

May Day statement Fight bomber Blair at polls

June 10 sees elections to the parliament of the European Union. These will be the first United Kingdom-wide elections since Tony Blair and New Labour swept to power in May 1997. They will also be the first UK-wide elections fought on the basis of a system of proportional representation. To all intents and purposes then they are a plebiscite on two years of New Labour government.

Yet there is another vitally significant factor. The EU elections take place in the midst of an ongoing Nato air war against rump Yugoslavia and preparations for a bloody ground assault. Thousands upon thousands are set to die.

Nato's day-and-night pounding of Serbia, its people and infrastructure is a moral crusade, boasts Blair. A sickening lie. Neither Blair nor Clinton are concerned with the right of Kosova to self-determination. Rambouillet was about legitimising Nato intervention and domination of south-eastern Europe. Allowing the Kosovar people to freely decide their own future up to and including full independence was noticeably omitted.

The west still refuses to unconditionally supply or sell arms to the guerrilla forces of the Kosova Liberation Army: ie, those actually physically resisting Slobodan Milosevic's barbaric pogrom in Kosova. The 'Marxist-Leninist' KLA is not yet trusted. Such popular forces could easily turn into Frankenstein's monsters.

Clinton and Blair are warmongers. They serve imperialism, not humanity. The United States and its allies - most bellicosely Britain - are politically constructing a new world order and doing so using violent means. Not surprisingly William Hague and Paddy Ashdown have loyally rallied round the Nato flag. So have a range of liberal, green and leftist icons. Ken Livingstone, Joschka Fischer, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Clare Short.

Under these testing circumstances the left in Britain has both a golden opportunity and a moral obligation to take full advantage of the EU elections. We should fight bomber Blair in the ballot box. The growing anti-

war movement can and must find a powerful voice in votes. A language no establishment politician can afford to ignore. What is more, on the basis of gaining even a relatively small percentage of the poll, a springboard can be created which can take us a long way towards building a genuine socialist alternative to the Labour Party.

There must be an end to calls to vote Labour in the name of socialism. Auto-Labourism is thoroughly bankrupt. That and the 'lesser of two evils' approach to politics belong in the museum of abject failure. The 'vote Labour, but ...' strategy produces nothing but the ashes of disappointment. New Labour's parliamentary landslide did not trigger the crisis of expectations predicted by so many leftwing seers. Blair presides over the most rightwing Labour government in history.

However, to vote Labour in June is not only to vote for big business, the anti-trade union laws, a poverty minimum wage and strengthening the monarchy system. To vote Labour is to vote for the Nato war. So there must be meaningful opposition to, not 'critical' support for, New Labour's carefully selected clones on June 10.

Unfortunately our allies on the left proved unequal to the task. Led by the Socialist Workers Party, one after another they fell by the wayside and into programmatic incoherence. They were either unwilling or unable to stick with the Socialist Alliances - the united left bloc formed to fight the June 10 Euro election.

The SWP's political committee split down the middle and was paralysed for three weeks. Eventually the claim was made that Arthur Scargill's decision to head his party's list in London rendered the Socialist Alliance no longer credible. A cynical cop-out. The SWP withdrew from the Socialist Alliances not just in London. Disorderly retreat occurred throughout the country.

Now the SWP indicates that it will call for a vote for Scargill's SLP. Frankly this is not merely cowardly. It is grossly irresponsible. Scargill, if given the chance, will lead the work-

ing class to utter disaster. Scargillism is far nearer the red-brown politics of Milosevic than working class socialism. His model of socialism is the bureaucratic socialism of Stalin, Mao, Kim Il Sung and Castro. Scargill aspires to be Britain's labour dictator.

Scargill might still have a reputation amongst some militant workers. He is though extremely vulnerable. Half the candidates on his London list are members of the Stalin Society (no joke). His is a little England national socialism whose only slogan for the EU is withdrawal. As to the SLP, it is a husk. No hint of opposition is tolerated. Wave after wave of dissidents have been purged ('voided') till now barely a handful of branches function. The prospect of a Scargillite Britain is nightmarish. Scargill would rule over an island prison house inhabited by state slaves. Who will expose Scargill? It might be the BBC and the capitalist media. It ought to be the revolutionary left.

Scargill was asked to join the Socialist Alliances in fielding candidates by the SWP. He did not even deign to reply. Scargill might have rotten politics, but he certainly has more bottle and self-belief than those comrades who at present constitute the SWP leadership.

The SWP's collapse before Scargill was followed in turn by Socialist Outlook, the Independent Labour Network, Socialist Party in England and Wales, and Alliance for Workers' Liberty. The possibilities of a truly united campaign was thereby greatly weakened. Though all the above groups argue that Blair is deeply unpopular they dare not test the thesis in practice. The nettle was left ungrasped.

Of the constituent national parts of the Socialist Alliance the CPGB alone remains committed to challenging bomber Blair and refusing to hand the opposition movement over to the labour dictator Scargill.

It was against this sombre background that the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB met last week to fully consider its position. After lengthy and fully considered discussion it was unanimously agreed that

the CPGB will press ahead with a full slate of candidates in the London and North West England EU constituencies.

Deposits alone for this cost £10,000. So the whole of our £25,000 Summer Offensive campaign is to be devoted to the EU election. Our hard pressed members and supporters should not be left to shoulder the burden by themselves. The Provisional Central Committee therefore earnestly appeals to all militants, socialists and communists to lend a hand. Comrades, no matter what your particular differences are with us, you surely have a responsibility here, in what is after all a common fight for the interests of the working class.

Of course, thanks to the Blairites, the CPGB, like the Socialist Party, is banned from standing under our own name. We have been forced to register as 'Weekly Worker'. Given the historically established record of the CPGB and the fact that we have fielded candidates since 1992 in Westminster, European and local elections under our Party's name, this is an undoubted handicap.

Nevertheless we are determined that the CPGB does its duty. We will provide a focal point for principled opposition to bomber Blair. The CPGB is also determined to uphold the inclusive spirit of the Socialist Alliance and facilitate the work of other forces. The CPGB, it should be noted, is affiliated to the Socialist Alliances network led by comrade Dave Nellist.

Our list is open to any socialist who is prepared to accept the manifesto of the 'Weekly Worker' (to be based on an updated and adapted version of the Socialist Unity manifesto jointly negotiated and agreed for January's North Defoe by-election by the CPGB, SWP, Hackney SLP and a revolutionary Turkish community association).

Hence, besides formulations around basic issues such as the minimum wage, the environment, smashing the anti-trade union laws and fighting unemployment and poverty, our manifesto emphasises democratic questions.

As revolutionary democrats we stand for the immediate abolition of the monarchy, the House of Lords and the whole constitutional monarchy system. We are for the maximum unity of the working class against our common enemy: ie, the UK state of the capitalist class. Today that best finds expression in demands for Irish reunification and the right of Scotland and Wales to self-determination in a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales.

When it comes to Europe, here too we are for the fullest, most extensive democracy. That can most effectively be fought for through the call for an end to the corrupt system of unelected European commissioners and in their place a popularly elected constituent assembly of the EU. We are for the highest trade union and party unity of workers in the EU in the struggle for both democracy and socialism.

Unlike the Scargillites, reformists and Stalinites we insist that socialism is won by workers themselves. Socialism is an act of conscious self-liberation. It cannot be handed down from on high. Neither by a benign state nor by some self-appointed labour dictator. Socialism is necessarily democratic. Nor can socialism be confined to one country. Socialism is international or it is nothing.

Last and by no means least, our manifesto takes a position of complete opposition to Nato's war in the Balkans. We say stop the Nato bombing now. That however does not lead us into the red-brown camp of Milosevic and his Serbian Socialist Party. We champion the Kosovar demand for self-determination and independence. The KLA has the right to arm itself and fight.

Naturally individuals and groups joining or supporting our list have the full freedom to criticise and put forward their own distinct propaganda. Allowing the expression of differences is no sign of weakness. It is a sure sign of our strength ●

**Provisional Central Committee
Communist Party of Great Britain
May 1 1999**

Party notes

Long live May Day!

Victory to the 16th Summer Offensive!

May 1 sees the official launch of the Communist Party's 16th Summer Offensive, our annual fundraising drive. We will mark the event during our 'Politics of the Balkan war' school on May 2 and take individual pledges from our comrades present towards our £25,000 target.

For readers unfamiliar with our SO, it is an intense two-month period of collective income generation undertaken by members and supporters of the Party. Comrades set themselves personal targets and then go about clawing the money in. All the cash that a comrade raises through his/her work during the course of this eight weeks is counted towards their total - so comrades have a chance to get off to a good start on the various May Day demonstrations around the country this weekend. Thus, the SO is more than a much needed fund drive: it is also a measure of the intensity of political work and intervention of our organisation and the individuals who comprise it.

A justified criticism of previous years' campaigns has been what might be called the 'big black hole' syndrome. The Party's financial targets were set without being clearly referenced to what the money was going towards, what had already been achieved and what was still needed to be done. Thus, comrades sometimes compared raising money to standing on the edge of a pit, pouring money in without ever knowing if the abyss was filling, how much more was needed.

There are no such worries this year. It is clear what our immediate tasks are and the type of funds we will need.

The crisis of the Socialist Alliances in London and the North West means that it falls to our organisation to shoulder the burden of mounting a principled challenge to Blair. This will cost £10,000 in deposits alone, before we even start to think about running any sort of campaign.

Long ago, we outgrew our current national centre. During the SO campaign, we plan to move to more spacious and better equipped office space. This will greatly facilitate the work of the organisation, but it will cost us in the short term.

The challenge to the outrageous decision of the registrar of political parties to debar us from standing under our own name in forthcoming elections will be an ongoing fight. Apart from any direct campaigning demands, the vital legal advice we have taken is incredibly expensive.

We have the perennial task of activating the layer of Party supporters we have around the country. We must get these comrades selling the paper regularly, contributing more substantially to Party coffers and attending national events more regularly. In other words, we have to reverse the current situation where servicing Party supporters is a small net drain on resources. Our periphery of sympathisers and supporters has remained relatively stable over the last year or so.

However, most are still very inexperienced and will find the rigours of the Offensive difficult, particularly without close attention from experienced veterans.

Certainly, the amounts that individual members are able to raise have been quite daunting for outsiders. This is our 16th SO. They originated in the struggle of Leninists against the old opportunist leadership of the Communist Party in the 1980s. We were thus able to directly contrast the levels of commitment and sacrifice of our comrades with members of contemporary factions in the Party. One comparative statistic that sticks in my mind from the time was our discovery that some of our *lower* totals being raised by *individuals* were more than those managed by several whole *districts* of opportunists during their limp annual 'appeal'.

This approach flows from how we regard our tasks as revolutionaries. To believe in communism in practice means to take the necessary steps *in the here and now* that will get us from here to there. The left in Britain flounders in day-to-day 'practical' activity, with a platonic commitment to a communist future, shimmering off there in the remote distance. Some of these comrades have even called our level of dues and financial demands "immoral", in that they alienate "ordinary workers".

History shows that masses of workers have been more disposed to building serious organisations in a serious way than the sects of the revolutionary left. "Ordinary" people have flocked into organisations from the catholic church to the Communist International on the basis of their deeply held beliefs, not which was cheaper to join.

The project for world communism demands commitment on a qualitatively *higher* level than that of the most militant workers. Certainly those who do not even aspire to such levels should not insult militants by blaming their failings on the supposed whimsical and shallow nature of the working class itself.

The crisis-racked British left is utterly incapable of linking its theory to its practice. It is an irony that the one organisation - the CPGB - that recognises this as a period of intense ideological reaction has been left alone on the electoral stage as groups like the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party and Alliance for Workers' Liberty have collapsed.

The gutless failure of these other groups is an expression of a programmatic crisis ripping through their ranks, of a profound disjuncture between their upbeat perspectives and the harsh reality of the class struggle in contemporary Britain.

An energetic and successful 16th Summer Offensive will have an excellent exemplary effect on a revolutionary left in such a state of flux. Comrades must approach this year's SO with attention to detail, guts and imagination ●

Mark Fischer
national organiser

Right of reply

"Given his anarchistic attachment to the unconditional principle of a right of reply, I trust Dave Craig will insist that the *Weekly Worker's* editor finds space to print this rejoinder to his 2,000 words of lies and smears." This is the opening line of Tom Delargy's article (*Weekly Worker* April 15). That is about as polite as it gets.

After that it is downhill all the way. Some of it was so personally abusive that the editor cut it from his article to save everybody's embarrassment. My article in the *Weekly Worker* (April 8) must have been on target because it caused Delargy to explode in a puff of smoke.

Clearly he has got a big problem in his relations with comrades Mary Ward and Nick Clarke. He hates them so much that he can't resist sneering at them as a "Couple for a Federal Republic". Is this real? Perhaps at the Communist University this year, we will have 'Mark Fischer (sharing a flat) debates a federal republic with Allan Armstrong (workers' republic and married)'!

Delargy is too busy handing out insults to think straight. It is not sufficient to ask in a comradely fashion why we didn't answer his question. He has got to provide the answer. Apparently we didn't answer his question quite deliberately because we are not Marxists and can't think. He announces that "not one of you has a firm enough grasp of Marxism to be capable of offering a considered response".

Of course Delargy's article raises a number of questions, including the right of reply, the style and method of polemic and the meaning of revolutionary democracy. On the latter point he raises nothing new and nothing that hasn't been answered in the *Weekly Worker* on many occasions before. Still I will be only too happy to answer it again in due course.

Let me clear the decks for future polemic by dealing with my alleged "anarchistic attachment to the unconditional principle of a right of reply". Wrong on all counts. I defended a democratic principle of a right of reply. I made it clear that it was not unconditional. In exceptional circumstances, there may be a valid political reason not to give a right of reply.

Where there are exceptional circumstances and a right of reply is refused, the editors should publish the official reasons for non-publication. In my view the *Weekly Worker* or indeed any revolutionary paper should be open for a right of reply, or open about the reasons why they were not. This means the editors should be accountable for a decision to deny a right of reply in front of their readership and the wider working class movement.

The right of reply is not the right to have any article in the *Weekly Worker*. It is simply the right to correct mistakes, and challenge lies or slanders. Although Delargy claims my entire article was "2,000 words of lies and smears", in fact he raises only two matters that might require correction. First is the fact that I deduced from his actions over the last few months that he did not support a federal republic. He says that he does. I will examine that in my reply on revolutionary democracy. Second he claims that I had "damned" Sandy McBurney "as a liberal supporter of the monarchy".

What I actually said was: "When we hear Sandy, it is the voice of a liberal anti-monarchist, not a revolutionary." Delargy hasn't got his facts right. Apparently he can't tell the difference between a liberal-monarchist, and a liberal-republican.

On the question of the method and style of polemic I do not believe that responsible communists should write or publish sectarian polemics. But the checks against this are openness, the right of reply and the decisions of the

editor(ial) The editorial board should seek to set high standards for polemics and encourage all contributors to reach those standards. It should be obvious from my previous comments that Delargy has fallen well below the standards that we as communists should expect and demand.

I certainly don't agree to an anarchistic, 'anything goes' style or method of polemic. Communist polemics must be fundamentally about seeking the truth. When they degenerate into name-calling and personal abuse, they will be of use mainly by sectarians and *agents provocateurs* within our movement. Calling me a lying, slandering, non-Marxist hypocrite is evidence that Delargy has lost the plot.

Dave Craig
London

National liberation

Comrade Malkin's reply (*Weekly Worker* April 22) to my letter is inadequate.

Firstly he does not situate the war in the correct international context: ie, that ethnic cleansing flowed from the shock therapy enforced by the IMF in 1990 on the working class of Yugoslavia, and that the aim of the Nato assault is, among other things, to prepare public opinion in Nato countries for some other American-dominated alliance to engage in future operations as the world's policeman for finance capital.

Comrade Malkin effectively lets imperialism off the hook in respect of its support and sponsorship for the various nationalist projects of the decomposing Stalinist apparatus. This support had the useful consequence of promoting an ethnic fracturing of the Yugoslavian proletariat and thus weakening the potential for working class opposition to IMF austerity. The failure of sections of the left to raise these issues and instead concentrate on the demand for independence for Kosova essentially means joining in with the media campaign against the significant anti-war feeling at home.

Instead the genuine left should be using the war to alert the working class to the growing danger of its sons and daughters being called on to fight repeated wars to defend finance capital's domination of the planet. We should use every opportunity to highlight the hypocrisy of the Nato powers' concern for the refugees when these powers are enforcing policies on the third world resulting in mass starvation. We should point to the anti-working class consequences of nationalism and the need for international solidarity of the working class to defeat the warmongers and criminals who rule our planet.

Comrade Malkin writes as if nothing has changed since 1915 in terms of the relevance of the slogan of national self-determination. Quoting Lenin is no longer sufficient and hasn't been for some time past. Since Lenin's time the old European empires have gone and national self-determination for the countries of the third world has been achieved. Direct political control of these states has largely disappeared. Global finance capital now rules supreme through its control of credit, investment and the terms of trade.

The old national liberation movements had a progressive content, even when led by bourgeois or petty bourgeois leaderships. They attempted to develop the forces of production which imperialist domination was holding back. This progressive content to the struggle for national self-determination has disappeared with globalisation.

In this situation the demand for national self-determination often becomes either a tool in the hands of elites in an attempt to mobilise the population behind reactionary wars or a tool in the hands of petty bourgeois 'would be'



Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed.

elites who seek to carve out new states in order to achieve power for themselves and a more lucrative direct relationship with finance capital.

These new 'national liberation movements' are ethnically defined, anti-democratic and pro-finance capital, and thus pro-imperialist. These movements utilise (and for their own ends often consciously seek to exacerbate) national disadvantage or oppression where it exists. They violently crush any dissent within their 'own' communities and suppress any attempt at working class self-activity.

As capitalism continues to decline and the proletarian response to this decline remains disorientated, the potential for the growth of such reactionary ethnic movements remains and even increases. Socialists should expose these movements as being fundamentally anti-working class and as tools in the hands of our enemies, while at the same time denouncing state support for any national oppression or disadvantage. We recognise the right of national self-determination and do not support state measures taken against those advocating that right within oppressed communities.

I made it plain in my letter (*Weekly Worker* April 15) that communists in Serbia should oppose the repression of the Kosovars.

However, whether we demand self-determination in any given situation depends on the concrete conditions. Given the real nature of many of the new national liberation movements, extreme caution should be exercised. But if the reports of ethnic cleansing by Serbian state forces are true, as seems very likely, Serb communists should call for their withdrawal from Kosova and argue for a multi-ethnic workers' militia to combat the chauvinists on both sides.

The only way out is through the mobilisation of the working class fighting for its class interests around a socialist programme. The demand for a socialist federation of the Balkans is a key part of such a process. The CPGB and Comrade Malkin do not want to advance such a slogan at the moment. It would seem that it is not part of the their 'minimum programme'.

Comrade Malkin prefers the slogans of 'Independence for Kosova' and 'Arm the KLA' to the "pious" call for a socialist federation. (Who exactly are you demanding should arm the KLA? - Nato perchance, as the 'comrades' of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty demand?)

As well as fighting the forces of Serb chauvinism the KLA has engaged in some ethnic cleansing of its own. It would seem that it policies could be summed up as a Kosovo for Albanians only. It is armed and trained by Germany and the USA. Reports indicate that it obtains a large part of its funding for drug smuggling and involvement in the white slave trade in cooperation with the Italian mafia. Comrade Malkin believes that we should not underestimate the possible impact of revolutionary socialists elements within its ranks!

The comrades of the CPGB should reconsider their campaign for an independent Kosova. Even more so their call for the arming of the KLA. Imperialism armed the mujahadeen in Afghanistan in their "struggle for national self-determination". In retrospect should communists have demanded just such a course? Look at the result, comrades, and think again.

Sandy McBurney
Glasgow

Brian Heron and Carolyn Sikorski, leaders of the Fourth International Supporters Caucus, along with Royston Bull, former SLP vice-president and editor of the *Economic and Philosophic Science Review*, have been effectively expelled from the Socialist Labour Party.

At last week's meeting of the SLP's London regional committee comrade Heron announced that both he and his partner, comrade Sikorski, had been informed that their membership had 'lapsed' after they failed to renew their subscriptions. Apparently their cheque had been returned with the excuse that it had been received too late. In a move of the utmost cynicism general secretary Arthur Scargill has graciously conceded that they may reapply for membership.

Along with Terry Dunn and Helen Drummond, comrades Heron and Sikorski had headed the Appeal faction, set up last October to launch their 'Appeal for a special conference'. Despite containing only the mildest of criticisms of Scargill's bureaucratic rule, the 'Appeal' was viewed by the Great Leader as an outrageous act of disloyalty. He banned its circulation and decided that Fisc had to go.

At the November 1998 special congress Scargill saw to it that the Fiscites were all but eliminated from the NEC. Comrade Heron was voted out and fellow Fiscite Patrick Sikorski, the sitting vice-president, was defeated by comrade Bull. This in turn led to the Fiscites withdrawing cooperation in their London stronghold, where they announced that they would not back the SLP campaign in June's EU elections unless Scargill removed Bull from his democratically elected position. Apparently they had just 'discovered' the homophobic contents of the *EPSR*.

Scargill decided to move swiftly against both factions, bringing disciplinary action against the Appeal Four for refusing to withdraw their appeal, and against Bull for having the audacity to "comment on the affairs of the SLP" in the pages of his cut-and-paste journal. Unfortunately for the general secretary, however, he ran into a little difficulty when the validity of the party's complaints procedure was challenged by comrade Imran Khan, acting as the Appeal Four's lawyer, and moves to expel all the 'defendants' had to be aborted.

Comrade Bull was verbally informed immediately after his hearing on February 12 that the complaints committee had decided in favour of expulsion - subject only to NEC endorsement - but no written notification was ever sent to him, as the complaints procedure stipulates. On April 2, having previously been informed that he was expelled, he received a letter from Scargill with the news that his membership had lapsed after 13 weeks' non-payment of dues.

Comrades Heron and Carolyn Sikorski were caught in the same trap, after withholding their 1999 payments until the last minute. Having given Scargill his chance, they now self-righteously complain that they had in fact just beaten the 13-week deadline. Comrade Drummond has also been 'lapsed', while Terry Dunn remains a member, his subscriptions kept up to date.

The two Fiscites led a pathetic walk-out from the April 22 London committee meeting, followed by a handful of others, including John Mulrenan, the acting London chair, who announced his resignation from the party.

Earlier comrade Heron had given a long, emotional speech to the open committee meeting, attended by just under 20 London members. Now that Scargill had turned against Fisc, he said, the SLP had "reached the point where it has been transformed into a minor sect". Not, however, as useless a sect as the components of the "Socialist Alliance swamp", he added. Yes, Scargill was a "guru", but he pre-

ferred "guru Arthur" to all the other left gurus.

It is difficult to find words to describe Heron's dismal view of what a working class party ought to look like and how it ought to be built. For example, while bemoaning the "*de facto* expulsion" of such valuable ex-sycophants as himself and Carolyn, he actually maintained his flagrant support for previous voidings and 'lappings' directed against the left, relishing his own part in "chucking out the CPGB", as he preferred to describe the anti-communist witch-hunt.

Trembling with emotion, comrade Heron went on to recall his hopes at the time of the SLP's formation in similar terms to those of countless others who have since walked away in despair and demoralisation.

In a stunning condemnation of her own politics, comrade Sikorski emphasised how it could have been all so different - if only king Arthur had booted out comrade Bull. The turning point for Fisc seems to have been Scargill's manipulation of the January executive agenda, which ensured that the European elections were moved up ahead of the disciplinary reports, thus suppressing news of comrade Bull's offer to resign the vice-presidency until after the NEC had considered what to do about London. In view of Fisc's refusal to contest the elections, the executive agreed that a list of candidates should be imposed. If only she had known that Bull was out, said comrade Sikorski, she would have announced to the NEC that London was crawling back into the fold.

As it was, Heron and Sikorski were reduced to proposing to the London regional committee that "This committee does not support this imposed slate". NEC member Harpal Brar, one of the slate's candidates, put forward a counter-proposal: "Failure to support this slate is incompatible with party membership." The committee members present voted four to one in favour of Fisc (for: Heron, Sikorski, Mulrenan and acting secretary Heather Downs; against: Ranjeet Brar, Harpal's son).

Comrade Heron generously proclaimed that he was still prepared to "organise the way forward" - if others were prepared to follow him. Condemning the "very different politics" of some of those present, he declined to engage further with the meeting as it was constituted: "This forum is not a basis to fight." He was referring to the half dozen ultra-Stalinites around Harpal Brar, editor of *Lalkar*, the bi-monthly journal of the Indian Workers Association. He was sure that the Brarites would be elected onto the London committee at May's AGM.

Despite the appeals of some to stay and fight, comrade Heron called on his dwindling band of miserable supporters to walk out. A comrade asked whether he now intended to organise a "new party" with his six supporters, to which he replied: "Certainly not. But we will not sleep either. And take that smile off your face." (The comrade was not actually smiling.)

Brar makes his move

Harpal Brar is now set to consolidate his position as head of the remaining factional courtiers of king Arthur. As the SLP continues its cataclysmic decline, even the tiniest of grouplets are able to win positions of influence. In

February the Brarite slate of Ella Rule, Amanda Rose and Iris Cremer took over the SLP women's section after being given a clear run at the AGM by the former Fiscite incumbents, led by comrade Sikorski. In protest at Scargill's gerrymandering of the voting entitlements Sikorski and co declared their intention of setting up a rival women's grouping, calling their own women's national conference on April 17. It was a dismal failure, with just six supporters showing their face.

After the London committee went on strike over Bull, Scargill turned to comrade Brar to come up with 10 names for the EU elections. Not surprisingly Harpal nominated himself, together with four close supporters: his daughter, Joti, along with comrades Rule and Rose and IWA disciple Hardev Dhillon.

With Arthur himself topping the list, the Socialist Alliance electoral bloc was thrown into disarray. First the SWP and Socialist Outlook, followed swiftly by the Independent Labour Network, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and the Socialist Party in England and Wales, threw in the towel, despite the Stalinite composition of Scargill's slate and the absence of any organisation.

The SLP's Euro 'campaign' will consist almost entirely of a single election broadcast. In order to qualify, Scargill has prioritised the funding of SLP slates in sufficient regions. It seems that there will be little, if any, published propaganda, as Scargill's 'viable' organisation cannot afford to print more than a token amount of material, let alone put in the person-hours necessary to prepare it for distribution by the Royal Mail. The last meeting of the NEC (March 20) did not even discuss the EU poll, and no elections sub-committee has been set up. The next meeting is not scheduled until June 6 - the Saturday before polling. Through stubborn, sectarian doggedness and nothing more than the aura of his name Scargill has contemptuously swatted away the rest of the left, apart from the CPGB. And comrade Brar can hardly believe his own good fortune.

Now Harpal seems set to complete his takeover of the London organisation. At last week's committee meeting acting regional secretary Heather Downs was left in limbo after the Fisc walkout. Without access to the names and addresses of the few CSLP secretaries whose branches still remain in

existence, she is unable to notify them of the May AGM of the London region. Comrade Brar announced that he would be calling the meeting, in view of the fact that the regional committee had "tried to sabotage the party" and could not be trusted with such confidential information as their comrades' addresses.

When his right to do this - since he holds no elected position on the London committee - was challenged, comrade Brar called for a vote of all the members present. Ignoring the fact that only the two remaining committee members (Heather Downs and Ranjeet Brar) were actually entitled to a vote, the *Lalkar* editor asked the members to indicate their agreement. Six Brarite hands shot up, while the remaining comrades, stunned by his effrontery, had no answer. "Thanks, comrades," gloated comrade Brar. "That's all I need."

Spark

At a recent demonstration in London against the Nato attacks on Serbia, Scargill was seen approaching one of comrade Brar's supporters. The comrade was selling not only *Socialist News*, the SLP's deadly dull occasional paper, but *Lalkar*. Ignoring the latter, the general secretary took a copy of his own publication in order to press it into the hands of Tony Benn, who was no doubt overwhelmed by its inspiring contents.

Not content with *Lalkar*'s status as a tolerated publication, despite the party's constitutional ban on "separate and distinctive propaganda", the Brarites are now touting their own officially sanctioned SLP journal. *Spark* is the organ of the SLP youth section, run by none other than comrade Ranjeet Brar. This 'British *Iskra*' bears more than a passing resemblance to the better known publication put out by Ranjeet's dad. Same layout, same type fonts, same cartoonist, same ultra-Stalinite dross - even the style of the unsigned articles has that familiar ring to it.

Mind you, why should a journal aimed at young people be different from the grown-up version? Apart from the editorial, the articles - on 'Capitalism in crisis', ideology and Paul Robeson, as well as Iraq, Ireland, the Labour Party, etc - contain hardly a mention of youth. All are standard *Lalkar* fare - with an assurance of "Socialist Labour youth" backing for the Brarite line tagged on at the end ●

action

■ CPGB seminars

London: Sunday May 2, 11am - CPGB day school - 'Politics of the Balkans war'. Call 0181-459 7146 for details.

Manchester: Monday May 10, 7.30pm - 'The rise of the Soviet bureaucracy' - special seminar. Phone 0161-226 6133 for details. 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.

■ Socialist Alliance (London region)

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

■ NW England Socialist Alliance

Open forum: 'Socialists and the Balkans war' - Saturday May 15, 11am-3pm. Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester. Building fully accessible. Staffed crèche - phone Mark (0161-224 5034) by May 10 to book. Admission £2 (£1 unwaged).

■ 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.

■ May Day demonstration

Saturday May 1 1999 - assemble 12 noon at Clerkenwell Green, London. March leaves 1pm. Rally in Trafalgar Square 3pm.

Support the struggle to reclaim our rights, free the unions and repeal all the anti-union laws. Organised by the London May Day Organising Committee.

For more details contact the United Campaign for the Repeal of the Anti-Trade Union laws, c/o John Hendy QC, secretary, United Campaign, PO Box 17556, London EC2Y 8PA. Call: 0171-638 7521; fax: 0171-638 7507.

■ End the war

Public meeting - Nato out of the Balkans - self-determination for Kosova.

Tuesday May 11, 7.30pm, University of London Union, Malet Street. Speakers include Liz Davies, Jeremy Corbyn, Greg Tucker, Kosovar Albanian representative.

■ Stop Nato bombing

Committee for Peace in the Balkans - national demonstration, Saturday May 8. Assemble - 12 noon, Embankment. Rally - 2.30pm. Speakers include Tony Benn, Tam Dalyell, Lee Jasper, Alice Mahon.

■ March for jobs!

Prepare for the demonstration in Cologne on May 29, to coincide with the EU heads of government summit.

For details contact Andy Robertson, secretary, Euromarch Liaison Committee: 0191-222 0299; euromuk@aol.com.

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Robbie Rix

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Are they freedom fighters or terrorists, partisans engaged in a just struggle against national chauvinist mass terror or agents of imperialism? In essence, the attitude adopted to the KLA by some leftwing groups serves to define the ideological bankruptcy of those who, abandoning any serious attempt at Marxist analysis, choose instead to revive the redundant polarities and anachronistic rhetoric of the Cold War - the 'Yugoslav defencists'; or to take up positions objectively indistinguishable from liberal bourgeois ideology - the social-pacifists.

For the arch-proponents of 'Yugoslav defencism' at the *Morning Star*, Nato's offensive against Serbia seems to have induced an acute bout of Cold War nostalgia. It is as if the collapse of the Soviet Union and with it the demise of 'official communism' had never really happened. Unconditional defence of the USSR has been replaced by unconditional defence of Yugoslavia. Just as in 'the good old days', when the *Morning Star* regurgitated every word that came from the mouth of Tass as if it were holy writ, so now it fills its pages with communiqués from Tanjug. Its editorials might just as well have been written in Belgrade. Hence, the KLA are roundly condemned as "criminals", funded by Germany and the USA as part of a fiendish plot to "break up the former Yugoslavia so as to make a client state for Germany, which is a repeat of policies pursued in 1914 and 1939" (editorial, April 21).

The principal charges levelled by the *Morning Star* against the KLA are that the latter are "terrorists", whose goal is the creation of "an ethnically pure, Albanian-only Kosovo"; that they are not so much a military force as a gang of "drug-traffickers"; and, most grotesquely, that they are "fascists".

The first accusation is, of course, pure routine. As "terrorists", the KLA are legitimate targets, and Milosevic's campaign of terror against the entire population of Kosova, with its mass murder, rape, arson and looting can be portrayed as "the Yugoslav national army stepping up its offensive against the Kosovo Liberation Army - an organisation which western intelligence agencies identified as a terrorist group a year ago, but which is now treated as an honoured Nato ally" (editorial, April 17).

The second allegation has a curious provenance, originating in part from remarks made by Tory maverick Alan Clark, to the effect that the KLA are "drug dealers". Since Clark is "no communist", his words carry weight, the *Morning Star* implies. Of course, Clark was a notorious Cold War warrior. Anyway the problem for the paper was how to give substance to the smear. Its answer was an article by Brian Denny entitled 'Trafficking to the west' (April 15). This classic piece of scissors-and-paste journalism draws on snippets from various sources to the effect that "It is said that between 25% and 40% of all heroin in the US was supplied by the leading Kosovo-Albanian cartel"; a report from the German Federal Criminal Office is cited to demonstrate that "ethnic Albanians are now the most prominent group in the distribution of heroin"; according to the *Morning Star*, the German government itself is involved with the "cartel" (in order to "further Bonn's aim of breaking up Yugoslavia"); and the CIA is similarly accused of financing Kosovar "freedom fighters through the laundering of drugs and money".

It may well be that a "Kosovan-Albanian drugs cartel" exists, but an attentive reader of Denny's poisonous little confection will notice that he silently conflates this "cartel" with the KLA, producing not one shred of evidence proving KLA involvement in drug-running.

Thirdly, the *Morning Star* plumbs

A just cause

Critical support for KLA does not mean backing Nato says **Michael Malkin**

.....
 "To paraphrase a certain Jewish German: while it does not actively side with Kosovar self-determination the working class in Serbia can never free itself"

.....
 new depths of absurdity by claiming that the KLA are "fascists". It 'substantiates' this claim by reprinting a curious article from "Workers World Service", according to which "many leaders of the KLA trace their roots to a fascist unit set up during World War II by the Italian occupiers". What is more, the KLA "has patterned some of its uniforms and insignia on the fascist unit" (April 13). When the 'Yugoslav defencists' are reduced to bolstering their arguments with abysmal nonsense of this kind, one can only wonder what they will think up next? Perhaps the KLA will be 'unmasked' as covert agents of freemasonry or international Zionism?

There is one issue of some substance that brings the 'Yugoslav defencists' and the bourgeois-pacifists (notably the Socialist Workers Party) together, and that is the question of imperialism's military support for the KLA, and its corollary, the assistance given by the KLA to Nato's bombing offensive, specifically in relation to providing Nato with targeting intelligence on Serbian troop movements and dispositions. For the *Morning Star*, the KLA is *simply* and *only* a catspaw of the Nato powers, its military campaign nothing but an adjunct of the very real conspiracy by the imperialists to gain hegemony over the Balkans.

For *Socialist Worker*, the KLA is a "problem", because "... an Albanian nationalist army, hardened by war and enjoying mass support ... could threaten the integrity of half a dozen states throughout the region." Hence, "arming the Kosovo Liberation Army and backing Kosovan independence would make the situation worse" (April 10). So far as military cooperation between Nato and the KLA is concerned, *Socialist Worker* appears to agree with the maxim that 'by their friends shall ye know them': under the headline 'KLA's friends', the paper tells us that the KLA is presented by "some" (eg, the CPGB) "as a fighting force to support. But the KLA admits it is being trained by the British SAS and US special forces teams" (April 24). Evidently, the SWP, currently undergoing its own crisis of identity and direction, has too weak a stomach and too little theory to countenance support for the messy kind of struggle in which an organisation like the KLA chooses to seek help where it can find it. Much safer to wash one's hands of the whole business and espouse the sort of bourgeois pacifism touted by the likes of Bruce Kent, or get into a cosy bed with the MPs who run the Committee for Peace in the Balkans,

and bemoan the fact that "war leads to catastrophe".

At a rally organised by this committee in London on April 21, the comedian and SWP member Mark Steel (though he did not declare himself in the latter capacity) told his audience that the KLA was an "anti-working class" force meriting no support, and that the Kosovars' struggle for self-determination was a "distraction" from the main issue, which, according to Steel, is to offer support to the "anti-Milosevic elements" in Serbia.

Comrade Steel is probably right to say that such "elements" exist, but if he believes that they are socialists, bursting with suppressed proletarian internationalism and a fervent desire to embrace their Kosovar brothers and sisters, we can only conclude that he is living in a dream world. If these "elements" in the Serbian political and military leadership decide to ditch Milosevic, it will be because he is a loser and hence a danger to their own skins, not because he is failing in his 'socialist' duty. As to the Serbian working class, there is no sign *yet* of any outburst of a revolutionary socialist commitment to justice for Kosova. To paraphrase a certain Jewish German: while it does not actively side with Kosovar self-determination the working class in Serbia can never free itself.

The question of how we should view the KLA's cooperation with Nato forces is of prime importance, a question demanding Marxist clarity and perspectives. First, the facts: is the KLA being trained by the SAS? Certainly, if authoritative sources in the bourgeois media are correct (see, for example, *The Sunday Telegraph* April 18). It is probable that the KLA is already receiving covert military assistance in the form of weapons as well as training. It is possible, though in my view unlikely, that this assistance will eventually become a matter of public Nato policy - such a development would bring about a serious confrontation with Russia, which would then feel itself obliged to break the arms embargo in favour of the Serbians.

Do any of these facts or possibilities mean that, as Marxists, we should jettison support for the KLA in order to maintain our ideological purity by refraining from giving comfort to an organisation self-righteously castigated by many on the left as a tool of imperialism? No, they do not. Such a view is one-sided, mechanical and reeks of cowardly opportunism. In the first instance, there is the fact that the KLA and the Kosovars' struggle for self-determination is a just one. They have the right to get military aid where and when they can. Did the Provisional IRA's acquisition of arms from Libya make them 'tools of Arab nationalism'? And what about the Boston Irish?

Furthermore, as we have consistently argued, there is a decidedly positive aspect to the dialectic of the present situation: of course, we never support the war aims of imperialists. Nonetheless, the fact remains that Nato bombing has reduced the already enfeebled Serbian economy to a state of ruin. An eventual Nato victory, however high the cost in terms of lives and material, must be inevitable. As always, it will be the working

class, the ordinary men and women of Yugoslavia, who will have to pay the price for Milosevic's chauvinist dreams of creating a Greater Serbia - they will pay for it in the coinage of mass unemployment and social deprivation. Just as significant, divisions at the top, coupled with demoralisation turning to anger below, will provide an opportunity for socialists. In this situation, the possibility of a genuine socialist alternative, marked by the resurgence of class politics, can come onto the agenda. This consideration leaves aside the obvious - indeed, the more important - fact that the demand for a Nato ground offensive - promoted by Blair at his most 'patriotic' and bellicose - may well cause irreparable damage to the military and political cohesion of the imperialist bloc even before it begins. In short, the situation is pregnant with possibilities which even a cursory glance should make clear to any Marxist theoretician or organisation worthy of the name.

To judge by the reaction of some comrades, you would think that the issue of Kosovar self-determination had suddenly sprung up from nowhere. They appear to lack any historical grasp of the background to the present conflict. The apparent golden age of 'Yugoslav unity', so cherished by the 'Yugoslav defencists', was imposed by the Tito regime from above. It may have contained some positive aspects, but it was nonetheless a fudge, in essence a betrayal so far as Kosova was concerned. The 1946 constitution of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia made no mention of Kosova as a distinct political entity, thus reneging on promises made by Tito when the Yugoslav and Albanian partisans fought side by side against the Nazis.

The constitution of 1963 offered a notional concession to Kosovar aspirations by declaring Kosova an autonomous province of the Socialist Republic of Serbia. Yet another new constitution, that of 1974, gave the Kosovar provincial assembly the right to elect its own members to the Chamber of Republics and Provinces of the Yugoslav federal parliament.

Nevertheless, with the Yugoslav economy tottering Serbian chauvinism reasserted itself. Three hundred Kosovars were killed and some 7,000 jailed in 1981 as a result of the spring demonstrations for more autonomy. With the advent of Milosevic in 1987, and his plan to re-establish the Yugoslav bureaucracy on Serbian nationalist foundations, the situation worsened. The Yugoslav army was sent into Kosova and more killings and reprisals followed. By July 1990, the Milosevic regime's assertion of Serb dominance against the rights of Kosovars to self-determination led to the arbitrary abolition of Kosovar autonomy and the dissolution of their provincial assembly and government.

The polls held in Kosova in the

spring of 1992, in the teeth of Serb opposition, resulted in the election of Ibrahim Rugova of the Democratic League of Kosova (LDK) to the post of president of the Independent Republic of Kosova, and gave a mandate to a Kosovar parliament. Needless to say, the results of these elections were declared invalid by the Belgrade regime. As the only reaction open to them, Rugova and the Kosovar parliament declared the creation of a Kosovar government in exile, based in Germany, under the prime ministership of Bujar Bukoshi.

This government was supposedly responsible for furthering Kosovar interests abroad, but as Sabri Kicmari, foreign affairs spokesman of the KLA put it recently, "All the [Bukoshi] government has done for six years is sit in Bonn drinking coffee" (*The Daily Telegraph* April 23). While Bukoshi endured the pains of exile in German coffee houses, his countrymen at home came under increasingly ferocious assaults from Milosevic's army and special forces, and the KLA took up an armed struggle in defence of Kosova's right to self-determination. These are the immediate, concrete origins of the present conflict.

Readers will recall allegations by Nato spokespersons to the effect that Rugova had been assassinated by Serb forces. To their acute embarrassment, the same spokespersons had subsequently to admit that Rugova was not only not dead, but was engaged in negotiations with Milosevic to bring about an agreed settlement. This "treachery", as the KLA sees it, and their disillusionment with the diplomatic intrigues of the LDK government in exile, recently led Hashim Thaci, leader of the KLA and its principal negotiator at Rambouillet, to declare the Bukoshi government abolished. Thaci replaced it with a cabinet, under his own leadership, in which the KLA predominates. It is Thaci, as *de facto* prime minister of Kosova living rough alongside his troops, with whom Robin Cook and other Nato ministers are in contact by satellite telephone.

Such is the nature of politics in the real world, as opposed to the tidy world of theory and abstraction. Thaci may, as yet, lack a formal democratic mandate from the people of Kosova, but everything suggests that he and the KLA have the overwhelming support of the Kosovar population, both those who remain in their homeland, hiding in the forests from Serbian murderers, and the million or so who have been forced to flee for their lives.

The cause of the Kosovars and the KLA is just. Communists - not only in Britain, but crucially Serbia - should support the democratic content of their programme, while criticising their petty bourgeois and nationalist prejudices and shortcomings, not least the illusion that Nato is a trustworthy ally ●

Politics of the Balkan war

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Questioning the KLA

Pleurat Sejdiu is the diplomatic representative of the interim government of Kosova. Tom Ball spoke to him earlier this week

Like most of the Kosovar political leadership within the interim government, Dr Sejdiu is young and a professional (in his case, a physician). He was a member of the People's Movement of Kosova (LPK), founded in 1982.

The LPK never recognised the powerless parliament set up by Kosova's liberal forces. Sejdiu claims that the LPK took on its Enverist political complexion merely because it needed the support of Albania, which was ruled by Enver Hoxha. He volunteered that the LPK would have looked for support from Albania even had it been fascist.

The Kosova Liberation Army has not had a political structure since its political directorate members became ministers in the interim government of Kosova. Since then, no political discussions have taken place within the ranks of the KLA at all. Indeed, overtures by various political parties and groups have been rebuffed: the KLA leadership did not and does not want it to become the armed wing of any one political trend. Accordingly, it now functions solely as the army of the interim government.

Recently ex-prime minister Bukoshi,

based in Germany and heading the Kosova Information Centre, set up the Military Force of the Republic of Kosova (FARK) as a competitor for the KLA, but with the Serbian government pogrom it collapsed. Unfortunately, it was this 'usurper' force which sent two unprepared British volunteers to the Balkans: they related their disappointment on BBC2's *Newsnight* last Monday. However, the pair are in close contact with the KLA for the first time now they are back in Britain. Although fielding several enquiries daily from keen British ex-squaddies, Sejdiu was anxious to discourage non-ethnic Albanians who might want to go to fight; none are going from Britain nor, according to KLA policy, from anywhere else. It is just too difficult, he says, to check on the bona fides of anyone outside the Albanian communities.

This does not mean that the KLA has no need of military assistance, of course; it does. Over 25,000 of its fighters are armed, but there are another 20,000 waiting for arms. Most KLA fighters carry only small arms. Sejdiu is pessimistic about getting heavy weaponry in the short term. The KLA refused an offer from the Iranian

government. Not wanting to provide the Serbian regime with a propaganda coup of the 'muslim fundamentalist support' variety. Instead, says Sejdiu, "We want to be part of Europe," and therefore the KLA looks only to Nato for arms, a source which looks set to keep it starved for the foreseeable future.

He considers that the main stumbling block to Nato arming the KLA was the existence of Bukoshi's FARK: Nato's military leaders may have been concerned that an intra-Albanian conflict could erupt, as happened between western-supplied armed groups in Afghanistan. While of late the KLA has been unable to obtain weapons beyond small arms, the overwhelming bulk of its weapons originate in Albania; it is likely that most were made available during the 1997 crisis.

Nato's arms embargo and the KLA's reluctance to go elsewhere leads the KLA to distinct conclusions over the next stages of the conflict: it aggressively supports the idea of Nato ground troops and accepts as inevitable that a protectorate would then be established under Nato tutelage. While the KLA realises this does not mean independence, it sees this as a

necessary stage. Even were Nato to arm the KLA, it is unlikely that it would want to go it alone anyway, given the desperate situation now in Kosova. It is unclear how the KLA might operate during a Nato ground attack, though interim government prime minister Thaci is in almost daily telephone contact with western government leaders.

Sejdiu said he was "disappointed in people like Tony Benn" who have come out against Nato's air war. Predictably disagreeing with the CPGB's position against Nato - as not facing the realities of the situation in his view - Sejdiu nonetheless welcomed our support for independence for Kosova and for the KLA.

Former KLA leader Adem Demaqi, who retired to private life during the Rambouillet talks when outvoted (he opposed accepting the Nato proposals), floated the concept of Balkanija, or voluntary union with Serbia and Montenegro. But the concept is presently a complete non-starter. As Sejdiu noted, this was an old idea. It was first floated in slightly different form by Georgi Dimitrov - the last president of Comintern and first leader of 'socialist' Bulgaria. Anyway "it's been tried before ... it was called Yugoslavia" said Sejdiu.

While the KLA discounts the possibility of any trans-Balkan federation or confederation, however, its attitude

to 'ethnic Albania' is not dismissive. This is the term applied to a potential fusion of territories containing Albanian populations, such as Albania itself, Kosova, and areas in Macedonia. Sejdiu was at pains to state that this is not an aim of the KLA, which asserts the democratic right of the people of Kosova to determine their own future, including who they will unite with. It is merely one possibility among others.

Following the Milosevic regime's attack on Kosova, the KLA tightened up its organisation. No-one thereafter was able simply to proclaim themselves a KLA unit or battalion, as sometimes happened previously. There is a fixed command structure, and the KLA has become more disciplined. As its daily reports make clear, KLA commando and regular units, organised within brigades, have been able to strike back at Serbian forces.

Lack of arms remains the KLA's greatest handicap, it says. There is evident frustration that Nato has not yet delivered, either by arming the KLA or sending in ground troops to drive out the Serbian forces ●

Daily updates on the war in Kosova can be found on the Kosova Press website, <http://www.kosovapress.com/english/index.htm>

'Oracle' speaks

Delphi is a disillusioned Scargillite

It was Delphi's intention to follow up the analysis of the Stalinism of Harpal Brar with an autopsy of the politics of Royston Bull. Partly from an unwillingness to kick an SLP ex-vice president when he is down, but mainly due to incipient brain damage from ploughing through back copies of *Extra Sensory Perception Review*, this project fell by the wayside. However, since Bull has finished digging his own grave as far as the SLP is concerned, I have no objections to assisting his departure by banging one last small nail into his coffin.

His letter attacking Scargill (*Weekly Worker* April 8) must be his swan song, not only as far as the SLP is concerned, but as an aspiring leader of the left in general. How can someone aspire to office in a political party and then, within months, denounce it and its leader with invective such as "the nastiest bureaucracy ... demagogic ... reactionary ... ludicrously nationalistic ... social chauvinist ..."? Either Bull suffered from a serious misjudgement when he put himself forward as vice-president, or he was being duplicitous, or he is wrong in his present appraisal of the party. This rather undermines confidence in his politics and the sincerity with which he presents his arguments.

Of course Bull entered the SLP with the intention not of serving the party, but of causing as much disruption as possible under the guise of 'discussion and polemics'. Bull's only concept of class struggle is confined to 'theory' and "the science of Marxism-Leninism". It does not stem from the living reality of class struggle itself, or of historical change. This is made clear by his arrogant dismissal of 'praxis', single-issue campaigns and trade union struggle. It is also the rea-

son he is unable to grasp the nature of revolutionary opposition to the European Union.

He attacks Delphi's description of the EU as "the actual concrete form taken by imperialism in post-war Europe". Instead he tells us: "The American Marshall Plan/IMF/Nato, Cold War domination, tail-ended by Britain, has been the main imperialist driving force overall."

Well, that's true enough, if somewhat crude and simplistic in formulation. Then he goes on: "The EU became a ruling class challenge, started by six west European states, to that Anglo-Saxon domination." Does Bull mean to say what this apparently clearly states - that the EU is a "challenge" by sections of the European bourgeoisie to "Anglo-Saxon domination", that is, US imperialism? Is that why we shouldn't call for withdrawal, because the EU is an anti-imperialist challenge? Surely Bull is not advocating the replacement of a "ludicrously [British] nationalistic" view with an even more ludicrous form of European social chauvinism?

There is ample evidence that, far from being a challenge to US imperialism, the EU fulfils the US-driven economic and political strategy for Europe. The present role of the EU in the Balkans is a case in point. Obviously there are still trade and political rivalries between the US and the EU, and between the US and particular European countries, but disputes about bananas do not constitute a "challenge" to imperialism. In 1971 the annual US presidential report on foreign policy, which hailed the expansion of the EC, stated:

"The US has always supported the strengthening and enlargement of the EC. We welcome cohesion in Europe

because it makes Europe a sturdier pillar of the structure of peace. Regional cohesion contributes to world stability and America's and western Europe's fundamental interests are parallel in most areas of policy ..." (J Paxton *A dictionary of the EEC* 1976, p265).

It is quite clear that the present EU, with all the developments towards greater economic and political integration, is a further phase in the development of European imperialism and part of the process of globalisation. This is a *concrete* manifestation of imperialism. Its political, economic and state institutions are *actual*. Its effect on British and European peoples is *real*. But rather than having a *practical* strategy towards the EU, Bull, as always, talks in an abstract way about an abstract 'imperialism', which exists only in his head and has not evolved beyond a condemnation of Cold War militarism and big business.

Bull's attitude to the SLP policy on Europe accords with his subjective world view on all issues, a view which bears more relation to religious messianism than 'Marxist-Leninist science', or any other mode of rational thought. His views are a kind of Manichaeism, in which the contending duality of good and evil is replaced by the cosmic battle of 'anti-imperialism' versus 'imperialism'. This is no different from, but certainly more pretentious and obscurantist than, the 'Capitalism bad, socialism good' approach he condemns in *Socialist News* headline articles.

What Bull is quite incapable of, not only in the case of Europe, but on every issue affecting working class and other oppressed people, is proposing practical action which relates to those engaged in struggle and

helps carry them forward. Hence his haughty dismissal of "trade union journal-type activity" reports in *Socialist News*. Symptomatic also is the fact that, despite being just down the road, he has not been on any of the main Tameside careworker demonstrations in Ashton under Lyne. Bull has absolutely nothing to learn from working class people. Like the religious fundamentalists he already has all the answers. He knows what is good for everyone - hence gay people and black people are not only wasting their time resisting specific forms of oppression, but are positively obstructing the greater fight against imperialism. But what form this fight takes, apart from evangelising the one true gospel of 'Marxist-Leninist science' (authorised Bull edition), is not elucidated anywhere in all of his semi-coherent outpourings.

Unfortunately, in this attitude, Bull only represents a *reductio ad absurdum* of one of the main failings of the left. The Leninist idea that working class struggle cannot transcend trade union consciousness without the introduction of theory from outside, by professional (and usually middle class) revolutionaries, has been one of the main factors in preventing Marxist ideas gaining ground in the working class.

Bolshevik-type organisations have tended to adopt a didactic approach to political education - what the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire, a humanist Marxist, has described as "the banking theory of education". The recipient of knowledge is just regarded as a passive repository of facts. Instead, he argues that education, or consciousness-raising, must relate to real life experience. The educator must start from where the worker or peasant is actually at, from their perception of the world, not from where they would like them to be.

Theory is worthless unless linked to the practical struggles of everyday life. "We proceed by asking questions", as the Zapatistas say. It is necessary to be in a dialogue with

those in struggle - to constantly interrogate reality. Instead Bull tries to inject his creed, formulated in another epoch and light years behind today's reality, into an idealised, 'heroic', working class craving enlightenment.

What Bull means when he complains of the lack of political education or discussion in the SLP is that he has not been provided with the platform to harangue the membership with his panaceas for "overthrowing the entire imperialist system". In fact what he interprets as "anti-theory" is in fact anti-dogmatism - a desire to avoid the old sectarian disputes which should have been buried under the rubble of the Berlin Wall. Scargill's plea for members to leave their old baggage outside the party has been ignored by those like Bull and Brar who have imported not only their baggage, but all the furniture, including the kitchen sink. And, in the case of both Bull and Brar, that sink is full of the detritus of age-old dirty Stalinist pots.

Delphi has gone on record as stating the political education within the SLP is abysmal. But one of the reasons for this is the legacy of rigid, doctrinaire views which Bull, Brar and other supporters of the Bolshevik Revolution Re-enactment Society still propagate. Fortunately, as the myth of the 'workers' states' recedes into the mists of folk memory, as the last material base of Stalinism dissolves along with the North Korean slave state, the theoretical delusions of the Stalinoids become even more vapid. This permits the development of genuine political education within the SLP and the working class as a whole. It also improves the opportunity to create a new vision of socialism and new strategies for the revolutionary transformation of society.

Perhaps with the indulgence of the *Weekly Worker*, and Simon Harvey's continuing chivalry in safeguarding Delphi's anonymity (or is he bluffing?), Delphi may be permitted to explain not only what we are against, but what that vision and those strategies are ●

Welsh assembly United challenge

Next week, on May 6, the people of Wales have the opportunity to vote in the Welsh assembly elections, colloquially dubbed the 'Welsh general election'. Sixty seats are up for grabs, 40 of which will be elected by the 'first past the post' system, the remaining 20 to be filled by proportional representation.

Despite Labour's slogan for the elections, 'Standing up for Wales', the Welsh assembly has nothing to do with democratic self-determination. Have no doubt about it, any changes that it initiates will be cosmetic. Whilst having the 'power' to administer in areas such as health and safety, education and economic development, the assembly will, at best, be only able to tinker with underlying policy. When it comes to major issues affecting approximately three million people, it will remain firmly under the thumb of the Westminster parliament and the constitutional monarchy system. Millbank Tower has also ensured that New Labour's candidates are, with a few exceptions, eminently acceptable to Blair.

It is likely that this is one reason why, to date, the people in Wales are hardly falling over themselves with enthusiasm. Two decades of Tory government, superseded by a Labour Party that despises the working class, has alienated many. An assembly with the powers of a glorified council is hardly inspiring. It is no wonder interest in the run-up to the elections is still relatively weak. Indeed, in an effort to bolster turnout for the elections, Wales's most famous Stone Age animated family, 'The Gogs', is now being used by S4C during peak hours to spearhead a campaign to persuade people to go out and vote on the big day.

Having said that however, the left must take the elections seriously, as they set us an important challenge. As well as giving us the opportunity to expose the cant emanating from the Welsh establishment about "devolution" and "self-determination", they give us a chance to put forward the revolutionary democratic alternative to Blair's Labour government.

There are a number of left forces involved in the May 6 elections. The SLP, as usual, failed to discuss calls for unity with others and is standing under the list system in two regional seats where other socialists are contesting: South Wales Central and South Wales East. The exact politics it is promoting is difficult to pin-point, as the recent edition of *Socialist News* does not carry a Welsh election manifesto. However, Scargill's party does think that the assembly represents a move towards Wales having greater freedom - if only it could get out of Europe: "We do not want to gain autonomy or partial autonomy from England simply to give it away to unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats in Brussels ... That's why Socialist Labour is also campaigning for a policy of getting Wales out of the European Union" (*Socialist News* March-April 1999).

Thankfully, there are a number of left organisations in Wales who have recently begun to pool their resources. For all its fragility the formation of the Welsh Socialist Alliance was a healthy political development. The main components are the Socialist Party, Socialist Democracy and Cymru Goch. The CPGB is represented in Cardiff.

One important outcome of the WSA has been the agreement of a common platform for next week's elections. The United Socialists platform was pro-

duced following debate by the affiliated organisations. Each organisation standing for the assembly will use this platform in their election addresses, having the right to criticise it as they see fit while distributing their own political propaganda throughout the campaign. Although not an active participant within the alliance, the SWP was also consulted during its drafting. It agreed to stand under the United Socialists banner.

A look at the platform reveals a number of limitations. For example: no position on Ireland; a below-subsistence-level £6-an-hour minimum wage; the scrapping of only 'racist' immigration controls; and, perhaps most important, given the fact that the assembly is an integral component of Blair's programme of strengthening the constitutional monarchy system, no demand for the voluntary union of the peoples of Britain in a federal republic.

Having said that, the platform does deserve critical support. The working class throughout Wales (and of course Britain) exists as an atomised, generally demoralised mass. Socialists have the opportunity to attract new layers of supporters and enable all organisations involved to build towards future joint campaigning. This will facilitate open discussion of political differences, thus strengthening unity.

This is necessary, particularly as there are big political differences within the WSA. For example, both the SP and SWP meekly supported Blair's sop in Wales, as opposed to boldly fighting for self-determination: "Socialist Party Wales supported the establishment of the Welsh assembly" (*The Socialist* April 23). The SWP echoed a similar line. Charlie Kimber confesses: "The Welsh assembly has very few powers. But socialists supported a 'yes' vote in the referendum as a small step towards raising confidence ... and intensifying the feeling for a break from the Tories' agenda" (C Kimber *Wales, class struggle and socialism*, p42).

From the outset the assembly was a sop, a plank in Blair's constitutional revolution from above. The right of the people in Wales to democratically choose how to run their own affairs, including the right of separation from the UK state, was never part of Blair's agenda and will not be within the remit of the Cardiff Bay assembly. As such it was necessary to fight for more. As a minimum the CPGB argued for genuine self-determination through a parliament with *full* powers.

A quick word on Cymru Goch. Fond of referring to other socialists as the 'Brit left', it has a vision for Wales which is thoroughly nationalist. At the

launch of the WSA it put out the call for a Welsh workers' republic. It was, correctly, defeated. Subsequently Cymru Goch has been arguing for permits for companies wishing to operate in Wales. At the Merthyr WSA conference in February it proposed a motion which called for a 'three strikes and you're nationalised' policy for factories that pollute the environment.

Finally, mention is needed of Plaid Cymru, which now claims to be a viable alternative for the people of Wales. A recent poll showed the party's president, Carmarthen MP, Dafydd Wigley, only one percent behind Labour's Alun Michael for the post of first secretary, with increased support coming from industrialised and traditionally Labour-voting areas of Swansea, Newport and Cardiff.

Plaid Cymru has positioned itself to the left of the Labour Party in an attempt to woo voters. Over past months, speeches from Wigley and Cynog Dafis, the party's deputy president, have emphasised the failure of the Labour Party to deliver. At the launch of its campaign in March, for example, Wigley stated that people expected a change for the better following the end of Tory rule: "Now we see problem schools being sold off to the private sector and London New Labour is spending a billion on Trident, but cannot restore the value of the basic state pension."

Recently, the party's candidate for Swansea East, John Ball, highlighted the utter parochiality of Plaid Cymru: "The local economy has been hit simply because our major employers *are owned by organisations outside Wales*" (my emphasis *South Wales Evening Post* April 19). His argument implies that if major companies were owned by Welsh capitalists then the people would enjoy much greater prosperity. Incredible!

The 'party of Wales' has certainly shifted its political rhetoric since conception 64 years ago. In 1925, Ambrose Bebb, one of Plaid Cymru's founding leaders and admirer of the French fascist movement, Action Française, placed the party well to the right. He announced that Wales needed a Mussolini and, with Saunders Lewis, a campaign was launched to establish an independent Wales managed by "small capitalists". English was to be "annihilated" and Welsh made the only language.

Nowadays, Plaid Cymru talks left. It claims to champion not only democracy, but even socialist democracy. It aims, for example, to "secure self-government for Wales and a democratic Welsh state based on socialist principles".

It is a bourgeois nationalist party in socialist clothing ●

Gareth Phillips

United Socialists: candidates for the Welsh Assembly

Dave Bartlett (SP) Cardiff South
Julian Goss (SWP) Cardiff Central
Alec Thraves (SP) Swansea West
Nick Duncan (SWP) Neath
Mike Jenkins (Cymru Goch) Merthyr
Tim Richards (CG) Caerphilly

Morris Jones (CG) Clwyd South
Huw Pudner (SWP) Aberavon
Ian Thomas (SWP) South East Wales
Nimisha Trevedi (SWP) South Wales Central
Alex Frazer (SP) South West Wales

Cool Cymru?

Charlie Kimber **Wales: class struggle and socialism** Socialist Workers Party 1999, pp47

Kimber's pamphlet represents the attempt of the Socialist Workers Party to challenge from the left the current Blairite rebranding of Wales as 'Cool Cymru' and to debunk the myths of the nationalists. His project is to dispel the harmful idea that Wales is "a land of harmony where classes do not really exist" (p5). This needs to be done ... but with politics other than comrade Kimber's, I'm afraid.

The contemporary raw social material for such a Blairite process is extraordinarily sparse in Wales. It remains a country traumatised by the industrial havoc of the Thatcher years, with household incomes 14% below the British average and full-time earnings at least 10% below the rest of Britain. The popularity of Welsh bands like Catatonia and the Manic Street Preachers or the fitful successes of the Welsh rugby team (under the adopted Welshman, the Kiwi Graham Henry) is a pretty meagre basis on which to 'redefine' today's Wales.

It is a country obsessed by history, so it is no surprise that the modernisers have been forced to lay claim to the past. As Kimber shows, this is explosive material for them to be handling. For example, a recent article by Blair's 'enforcer' in Wales - Neath MP Peter Hain - is an interesting case study of how a proletarian heritage may be usurped by a virulently anti-working class trend. If a viable workers' alternative existed in Wales, it would make him eat his article line by line.

Hain seriously attempts to hitch the history of the modern Welsh people to the Blairite bandwagon, even suggesting that "anchoring the Third Way ... to libertarian socialist foundations, informed by the Welsh experience, can give it ideological clarity and direction" (*Western Mail* March 11). He notes that what he dubs "radical and libertarian socialist instincts have deep historic roots in Wales", then defines these as "a strong sense of solidarity, mutual aid and cooperation" - a "radical third way in action", in fact.

Incredibly, the man then has the gall to cite as evidence revolutionary syndicalism (ie, *The miners' next step*, in which Welsh miners apparently called for "a form of decentralised industrial democracy"); the first great utopian to explicitly link his ideas with the fate of the working class, the communist Robert Owen; the firebrand reformist Kier Hardie and the miners' Great Strike of 1984-85. ("The South Wales valleys maintained the strongest cohesion, self-discipline and support of any across Britain" - no thanks to the scab Labour Party leadership under Judas Kinnock of course).

Hain thus claims the history of the Welsh for New Labour's 'communitarian' values of "social justice, inclusiveness, radicalism ... and above all, a commitment to community". The fact that he does so confirms a perceptive point made by Eddie Ford, discussing the theoretical origins of Blair's inane "stakeholding" vision, that it is "constructed on the backs of a de-

feated working class movement - but one which still has a sort of *residual* existence, a cultural after-life" (*Weekly Worker* June 6 1996).

Many parts of comrade Kimber's pamphlet are welcome antidotes to the horseshit peddled by the likes of Hain and the claims of the nationalists to present an alternative to them. He makes the self-evident point that Welsh history actually demonstrates "the raw hatred between classes and ... [that] the most inspiring moments in the last 200 years have been when Welsh workers united with their comrades elsewhere to fight together against their native ruling class" (p5).

To underline his point, he gives a potted history of some of these "inspiring moments". These include the Merthyr rising of 1831; the insurrectionary attempt to seize Newport during the height of the Chartist agitation; the Scotch Cattle and Rebecca revolts (when Viscount Melbourne, the badly rattled prime minister, blurted out the very un-Blairite opinion that South Wales was "the most terrifying part of this kingdom" - p18); the *real* history of the revolutionary syndicalists around *The miners' next step* (who preached a "war of interest between the workers and employers" - p24); the 1926 General Strike and the mass influence of the Communist Party. If nothing else, the pamphlet is excellent reading for a novice in the intensely strotty history of the Welsh masses.

Yet in two key passages, the SWP spoils the honey with this spoonful of tar:

"We do not believe that there is national oppression in Wales today. Welsh bosses, Welsh politicians and Welsh bureaucrats are central to the way that Wales is run. The very real poverty, inequality and alienation that do exist in Wales are the result of class division, not national divisions.

"However, our greatest enemy is the British state, not Welsh nationalism. We support the right of the Welsh people to decide what constitutional arrangements they want. If they want separation then Wales should be an independent state" (p42).

"National oppression" is here equated with a crude colonial form of domination. Yet the Welsh - as a historically constituted people - have no right to self-determination under the constitutional monarchist British state. To that extent, their national rights *are* denied.

Kimber should also tell us *how* self-determination is best exercised. Do we say 'wait till the socialist paradise'? Or do we fight for democratic rights in the here and now, and by winning the whole of the working class to the politics of revolutionary democracy begin to build a bridge to that future? It is incumbent on Marxists to step forward with real answers to the national question in Britain - concretely the demand for a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales.

For all the good material in this pamphlet, the SWP illustrates again that it is still a long way from a Leninist understanding ●

Mark Fischer

May Day is workers' day

The celebration of May Day as a spring festival is an ancient tradition in many parts of the world, and probably originated in pagan rituals dating back thousands of years.

However, the association of May Day with the international workers' movement began in the USA in 1886, when the revolutionary Knights of Labour organisation and socialist trade unions called for a strike on Friday May 1 to fight for an eight-hour day. Over 100,000 workers across the USA joined the strike, and on May 3 police killed six strikers at a harvester factory in Chicago. Since then, socialist groups and trade union organisations around the world have marked May Day as the day of international solidarity of the workers of the world.

In the early years of the 20th century May Day demonstrations were often the scenes of violent clashes between workers and the police forces of bourgeois states. In Poland in 1905, 100 people were killed when tsarist troops opened fire on a Warsaw demonstration. Polish nationalist-socialist leaders immediately called a general strike, although a few days later they urged workers to return to work, claiming that conditions were not yet ripe for revolution.

The May Day massacre, and suppression of workers' protests in Russia itself, spurred on seven east European socialist parties, including those of Poland, Georgia, Finland and Armenia, to unite in a fighting committee based in Switzerland, to work cooperatively for workers' rights, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and association, universal suffrage and constituent assemblies in Poland and Armenia as well as Russia itself. Tsar Nicholas II was forced by the revolutionary situation in Russia to grant some of these demands in Oc-

.....

“May Day gauges the strength of the politically organised working class - the vanguard”

.....

tober of that year.

In Paris, 3,000 workers were arrested during a May Day demonstration in 1906, and in 1919 90 policemen were injured in May Day battles between police and workers. During the revolutionary situation in Germany in 1929, eight people died in May Day clashes between communists and the social democrat-commanded police in Berlin. Conflict went on for days and the city was placed under curfew. This revolutionary upsurge in Germany was ultimately defeated and the crisis resolved negatively by the triumph of Nazi fascism.

In the early years of Soviet power May 1 was seen as symbolising the triumph of the working class, and May Day became a big national holiday, second in importance only to the anniversary of the revolution of November 7. Subsequently, it was usurped by the bureaucratic regimes of the USSR and eastern Europe as a means of incorporating workers behind a façade of communist slogans.

In the US, nationwide demonstra-

tions to mark May Day continued into the 1920s, but the US government cleverly diminished public support for May Day by establishing the first Monday in September as a public holiday honouring workers, Labor Day. May 1 has long been a public holiday in most European countries, although demonstrations have often been taken over by reformists and channelled into support for reformist parties and governments.

The importance of International Workers Day in Europe is shown by the fact that for the second time, as it had done with the original pagan festival, the catholic church has attempted to ‘christianify’ May Day by declaring it the feast day of saint Joseph the Worker.

The Wilson government acceded to the long-standing demand for a bank holiday in Britain in 1975, but it chose the first Monday in May, rather than May Day itself. Even this was too much for rightwing sections of the establishment and ever since they have called for this alien, socialist holiday to be abolished and replaced by a holiday in the autumn - perhaps Winston Churchill’s birthday or even Margaret Thatcher’s. In 1995 the Tory government moved the bank holiday to May 8 and declared that it was a holiday to commemorate VE day, the liberation of Europe from Nazi occupation in 1945. Veterans of World War II were granted cut-price train tickets to get to London for celebratory events.

The motive force and backbone of May Day mobilisations in Britain has traditionally been supplied by the CPGB. For the last couple of decades the Turkish and Kurdish communities have taken the lead in London. The annual May Day demonstrations act as a barometer of the class struggle, drawing in many strands of the work-

ing class movement and allowing particular struggles to be seen in the context of the fight for world socialism. Because of this, as well as mirroring day-to-day changes in the political climate, May Day also gauges the strength of the politically organised working class - the vanguard. As the strength, both in terms of numbers and consciousness, of the vanguard changes, so does the size of May Day demonstrations. The steady decrease in the number of trade unionists mobilised on May Day during the 1980s and 1990s reflected the decline of the revolutionary left, and the ideological and organisational weakness of the working class as a whole.

This year represents a significant change. Through the Reclaim Our Rights campaign Arthur Scargill is seeking to assert his leadership of the militant working class. Nine national unions and over 150 other union bodies have sponsored the campaign. There is certainly a political space. New Labour’s ‘Fairness at work’ leaves almost the full panoply of anti-union legislation enacted by the Tories intact. Blair has proved beyond doubt that he serves the bosses, not the trade union bureaucracy.

Of course Scargill is a would-be labour dictator. He wants to capture May Day in London not as an expression of international working class solidarity but to further his own vaulting ambitions. The only way to beat this danger is to build working class self-confidence and self-activity. The best start here is uniting the left to challenge both Blair and Scargill. Next year’s May Day will be a test for us all.

Join the May Day demonstration in London this Saturday. Assemble 12 noon at Clerkenwell Green. Rally in Trafalgar Square 3pm ●

Mary Godwin

Democratic centralism Minority rights and the CPGB

Comrade Roger Harper (Letters, April 22) has now added his voice to that of comrade Phil Watson (Letters, March 18), criticising a passage in Danny Hammill’s article on the London Socialist Alliance launch rally (*Weekly Worker* March 11).

Comrade Hammill reported part of Anne Murphy’s speech in the following way: “The CPGB consistently champions democracy in our movement, but also in society at large. As comrade Murphy made clear, in the view of the CPGB, Stalin and his wretched cohorts ruled over societies which had absolutely nothing to do with socialism. The bureaucratic regime in the Soviet Union - and all those modelled upon it - treated the working class as state slaves. The ‘Soviet experience’ demonstrates that democracy is no add-on extra, but is an *essential* feature of socialism.”

Phil Watson’s complaint seems to be that comrade Murphy was expressing the opinion only of a *majority* of Party members and supporters, which presumably implies that the phrase, “in the view of the CPGB”, ought to be restricted to instances of *unanimous* Party opinion. This is clearly wrong.

I doubt if there is a single issue where we have complete unanimity down to the last detail. The existence of differences is natural and would be replicated a thousand times in a

mass, reformed Communist Party. So does that mean that an authoritative Party view can never be publicly stated? Obviously, when it comes to questions of immediate tactics, agreement on strategy or the adoption of a programme, the method of overcoming our differences is through a democratic vote. To do otherwise would be to risk paralysis. I am sure comrades Watson and Harper would agree that the majority position could in such circumstances be described as “the view of the CPGB”.

But the nature of the Soviet Union is not a question that requires a vote. It is not a matter of action, but theory and history. How we view the USSR today does not determine what we do in the immediate sense. Indeed it would be positively undesirable to force the issue to a vote, implying that the question was now ‘settled’ and should not be reopened. Nevertheless, as the comrades readily admit, the position stated by comrade Murphy *is* the view of the majority. To differentiate between questions that have and have not been put to a vote smacks of formalism.

Comrade Harper writes: “If indeed this [comrade Murphy’s description of the Soviet Union] was the policy of the CPGB, it would be incumbent on all members to argue for this political perspective.” Absolute nonsense. That may be the interpretation

placed on democratic centralism by most of the left, but it is certainly not the position of the CPGB (or of VI Lenin). As comrade Watson correctly states, “the CPGB ... does not impose a gagging order on its minorities”. That is why the disagreements of minorities are published, including those of comrades Harper and Watson. The description of comrade Murphy’s speech as “the view of the CPGB” in no way implies a “desire to bury our differences and stifle debate in the cause of ‘unity’”, as comrade Watson alleges.

Democratic centralism means unity during an *action*. Only when a decision to embark upon a particular course has been taken is it “incumbent on all members” to throw themselves wholeheartedly into the campaign, and do nothing to undermine it. For example, the CPGB has now decided to contest the forthcoming European elections. It is therefore the duty of all comrades, including any who may have reservations, to make our intervention as successful as possible. The *Weekly Worker* should not be expected to publish comrades’ agitation against the decision once the action has begun.

However, after the election has taken place, we will then have to assess every aspect of our intervention, including the original decision. Com-

rades will have not only the right, but the duty to voice criticisms.

Comrade Harper is not content with criticising Anne Murphy’s original speech and comrade Hammill’s reporting of it. He goes further, reproaching myself for “slapdash editing of material”, and adds: “This wholly incorrect statement should have carried an apology and correction by the editor.” It goes without saying that it is not the editor’s job to strike out - or ‘correct’ - contentious statements, whether they be those of the majority or a minority (although it would clearly be impermissible for a minority opinion to be described as “the view of the CPGB”).

Finally, comrade Harper ends his letter in the following way: “I call on all those in the ‘majority’ to inform the ‘minority’ when, where and how its understanding of Soviet Marxism is incorrect, and how exactly it ended up as a ‘slave society’ after a workers’ revolution. Come, comrades, don’t just postulate a position - prove it!”

It is as though comrade Harper has just flown in from Mars. Leading supporters of the majority position - not least comrade Jack Conrad - have proved the validity of their analysis in drafts of a forthcoming book, open debates and in the pages of the *Weekly Worker* ●

Jim Blackstock

What we fight for

- Our central aim is to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain. Without this Party the working class is nothing; with it, it is everything.
- The Communist Party serves the interests of the working class. We fight all forms of opportunism and revisionism in the workers’ movement because they endanger those interests. We insist on open ideological struggle in order to fight out the correct way forward for our class.
- Marxism-Leninism is powerful because it is true. Communists relate theory to practice. We are materialists; we hold that ideas are determined by social reality and not the other way round.
- We believe in the highest level of unity among workers. We fight for the unity of the working class of all countries and subordinate the struggle in Britain to the world revolution itself. The liberation of humanity can only be achieved through world communism.
- The working class in Britain needs to strike as a fist. This means all communists should be organised into a single Party. We oppose all forms of separatism, which weakens our class.
- Socialism can never come through parliament. The capitalist class will never peacefully allow their system to be abolished. Socialism will only succeed through working class revolution and the replacement of the dictatorship of the capitalists with the dictatorship of the working class. Socialism lays the basis for the conscious planning of human affairs: ie, communism.
- We support the right of nations to self-determination. In Britain today this means the struggle for Irish freedom should be given full support by the British working class.
- Communists are champions of the oppressed. We fight for the liberation of women, the ending of racism, bigotry and all other forms of chauvinism. Oppression is a direct result of class society and will only finally be eradicated by the ending of class society.
- War and peace, pollution and the environment are class questions. No solution to the world’s problems can be found within capitalism. Its ceaseless drive for profit puts the world at risk. The future of humanity depends on the triumph of communism.

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

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Our anti-racism and theirs After Brixton and Brick Lane

There are two ways the left can react to New Labour's anti-racist crusade. One is to capitulate to Blair and form the left wing of the establishment's top-down anti-racism. The other is to recognise the shift in the ruling class's ideology and re-articulate a militant and revolutionary working class anti-racism - one that unites our class, not splinters it along the lines of ethnic supplicants to the bourgeois state.

This task has become more urgent with what now seems likely as the development of a racist terror campaign by the 'White Wolves' - an isolated and tiny ultra-right grouping. In the aftermath of the Brixton and Brick Lane bombs, the police are out in force in an attempt to prove their anti-racist credentials. And, much to the chagrin of the dogmatic left which can only say 'police - racist to the core', their attempts at top-down, official anti-racist policing will be genuine.

Since the Macpherson report came out, the government, the police and almost all other sections of the establishment have been gushing with well-meaning, hand-wringing platitudes about racism in British society. Stung by the dislocation caused by Thatcherism - from the Brixton riots of 1981, the miners' Great Strike and the anti-Poll Tax movement - Blairism continues the ruling class's neo-liberalism, but is attempting it with a human face.

Anti-racism, as a bottom-up movement, reacted to Thatcher's open class war in the 1980s. As part of New Labour's programme of 'inclusiveness and opportunity', and constitutional reform from above, it is being coopted as an integral part of bourgeois ideology.

One prominent black figure who epitomises official anti-racism is Trevor Phillips, possible Labour candidate for London mayor. Writing in *The Observer*, Phillips reported on his previous day's outing with Her Majesty's Metropolitan Police in Brixton.

"The afternoon had the feel of a village gathering. The local police chief, Simon Foy, was out with one of the Met's top brass, Dennis

O'Connor, swapping jokes with members of the black group doing the leafleting. A dreadlocked eccentric followed us with a poetic stream of consciousness ... A righteous rastaman took a leaflet ... No one questioned what a group of predominantly black people were doing on the streets supporting a police investigation. Few refused to take leaflets. It was so different from the past, when any cooperation was suspect. But something exceptional had happened. The people here were reacting as Londoners, not as black or white, or pro- or anti-police" ('Racists know the game is up' *The Observer* April 25).

It is this official anti-racism which must be challenged. But all that most of the left can do is say that people such as Phillips are just liars - they are dupes or Uncle Toms, covering up for the racist state.

In condemning the fascist attacks of the past two weeks, Phillips said: "We have been able to achieve this [a stable nation formed by waves of immigrants] over 1,000 years by developing a very simple set of values which we now take for granted as the secret of Englishness - decency, tolerance, respect for privacy and individualism which the rest of the world sees in us ... These are the very values that the scum who bomb English communities are threatening ... Those who claim to be defending the land of their birth are doing precisely the opposite."

Draped in the flag of St George, Phillips condemns the fascists as having not an anti-human or anti-working class ideology, but an *anti-English* ideology. This points to the content of his official anti-racism - national chauvinism. And this is what the left must grasp if it is to re-articulate a new anti-racism from below.

Our main enemy remains the bourgeois state, not Hitler-saluting nutcases. As the state adopts anti-racism - changing its content - and becomes the proponent of a new, *reactionary and chauvinist* anti-racism, communists must come up with new answers ●

Marcus Larsen

Strange bedfellows

The Committee for Peace in the Balkans public rally at Friends Meeting House on April 19 was, in some ways, a very strange affair. To see an audience of SWP and CPB members together supporting a similar stance on ex-Yugoslavia does seem strange, given their political antecedents. But here they were - the SWP with its social pacifism, the CPB with its pro-Serb nationalism - applauding at the oft repeated claim from the platform that the war crimes of Milosevic are exaggerated and the fight for Kosovar self-determination is, in the words of Mark Steele, a "dangerous diversion" from the class struggle.

Tony Benn led a list of 10 speakers with a damning criticism of the Blairite press for failing to report the anti-war movement. Quite right. Unfortunately he then went on to claim that the *Morning Star* is the only daily paper to tell the truth about the war. While it is correct that the media parade their support for the Kosovar refugees in order to win brownie points from Blair, who can deny - except the *Morning Star* of course - that Milosevic is driving hundreds of thousands from their homes and murdering those who cannot escape fast enough?

But it seems like Tony Benn believes far too much of what he reads in the pro-Milosevic *Star*. He assured the audience that the "so-called ethnic cleansing" was greatly exaggerated. A substantial proportion of the refugees were simply displaced by war. And then there are all those Kosovars who are running away from the KLA!

Although Benn has taken an important stand against Blair and US imperialism, his illusions in the United Nations are leading him in a very chauvinist direction. To deny as he does that this is in "no way a war about democracy" is to deny the legitimate right of the Kosovar people to determine their own future. It is true, as he

argues, that a new world order is being created by the US within which a gung-ho Nato is ignoring the UN (formal) commitment to non-interference in sovereign states. But Benn's defence of sovereignty leads him to give Milosevic *carte blanche* to do as he pleases within Serbian state boundaries. His 'hands off' approach allows for no support to the Kosovars and no answers for the anti-war movement.

He was followed on the speakers' list by Tam Dalyell, who had just arrived, with Alice Mahon, from a debate on the war in the House of Commons. Dalyell dwelt at length on the danger and stupidity of the war. He said it had become simply a question of "not losing face" for Blair and Clinton. He called for an end to bombing and a start to negotiations.

Alice Mahon spoke of her experiences when she visited Serbia some days before. Of the determination of the Serbs to fight despite their desperate conditions. She was angry at what she called the "ultimatum" given by Nato. She also pointed to the hypocrisy of the US when it came to the years of "Israeli suppression of the Palestinian people within that particular state boundary". Clearly the US and Britain have selective taste when it comes to "protecting rights". However, despite her obvious good intentions, she too tried to brush ethnic cleansing under the carpet. While she was "sorry for the people being expelled", she was "just as sorry for the Serbs".

Yes, it is true in one sense they are all victims. But to simply say, 'all war is bad' is to duck the issue of the democratic rights of the Kosovars. A call for Nato out of the Balkans does not have to lead to an agnostic view on the struggle in Serbia-Kosova. Making it seem like one horrible mess is a cop-out. The Kosovars are fighting a just war for democratic rights. This should be supported.

Leftwing journalist and comedian Jeremy Hardy was by far the most radical speaker of the night. His remarks were funny and provocative. He argued that those on the Labour front benches have always been warmongers. That the British state and its army which is supposedly fighting a "good war" in the Balkans is the same one which has been an occupying force in Northern Ireland for the last 30 years. Not an army he'll support. The comparison between a British state supposedly supporting self-determination for the Kosovars while sending its troops in to put down the Irish struggle drew some applause from the audience ... but a few pained expressions from other speakers.

Tariq Ali warned of the dangers if "Russia's patience finally snaps should ground troops be sent in". He suggested that this is a war of liberal imperialism based around a creed of "human rights fundamentalism". Again he too hated to see the "Kosovars herded out just as the Serbs had been in Krajina" and "was against all ethnic cleansing". But the problem lay with the break-up of Yugoslavia in the first place. If Germany had not been so keen to recognise Croatia, if Bosnia had not been made independent, then these problems would never have occurred. Another man with a sentimental attachment to Tito's Yugoslavia.

Matthew Felling of CND was on hand with some pacifism. He spoke of the "higher human ambition that is destroyed through war". That "we as human beings can do far better than kill each other". He read from the UN charter for human rights and said that we need to call on our leaders to fulfil their promise of no more wars after World War II. Felling has obviously forgotten the UN-led war against Korea in the 50s and against Iraq just a few years ago. How the UN can possibly be seen as a proponent of peace is beyond belief - except for a pacifist with a short memory. It is a den of imperialist butchers, capitalist thieves, bureaucratic dictators and third world aidocracies.

The great unanswered question throughout the evening was what to do about the Kosovars. While many simply avoided the question and put their main stress on helping the refugees, Mark Steel had the answer - or so he thought. The Kosovars should "give up the fight for independence" and "reject nationalism". Not to do so is "to play into the hands of their rulers". Instead they should be "helping the Serb dissidents ... the factory worker ... the rebel radio station". As usual the SWP want everybody to get back to good old (British) trade unionist normality and forget about all those divisive democratic questions. However, this time round their economism is serving the cause of Serb chauvinism.

Unsurprisingly there were no Kosovar speakers. The Campaign for Peace in the Balkans does not recognise their democratic rights. It would rather support Milosevic as the 'lesser evil' against Nato than take a principled stand. Those in the anti-war movement with progressive politics must fight to create a democratic platform. We need to make sure that our politics are heard and that the anti-war movement takes a revolutionary defeatist line ●

Anne Murphy

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