story short, Z comes back and saves - again by accident - the ant world from destruction by a power-mad general. In the end he gets the princess, the bad guy dies and the colony is renewed. Hurray.

Obviously, the film is *not* about a “victorious workers’ revolution”, where “millions batter their way to liberation” (*Socialist Worker* November 21). It is a sophisticated children’s film, with sufficient ironic and knowing jokes to keep the adults in the audi-

ence amused. Those with political backgrounds in the cinema where I watched it were sniggering when the foreman told the workers to go back to work, and was met with a semi-anarchist “why?” The same people laughed out loud when a gaggle of worker ants tell each other that “the workers control the means of production” - good fun for lefties.

But what is the essential message of the film? Well - unlike, say, Disney’s ‘Lion King’, what we have here is cartoon in praise of individual choice and meritocracy. ‘Lion King’ shows a world thrown into profound disorder and turmoil by a disruption in the natural - *aristocratic* - order of things. ‘Antz’ tells us that we can choose our own place to be in the world and - if we work, fight or dream hard enough - we can get there.

Thus, despite the hero’s claim to have “changed the underlying social structure” of the colony, little actually moves on. The subliminal message of the film is thus a reconciliation of the alienated individual to society as it is. The thing that really needs changing is what’s inside your head. As Z says at the end of the film about his ‘revolution’, he got to where he wanted to be - “and that was right back where I started from”.

Tell that to the ‘antz’ on the street of Indonesia, Woody ●

Katrina Haynes

action

■ CPGB seminars

London: Sunday December 6, 5pm - ‘Bakunin and the International - a libertarian fable’, using Hal Draper’s *Karl Marx’s theory of revolution* as a study guide.

Sunday December 13, 5pm - ‘From the revolutionary Jesus to the imperial Christ’ - speaker Jack Conrad.

For details phone 0181-459 7146

Manchester: Monday December 7, 7.30pm - ‘Cooperation, the division of labour and manufacture’ in the series on Karl Marx’s *Capital*.

For details, phone 0161-798 6417. E-mail: cpgb2@aol.com.

■ 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.

■ London Marxist Discussion Forum

Public meeting: ‘Marxists and the Labour Party’.

Speakers: Steve Myers (*Workers Fight* editorial board); Dave Osler (Socialist Democracy Group). Sunday December 13, 2-5pm, Calthorpe Arms, Grays Inn Road, near Kings Cross.

■ Support Tameside careworkers

Support Group meets every Monday, 7pm, at the Station pub, Warrington Street, Ashton under Lyne. Donations and solidarity to Tameside Unison, 29 Booth Street, Ashton under Lyne.

■ Communities of resistance

‘Tal’ presents the British premiere of ‘War and peace in Ireland’. Introduced by internationally acclaimed Irish-American director Arthur McCaig (‘Patriot games’ and ‘Irish ways’). Saturday December 12 at 2.15pm, Rio Cinema, 103 Kingsland High Road, Dalston, Hackney E8 (near Dalston Kingsland BR). £5 admission (£3.50 concessions).

■ Stop the fascists

Join the demonstration to stop the National Front marching in Dover. Full rights for asylum seekers!

Saturday December 5, Dover seafront. Assemble 11am on Marine Parade (next to miner’s statue).

■ Close down Harmondsworth

Picket of Harmondsworth detention centre, Saturday December 12, 11.30am-1pm. Colnbrooke by-pass, Harmondsworth. Transport: Bus 81 from Hounslow West tube or Bus U3 from Heathrow Airport. For more information, contact Close down Harmondsworth campaign. c/o 10 Endsleigh Road, Southall, Middlesex UB2 5QL. 0181-571 5019.

Stalin and socialism

In this article I will not resort to quotations in order to resolve the issues raised by Harpal Brar about Stalin and the history of the USSR (*Weekly Worker* November 12). Instead I will attempt to show that his defence of Stalin relies upon idealist ideology.

This is because in philosophical terms we can locate the content of Stalin's actions as the expression of subjective idealism. Stalin's alienated consciousness represented an estrangement from the material world, which meant he distrusted everyone who existed outside of his own sensations. Consequently the only possibility he had to control this frightening external social environment was to destroy and liquidate. Stalin did not start out as a dictator justified through subjective idealism, but the social transformation of the Soviet Union and the formation of brutal new class domination was the structural basis to reduce this new social formation to the expression of the estranged wishes of the dictator who feared everyone, and was prepared to constantly subject society to purges and terror in order to try to alleviate his fears.

Harpal Brar obviously does not want to defend Stalin, the subjective idealist, but he cannot overcome the idealist aspect of Stalin's theory and practice, and so he essentially justifies this idealism in political terms. His standpoint is to essentially conceive of Lenin as Hegel's wise and dynamic world historical individual, and so after Lenin Stalin becomes the next world historical individual, which is expressed by his personification of the spirit of socialism. Thus Stalin can do no wrong, and this means his political opponents, such as Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin, become counterrevolutionary and must be liquidated. Stalin is the self-appointed expert on Leninism, and consequently he is the defender of the faith against anti-Leninists.

Stalin's ideas and actions have a direct and inherently correct relationship to reality, because Stalin is the omnipotent absolute spirit and infallible leader who is guiding the Soviet Union towards communism. There is no need to define socialism except as the expression of the heroism of Stalin, and the 'fact' that the Soviet people are willing to work, fight and die for him, shows that the consciousness of the workers and peasants is based upon a love for Stalin. This unity between the workers and peasants with Stalin represents a socialist consciousness, and shows the deeply held aspiration of the Soviet people is to follow Stalin in the building and defending of socialism.

This approach of Harpal Brar represents a form of utopian socialism: the elite introduction and development of socialism from above. He makes no attempt to show that the relationship between the Soviet people and Stalin is democratic. The question of whether Stalin is accountable to the people is essentially considered to be irrelevant, and the additional question of whether real and meaningful soviet and party democracy exists is also considered irrelevant. This effective dismissal of the question of the content of party and class relations is because it has been resolved through the relationship that exists between leader and people. Stalin is held to be the infallible leader, and this means the people express spontaneous gratitude to Stalin for his wise leadership. Hence the people are prepared to spontane-

Phil Sharpe replies to Harpal Brar of the Socialist Labour Party

ously bestow and project this gratitude in the form of alienating (separating) their political power to Stalin, and as a result of this process of the mass abdication of political power the masses are prepared to be passive yet enthusiastic participants in the soviet elections. They are also willing to join mass participatory events, such as demonstrations against Trotsky and the Moscow trial defendants.

Given this hierarchical, yet apparently voluntary, relationship between the masses and Stalin, the actual use of coercion and terror against the Soviet people can be dismissed as a Trotskyist slander. Harpal Brar is essentially justifying the utopian socialist view - the masses lack their own initiative and wisdom to be active participants in the struggle for socialism. Thus Stalin's socialism has the ideology of a new absolute monarchy - 'the state is me'. Consequently, Brar is elaborating a central aspect: the justification of the omnipotent leader, or the red tsar. The people become reduced to instruments (rather than an active agency) for the building of socialism in accordance with the instructions of the leader. The uncritical hero worshipping of Stalin by his supporters means that the horrors and problems of collectivisation and industrialisation are considered by these Stalinist apologists to be an unfortunate and yet necessary aspect of this instrumental process of modernising and building socialism. It is not possible to build the productive forces without misery and distress. But eventually these problems will be overcome, and reality will conform to the aspirations of the leader in terms of the increasingly successful completion of the building of socialism.

In reply to these idealist illusions it can be argued that even if the productive forces can be rapidly developed in Stalinist terms (which they were not because of the widespread economic chaos in the 1930s) the problematical question of working class and peasant participation in running the economy remains. The leader promises a socialist and communist future to the masses in order to motivate them and develop enthusiasm for carrying out economic tasks, but he is still very reluctant to 'bestow' the realisation of meaningful economic and political democracy. Instead he hopes that the masses will be content with formal elections and election meetings. The tension between elitist utopian socialism from above and the lack of working class and socialist democracy remains an enduring feature of society.

The utopian socialist ideology of the leader (and of the leaders who succeed him) is used to try and console the working class and peasants that the only feasible socialism is that of socialism from above. The system is full of this tension between the fallible and shallow ideology of Stalinism and the suppressed aspirations of the workers and peasants. Resolution of this tension does not occur, and so an advance towards socialism cannot take place because the workers and peasants are still in a subordinate position within the relations of production.

Eventually, under Gorbachev, the Stalinist bureaucracy starts to recognise that their system is in deep crisis. The economy is inefficient and

the bureaucracy are increasingly unpopular and hated by the Soviet people. Gorbachev has enlightened the bureaucracy with some home truths about the crisis, and he introduces perestroika to bring about economic reform, but it does not work adequately. Increasingly the bureaucracy are forced to acknowledge that the omnipotent leader no longer provides workable solutions for the requirements of society (that is to say, the requirements of the bureaucracy). They are forced to look at themselves (getting out of the consoling shadows of the Plato's cave of philosophical illusions is a very demoralising experience), and can only recognise themselves as ghosts of a glorious past, with little hope for the future.

This means they have to admit that there is no real alternative to capitalism, and Thatcherite ideology has become hegemonic. This ideological counterrevolution facilitates the fragmentation of the bureaucracy and the way is prepared for Yeltsin to come to power with a restorationist perspective. Utopian socialism is over, but the working class has become atomised by the economic, political and ideological structures of the system, and so it is not possible to develop an independent revolutionary alternative in this period of the crisis of the elite.

A number of specific points of Harpal Brar's presentation will now be analysed.

Firstly, he refers to Lenin's support for socialism in one country. He refers to Lenin's famous article on the military programme of proletarian revolution and the articles on cooperation in order to substantiate his viewpoint. But even if we accept the validity of Brar's standpoint in relation to these articles, we could also provide other quotes that indicated Lenin's world revolution perspective. But what is important is not a selective quotation conflict, but rather whether we are able to explain reality in an emancipatory manner. In this context Harpal Brar's use of quotes and references to articles by Lenin does not amount to justification of a non-utopian process of transition to socialism. Instead Lenin is used in a selective textual manner in order to support a utopian illusion about the prospect of building socialism in one country.

It is idealism to equate an infallible textual Lenin with the validity of socialism in one country, because this amounts to defining reality through the text in an *a priori* manner. Socialism becomes conceived in idealist terms - as the metaphysical truths of Lenin's intentions as a world historical individual. These intentions are outlined in the text and are then realised in practice as the concrete and inevitable expression of revealed truth. In actuality, the retreat into the Soviet state after the Brest-Litovsk treaty, and the failure to re-establish soviet democracy after the civil war, the ban on factions and the construction of a one-party state, and primarily the isolation of the Soviet Union and the repressive and exploitative character of collectivisation and industrialisation show the objective difficulties and improbability of realising socialism in one country.

Any amount of quotes from Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky are not sufficient

in themselves to prove either the actuality or impossibility of socialism in one country. Rather it is necessary to develop a historical materialist approach that can facilitate a non-idealist understanding of the Soviet Union, and on that basis the textual work of Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky becomes explanatory rather than obscurantist. Significantly, Harpal Brar continues to prefer his idealist approach as the basis to uphold socialism in one country. He uses quotes from Deutscher to indicate the mass popularity for Stalin. This subjective approach cannot establish the economic and political reasons to uphold the building of socialism in one country: rather a selection of impressions are used to create images of socialism, and we are back to the consoling shadows of Plato's cave.

Secondly, Harpal Brar quotes from Trotsky in order to show the productive forces were developed as the material basis for socialism. But far from showing that socialism was being built, Trotsky's comments primarily indicate the problems with his theory of degenerated workers' state. To Trotsky the economic base of the Soviet Union was essentially sound and represented the potential to realise socialism, but the political superstructure was counterrevolutionary. This contradiction between base and superstructure was essentially not explanatory about the Soviet Union, in that the importance of exploitation within the relations of production was glossed over. Furthermore, the reactionary nature of the political superstructure was not separate from, but was instead connected to the class character of the economic base, and Trotsky ignored the importance of the ideological structures which actively upheld utopian socialism.

Between 1924 and 1929 a degenerated workers' state did exist, in that a counterrevolution had occurred in the state apparatus with the development of the hegemony of the Stalinist bureaucracy. In this period the bureaucracy had no secure material foundation, and the New Economic Policy did not provide a big enough surplus for the bureaucracy to become a cohesive ruling class. However, collectivisation and industrialisation consolidated the economic and political power of the bureaucracy through repression and coercion directed against the peasants and workers. The ideology of utopian socialism based upon the role of the infallible leader was vitally important for obtaining mass support for the social regime of a new ruling class that exploited the workers and peasants in the name of the workers and peasants.

The initial political counterrevolution of the mid-1920s became the basis for economic counterrevolution in the late 1920s, and then an ideological counterrevolution was developed in the early 1930s in relation to the transformation of the right centrist position of the 1920s into the systematic counterrevolutionary utopian ideology of Stalin as the spirit of socialism.

Trotsky did not study the ideology of Stalinism, and he did not systematically study the economic activity of the Soviet Union. His theoretical emphasis was upon the political internal and external actions of Stalinism, such as the relation of Soviet Stalinism to 1930s revolutionary situations and the purge trials. In methodological terms this one-sidedness led him to abstract the political from the economic and ideological, and this resulted in him eclectically and

impressionistically praising the building of the productive forces in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, no one knew better than Trotsky the limitations of the perspective of socialism in one country, and his analysis continues to help us to understand the problems and crises of the Soviet Union in its 74-year history.

Thirdly, Harpal Brar argues that Trotsky's defeatism about the prospects of the Soviet Union in the world war is an indication of his subjectivism about the Soviet Union. Deutscher was more accurate when commenting about the immense prestige of Stalin that enabled him to lead the Soviet Union to victory. In order to uphold his standpoint Harpal Brar has to ignore the significance of Stalinist political activity that facilitated the victory of fascism in Germany and Spain and resulted in the increased encirclement of the Soviet Union. This situation encouraged the prospect of German imperialist invasion, and the Nazi-Soviet Pact would only postpone and not overcome the threat of military action against the Soviet Union.

When German imperialism advanced into Soviet territory the Soviet people were faced with the prospect of fighting or becoming colonial slaves. Only the barbarism of imperialism was worse than the terrible tyranny of Stalinism. In other words, it was in spite of Stalin rather than real affirmative support for the Stalinist system that led the Soviet people to accept the necessity to fight German imperialism. No doubt many people expressed gratitude to Stalin for being their leader during the period of the war, just as gratitude was felt towards Churchill, the imperialist wartime leader of Britain. Such expressions of gratitude do not define a regime in Marxist terms - it is subjective and impressionistic to equate spontaneous and transitory moods of an alienated consciousness with the nature of a given social system.

Indeed it is significant that Stalin's wartime popularity did not lead to a more advanced regime in peacetime. The purges and terror were continued, and the working class and peasantry remained subordinate and atomised within the exploitative relations of production of bureaucratic utopian socialism. Only proletarian revolution could have liberated the working class of the Soviet Union and eastern Europe after 1945, and only an independent working class mobilisation against utopian socialism was the basis of human emancipation from the red tsar.

So was Trotsky a defeatist about the Soviet Union? Was he nothing more than a sceptic? Trotsky certainly was not sceptical about the workers and peasants and he believed that they could defend the 'gains' of the revolution. But he was aware that the actions of the bureaucracy were leading the Soviet Union to potential military defeat. The victory of the Soviet people was an immense achievement against a formidable opponent, but nothing really changed after the war. The system of bureaucratic socialism remained and, as Trotsky was aware, the longer the system existed and revolution did not occur, the possibility for capitalist restoration became more real.

The events of 1991 showed that the idealist ideology of the rule of the infallible red tsars was now thoroughly discredited, and the new tsars extolled the virtues of a vicious market capitalism. Stalin's successor was now Yeltsin ●

Call for open debate

The Communist Party of Great Britain and the Democratic Socialist Party (Australia) have exchanged the following correspondence

No constructive purpose

**To: Communist Party of Great Britain,
Provisional Central Committee**

November 16 1998

Dear comrades,

We have received a request from one of your members, Marcus Larsen, to attend our 18th national conference next January. Since he states that he would like to attend as a "formal representative of the CPGB" we assume that his request is made with your knowledge and approval.

Our policy with regard to the attendance at our decision-making conferences of members of other parties is that we only invite the attendance of members of parties that are interested in developing collaborative relations with our party.

Up to now relations between the DSP and the CPGB have been limited to the exchange of public literature (public political documents and press). We have had no indication from you that you wished to develop any level of political collaboration with our party.

To the contrary, a number of the public criticisms that you have made of our party in your press have obviously been aimed at encouraging an attitude of political distrust and hostility toward our party among your members and other readers of the *Weekly Worker*. Thus in an article on political developments in Indonesia in the May 28 issue of your weekly, you made the following comment on our party: "Given its influence with the PRD, of concern is the DSP's abandonment of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution in the early 1980s in response to the victory of the Sandinistas and other Latin American struggles. The DSP comrades now seem to favour a two-stage theory for the underdeveloped world. This should sound warning bells for all of us - Trotskyite or non-Trotskyite."

It is true that our party abandoned Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution in the early 1980s. It is also true that we "favour a two-stage theory for the underdeveloped world" - the two-stage theory of uninterrupted revolution advocated by Lenin. However, the point of the above quoted comment was clearly not intended to inform your readers of what our position is on revolutionary policy in the underdeveloped countries, which you could easily have done by quoting from our party's programme (see *Program of the Democratic Socialist Party* p21), or even to express any disagreement with that position. Rather, it was aimed at giving the impression to your readers that we adhere to the Menshevik-Stalinist policy for underdeveloped countries of subordinating the worker-peasant masses to the nationalist bourgeoisie. This is what is mistakenly understood by Trotskyists and most non-Trotskyist leftists by the phrase 'two-stage theory'.

In an article in the July 2 *Weekly Worker*, you again seek to give the impression to your readers that we are some sort of Stalinist outfit. You imply that our lack of public criticism of the PRD is a product of "the good, old-fashioned 'diplomatic internationalism' of the old 'official communist' parties": ie, the Stalinist parties. It appears to be beyond your comprehension that we have not found anything in what the PRD has done that warrants public criticism on our part.

Indeed, you seem incapable of conceiving of international relations between revolutionaries being based on mutual solidarity and comradely discussion. Instead, such relations are viewed only through the sect-like prism of factional intrigues and the creation of monolithic toy-internationals. This factional mentality is reflected in your reporting of the development of collaborative relations between our party and the Pakistan section of the CWI (relations that we had, unsuccessfully, sought to develop with all of the CWI organisations, including its section in Australia). Thus in the October 15 *Weekly Worker* you refer to the "Pakistan group ... being circled by a hopeful Australian Democratic Socialist Party". What purpose is served in describing our relations with the Labour Party of Pakistan in this way? - other than to give your readers the impression that we are some sort of international political 'predator' which views the Pakistan group as our next factional 'meal'.

In the light of the complete lack of any indication on your part that you want to develop collaborative relations with our party, we do not see any constructive purpose would be served by having your comrade participate in our party conference. We believe that relations between our parties should therefore remain at the existing level of exchange of public documents and press.

Yours comradely,

Doug Lorimer

for the Democratic Socialist Party national executive

Air our differences

**To: Democratic Socialist Party,
national executive**

December 2 1998

Dear comrades,

Thank you for the letter of November 16. We regret that you see no "constructive purpose" in a representative of our organisation attending the DSP's 18th national conference. We would ask you to reconsider in order that we may initiate the "comradely discussions" to which you refer.

Far from "encouraging an attitude of political distrust and hostility toward [your] party" within the pages of the *Weekly Worker*, we have attempted to critically engage with the politics of the DSP in order to help clarify a number of issues - not least of which is the unfolding revolution in Indonesia. Our paper - which is widely read throughout the revolutionary left - has been unique in the coverage it has given your organisation and the role it plays in the movement in Australia and Indonesia. We believe the DSP is the most important revolutionary organisation in Australia to engage with, both in order to criticise the political shortcomings which exist and to learn from its activity and ideas.

You seem to have considered our reporting to have been inaccurate for some time. Neither myself nor my comrades want to misrepresent the DSP's politics - indeed, our whole culture is one of open debate, and we welcome corrections and responses. Unfortunately however, it seems you consider public criticism to somehow contravene "mutual solidarity and comradely discussion". This is reminiscent of "diplomatic internationalism". We hold the opposite view - open criticism is an obligation and prerequisite for "mutual solidarity and comradely discussion". Rather than writing in a comradely way and correcting what you hold to be inaccuracies, you have chosen to interpret our criticisms as an attempt to create hostility. This is not the intent.

Your letter raises two main issues. One concerns the supposed distinction between Trotsky's theory of 'permanent revolution' and the Leninist theory of 'uninterrupted revolution'. The other issue raised indirectly concerns the struggle to build an international. Specifically, the differences between a Marxist concept of the international and the Trotskyite-Cannonite approach.

On permanent revolution/uninterrupted revolution and the Menshevik-Stalinist two-stage revolution, perhaps there is common ground between us. We reject the Stalinist-Menshevik theory of two stages in the so-called 'third world' which politically subordinates the working class and its revolutionary-democratic allies to the counterrevolutionary liberal bourgeoisie. Likewise, in the 'first world', we reject as economistic the Trotskyite version of revolution which in practice means trade unionist politics in the here and now and abstract socialism for tomorrow - there are no burning demo-

cratic tasks. Instead we advocate a revolutionary-democratic theory of uninterrupted or permanent revolution.

Perhaps, you concur. Yet - in what is admitted to be an initial and by no means thorough analysis of your position - the DSP appears to have adopted a rightist and selective take on the theory of uninterrupted revolution.

My article 'Reformasi Total!' in *Weekly Worker* (November 19) does quote the DSP's programme and compares it to the practice of the PRD in Indonesia - an organisation which has a different political programme, but is nonetheless influenced by the DSP. In the article I expressed a concern that the DSP programme "allots the bourgeois nationalists an anti-imperialist - ie, progressive - role". I then noted the PRD's stated perspective of a government which includes counterrevolutionary forces such as Rais and the PDI's Megawati. I believe the call wrong. While the article contains several reservations, I am expressing my opinion, given the facts at my disposal. Is this so terrible? If I am wrong, please enlighten us.

You say the DSP has abandoned Trotsky's 'permanent revolution' for Lenin's 'uninterrupted revolution' (yet they are to all intents and purposes the same - whatever the rival Stalinite and Trotskyite mythologies claim). Nevertheless, one of the common mistakes in reading both these variations on Marx's original theme is the category of 'bourgeois democratic revolution'. A thorough reappraisal of this theory is vital if our movement is to advance. The way that this fixed and ahistorical category is used effectively splits the world in two and separates democratic and socialist tasks, inferring that there are no further democratic tasks to be undertaken in the industrially developed world. We, on the other hand, insist that the method of revolutionary democracy is applicable in all countries.

I hold that a mistaken reading has been carried over into your organisation's programme. Even so, for the CPGB and myself, this is no barrier to engaging in cooperative or "collaborative" relations, let alone constructive discussions. (We have just received a copy of comrade Lorimer's pamphlet *Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution: a Leninist critique*, and I look forward to studying your position further.)

For you, however, the main barrier to collaborative relations seems to be that we are criticising the DSP *per se*. This fear of openness is fundamentally anti-Leninist. While you boast that the DSP has broken from Trotskyism in terms of permanent revolution, it is clear that you have not adopted a Leninist or Marxist understanding of party-building. Indeed, you firmly adhere to the method advocated by James Cannon, which treats internal differences as something to be hidden. Public debate is considered likely to confuse the masses and the open expression of differences viewed as a declaration of war.

Lenin did not consider internal dif-

ferences to be the secret preserve of revolutionaries. Both as a majority and a minority he considered openness an essential aspect of Party culture. He famously wrote: "There can be no mass Party, no Party of a class, without full clarity of essential shadings, without an open struggle between various tendencies, without informing the masses as to which leaders and which organisations ... are pursuing this or that line" (VI Lenin *CW* vol 13, p159). In other words, for Leninists it is only this open struggle - not diplomatic silences and truces - that can build real and lasting unity.

You clearly believe that polemics should not be conducted in public. Again, Lenin thought differently. Take the example of the famed *Iskra*: "We do not reject polemics between comrades, but, on the contrary, are prepared to give them considerable space in our columns. Open polemics, conducted in full view of all Russian social-democrats and class conscious workers, are necessary and desirable in order to clarify the depth of existing differences, in order to afford discussion of disputed questions" (VI Lenin *CW* vol 4, p320).

It is not the CPGB's approach to relations between revolutionaries which should be "viewed through the sect-like prism of factional intrigues and the creation of monolithic toy-internationals". On the contrary, it is the closed method, which treats differences between organisations as a diplomatic issue, that by definition adds to "factional intrigue".

How do we know that the DSP has developed "collaborative relations" with the Labour Party of Pakistan? It is through reading *leaked* documents from the Committee for a Workers International, not your *Green Left Weekly*. But when it has suited the DSP's needs you have sent us your own internal bulletin, *The Activist*, to expose the secret on-off negotiations between yourselves and Militant in Australia. What are we to make of this?

On "toy-internationals" - or 'oil-slick internationals', as I call them - the DSP and the CPGB seem to have a similar disdain for such formations, which merely export a sect. They are certainly not the basis for a world party. We have no interest in any such projects.

Again, the CPGB asks the DSP to reconsider your decision. We no doubt have much to learn from one another. Both the DSP and the CPGB hold that we have criticised our pasts and opted for Leninist politics. Yet clearly differences remain. Far from hiding these differences, we should openly air them. It is not the end result of political debate which the working class needs for self-liberation; it is the mastery of *political method*. And that can only be developed through thorough-going debate.

What do we have to hide?

Yours comradely,

Marcus Larsen

for the Provisional Central Committee, CPGB

Outrageous exclusion

The Network of Socialist Alliances is to make another attempt to agree a constitution on January 16 next year - but outrageously the ad-hoc Liaison Group wants to exclude most of the affiliated and supporting organisations from the preliminary discussions.

The Network's September 5 launch conference in Rugby failed to reach agreement and decided to hold a recall meeting within six months. The conference voted by around 60:40 to adopt the Liaison Group's constitutional proposals on an interim basis, but this was in fact meaningless, as the provision for electing a leadership was not implemented and the unelected Liaison Group continues to act as the Network's coordinator.

The Rugby conference was split down the middle. On the right those who blindly supported the Liaison Group's proposals for a party-type structure - whereby a leadership in the form of a Liaison Committee is elected annually, and from which minorities can be completely excluded. On the left there was the 40% minority who called for an inclusive structure more appropriate to a loose, federal network, with automatic representation for national affiliated organisations and local/regional Socialist Alliances. Worryingly the two principal advocates of such a delegate structure - Socialist Perspectives and, crucially, the CPGB - have not been invited to the January 16 meeting.

The national bulletin of the Network, *The All Red and Green*, tries to justify the exclusion of most supporting organisations with the incredible suggestion that they have not shown enough "commitment to the project" (winter 1998). Only the four groups that have taken out a £5 subscription to the bulletin are deemed kosher. The fact that leading CPGB comrades, *do* subscribe counts for nothing. The fact that the CPGB has submitted carefully drafted documents which clearly represent a serious attempt to resolve the impasse over structure, the fact that it took the initiative in setting up the London Socialist Alliance and its supporters are active in many local SAs - such realities are disregarded.

We could be generous and say that perhaps the Liaison Group is hoping to encourage more subscriptions to *The All Red and Green* by this device. The CPGB as a body has therefore sent a £20 cheque to the coordinators, hoping that fulfils their "commitment" criterion. However, we must say that people who repeatedly extol the virtues of inclusiveness ought to bend over backwards to ensure that all points of view are heard - all the more so when the question being debated is so crucial.

Despite the fact that we have tried on many occasions to explain that the delegate structure we advocate is intended to reflect the Network's existence as an alliance, the anonymous writer of the front-page article in *The All Red and Green* repeats what can now only be wilful misrepresentation of our proposals. It states: "On the one hand, there are those who still want us to be a mass party with a central committee, based on the UK state; others want a looser federal structure, based on networking and mutual respect." The organisation that supposedly wants to impose a "mass party with a central committee" is of course the CPGB, while the Liaison Group, we are led to believe, just wants people to be nice to one another.

As it happens, if you turn to the inside of the bulletin, you can find a rather more accurate description of

what we advocate. Comrade Pete McLaren, one of the four joint coordinators, makes some implied criticisms of our original draft, but he does not blatantly misrepresent it. He states that under our proposals, "The Liaison Group/Steering Committee should contain one delegate from each affiliated organisation, and one delegate per 100 members of an Alliance." How can a gathering of such disparate and varied *affiliates* be described as a "central committee"? Far from demanding that such a body be authorised to issue instructions or lay down a political line, we propose only that "The Liaison Committee shall be responsible for the day-to-day running and promotion of the Network" (clause 5, paragraph 4).

Last month, a conference of the London Socialist Alliance, attended by members and supporters of nine national political organisations and six local alliances, *unanimously* agreed a set of draft rules for the national Network based on the CPGB's structural proposals. Several amendments were accepted by overwhelming majorities and have now been incorporated into the draft submitted to the Liaison Group by the LSA (see below). One of them, originating with

Toby Abse of the Independent Labour Network, was to lower the threshold for automatic representation on the Liaison Committee to one delegate per 20 members of each Alliance. In our view such a figure should be quickly amended upwards as the Network grows.

Leaving aside the vague and foolish remarks about a "central committee", the only really substantive criticism that has been made of such a delegate structure is that it would result in too large a body. Comrade McLaren implies this in his article. Such fears are unfounded. The Liaison Committee would not necessarily debate every organisational detail and nuance. It would elect its officers and appoint sub-committees for specific purposes. Every member would represent a particular organisation or Alliance and would be answerable to and recallable by that constituency. It would be the very epitome of a "looser federal structure".

Ironically the "enlarged meeting of the Liaison Group" called for January 16 will be similar to the kind of body we envisage (it certainly would be if all supporting organisations paid £5 for the bulletin and thus qualified

to attend according to the coordinators' petty-cash criteria).

At their first annual conference on November 7 the Welsh Socialist Alliances, while agreeing to elect key national officers annually, nevertheless accepted the principle whereby "affiliates are entitled to delegates on the national council". In our view the Liaison Committee (or "national council") should elect officials from its own number. This would ensure that an officer who drops out (for reasons of ill health, for example) could be replaced immediately without the need for a conference of the entire membership. Nor would there be a culture of elected dictators - officers would be subject to the will of a constantly fluctuating and evolving majority.

We believe that the Welsh Socialist Alliances, as well as any that develop in Scotland or Northern Ireland, should be entitled to affiliate and send delegates to the Network, while retaining their full autonomy (local and regional Alliances must of course be fully autonomous also). The same should apply to political groups based in Scotland, Wales and the Six Counties. It is utterly self-defeating to deliberately *exclude* comrades from outside England, while our en-

emy, the capitalist class, organises its rule on the basis of the UK state.

Comrade McLaren makes additional criticisms of the CPGB's approach. He talks of changes we have proposed which would "weaken the significance given to environmental issues and the desire to create a socially just and sustainable society". It is true that we want a Network of *Socialist Alliances*, but we believe that all greens, environmentalists and single-issue campaigners who say they are socialist should be welcome within it. The LSA draft, backed by the CPGB, calls for support for campaigns that seek to "advance the interests of the people - economically, politically and *environmentally*". It should also be pointed out that at a meeting of LSA last July the CPGB took the lead in calling for "principled links" with greens - a proposal that was opposed by the Socialist Party.

Comrade McLaren continues: "These amendments would also have taken out ... our desire to be positive, cooperative and non-sectarian; our call for unity rather than discord; our encouragement of the notion of alliances; and our requests for debates to be conducted positively without personal attack." The fact that we do not choose to use identical phrases to those of the Liaison Group is, it seems, used to imply that the CPGB wants to be 'negative', 'non-cooperative' and 'sectarian'; that we prefer discord to unity; that we want to 'discourage' alliances; and that we believe debates should be conducted 'negatively', consisting entirely of personal attacks.

In actual fact it is clear that in the eyes of Pete McLaren's comrades on the Liaison Group - John Nicholson, Dave Nellist and Dave Church - the definition of "positive", "cooperative", "non-sectarian" behaviour is meekly agreeing to everything they suggest. Such a 'control freak' approach certainly seems to inform their response to the CPGB. Those such as ourselves who propose alternatives are apparently lacking in the necessary "mutual respect".

In a further irony, these same comrades now look set to abandon the very proposals to which they viewed opposition as evidence of non-cooperation, sectarianism or worse at Rugby. On September 5 they proposed that the Liaison Committee be elected by an annual conference by means of a cumbersome and frankly unworkable system of electoral colleges. Five members were to be elected by local SAs, three by national organisations, and two by unaffiliated individuals.

Thankfully, according to comrade McLaren, the Liaison Group is now "looking at devising a simpler version of its structure proposals ... This may include ... the straight election of five officers and 10 other members at an annual conference ..." This would undoubtedly be simpler, but no less inappropriate for a network of alliances. Clearly whole tendencies and organisations would remain unrepresented under such a system. Majorities could - and no doubt would - exclude minorities not to their liking.

If the comrades are serious about building genuinely democratic, participatory and inclusive *alliances*, they would not even consider structural proposals which *exclude* minorities. Let the majority determine who holds office. But surely we must provide a structure that ensures that *all* points of view are heard and represented ●

Peter Manson

Draft rules for the Network of Socialist Alliances

Submitted by LSA for discussion, November 22 1998

Preamble

The following represents arrangements to allow socialists and socialist organisations to work together under one loose federal structure in agreed common actions. It is recognised that differences will exist. This should not be a barrier to electoral arrangements, campaigning or open and frank exchange of views. The Network will encourage and facilitate debate and the process of clarification. Our principle is inclusion, not exclusion. Through joint work and no-holds-barred discussions genuine trust can develop. It is therefore hoped that the individuals and groups involved will move closer and towards a higher organisational structure.

Clause 1. Name

Network of Socialist Alliances (hereinafter called the Network)

Clause 2. Objectives

1. To bring together through affiliation, national, regional and local political organisations and individuals for the purpose of establishing a socialist society. The Network considers:

- Socialism and democracy are inseparable.
 - Socialism is conquered by the working class. It cannot be delivered from on high.
 - Socialism is international or it is nothing.
2. The Network will fight for the maximum democracy under existing social conditions - ie, capitalism. In particular:

- Abolition of the monarchy, the House of Lords and all constitutional hereditary privileges.
- For an immediate end to British rule in Ireland. For the right of Scotland and Wales to self-determination.

- For the closest political and organisational unity of the working class.
- Support for all campaigns that seek to advance the interests of the people - economically, politically and environmentally.

3. To work with other national or international organisations in pursuit of these objectives.

Clause 3. Membership and membership conditions

1. Membership of the Network shall consist of:

- Affiliated national organisations.
- Affiliated local, regional and single-issue organisations.
- Local or regional Socialist Alliances.
- Individual members.

2. Membership shall be open to all within the United Kingdom who agree to the rules and accept the objectives of the Network.

Clause 4. Subscriptions

1. Annual membership subscriptions shall be as follows:

- Affiliated national organisation: £50.
- Other affiliated organisations and Socialist Alliances: £10.
- Individual member £6 (£3 unwaged), to include annual subscription to *The All Red and Green*.

2. When an organisation or individual fails to renew their annual subscription their membership shall be deemed to have lapsed after two months.

Clause 5. Organisation

1. There shall be an annual conference called by the Network Liaison Committee or a special conference at the demand of a third of affiliated Socialist Alliances.

2. Conferences of the Network shall be open to individual members and individual members of affiliated organisations, but voting delegates shall be on the following basis:

- Affiliated national organisations: two delegates.
- Affiliated local, regional or single-issue organisations: one delegate.
- Local Socialist Alliances: one delegate per 10 members.
- Regional or metropolitan Socialist Alliances: one delegate per 100 members.

3. Voting shall be by a simple majority. The role of the annual conference shall be to:

- Debate and express a view of political questions.
- Change the rules and objectives of the Network.

4. The Liaison Committee shall be responsible for the administration and day-to-day running and promotion of the Network. The Liaison Committee shall elect and remove officers as it so chooses. The Liaison Committee shall consist of elected and recallable delegates on the following basis:

- Affiliated national organisations: one delegate (plus one observer with speaking rights).
- Regional, metropolitan and local Socialist Alliances: one delegate per 20 members.

5. The Liaison Committee shall present audited accounts to the annual conference.

6. Standing orders for the purpose of conducting conferences of the Network and the Liaison Committee may be adopted by resolution of a conference of the Network.

Clause 6: Electoral arrangements

The Network shall facilitate and coordinate the electoral work or regional and local Socialist Alliances. It shall encourage the biggest possible socialist challenge in local, regional, national and European elections ●

Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance

Unity rejected

Greater Manchester Socialist Alliance remains mired in organisational and political lethargy. November's open members' meeting, the first since June 1998, was attended by just eight people - representatives of affiliated organisations and individual members, plus an observer, Stefan Cholewka, secretary of the Campaign Against PFI and Privatisation.

This is the level on which GMSA 'operates' following the constitutional coup by convenor John Nicholson and his political allies at the May 16 annual general meeting. (He is still hoping to implement a similar exclusive national arrangement for the Network of Socialist Alliances). The coup succeeded in removing from the steering committee representatives of two affiliated organisations, the CPGB and the Campaign for a Democratic Socialist Labour Party, who were both committed to inclusive democracy and an active challenge to Blairism in the ballot box (see *Weekly Worker* May 21).

There were two items on the published agenda - the local council elections 1999 and the structure and rules of the Network of Socialist Alliances. In response to pressure from Margaret Manning of the Socialist Party and John Pearson (CDSLP) - who argued the importance of discussing the 1999 European parliamentary elections - comrade Nicholson explained that the Independent Labour Network was taking the lead on this issue and would probably hold a meeting in Manchester "before Christmas". He did later concede that perhaps it was appropriate for a GMSA meeting and undertook to see that the steering committee considered this matter. Nicholson is incidentally a member of the ILN, although he has chosen not to disclose this within the GMSA, where he continues to operate as an 'independent'.

After a rather one-sided and superficial debate the GMSA rejected, for the second year running, the idea of working for a united electoral challenge based upon agreement between socialist organisations on a minimum platform of working class demands and on the proportional distribution of candidates. This was despite comrade Pearson's urging that such an approach had become even more necessary and desirable this year, in the light of the shift of the biggest left organisation, the Socialist Workers Party, on the question of opposing New Labour in elections. His views were swept aside. However, it fell to the observer to attempt any kind of political justification. Such a project was a "left front", comrade Cholewka pronounced. This was not at all what either Lenin or Trotsky meant by a working class united front. The comrade did not elaborate, but it was implicit that the alternative proposal, by Noel Pine of the Socialist Party, did represent genuine united front politics.

Comrade Pine opened the discussion by summarising the experience of the first 18 months of the Blair government. He emphasised New Labour's continuance of privatisation, through the private finance initiative, first in the health service and now extended to education, and through the ongoing enforcement of contracting out of service provision upon councils. This had led to a number of disputes in the public sector, the most recent local example being the mass sacking of 230 careworkers in

Tameside. Comrade Pine suggested that there was a need for a new force in local politics. He referred to the intention of the Tameside careworkers to stand against Labour in the next council elections, if the dispute was still going on. The comrade proposed that the GMSA should put out a public call for local socialist candidates to stand against Labour in the council elections, *where existing struggles/campaigns were going on*. It was stressed that this was *not* a call for a socialist unity slate against Labour.

Comrade Pine's proposal attracted support, with varying levels of enthusiasm, from fellow steering committee members, who - in the now well established GMSA 'way of working' - were extremely brief in their contributions. Mark Catterall of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty expressed the view that a 'broad sweep' campaign based on just distributing leaflets door to door was unlikely to be effective and that canvassing needed to be done in selected seats where there was a prospect of basing the campaign on real working class struggles. The Tameside careworkers' dispute was a good example of where this could be done.

Chris Jones of Socialist Outlook sounded a note of caution. It was notoriously difficult, he reminded comrades, to achieve agreement amongst left organisations, even at the level of not standing against one another in elections. He agreed with comrade Catterall that any electoral activity to be supported by the GMSA should not be widespread. He was worried, he said, "electoralism taking over".

John Nicholson agreed that any socialist electoral challenge should be based on linking the campaigns and struggles that are already going on and announced that to this end GMSA had organised a 'Unite the struggles' conference to take place in Manchester on February 13 1999.

Although the European elections was not agendaed for discussion, the perspectives outlined for the local elections by the GMSA leadership bear a striking resemblance to the formulation in the ILN's 1998 'May Day manifesto':

"... for the elections of 1999, the ILN seeks to create an alliance, as inclusive as possible, which would enable pensioners, students, the disabled, and a multitude of environmental defence groups, to make common cause for electoral support."

The ILN manifesto went on, of course, to state: "We do not seek to create a new party, but we are anxious to compel the Labour government to return to its roots, and to uphold its long-term commitments to these constituencies." Whilst Nicholson and representatives of the Labourist organisations, SO and AWL, did not echo the latter statement, there is no doubt in this writer's mind that this is their political position. It is interesting, moreover, at a time when the Socialist Party in England and Wales is undergoing a fragmentary crisis, that cadre such as comrades Pine and Manning should be supporting the Labourist position. Nevertheless, this is entirely consistent with the SP's action, in this year's local elections in Manchester, when comrade Manning moved to contest another seat, leaving a clear run in her long-standing Rusholme ward to a councillor identified by the AWL and SO, at a GMSA steering committee meeting, as "the

only one of 70 City of Manchester Labour councillors to vote against cuts this year". The approach suggested by the CPGB, of proposing a minimum platform of working class demands to the said councillor was rejected.

There were no surprises when it came to the second item of the agenda. Declan O'Neill, for the steering committee, proposed that the GMSA support a shortened version of the draft rules put to the Rugby conference of the Network by the Liaison Group. John Pearson instead proposed three amendments:

i) to remove the debarment from affiliation/membership of the Network of socialist organisations/individuals based or residing in Scotland, Wales and the north of Ireland;

ii) to prescribe a Network liaison committee comprised of delegates directly elected by, and recallable by, affiliated organisations;

iii) to replace references to "green" organisations/individuals in the Network membership criteria by "socialist greens".

This was not to the liking of the majority. Comrade O'Neill opposed comrade Pearson's representation formula on the basis that it would lead to a committee that was unmanageably large. He was backed by comrade Jones of Manchester Socialist Outlook (in London Socialist Outlook proposed an *additional* non-voting delegate to the Network - in the spirit of unity the proposal was accepted).

Comrade Jones stated that John Pearson had made "mistaken" comments at the Rugby conference about GMSA having moved from an "inclusive" steering committee composition in 1997 to an "exclusive" structure a year later. The only reason there had not been an election at the 1997 AGM from those nominations received from affiliates was that a lower number of nominations had been made than at the 1998 AGM.

Comrade Pine rebuffed comrade Pearson's argument for an *inclusive* Socialist Alliance and against the exclusion of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. He rejected the idea that this was to pander to nationalism. The real nationalism, comrade Pine suggested, was precisely the insistence that working class organisations should mirror the capitalist state. He considered separated Welsh and Scottish working class organisation a gain in terms of democracy, as such separatism purportedly offers the prospect of a viable working class challenge in response to Blair's devolution moves.

John Nicholson declared the steering committee's recommendation on rules for the Network to be carried by consensus, with just a minor amendment to replace a reference in the section on objectives to the need for affiliates/members to "share a vision of socialism" with a reference to the need for the Network to promote united work to the end of achieving socialism ●

John Pearson

Abandon nationalism

Statement by the Revolutionary Democratic Group on the Scottish Socialist Party

1. The crisis developing within British, European and world capitalism is leading to the break-up of the United Kingdom. This process, which has already begun, is tending to split the working class movement, and polarise it between British unionism and Scottish and Welsh nationalism.

2. In the face of this growing danger, socialists, revolutionary communists and militant workers must campaign vigorously for the unity of the English, Scottish and Welsh working class. We must oppose unionism and nationalism, by fighting for a federal republic based on the right of nations to self-determination.

3. The RDG has viewed with grave concern the split between the Socialist Party and Scottish Militant Labour and the proposal to set up the Scottish Socialist Party. We oppose these developments and consider them to be symptomatic of the growth of nationalism.

4. We specifically oppose the call for an independent socialist Scotland and the establishment of a separate Scottish party as being against the interests of the working class. These policies have been adopted for short-term electoral gain.

5. The RDG is not against the formation of a 'hybrid', centrist (or communist-Labour) party. We are

in favour of organising a revolutionary democratic communist tendency within such parties. But we are opposed to the formation of the 'hybrid' SSP because of its nationalist policies. Supporters of the RDG voted against setting up the Scottish Socialist Party at the special recall conference of the SSA on September 20 1998.

6. It is now clear that the overwhelming majority of the SSA have agreed to join the new party. In these circumstances, despite our opposition and the reluctance of our supporters to join, it is now necessary to do so, in order to continue the struggle against the nationalist policies of the new party.

7. RDG supporters will be joining the SSP with a clear and openly declared intention to campaign for the new party to abandon nationalism and fight for the unity of the English and Scottish working class around the demand for a federal republic.

8. RDG supporters will continue to campaign for the formation of an all-UK party and call on the SSP to adopt this policy. Consequently, we will urge the SSP to seek discussions with the Socialist Party, Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Labour Party and the Network of Socialist Alliances with the aim of future merger(s) into one party ●

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 adopts wild west diplomacy

The United States government's imposition of its *pax Americana* - loosely translatable as old-fashioned, wild west gun law applied to international relations - grows more brazen all the time.

US imperialism now openly undertakes actions which in the Cold War era of Soviet power would have been done only in secret, or not at all.

Recent weeks have witnessed what appears to be a qualitatively new dimension to this phenomenon. In a radical shift of policy, the Clinton administration has now espoused a policy of overt and direct military intervention in order to remove the heads of government in such 'pariah' states as Iraq, Serbia and North Korea. Even the notional constraints governing the US in its role as global gendarme, acting in the interests of the 'international community' - adherence to international law and resolutions of the United Nations Security Council - now count for nothing.

The trend towards an increasingly arbitrary use of violence was already apparent in August this year, when the United States deployed cruise missiles against targets in Sudan and Afghanistan in a blatantly adventurist show of force designed to execute retaliation for terrorist bomb attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The catalyst for the latest change of strategic direction, whereby individual heads of state are singled out for removal by force - appears to have been the abortive confrontation between the US and Iraq over weapons inspections. Saddam Hussein's 11th-hour acceptance of the resumption of UNSCOM inspections thwarted the US's intention to deal a decisive blow to his regime, and once more exposed the contradiction between the western powers' alleged aim of containing the military threat allegedly posed by Iraq and their real policy objective of deposing Hussein himself.

The frustration created by this turn of events was evident: secretary of state Madeleine Albright, defence secretary William Cohen and chairman of the joint chiefs of staff general Henry Shelton urged Clinton to go ahead with the planned military onslaught despite Saddam's climb-down. Only the intervention of national security adviser Sandy Berger appears to have dissuaded the US president from authorising the attack.

Of the five-member UN Security Council, China, Russia and France had sanctioned military action with considerable reluctance. To them,



Bomb the bastards

Saddam's decision must have come as a relief. But the US and the UK could not conceal their disappointment. In a strikingly bellicose statement, Tony Blair declared that there would be "no warnings, no wrangling, no negotiations ... The next withdrawal of cooperation and Saddam Hussein will be hit ... I will have no hesitation in ordering the use of force. President Bill Clinton's position is the same." In effect the outcome has been the formation of a US-UK axis pledged to remove Saddam, come what may. The strategic objective is, of course, to instigate a *coup d'état* in Iraq, whereby the essential power structures remain unchanged.

In the immediate aftermath of Saddam's decision to back down on the UNSCOM issue, Clinton confirmed the intention of the US to "intensify" its support for "the forces of change" by implementing the Iraq Liberation Act, which was passed by the Republican-dominated Congress in October. Under its provisions, the US will provide \$97 million (£60 million) for the military training and equipment of Iraqi opposition groups, with the intention of stimulating a civil war which will lead to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Fomenting an armed uprising in Iraq is, of course, not a new policy - since the end of the Gulf War in 1991, the CIA has funded a futile guerrilla war in Iraqi Kurdistan and an abortive coup by dissident offi-

cers of the Iraqi armed forces. Such operations are the bread and butter of imperialist intelligence and special services - the overthrow of the Allende regime in Chile in 1973 was engineered with the help of some 400 CIA 'advisers'. What is new about the present situation, however, is the overt espousal of the cult of force by the US and British governments in what amounts to the militarisation of international relations.

Prior to the collapse of the USSR, the imperialist powers were restrained both militarily and ideologically from giving free rein to their appetite for intervention in the affairs of sovereign states. The need to preserve their mythical 'moral superiority' meant that such intervention was for the most part conducted on a clandestine and deniable basis. The collapse of the USSR freed them from such constraints, and the increasingly aggressive stance of the US towards any state which fails to comply with its demands is a reflection of the fact that there is now only one superpower.

While not totally unrestrained to exercise its dominion on a global scale, US imperialism can target those isolated, medium to small powers that refuse to accept imperialist hegemony. Trampling on conventional notions of sovereignty and territorial integrity, the US declares that certain states are effectively 'outlaws' and

that their leaders are 'wanted dead or alive'.

Hence, Clinton has decreed that the government in Belgrade must be 'toppled' by the removal of Milosevic himself. To this end, the US openly reveals its intention to exploit current tensions between Serbia and Montenegro as a means of breaking up the Yugoslav federation, the aim being to install Milo Djukanovic, the supposedly pro-western dictator of Montenegro.

The arbitrariness and sheer criminal irresponsibility of US foreign policy in the Balkans is exemplified by a rumoured *volte face* in its attitude to the crisis over Kosovo. To date the Clinton administration has steadfastly turned its back on Kosovo's aspirations to independence. Now, in order to weaken the position of Milosevic, it is apparently intent on playing the Kosovo card. The alleged objective of US policy, inspired by Richard Gebhardt, the president's special envoy, is to create conditions in which the US can back out of what threatens to be a long-term military commitment to 'peace-keeping' in the region. Yet the power-play on which the US is set to embark risks bringing about a resurgence of armed conflict in which thousands more in the former Yugoslavia will lose their lives.

The clearest example of the dangers arising from the US's unfettered domination of global politics can be seen in its venture into military 'diplomacy' in the Korean peninsula. In order to topple the regime of Kim Jong-il, it would appear from a deliberately leaked joint chiefs of staff planning memorandum that the US is prepared to contemplate launching an aggressive, full-scale war against the People's Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

According to a report placed in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, the US will exploit any North Korean military threat to the South as an excuse for an outright invasion of the DPRK using South Korean ground forces supported by American naval and air units. The 'thinking' - or rather the transparent pretext - on which this threat is based is that the DPRK's current dire economic situation, which has resulted in wide-scale famine, might lead Kim Jong-il to launch a military adventure of his own.

This case differs from the other two we have mentioned in some important respects. In the first place, any attempt to remove the Pyongyang government is certain to meet with fierce resistance. Casualties and ma-

terial damage would be on a scale not encountered by US forces since their humiliating defeat by the Vietnamese. Given the fact that the DPRK is believed to have extracted enough plutonium for the construction of at least three nuclear warheads, the possibility of a nuclear conflagration on the peninsula could not be excluded. Interestingly, the leaked document's extremely aggressive tone is at odds with the cautious and relatively conciliatory position adopted by the US defence department within recent days, a fact that suggests the possibility of political infighting between senior US military officers and Pentagon officials. The document also departs from the so-called "sunshine" policy of trying to defuse intra-Korean tension currently being followed by South Korean government under president Kim Dae-jung.

As with Iraq, the DPRK is being accused of violating weapons agreements - in this case by allegedly constructing an underground nuclear missile facility in contravention of the 1994 agreement that obliged the DPRK to cease work on its nuclear weapons programme. The nature of this facility has supposedly been determined using pictures from a US spy satellite, but even the US special envoy in the region, Charles Kartman, has stated that the Pentagon lacks "conclusive evidence" to substantiate its claims.

Given the unreliability of American intelligence - as evidenced by the fiasco in Sudan last August and by the failure of the CIA to warn the US government of the recent Indian nuclear weapons test - little reliance can be placed on their reports about this purported weapons site.

Even if true, they would in no wise justify retaliation in the form of an invasion by a US-South Korean task force. The leaked strategic plan has yet to be officially confirmed by the US and South Korean top brass, but its eventual confirmation would mark a serious heightening of the war danger. Nothing is more likely to consolidate Kim Jong-il's tyrannical grip on his disintegrating country than the threat of a US invasion.

To make such a threat is grossly irresponsible on the part of the US and could have disastrous consequences for millions of people. Clearly, the unchallenged hegemony of the United States as the world's only remaining super-power constitutes an increasingly grave menace to humankind ●

Michael Malkin