

Scargill fails

Claims to be the left alternative to Blair take a dent on May Day

Arthur Scargill's hopes of seizing the space on the left of British politics were dealt a blow last weekend. At Saturday's London May Day march he could only mobilise around 100 people to march behind the Reclaim Our Rights banner and about 40 amongst the ragged Socialist Labour Party contingent.

For over a year the SLP general secretary has been building up May 1 1999 as the day when 100,000 workers would flock to the call of ROR and the United Campaign to Repeal the Anti-Trade Union Laws. Scargill's lieutenants, Bob Crow and John Hendy, have been the main movers behind the campaign, and Scargill saw the London demonstration as a decisive moment. Socialist Labour would finally be put on the map. He could at last start to play out his destiny of leading a mass movement ... as its labour dictator.

With the SLP now a husk, membership evaporated and party democracy reduced to the whim of one man, Scargill was banking on using May Day as a springboard. SLP membership exists as around 200 atomised individuals, just one tenth of what it was at its peak in 1996-7. If there had been a big turnout last Saturday with Arthur addressing thousands upon thousands from the Trafalgar Square podium, he could have disdainfully dismissed all talk of declining fortunes and pointed to an upturn in influence and a potential influx of new recruits (not least in the form of trade union affiliates to his 'non-federal' party).

Speaking just a week before May Day, SLP NEC member Bob Crow, assistant general secretary of the RMT union, told a London public meeting that 800 union branches, 200 union regions and 27 trades councils had affiliated to the United Campaign, of which he is the chair: "At the demonstration itself, a 40-piece brass band will accompany our banner, which will be held up by workers from Magnet, Hillingdon, Liverpool dockers, Sky Chef, etc" (*Lalkar* May-June).

Well, there was a brass band, and Magnet, Hillingdon and Sky Chef workers were certainly among the 5,000 demonstrators. However, they were not marching behind the United Campaign banner, but up ahead, along with sacked Critchley Labels workers and a dozen or so union branches, just behind the main banner of the official organisers. Here was the self-defining *anti*-Scargill majority - near 2,000 of them.

Instead of leading such militant

workers, Scargill had to be content with following on behind. He walked alongside comrades Crow, SLP president Frank Cave and Vic Turner, the United Campaign president. Comrade Turner was one of the heroic Pentonville Five, jailed in 1972 under Heath's Industrial Relations Act.

As for the Trafalgar Square rally, Scargill was not even allowed to speak. An alliance of leftwing trade union bureaucrats, Labour leftists and Communist Party of Britain (*Morning Star*) cadres saw to that. Far from organising and dominating the whole event himself under the auspices of the United Campaign, the best Scargill could do was to get comrades Crow and Hendy - another SLP NEC member, who is the UC secretary - to sit in as representatives on the May Day organising committee. Scargill and the UC were merely tolerated.

He was furious at this snub. The gaggle of SLP members present, who had been led to believe that May 1 would prove to be some kind of turning point - not only for Socialist Labour, but for working class combativity - showed their frustration. As dull speech followed dull speech, Scargill sent instructions for them to move with their banners in front of the barriers below the podium. Around two dozen SLPers chanted, "Scargill! Scargill!" in between the speakers' contributions. They were not joined by any of the union contingents or groups of workers in struggle.

The rally chair, Anita Halpin of the CPB, used a combination of tactics to deal with the protests. For the most part ignoring them, she occasionally made some reference to their 'rudeness' in interrupting guest speakers. Ten-minute speeches in Kurdish and Turkish were used to take the wind out of their sails, and when a representative from the Stephen Lawrence campaign came to the microphone she said: "Surely you're going to be quiet now?"

Tony Benn made a concession to the SLPers when he referred to "the great miners' strike under the brilliant leadership of Arthur Scargill". But this only led to renewed chanting of the Great Leader's name, causing Benn to remark: "Don't shout at me, comrades. We're on the same side." Earlier he had deprecated the lack of unity in the workers' movement, but, as he did not indicate how this should be overcome, Benn seemed to imply that those protesting must be part of the problem.

After Benn's speech and more of the "Scargill!" refrain, a comrade from Colne Valley SLP leapt onto the po-



No platform for the Great Leader

dium and attempted to seize the microphone. He was all but hurled off the two-metre-high platform by union militant and budding heavy John Perry. Subsequently a steward came down to try and calm down the Scargill loyalists: "I'm sure Arthur would understand that this is a London event," he told them. It was not up to people from outside to lay down who the speakers ought to be. Besides, both Bob Crow and John Hendy, as the United Campaign representatives on the organising committee, had participated in and been fully aware of its decisions.

Comrade Crow was actually an official speaker. But he mentioned neither the United Campaign nor the SLP. He certainly did not use the occasion to demand that Scargill be allowed to address the rally. Perhaps he felt mentally constrained because he was speaking as an RMT representative. Either way comrade Halpin used her position to blow the trumpet of the *Morning Star*: "Where would we be without it?" she asked in reply to a speaker's rhetorical complaint that the mass media would surely ignore the May Day march.

The Socialist Labour protest was

completely ineffective. Only those near the very front could hear their chants, which were in any case all but drowned out by the public address system. In addition the SLPers held their banners facing the platform, so that those in the Square itself had little idea who they were. Most people would have been unaware that any pro-Scargill protest was actually taking place. Scargill himself made no attempt to walk onto the podium. The stewards could hardly have meted out the same treatment to the NUM leader as to his minions.

Far from showing a growing, confident, viable left alternative, the SLP's May Day intervention revealed that Scargill's party has been reduced to a tiny rump of ineffectual and disorientated loyalists. The general secretary has increasingly had to turn to the ultra-Stalinites around NEC member Harpal Brar - five of the SLP's 10 candidates on its London list for the EU elections are supporters of the Stalin Society and Brar's shadowy Association of Communist Workers.

Yet, instead of pushing ahead with a united challenge at the June 10 EU elections against bomber Blair and the red-brown politics of Scargill, the

economistic left has simply caved in. The Socialist Alliance crumbled, as the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party in England and Wales, Alliance for Workers' Liberty, Independent Labour Network and Socialist Outlook all retreated in disarray, using the excuse that - surprise, surprise - Scargill was to head the SLP's slate in London. They declared themselves to be not 'viable' even compared to the SLP.

The Socialist Alliance fights only in the West Midlands, through the efforts of Dave Nellist, who does not share the paralysing cowardice of the majority of his SPEW comrades. Julie Donovan, writing for SPEW in *The Socialist*, disingenuously tries to blame the collapse entirely on the SWP. Pathetically she promises that SPEW "is still prepared to play a leading part in ensuring there is a strong united left challenge in the London assembly and mayor election in 2001" (April 30). As if giving Scargill a free run on June 10 will weaken him and help unite the left.

Scargill himself still has the aura of a man who actually believes his own claims that he heads Britain's "fourth biggest party". Surely, allowing him the opportunity to win perhaps 200,000 votes (ie, less than one percent of the Euro poll), unopposed from the left, gives him the chance to do on June 10 what he could not do on May 1 - make himself undisputed leader of the left wing of the labour movement.

Fortunately, after the collapse of the Socialist Alliance in London and the North West of England, there remains a left challenge. The Communist Party of Great Britain, though we have been banned from standing candidates under our own name, will be on the ballot paper in both regions as the 'Weekly Worker' list.

The manifesto of the 'Weekly Worker' will be based on an updated and adapted version of the Socialist Unity manifesto agreed for January's North Defoe by-election by the CPGB, SWP, Hackney SLP and a Turkish community group.

We have always emphasised that we intend to stand on June 10 in spite of the possibility that our vote would be squeezed. We stand in order to establish an alternative in the minds of at least a section of the workers and youth. We will build on the impact the Socialist Alliance was having amongst some trade union militants before our allies so ingloriously fled.

The working class needs and deserves a revolutionary and democratic alternative to the three warmongering, pro-capitalist mainstream parties, and the would-be labour dictatorship of Arthur Scargill. Those who want such an alternative should politically and financially support our list ●

Marcus Larsen
Secretary,
Socialist Alliance in London

Party notes

Washing our dirty linen

Communist Party comrades in London have been having a good chuckle - in fact you could say we have been *creased* up - about the latest rumour to reach us purporting to explain the origins of the Communist Party's funds. Some of our erst-while partners in the Socialist Alliance are telling people that our money comes not from our comrades' dues and donations. No, apparently one leading CPGB member is supposed to be the heir to a well-known dry-cleaning chain and he supplies the cash.

Presumably, he uses us to launder the money.

This shock revelation has left the rest of us in a quandary. Clearly it is time for us to come *clean*. Should we *press full steam* ahead on the Summer Offensive, or should we let it *fold*? Should I use this column to call on comrades to tighten their belts, or should I offer a cut-rate alteration service to do it for them? ("Pick it up next Wednesday, sir...")

Of course, there is a serious political point behind this silly rumour. Those organisations and individuals whose politics are circumscribed by doing only what seems 'possible' look in blank incomprehension at our group, a communist collective defined by the fight for what is *necessary*. This approach requires courage, but it also instils it. Our individual comrades have thus been capable of levels of sacrifice that have confounded - and even angered - other elements on the dozy British left.

The simple answer to why we are able to raise comparatively much higher sums than the rest of the left is that *our politics* are on a commensurately higher level. Not that we should expect these comrades to embrace *that* explanation, of course. Instead, they all reach for - or rather, invent - other answers, the 'dry cleaners' version being just the latest and (so far) the most entertaining.

Thus, Arthur Scargill claims we get our money from 'the Turks' (an ethnic group he does not appear to differentiate politically - *which* Turks, Arthur? And why?). 'Official communist' opportunists in the 1980s would confidently claim that our lines of finance could be tracked back to the East German state, the Revolutionary Communist Group or - of course - MI5 (the variant would depend on which stripe of opportunist you were talking to and - crucially - how late you arrived in the pub).

We should treat the comrades who claim to believe these sorts of rumours with a degree of amused sympathy - they are tacitly admitting to us how impotent and puny their own politics actually are. Indeed, we should feel a certain pride in ourselves that we seem to be the subject of so much inaccurate speculation. To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, there is only one thing worse than having your organisation talked about, and that is not having it talked about.

The pace of pledges coming into centre for this year's Summer Offensive is beginning to pick up. Our 'Politics of the Balkan war' school on May 2 (see back page) gave the two-month campaign a good boost towards its £25,000 target, and other supporters and sympathisers are now beginning to step forward with pledges of cash.

We currently stand at just under £12k initially promised, with much more to come, as soon as readers of the paper and our broader periphery are tapped more systematically.

Of course, comrades will use a variety of different methods to raise the cash. However their pledges are raised, the common themes are self-sacrifice and hard political work. When we look back over the history of the previous 15 SOs, we see there has been a huge variety of schemes, political initiatives and levels of participation. We have had Stakhanovite heroics from comrades who have completed marathon sessions with hundreds of pounds raised making and selling badges, hundreds of papers sold, etc. On the other hand, we have had sympathisers - with childcare and domestic responsibilities - who have raised money through scrimping and saving house-keeping money, forgoing small 'luxuries'. Indeed, these types of 'micro-pledges' have often meant far more *politically* to us, given what they have cost the donor.

Money has never come easy: we have always worked hard for it. We work for the finances correspondent to our political ambitions and tasks.

The CPGB is the only national organisation that has not collapsed before Scargillism in the June 10 Euro-election contest. We are determined to mount a principled challenge to bomber Blair. The rest are victims of their poverty - financial and political.

It is our stamina, ambition and programmatic method - not our current membership levels or societal weight - that makes this organisation the most 'viable' on the British revolutionary left. We take the rest to the cleaners, so to speak.

We urge readers to make a full contribution to the fight for the future - rush cheques and pledges for this year's SO at our usual address ●

Mark Fischer
national organiser

The best

I am a member of the Socialist Labour Party in Merseyside and am committed to fighting against social injustice, poverty and social exclusion. I would like to take this opportunity to express my anger at the way Arthur Scargill is being seemingly demonised by the various leftwing papers. Arthur Scargill is not perfect, but what leader is? The fact is that he is the best we have and at the end of the day his heart is in the right place.

Isn't it about time that the left stopped fighting amongst themselves and concentrated on trying to bring about a better state of affairs for the working class people of Great Britain? There's much talk of a socialist alliance. This would be a great step forward if it worked, but would it? One has to be realistic and accept that the likelihood of this ever happening is doubtful, to say the least.

Yet just think what could be achieved if the left joined together in harmony, accepting each other's views and ideologies, with one express intention of bringing an end to this present rotten system. Of course one of the main factors that would be needed would be a total commitment to democracy and freedom of speech, no matter how diverse the content of that speech. In my opinion there can be no true democracy without diversity and a free flow of information.

There can be no perfect state of affairs, no perfect political party. As free-thinking libertarians and altruists, we must put all our efforts into bringing about a better state of affairs, instead of in-fighting and factionalism.

Jim Long
Liverpool

Rally round

The Socialist Alliance election project has broken down because the SWP and others have chickened out. The SWP fears that its 8,000 paper membership may be shown up at the polls.

May I offer an additional explanation?

The CPGB is continuously pointing out that many of the SLP candidates are Stalin Society members. The CPGB is doing a bit of witch-hunting here, saying, in effect, 'Do you want to vote for these headbangers?'

Look at the innocuous names of the Socialist Alliance constituents: eg, Socialist Workers Party, Alliance for Workers' Liberty, etc. With one exception: the CPGB. It was evident at Socialist Alliance meetings that the CPGB was playing the leading role. Everybody else was talking a load of left socialist rubbish from the heart. By way of contrast, the CPGB representatives, John Bridge, Anne Murphy, etc, were quite the statesmen. The CPGB was playing the leading role in the Socialist Alliance, just as the Association of Communist Workers is playing the leading role in the SLP. How long before somebody started witch-hunting the headbangers of the CPGB?

The collapse of the Socialist Alliance means that there is only one credible left socialist alternative in England. So why not rally round and help the SLP instead of wasting time in futile litigation or in winning a few hundred votes for the 'Weekly Worker' candidates? The CPGB and the *Weekly Worker* have far more important work to do.

Don't tell me you wouldn't like to see Arthur out in Strasbourg - though perhaps for the wrong reasons.

Ivor Kenna
North London

Even worse

Comrade James Frazer finds the term 'Pol Potism' "baffling and bewildering" when applied to the politics of Arthur Scargill (Letters *Weekly Worker* April 22). He also adds that the *Weekly Worker's* use of the term leaves it "bereft of scientific meaning", attributing its regrettable appearance to the subjective and "Kafkaesque" paranoia of the author (comrade Marcus

Larsen - April 15).

I can only conclude that comrade Frazer is unfamiliar with works such as the *Communist manifesto*, *Holy family*, *German ideology*, etc. Nor does he appear to be particularly acquainted with the contents of the *Weekly Worker* or the CPGB's *Draft programme* (or even the back issues of *The Leninist*). It should self-evident that *all* experiments in "local" or "national" communism have led to mind-stultifying backwardness - and, yes, to state-slavery of a sort which should be abhorrent to all Marxists. You can never say it enough: socialism is international or it is nothing.

Yes, comrade Frazer, I agree with you that Arthur Scargill has no "secret plans" for a British 'year zero'. He does not need any. It is *openly* pronounced in SLP publications (policy documents, *Socialist News*, etc) and by Scargill himself in public forums - "Vote us in to get us out" ... of the world.

Imagine a Scargillite-run Britain, which has been (somehow) wrenched away from Europe and is ruled like the SLP writ large. Scientific socialism (ie, Marxism) - not to mention common sense - tells us that such a society, and social formation, would in fact *be worse* than Pol Pot's Kampuchea. Russia and China were on the margins of the world economy - Cambodia even more so. Britain, on the other hand, is a capitalistically advanced country which lies at the hub of the world economy. It could not survive at its present level of culture for even a month 'on its own', even with a booming Cuba for a trading partner. The trauma produced by such a dislocation would inevitably lead to the common ruination of *all* classes and to a new dark age. Faced with the attractive prospects of autarky and state terror, the masses would literally be fighting each other to escape the 'socialist' island paradise.

Danny Hammill
South London

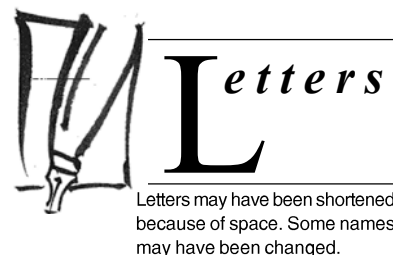
CPGB and Nato

The headline 'Balkans war unites internationalists' (*Weekly Worker* April 22) was belied by the obvious lack of unity, described by Marcus Larsen, on the part of those who participated in the April 14 meeting in London.

The first agreed slogan, 'Stop the Nato bombing', represents the *immediate demand for action by the government*. It is a slogan that not only unites internationalists, but also unites them with others and, if this aggression by *global* imperialism is going to be exposed or perhaps even stopped, that unity is crucial. The slogan, 'Nato out of the Balkans', represents a *medium-term demand*.

A longer-term demand would be represented by the slogan, 'Disband Nato'. Of course, this slogan would not be supported by those who are naive enough to believe in the possibility that global imperialism might have a 'progressive and humanitarian' military role to play. This role is put forward by the imperialists in their slogan, 'Stop the ethnic cleansing', which represents the main thrust of their justification for their aggression. The participants at the April 14 meeting nevertheless saw fit to uphold this slogan, which clearly represents an *immediate demand for action by the government*. Perhaps one of the participants could explain how that demand squares with the demand for Nato to stop the bombing and get out of the Balkans. In this context, the slogan, 'Self-determination for the Kosovars', ceases to be a call (correct or otherwise) for communists to support a particular political position. Effectively, it also becomes a *demand for action* by the Nato governments.

The disunity at the April 14 meeting was revealed when a number of participants, who wisely recognised the conditions that pertain at the present time, shied away from supporting the slogan, 'Arm the KLA', which was put forward by the 'CPGB'. The slogan, 'Arm the KLA', is an *immediate demand for action by government*. Who else is going to supply those



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

arms, if it isn't the Nato states? Perhaps the 'CPGB' could explain how the demand to arm the KLA squares with the demand for Nato to get out of the Balkans.

The 'CPGB' persists in applying the principle of revolutionary defeatism to every major, inter-capitalist confrontation. Essentially, it views the world as being comprised of a relatively ordered spectrum of imperialist states, from the lesser to the greater. As a consequence of this mistaken view, it incorrectly applies the principle of *revolutionary defeatism*, which is applicable to both sides in an inter-imperialist war. The principle of revolutionary defeatism is not applicable to a war launched against a *non-imperialist*, capitalist state by the combined military forces of *global imperialism*.

During an inter-imperialist war, a call for self-determination of a nation oppressed by imperialism becomes part of the struggle around the principle of revolutionary defeatism. In the present conflict, the principle of self-determination has to be subordinated to the principle of *unconditional* opposition to global imperialism.

Dave Norman
London

Two Outlooks

At a meeting I attended on April 16, a number of organisations agreed to work together in opposing the Nato intervention in the Balkans, whilst at the same time raising the demand for self-determination for Kosovars.

As most of the organisations in attendance (including my own organisation, Socialist Outlook) supported the demand for arming the KLA, the meeting decided that it would not be necessary to place this as a central demand.

During the meeting there was some discussion of the position of other groups not in attendance, including that of the Socialist Party. I argued that the position of one or other far left group was not a major concern of ours. What was important was developing a principled, internationalist line that could have maximum impact upon class consciousness. As such I argued that many people might have a basically principled position, but might not have been convinced as yet for the need to arm the KLA, and that it would be sectarian in the extreme to place such a demand as a barrier to working with others who are genuinely interested in finding a working class, internationalist solution to the crisis in Kosova. I also argued that we should attempt to work with such people, whilst trying to convince them in the process of the need to arm the only Kosovar group that is currently engaged in armed self-defence.

I was intrigued to read in the *Weekly Worker* ('Balkans war unites internationalists', April 22) that on the same day a different Simon Deville, in a different Socialist Outlook, attended a meeting on Kosova and argued that the meeting he attended should not adopt the slogan of 'Arm the Kosovars', as the SP "might not support it".

Whilst I disagree with the methodology and the reasoning behind the argument put forward by Simon Deville in the parallel universe of the CPGB, I fully support the conclusions of this other Simon Deville as to how the principled left should be working together in opposing the Nato war and opposing the ethnic cleansing of Kosova being carried out by the Serbian state.

Simon Deville
Socialist Outlook

Shame on you

Trotsky once said that sectarians are essentially opportunists who are afraid of themselves. In what better way can that claim be affirmed than by reading comrade James Paris's letter to the *Weekly*

Worker (April 1)? Now, the Marxist Workers' Group is definitely one of the healthier epigones of Trotsky's movement, having a thoroughly proletarian orientation and an analysis of the demise of the Fourth International which is definitely far more advanced than your average Trot outlet. Still, they have not succeeded in breaking with some of the most central aspects of degenerate post-FI 'Trotskyism' and comrade Paris's contribution to the discussion is a prime example of these mistakes.

Obviously, Nato doesn't give a flying fuck about the Kosovar people. The sole and only reason for the bombings is the interests of Wall Street, the City and Frankfurt. Therefore, communists should oppose this intervention and call for a victory to Serbia. First of all because Serbia has the same right to self-determination as Croatia has, and second, such a victory would be a major impulse to class struggle both in the Nato countries and Yugoslavia. Working people in the USA will be spurred on and consider the reasons for the war, as 'their' bourgeois faces defeat, and working people in Yugoslavia will understand that if they could defeat Nato, they could certainly defeat Milosevic.

The mistake comrade Paris commits is seeing Kosovar self-determination as opposed to military victory for Yugoslavia. He buys his 'own' bourgeoisie's war propaganda and it stems from a misinterpreted conception of the mechanisms behind the war, as well as a petty bourgeois conception of the method of Marxism. When comrade Paris makes the claim that communists can no longer defend Kosovar self-determination because of the KLA's support of Nato, he commits the same mistake as the opportunists: he equates the working masses of Kosova with a petty bourgeois leadership.

But national self-determination for Kosova remains a cause for all Yugoslav workers, just as defeat of Nato remains a cause for the Kosovar people. Serb workers have no interest whatsoever in keeping the Kosovar workers under the yoke of the Serb bourgeoisie. If the Kosovar workers want self-determination, Serb workers should make this their demand. Also, if the KLA have their way now, they will never get any real self-determination and absolutely no possibility to develop it towards socialism. What they will get is Kosovar autonomy reaching the level Washington decides. They will be freed from the shackles of Belgrade only to come under the yoke of Washington.

The main problem we face today is that Yugoslav workers are not likely to support the cause for Kosovar self-determination now. They are rather likely to respond as comrade Paris has done, seeing the Kosovar people as the stooges of Nato, and take out their revenge upon them. Just as we need to oppose US imperialism, we need to oppose such a revenge. To do this, we need a programme of action based upon the transitional method.

I would like comrade Paris to consider to what extent unconditional support for a country against imperialism stretches. I find comrade Paris's attitude towards the victims of Yugoslav repression and cruelties disturbing, to say the least. Communists defend the Yugoslav people against imperialism, not their leadership, and we certainly do not buy their propaganda and lies. We *definitely* do not diminish or justify their pogroms against the working people of minority populations. Shame on you!

Last, but not least, I would like to thank the Communist Party of Great Britain and its paper, the *Weekly Worker*, for the generosity and unsectarianism in lending space for this letter, which would otherwise not be published.

Gustav Mowitz
Berlin

Kautskyite

Dave Craig's report (*Weekly Worker* April 22) on two meetings of republicans in the SSP is somewhat less than honest. In fact, I would go so far as to say it calls into question whether the CPGB ought to rely on any more material from this dubious source.

Craig refers to an "independent Trotskyist" at the February meeting. That was me. According to Craig, I voted against adopting the slogan of 'revolutionary democracy' because I wanted nothing more than 'reformist democracy'. Myself and a supporter of Socialist Outlook did refuse to endorse this slogan without prior explanation as to what it meant. Given its contraposition to workers' power, it struck us both as a capitulation to the Stalinist stages theory. Craig told us that if he was content to support it without knowing what it meant, why should we feel we had a right to know what we were voting for!

At the Glasgow Marxist Forum meeting on the federal republic, I was able to quote Lenin's dismissal of an above-class democracy. Craig and his CFR disciples had ample opportunity to answer Lenin then. And my article, 'What sort of federal republic?' (*Weekly Worker* April 15), gave Craig a third opportunity to respond to Lenin's condemnation of a pure democracy, an above-class democracy, as the "mendacious phrase of the liberal who wants to fool the workers".

Having had his rightwing Kautskyite politics exposed in print, Craig has come up with a cunning plan. He runs away from my questions and pretends that those who vote against endorsing his meaningless soundbite politics are motivated by support for 'reformist democracy'.

I would recommend that the CPGB makes a sober assessment of where rapprochement with the RDG is going.

Tom Delargy
Paisley

Surreal

It is a telling sign of your own weakness when, in order to lend some credibility to your views, you have to attribute outlandish and ludicrous views to your opponent. Comrade Dave Craig's tendentious report of the discussion which took place at the Glasgow Marxist Forum on whether socialists should campaign for a federal republic is factually so wide of the mark as to assume a surreal character (*Weekly Worker* April 8).

Apparently in my contribution I defended the monarchy and praised the honour and veracity of the British ruling class! Of course in point of fact I said no such thing. I am for a socialist republic and would not trust the ruling class to do anything but defend their own power and privilege 'by all means necessary'.

The nub of the real debate can be stated thus: does the demand for a federal republic provide a focus which can mobilise the working class and its allies in the struggle against capital in the UK? Or is it a lifeless abstraction, which not only does *not* mobilise the working class, but in reality plays into the hands of the petty bourgeois nationalists by focusing on an alleged denial of Scotland's right to self-determination?

I take the latter view for two reasons. Firstly, the Scottish people suffer no national oppression. I am uncertain whether Dave Craig and his comrade in arms, Jack Conrad, believe that the lack of a written constitution guaranteeing Scotland's right of self-determination is a form of national oppression.

Secondly, the Scottish people already have that right. If the Scots want independence or a parliament with full powers, they can vote for it. So far they have chosen not to. If the majority of Scots voted for independence and the UK state refused to rec-

ognise that decision, then the right to self-determination would be infringed in the real world and not just in Dave Craig's head. However, that scenario is extremely unlikely, as independence in Europe is no threat to the ruling class. All the bourgeois parties have said that they accept the right of the Scots to obtain independence. Every Scottish nationalist I have met has accepted that the principal reason Scotland does not have its 'freedom' is due to the Scots not voting for it.

To think that the demand for a federal republic somehow provides an effective answer to the nationalist project is to misunderstand what the basis of this project is. It is not an inchoate response to national oppression or absence of democracy, but a middle class project to carve out a more lucrative relationship with global capitalism. Working class support for this project is limited, largely unenthusiastic and premised on the lack of a viable socialist alternative. There have been no demonstrations of any size and no strikes calling for self-determination. The demand has been either irrelevant or used as a slogan by the labour bureaucracy in an attempt to blunt proletarian self-activity. The CPGB demand for "genuine self-determination" only plays into their hands.

Thirdly, the working class is not going into battle for a federal republic because such a project provides no answer to its exploitation and oppression. This demand has never featured in past struggles of the British working class.

In response to Blair's constitutional reform we should advance the old Chartist demand for annual parliaments, as well as the demand for a European constituent assembly. These democratic demands should be raised within the context of a fight for a workers' government and a socialist republic on a European level at least.

Sandy McBurney
Glasgow Marxist Forum

Factional only

Jim Blackstock's article 'Minority rights and the CPGB' (*Weekly Worker* April 29) spectacularly misses the point in replying to my letter criticising a 'majority' view on the USSR being presented as that of the 'CPGB' (March 18). By circumscribing the ability of the paper to present 'majority' opinions - that have not received the blessing of a formal aggregate vote - as those of the Party, I am apparently guilty of the sin of "formalism".

Absolute nonsense. If comrade Blackstock could be bothered to read my letter properly he would find that a comparison between the CPGB and the practices of the rest of the left informed much of its content: "One of the CPGB's main bones of contention with the rest of the left has been their desire to bury our differences and stifle debate in the cause of 'unity'".

The CPGB has recently come under attack in the Socialist Alliances because it has stuck out against the idea of 'consensus'. The idea behind this 'consensus' culture is that the most advanced and the most backward strategies can function together: clarity and sharp differences are thus frowned upon. This is nothing more than a recipe for paralysis. Revolutionaries can have no impact on society if we merely seek to pander to a prevailing consensus.

'Consensus' is therefore the bed-fellow of opportunism and it is no coincidence that it has been used against the revolutionary politics of the CPGB on more than one occasion. This forms the backdrop to my disgruntlement with comrade Hammill's piece on the doomed London SA launch (March 11). Hammill correctly decried lowest-common-denominator platitudes - it is quite obvious that

the left could unite with its differences in plain view. Therefore Anne Murphy's views on the USSR (which, as comrade Blackstock suggests, has only an indirect relation to contemporary politics) should have been the occasion in which Hammill counterposed the disciplined, critical and open politics of the CPGB to the consensual (bureaucratically imposed or otherwise), opportunistic drivel of the British left.

Instead we were given something which sounded distinctly like the ruminations of a Trotskyite sect. Either this is extremely poor tactics or comrades could just not pass up the opportunity to have a factional dig at the CPGB 'minority'. Having said that, I am looking forward immensely to the 'CPGB's view' of Shostakovich - after we have voted on it of course!

Phil Watson
Liverpool

Celtic musings

I doubt if you can publish this letter because I don't exist (Jack Conrad 'Towards a more truthful history' *Weekly Worker* April 15). But, as a cradle commie raised by tankies in the 50s, I still outrank you.

The latest style fad of the post-modernists, post-revisionists, post-feminists, etc is that the Celts never happened. Having proven to their own satisfaction that the holocaust was a colossal fake, they then go on to erase the Celts from history.

So I laboriously trawl through 2,500 words of close-set type with no pictures, sub-headings, jokes or subtext, and what is this great, world-changing proof of the annihilation of the Celts? The classical stereotype Celt is tribes of warrior women with similar language, culture, spirituality, etc. If I were going to disprove the Celts, I would explode the stereotype. No chance! The post-modernists swallow the stereotype, hook, line and sinker.

So where's the beef? For 2,400 words here's the classic stereotype: our expansion from the Danube to the Pillars of Hercules, our deep spirituality, our mighty heroic deeds. Wallowing in purple prose, gushing like a Disney movie. Then the punchline. The Celts don't exist because we are only invented in the 17th century by a bunch of politically motivated intellectuals who noticed the similarities between all these disparate tribes and categorised us.

Our common language didn't unite us into one nation. It meant that we could keep squabbling even while the Romans are at our gates. And what have the Romans ever done for us? Put us under a common oppression. Bound us into a common destiny. Taught us we are all one. That is how nations are born, just like people - in pain and hope and love.

The post-modernist paradigm is that the Celtic nations were only noticed by reformation academics, and before that we were just a bunch of squabbling tribes with no thought of unity. Congratulations, Jack Conrad, you have just discovered ideology! And you have disproved the existence of the left - a bunch of squabbling tribes, etc, etc, etc.

Ideology is the fourth principle of Marxist-Leninism. Ideas do not spring fully-armed from the head of Zeus. Materialists know that ideas grow and die in response to social need. Celts felt the need for the idea of Celts, and now others need to kill that idea by ethnically cleansing history.

Owen Glyndwr proposed a Celtic alliance in 1400. In 1330 Edward Bruce, brother of Robert, was elected King of Ireland. The 8th century poem *Armes Prydein* prayed for the alliance. Before that, the Druidic faith was our focus for unity. But the idea never caught on, because the notion of racially organised states is anathema to the democratic spirit of Celtia. **Daffyd ap Thomas**
Caerdydd

action

■ CPGB seminars

London: Sunday May 9, 5pm - 'Lenin and "dictatorship"' using Hal Draper's *The dictatorship of the proletariat from Marx to Lenin* as a study guide. Call 0181-459 7146 for details. Sunday May 16, 5pm - 'Patterns of revolution and how not to quote Marx' using Hal Draper's *Karl Marx's Theory of revolution* Vol II as a study guide.

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.

■ 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

London: 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. **Cardiff:** Lobby BBC studios in Llandaff. Saturday May 8.

■ 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.

Tories in disarray

As the political map of Britain is being redrawn - through Blair's constitutional revolution from above - the Conservative Party is undergoing a deep and far-reaching crisis. The 'public versus private' furor of the last two weeks is a symptom of this.

The requirement of big capital for ever closer European integration has split the Tories into two hostile camps: on the one hand, the pro-EU minority, reflecting the needs of the most efficient, most dynamic sections of the bourgeoisie; and, on the other hand, the Eurosceptic majority, by and large reflecting the needs of the more inward-looking.

William Hague has attempted to paper over these cracks by stifling debate on the central question of Europe. The alternative - adopting an openly anti-euro 'never, never, never' line - would certainly secure the Tories a place on the political spectrum, 'Save sterling' would provide the 'big idea' capable of attracting a minority of the population. But it would make the party totally useless in the eyes of the big bourgeoisie and virtually unelectable.

Margaret Thatcher not only united the Conservative Party behind her vision of unfettered capital and of a union-busting, private enterprise Britain. She also struck a resonance with sections of the population, not least the private sector middle class and the upper echelon of the working class (stocks and shares and council house sales helped). Hague seems incapable of such strategic thinking. By contrast Tony Blair is as certain as was Thatcher of the road he is travelling. New Labour is in the process of implementing sweeping constitutional changes which, despite Tory protestations, complement or complete what Thatcher began - replacing the old post-World War II consensus with one fitted for the post-Cold War world.

Paradoxically from the Tory point of view, the whole of British politics has been pushed to the right, so that privatising, welfare-slashing and tax-cutting now goes unchallenged in the mainstream. Blair has stolen the

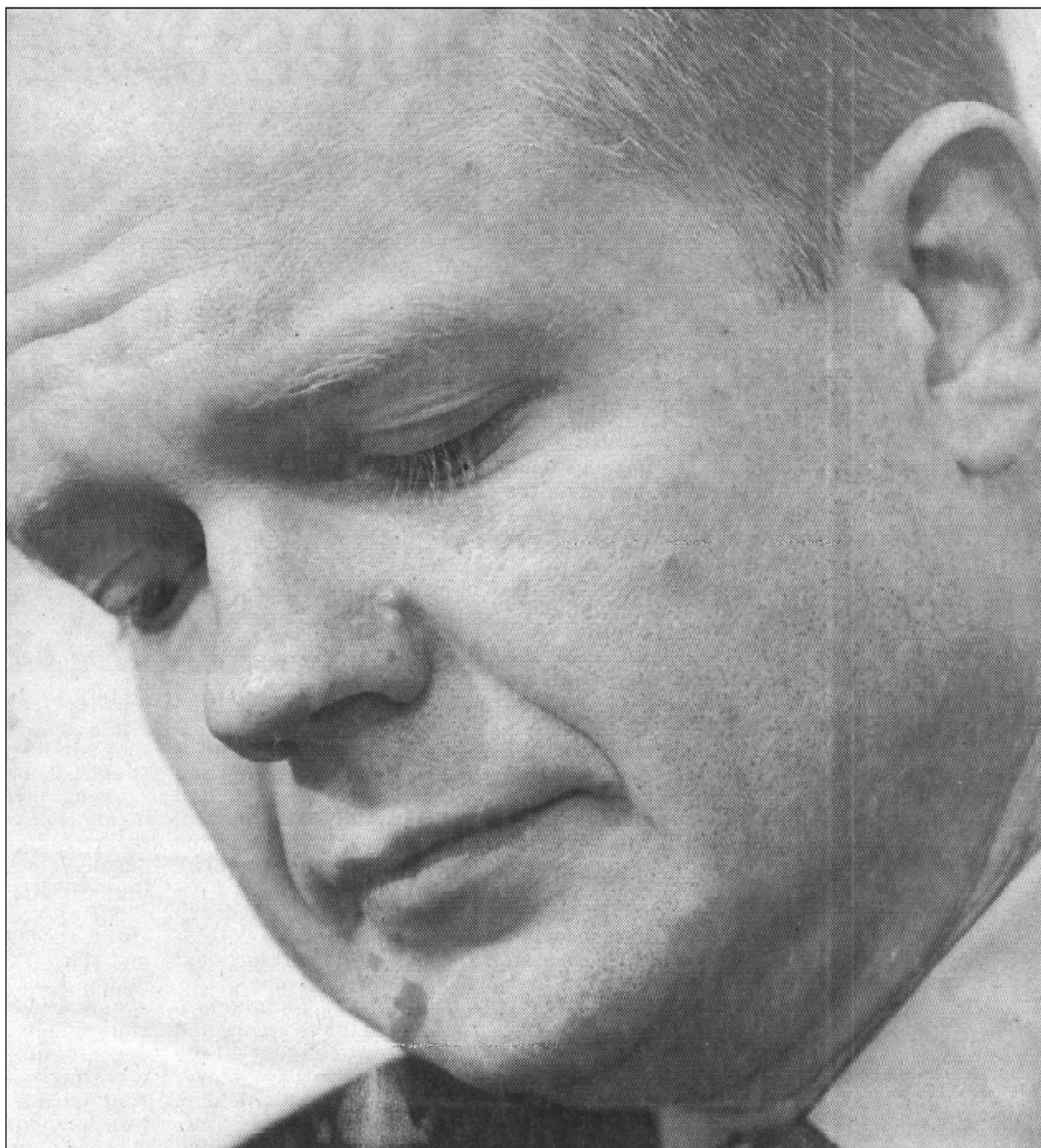
Tories' ground. Yet, confounding leftist common sense, New Labour enjoys unprecedented midterm popularity ratings.

However, paralysed by the fundamental strategic division over Europe, the Tories have no answer and have been reduced to thinking up 'distinctive' policies for their own sake. At a time when New Labour is openly seeking private-public partnerships in all areas, including health and education, Conservative deputy leader Peter Lilley caused uproar within his party by questioning the Thatcherite mantra of a capitalism, virtually unrestricted by government, being able to operate in every sphere. Lilley declared that health and education were "intrinsically unsuited" for the operation of the market. He said that the Tories had not been given the credit for funding these areas "in practice", because they had been thought to be against public services "in theory".

This statement, intended as a rejection of the 'worst excesses' of Thatcherism - a symbolic U-turn, whereby the party could 'concede and move on' - left many Tory rank and filers, as well as grandees, bewildered and angry. Yet this was the 'toned down' version. Michael Simmonds, a party worker, leaked details of the changes to the original draft, and paid for it with the loss of his job.

Taken aback by the reaction to Lilley's speech, party leaders attempted to play down its significance. But that was not an easy task. The claim that the speech was all part of a "seamless web" of Tory policy dating back to the 70s did not sit easily with the briefing given to journalists prior to Lilley's intervention, that it was "our version of clause four". Michael Ancram, the party chair, tried to claim that Lilley had been "misinterpreted". But, somewhat in contradiction, he complained that the deputy leader had tried to shift Tory policy without sufficient consultation.

Ancram later admitted that the whole affair had been a "massive and inexcusable" mistake. He was to set up a review to ensure "far better communication and presentation". This slightly misses the point. It is hardly



William Hague: public-private row conceals deeper divisions

useful to call for a change of packaging when you cannot decide what should be wrapped up inside it. And attempting such a rethink of policy in the middle of an election campaign is not a good idea either.

No wonder the Tories were thrown into turmoil. There were rumblings inside the party against the hapless leadership of Hague, who may have to sack his deputy in order to survive. Hague's leadership was being questioned to such an extent that shadow home secretary Norman Fowler issued a two-page document extolling his virtues in a vain attempt to stop the rot. After two years of Blair's government, the Conservatives are sliding even further in the polls. A recent survey showed that Blair is preferred to Hague by a majority of Tory voters.

Of course no such drastic leadership changes will be contemplated until after the current round of elections. After this week's local, Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly voting, Hague's troubles could intensify. And a further slump in the June 10 European poll will surely seal his eventual fate. But the problem for the Tories is that there is no obvious taker to fill Hague's shoes at the moment. No-one wants to be at the helm if the Conservative ship is to be sunk in a second successive general election Labour landslide in a couple of years time.

After that Blair aims to finish off the Tories through the introduction of

proportional representation. PR will spark off a fundamental realignment of British politics through allowing significant minorities to split in the knowledge that they will not necessarily be cast into the electoral wilderness. Blair knows that in return for a permanent Lab-Lib coalition he risks losing his left wing. But the Tories will almost certainly be hit by a much more devastating schism (creating the possibility if needed of a pro-EU Lab-Lib-

Con coalition - and leaving the Hague rump as permanent outsiders).

These fundamental changes will provide us with an opportunity too. The Tories may now feel the need to make noises in favour of 'public service', but there is no doubt that the rightward shift of mainstream British politics has left a vacuum. If only it had the self-belief, the left could organise to fill that space ●

Alan Fox

Communist University '99

A full week of debate, argument and political controversy at the CPGB's annual school

Saturday July 31 to
Saturday August 7

Sessions and speakers include: **Jack Conrad** on the politics of the Balkans war * **István Mészáros** on communism: * **Bob Pitt** on supporting the Labour Party under Blairism * **Sean Matgamna** of Alliance for Workers' Liberty on the USSR and the doctrine of class * the **Green Party** on saving the world * **Peter Tatchell** and former SLP vice-president **Royston Bull** on single-issue campaigns * **Hillel Ticktin** on the decline of capitalism * **Phil Sharpe** on Marxism and prediction * **Cymru Coch** on the Welsh road to socialism

Brunel University, Cleveland Road, Uxbridge, west London - 15 minutes walk from Uxbridge tube. Limited residential spaces available - send £20 to secure your place. Full cost of week: £75 (£85 after May), including self-catering accommodation. Non-residential - £30 for the week (£40 after May), or £5 per session on the door.

Fighting fund Useful start

Last week I wrote: "The start of our annual Summer Offensive will no doubt place a great strain on comrades' resources. However, please don't forget the *Weekly Worker*."

I am pleased to say that I have not been disappointed so far. Readers will see from our back-page report that over £10,000 has so far been pledged to the CPGB's fundraising drive. But this has not deterred comrades from doing their bit for their paper as well. As GT from Sheffield writes, "Where else

can you find such real *debate* on the left?" And, putting her money where her mouth is, she encloses a cheque for £30.

Thanks this week also to YP and SD (£20 each), as well as RA (£15), KL (£12) and TD (£10). Our May total starts off with a useful £107 towards out £400 target ●

Robbie Rix

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

Sordid sectarianism

Ian Donovan commission website - www.revplat.demon.co.uk

The final report of the London Socialist Alliance-initiated commission into the violent clash between Ian Donovan (editor of *Revolution and Truth*) and Eibhlin McDonald of the Spartacist League/Britain is now complete and available for inspection on a dedicated website. The site also contains other documents used by the commission, including a useful summary of the background to this unfortunate incident and extracts from letters and publications that set the attack in its proper context.

The *Weekly Worker* will be reprinting extensive excerpts from the material submitted to the commission as well as the full text of its conclusion. I will provide a commentary on this. It provides some very stark lessons on the sectarian state of the revolutionary movement in general.

We welcome the commission's report (see *Weekly Worker* April 8 for a summary of its initial findings). The report underlines that the attack on comrade McDonald was a gross transgression against principle. However, it is right to place this very uncharacteristic action in the context of comrade Donovan's fraught relationship with the SL/B, and with comrade McDonald in particular.

Two groups denounced the very idea of having a commission on such an "open and shut" case - the SL/B and its estranged child, the International Bolshevik Tendency. The SL/B wrote to the commission refusing any cooperation, stating "There is clearly nothing into which to 'enquire'". The straightforward duty of any organisation claiming to stand for workers' democracy is to condemn this grotesque act of violence against an Irish woman communist ... you are engaged in a wilful cover-up for Donovan's cowardly act of thuggery." Moreover, the request from the commission for background documents was "incredible". These were "internal materials" dating back some 13 years" (Letter to commission, March 12).

Characteristically, the spineless IBT agreed.

Of course, the evidence submitted to the commission indicates the real reason why the SL/B was so hostile to the body. It is the SL/B that has been engaged in an embarrassed cover-up of its real relations with comrade Donovan and what they reveal about the type of squalid, exploitative internal regimes it runs. And the same evidence - now openly available to the wider political public via the net - illustrates why comrade McDonald would have felt particularly vulnerable.

Even in the delirious world of international Spartacism, she has had a peculiarly savage reputation. She was summarily removed from the leadership of the British group in the mid-1980s for jointly

running a regime characterised by the cultish SL/United States as "malign". The brutalising effects of this form the background to the assault on the comrade. A number of SL/Bers - Ian Donovan in particular - left this nightmare organisation with some deep scars.

Finally, there is something amusingly appropriate that the commission's material should appear first on the web. Comrades looking for refutation of the commission's conclusions on the website of the SL/B, or even of the International Communist League (its parent international body), will be disappointed. Apart from a rogue site put together by one Bob Malecki - a foam-flecked Spart sympathiser in exile in Europe - there is nothing.

Again, this is tangential evidence of the nature of this international sect. The communications revolution presents organisations such as the Sparts with some major problems. This is an organisation that demands a "monopoly" over what it deems the public "actions" of its members. In other words, comrades are not allowed to speak to, write or communicate with any other political activist without the express permission of the organisation.

Therefore, like the Socialist Workers Party, the Sparts have a problem with the net. Here is a medium with an almost limitless capacity for anonymous, worldwide political communication with thousands, even millions of other human beings. It must give the internal policemen of the ICL nightmares. Short of compounding every member's computer, what can they do?

Perhaps the 'compounding' option is not such a bad idea, though. When the hapless Jan Norden - long-term editor of the SL/US's publication *Workers Vanguard* - fell foul of the regime he had helped create, the organisation insisted that he submit itemised phone bills to the treasurer for recompense. In other words, they wanted to go 'fishing' to pick up other dissidents.

When the boil popped and Norden was expelled, a Spart 'repossession team' appeared at his door late at night demanding his computer and fax. Some pretty grandiose conspiracy theories were subsequently made out of the numbers the poor man had programmed in on the one-touch-dial button on his fax.

The sooner the revolutionary left ceases to expend so much energy in policing its own members, the better for the workers' movement as a whole. The Ian Donovan commission - both in its open methods of work and its principled conclusions - has made a small, but important contribution to the task of raising the culture of our movement above the sordid sectarianism that unfortunately still characterises it ●

Mark Fischer

More heat than light

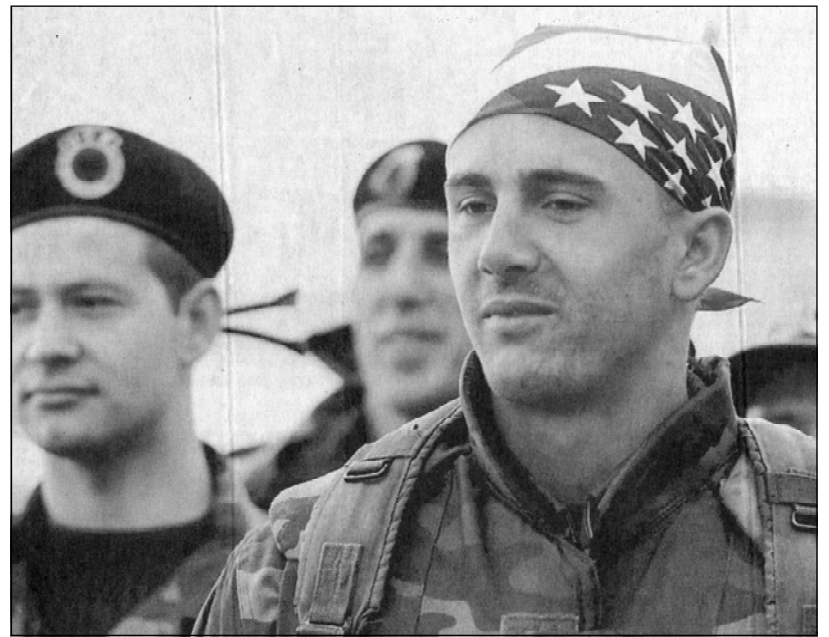
For most of those participating in this year's London May Day march the Serbian war was foremost in their thoughts. I was not surprised to discover, in the course of a dozen or so arguments with comrades from various left organisations, that the CPGB's backing for Kosovar self-determination in general, and the Kosova Liberation Army in particular, has led to our being stigmatised as "supporters of imperialism". Sadly, the discussions in which I took part generated more heat than light. A march is not the ideal place to debate, but it was not so much the noise of the brass band and the cacophony of chanting, so much as the raw emotions of anger and disgust that got in the way of meaningful dialogue.

Of course, feelings have their place. Is there anyone on the left who does not *feel* a visceral detestation of the manifold evils inflicted on human beings by imperialism? Anyone who is not nauseated by Tony Blair's crocodile tears over the Kosovar refugees and his claim that Nato is bombing Serbia in the "cause of humanity"? But feelings by themselves, however sincere, are not enough. As Marxists we must view the issues raised by the Serbian war soberly, analysing a situation that is both complex and constantly changing. I have already set out the CPGB's viewpoint in a series of articles. My purpose now is merely to focus on the key questions, in the hope - forlorn though it might be - that certain comrades will begin to *think* about it, rather than give vent to stock reactions and conditioned reflexes.

First, as regards Kosovar self-determination, I ask: "Does the population of Kosova consist of a *nation*?" Yes, it does. According to the definition that forms part of the Marxist canon on the national question, "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture" (JV Stalin *Works* Vol 2, Moscow 1953, p307). The provenance of this citation may cause some to wince, but they should not forget that Lenin himself acknowledged its accuracy.

Secondly, if the Kosovars are a nation, do they have the right to self-determination, including the right to secession from the rump Yugoslav state? Yes, they do, if this is the *democratic* desire of the population as a whole. Neither the din of war, nor the fog of propaganda can obscure the fact that the ethnic Albanians of Kosova *do* aspire to an independent state. Leaving aside the inveterate Yugoslav defencists and Sovietophile nostalgics, this justified, democratic demand is accepted by most on the left, but only *in principle*, only as a *theoretical* postulate. In *practice*, they tell the Kosovars to 'wait for socialism' and the establishment of a 'socialist federation of the Balkans'. There is nothing wrong with the latter as a *slogan*, but, in the current circumstances, that is all it is.

Thirdly, some comrades appear to believe that the imperialists have, from the outset, given their support to Kosovar independence and the KLA's role in furthering this aim. Hence, to



KLA volunteers: tools of imperialism?

support the Kosovars is to back imperialism. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our comrades' assessment of the main enemy is woefully deficient. If they had studied it more closely, they would realise that Kosovar independence was *never* on the agenda at Rambouillet. What is more, the aborted Rambouillet agreement specifically envisaged the *disarming* of the KLA and its replacement with a contingent of Nato 'peace-keepers'. For the Nato powers, the KLA's presence on the ground offers some obvious *tactical* advantages, but *strategically* the KLA's role as the front-line force in a drive to Kosovar self-determination is profoundly problematic.

Do we need to remind ourselves of the imperialists' geopolitical goals in the region? Militarily, they seek to safeguard their southern flank and establish the Balkans as a secure bridgehead for further operations in the *east*, directed against the former Soviet Union; economically, their consistent and predictable goal is to create and maintain a group of stable client states ripe for exploitation. Only a wilfully blind person or a fool could fail to see that an independent Kosova has no place in such a scheme. To the imperialists, an independent Kosova ruled by a triumphant KLA, if it became a reality, would represent a *threat*, a source of potential destabilisation.

The KLA would no doubt seek Albanian unity with Kosova - not Kosova unity with Albania. Greater Albania - incorporating Albania, Kosova and the Albanian parts of Montenegro and Macedonia - would be under the domination of KLA nationalist revolutionaries.

Hence, the democratic demands of the Kosovars count for nothing in Washington or London. At best, they will enjoy a spurious autonomy under the status of a Nato/UN protectorate; at worst, their territory will be partitioned as part of a negotiated 'peace', whereby the Serbs would be rewarded for their mass terror and genocide by having the north of Kosova incorporated into a postwar Greater Serbia.

Here we see the fundamental error of those on the left who condemn the

CPGB as "supporters" of the imperialists' war aims: they fail to perceive that, in the current situation, to support the Kosovars' legitimate, democratic right to self-determination is to act *against* the interests of Nato and the imperialists. But even if the Kosovars' struggle *did* happen to coincide to some degree with imperialist actions, that would not prevent us supporting its democratic content.

Does this mean that our support for the KLA's *military* operations (as distinct from the *political* cause of Kosovar self-determination) is unconditional? Of course it does not. At present, notwithstanding its ambivalent and changeable political complexion - especially given the influx of recruits from the west, not least American Albanians - the KLA's very *raison d'être* remains *inimical* to the imperialists' long-term interests in the region.

In the event, however, of a successful Nato ground offensive, one of the imperialists' first objectives in imposing a 'peaceful solution' will almost certainly be to neutralise the KLA. They may try to do this by 'disbanding' it altogether - in which case the KLA will very probably take up arms, however futile such a gesture may be, against the 'victors'; or, more probably, the imperialists may offer the KLA a subsidiary, internal security role as a local gendarmerie, helping to police a Kosovar 'protectorate', or whatever portion of Kosova remains after the imperialists have carved it up at the negotiating table. If the latter happens, and particularly if the KLA indulges in ethnic cleansing on its own account, then it would clearly cease to merit support as a force for Kosovar liberation, and really would *become* what others on the left now say that it already *is*: ie, a tool of imperialist interests.

It is not difficult to foresee other contingencies in which the KLA would forfeit the *critical* support of communists. But it is not our job to second-guess the future. Our task is to support the struggle for human liberation now, wherever, and in whatever paradoxical and contradictory circumstances, it is taking place. The cause of the Kosovars is just. All communists should support it ●

Michael Malkin

Recent events have sent the media into a feeding frenzy. War in the Balkans. The high school massacre in Colorado. Nail bombs in London. Jill Dando, the TV presenter, is shot dead outside her house. War, violence and guns dominate the headlines.

Whatever tidal wave of inconsequential nonsense the bourgeois media may generate, all the instances mentioned above raise issues of crucial importance for socialists and revolutionaries.

None more so than the mayhem which visited the quintessentially Middle American town of Littleton in Denver, Colorado. Two students - Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris - walked into the Columbine High School and shot 25 of their fellow pupils. Twelve died. They then turned their guns on themselves.

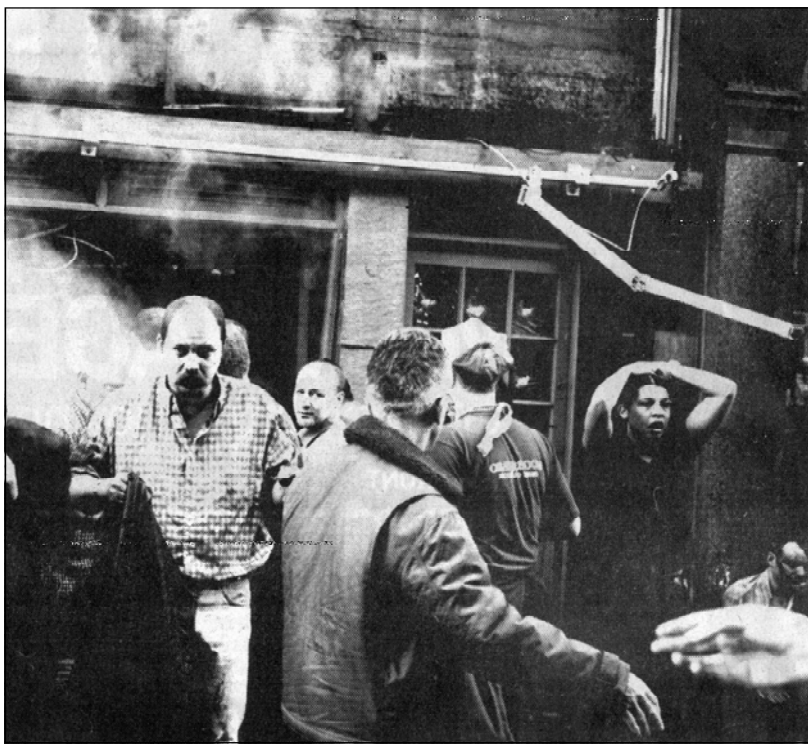
Inevitably, this terrible and seemingly inexplicable act ignited a moralistic panic. Klebold and Harris were middle class kids from respectable families - no white trailer-trash or underclass lumpens. Indeed, by all accounts they were intelligent and brighter than average teenagers. Yet something went terribly wrong. They developed a murderous hatred for the suburban high school values of Littleton - especially the 'jocks' who excelled at sporting activities. This antipathy to official values took the form of becoming part of the 'Trenchcoat mafia' - a distinctly anti-Middle American grouping. Klebold and Harris were fascinated by the mechanics of guns and bombs. The politics of white supremacism and racism also provided a strong pole of attraction. It seems that Adolf Hitler became hero and role model to the increasingly disaffected pair.

How could all this happen? The ruling class needed to find answers - quickly. The usual suspects were rounded up. Such as the worldwide web. Klebold and Harris obsessively trawled the internet looking for neo-Nazi and rightwing sites - Harris's favourite being called *Ich bin ein Auslander* (I am a foreigner). Then there were computer games and videos. Watching violent films and playing shoot-'em-up games occupied inordinate amounts of time. Next there was the music - another major suspect looms. The high school killers belonged to the 'goth' subculture, whose musical antecedents can be found in groups like Siouxsie and the Banshees and Joy Division. Klebold and Harris's favourite group were a Seattle-based 'industrial goth' band from Germany called KMFDM. This band has previously released albums called *Angstfest* and *Nihil*. Even worse, the two youths adored the 'shock-rock' performer Marilyn Manson (name derived from Marilyn Monroe and Charles Manson), who has openly declared war on the values of Middle America. A second-rate Alice Cooper only with more make-up, Manson's speciality are songs which hinge on nihilistic and suicidal themes, all nicely spiced with chic-occult imagery. Are Marilyn Manson and KMFDM to blame for the Columbine high school tragedy?

Of course, this is all nonsense - and nothing we have not heard before. The Oliver Stone film, *Natural born killers*, was blamed for a rash of seemingly motiveless murders in France and America. Strenuous attempts in this country were made to link the video, *Child's play III*, to the Jamie Bulger killing. As for music, not that long ago it was 'orthodox' heavy metal which was held responsible for the corruption of Middle American high schools kids - with Ozzy Osborne standing in for Marilyn Manson. Before that it was rock 'n' roll and Elvis Presley who were a mortal threat to the American way of life.

Such facile explanations hold no water. For instance, KMFDM claim loyalty to the ideology of anarchism

Guns, bombs and workers' control



Terrorism must not empower the state

and anti-fascism. Its bandleader, Sascha Konietzko, issued a press release saying: "From the beginning our music has been a statement against war, oppression, fascism and violence against others." Likewise it would be monstrously inadequate, and anti-Marxist, to simply portray Klebold and Harris as Hitler-loving weirdos devoid of all humanity. Objects to be condemned. And to make us feel more righteous.

For communists, the responsibility for Littleton lies elsewhere. In the consumer-driven conformity which pervades American society, and its subsequent fear of all 'outsiders'. An education system which has more of the features of a gigantic warehousing-cum-policing operation. A country, in the words of the conservative historian Niall Ferguson, "in which, for all the efforts of the multitudinous churches, traditional moral values have been more or less replaced by the value of stocks and shares ... where the parents track the Dow Jones and trade internet shares via Charles Schwab while their offspring spend the proceeds in endless, indefatigable consumption" (*The Sunday Telegraph* April 25).

And look at Littleton itself, which seems to have been designed by an evil genius for maximum alienation. The identical - scrubbed clean - houses. No public spaces or parks. No cafes. No pubs. No 'alternative' bookshops, record shops or clothes stores. Just a large shopping mall stuffed with security guards looking for 'punks' (or goths). A curfew which keeps young people off the streets after 11pm. The intolerance of 'the jocks', who taunted members of the 'Trenchcoat mafia' for being in a 'gay gang'. An intolerance quickly picked upon by the ambitious David Duke, white supremacist and former Ku Klux Kan leader, who opined of Klebold and Harris: "Diversity is what caused this shooting. These guys were radical homosexuals."

The overwhelming response - at least in Britain - to the Columbine killings has been a media-orchestrated chorus calling for gun control. Bour-

geois liberal common sense dictates that more gun control equals less violence. This has seen liberal and left-leaning journalists, whether implicitly or explicitly, contrast the more civilised British society to the backward, gun-loving culture of the United States. Hurrah for Britain, where the (anti-racist) bourgeois state has a virtual monopoly over automatic guns and weapons of mass destruction. We can easily recall the immediate and reflex reaction from official society to the Dunblane school massacre, which was to inaugurate an emotive crusade to ban all handguns. An understandable reaction for liberal humanists and for members of the bourgeoisie with a conscience.

Dismally, but predictably, this was also the Pavlovian response of economic groups like the Socialist Party in England and Wales. It tailed the Snowdrop campaign to ban handguns and in general argued for greater 'local authority control' over weapons. In other words, it capitulated to bourgeois common sense in its haste to be respectable. Weapons, guns and violence are bad things. Socialists are against bad things. Therefore we do not want anything to do with guns or weapons. Leave them in the capable hands of the bourgeois state instead.

Communists do not join the call for gun control. We actively oppose it. Or rather, the gun control we favour is that by which the workers, organised into a *political* class, have access to and control over the most advanced weaponry available - with which it seeks to overthrow the bourgeois state and disarm the bourgeoisie. Without workers' militias - the people armed - the workers can never become the *ruling* class. The American tragedy is that the right to bear arms - a progressive concept as such - has become the right of atomised and alienated egos to murder each other. The war of all against all. But the solution is not gun control, for American workers to disarm themselves - it lies in *working class* politics.

Narrow anti-Americanism can easily take an anti-democratic form. Already some are *favourably*

contrasting the German bourgeois state's anti-free speech laws to the first amendment bourgeois democracy of the United States. Displaying the swastika, owning a copy of *Mein Kampf* (unless state supervised) and disputing the six-million holocaust figure are criminal offences in Germany. Some people in the German media are keen to point out that the outward behaviour of the Littleton killers would have been illegal in Germany. Ergo if the United States adopted German-type laws restricting freedom of speech ... Is it not obvious?

This would be a 'cure' worse than the illness. To make it illegal to own, possess or even read *Mein Kampf* - or to ban far-right groups - would be deeply irrational, and could only help to give an air of mystique and glamour to fascist and neo-Nazi ideas. The CPGB has long said that openness and full democracy is the best antidote to reactionary ideas and prejudices.

Yet over the last week there have been more voices raised calling for German-type laws. After the first two nail bombs in Brixton and Brick Lane, Ken Livingstone wrote in *The Guardian*: "The BNP should be banned from gaining the rights accorded to genuine political parties in the coming elections. We should ban the BNP, which is no more than a racist criminal conspiracy" (April 28). A plea which has often been made by authoritarian anti-racist liberals like Yasmin Alibab-Brown, a regular contributor to *The Independent*. And after the Soho bombing, Michael Mansfield QC, one of the architects of the SLP's witch-hunting constitution, bellowed in *The Observer* (May 2) about "proscribing" organisations like the BNP, in order "to demonstrate to the Afro-Caribbeans, Jews, Asians and gays, and for that matter to the police themselves, that we mean business". Mansfield conscientiously added: "There is always the risk that such laws may be invoked against pure political dissent, but this risk post-Macpherson has been substantially reduced, now public recognition has been given to the need to define, identify and counter racism."

How long before Mansfield and Livingstone start demanding that certain politically incorrect publications and books be banned - starting of course with *Mein Kampf*. Authoritarian and statist views like these are not confined to ambitious bourgeois politicians and lawyers. Astoundingly, members of 'revolutionary left' groups have been known to express very similar sentiments. The CPGB has been told by some SWP members that *Mein Kampf* should be prohibited from public libraries and bookshops. Only duly-accredited students should be allowed to read it. Perhaps the SWP thinks that the very print, or even the actual paper itself, is impregnated with a supernatural evil that corrupts all those poor souls who gaze upon its dark words.

What all this indicates is the complete absence of any independent working class agenda. There is a big void where the left should be. The reaction to the London nail bombs dramatically demonstrates how official society is "on the crest of an anti-racist wave", to quote the apt words

of Ateeq Sidique of the Bradford Commission for Racial Equality. The bourgeois class has had *carte blanche* to promote and agitate for its inclusive, anti-racist vision of a new Britain. It is now the essence of unBritishness to subscribe to any form of racist and, so it seems, homophobic bigotry. The old Revolutionary Communist Party (later *Living Marxism*, now *LM*) adage that "racism is as British as Lady Di" needs to be urgently amended: anti-racism is now as British as Princess Diana. Everyone from Sir Paul Condon to Prince Charles has loudly and ostentatiously condemned the nail bombings, and lauded to the skies the values of multiculturalism, tolerance and diversity. With the possible exception of the *Sunday Sport*, all the newspapers have joined the PC anti-racist chorus.

But it is also very British indeed to wave the flag - vigorously. Addressing an international conference at Birmingham to mark the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Sikh faith, Tony Blair delivered an impassioned and Churchillian defence of the 'British' values of tolerance and decency. Directly linking the 'just war' by Nato forces against Serbia with the hunt for the London nail bomber(s), he told his rapturous audience: "Patriotism in Britain no longer excluded people because of their colour, religion or ethnic background, but took pride in a diversity which enriches and unites the country. The true outcasts today, the true minorities, those truly excluded are not the different races and religions of Britain, but the racists, the bombers, the violent criminals who hate that vision of Britain and try to destroy it." Unsurprisingly, the Sikh delegates were well impressed by Blair's anti-racist sincerity.

David Cesarani, professor of Jewish history and director of the Wiener Library, referred to the fascist and neo-nazi fringe as the "stay behinds". Confronted by Blair's hegemonic programme for an inclusive Britain, these forces feel that "all that remains is to hurt this new, plural, cosmopolitan society; to wipe the smirk off its face, as Jews, muslims, blacks, gays and Asians mingle happily in street markets, pubs and cafes" (*The Independent on Sunday* May 2).

However, you could talk about another group of "stay behinds" - the left. The increasingly bizarre left which still insists - as an article of infallible faith - that the bourgeois state is inherently racist. Which clings on to the Macphersonian belief that all the bodies and organisations of bourgeois society are "institutionally racist". Nothing could be further from the truth.

Until the left even *starts* to grapple with the political-ideological realities of Britain and high politics, it is doomed to impotency - shouting anti-racist slogans from the sidelines, slogans which the ruling class are only too happy to incorporate into their own vision of an impeccably anti-racist and inclusive bourgeois Britain. This dovetailing makes it most unlikely that any effective opposition to Blairite ideology will come from the revolutionary left as it is presently constituted ●

Eddie Ford

Friends fall foul

Royston Bull, former SLP vice-president, replies to Delphi the “disillusioned Scargillite” (*Weekly Worker* April 29)

At least your ‘Delphi’ Trot is open about his anti-Leninism, inventing a completely false ‘irreconcilable contradiction’ between the dedicated spread of revolutionary theory and solidarity action with workers in their daily spontaneous struggles. His is the arrogant condescension towards the workers: “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.”

This is exactly the dumping down line of the SLP/*Socialist News*. ‘Workers do not want to hear what one long-dead Russian revolutionary said to another’, etc, has been quoted several times from the platform. Delphi sneers at the *Economic and Philosophic Science Review* for its “idealised ‘heroic’ working class braving enlightenment”. He merely sneers at himself. Only complacent philistine conceit instructs *Socialist News* contributors to “keep it at the level of the *Mirror* or the *Sun*, which is where most of our recruits are coming from.”

The Bolshevik attitude was that “workers come to the revolution thirsting for knowledge”, and provided it in newspapers which make the *EPSR* seem like a light read. That Delphi has given himself “incipient brain damage” from struggling to get through the *EPSR* will tell workers everything they need to know about the backwardness in part of the SLP’s founding circles and concept.

The demand for ‘recommendations for practical action, not theory’ from the *EPSR* shows that it is Delphi who is out of touch, not the fight for Marxist science. Tameside careworkers understand the class-war rottenness of how they have been betrayed into outrageous injustice, and can organise and agitate for their own case better than anyone, as can any workers in struggle.

What they *do not* need is patronising Trot visits to teach them how to picket and write leaflets. They can already do that for themselves better than any Trot academic. What they *do* lack is the opportunity to develop a theoretical grasp of the stage of the imperialist crisis reached, the degree of Labour/TUC class-collaborating degeneracy reached, and what *political* struggle perspectives to add to their industrial-struggle fight.

Tragically, they will get no such political leadership from visiting SLP Trots or any other posturers from the fake ‘left’ swamp - just more dumbed-down head-patting, such as Delphi offers here.

What ‘practical action’ does Delphi ‘propose’ for those in struggle? In the absence of condescending ‘practical tips on strike organisation’, presumably the recommendation is to ‘politically trust the SLP’. Other Trots still recommend ‘keep on trusting New Labour’ presumably, like the SWP at election times. Brian Heron at SLP congress said, ‘Just roll your sleeves up and help strikers with practical matters’, in the most tail-ending SWP style.

These are all aspects of the philosophically bankrupt single-issue politics which have remained barren in nearly two centuries of reformism and centrism, but are still being defended by Delphi. To suggest that reformist illusions (that fascist degeneracy can

be squeezed out of capitalist society by anti-racist and anti-homophobic agitation and other anti-Nazi legislation) is part of the problem rather than the solution does not imply “didactic haughtiness” towards spontaneous struggles, or any less disgust at the nail-bomb terror threat to ethnic, gay and other minority communities. Possibly the opposite, because although all self-emancipatory awareness movements do properly win legal rights and have a profound educative and civilising influence - do they not also, however, imply that capitalist society is ‘getting better’, and hide its deepening contradictions which simultaneously are driving towards *increased* violence and a general return towards *renewed* fascist warmongering?

Just because there is a lot of paranoia about does not mean that New Labour is *not* preparing more and more class collaboration treachery (and reaction around the imperialist system generally), when Jack Straw jumps on the anti-nail bomb bandwagon to declare: “We are becoming a better society, so let us stay united, and work together to continue defeating this kind of thing.”

Meanwhile the rat race continues to disillusion youth and breed atomising conflict throughout society, with the full blessing of New Labour opportunism and humbug, and fascist blitzkrieg continues to rain down terror-destruction on the *whole* of Serbia, turning a nasty civil war into a holocaust catastrophe because of the strategic interests of imperialist exploitation and domination worldwide, and nothing whatever to do with bogus ‘concern for ethnic minority rights’, there or anywhere.

Under cover of wittily heaping up personal abuse, and daft distortions of *EPSR* positions, the truth is that Delphi is *anti-theory* - completely, in the Leninist sense. He says the *EPSR* offers nothing about “how to fight ... apart from evangelising Marxist-Leninist science”. Absolutely correct, and Marxism-Leninism guided the only successful revolutionary overthrows of imperialist states that there have ever been so far in history, and it will stay that way.

No doubt bolstered by the latest *Cold War* series brainwashing on BBC TV, Delphi goes into raptures to denounce the “North Korean slave state” and to look for its demise - the theory being, ‘All those central Europeans who broke up the Iron Curtain and destroyed the Berlin Wall cannot be wrong’. The revulsion against the dictatorship of the proletariat continues on a roll; but cautiously, the fake ‘left’ still mostly only openly reject Leninism, but not yet Marxism, which first laid bare the scientific necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat and its philosophical justification.

These knee-jerk anti-Stalinists could not be making a bigger mistake. Historically, scientific anti-Stalinism alone is able to explain the epoch-making anti-imperialist pricelessness of the 20th century’s workers’ states whilst exposing the crippling theoretical damage imposed on the international movement by accumulating revisionist mistakes, starting in the 1920s. To judge things by shallow temporary mass opinion in central

Europe, in the period of apparently triumphant imperialist-boom consumerism and apparently incurable proletarian-dictatorship bureaucracy and paranoid arbitrariness, is as daft as judging fascism’s worthwhileness by Hitler’s mass popularity in the 1930s, and Princess Diana’s worthwhileness by the morbid fan-worship her death brought forth.

Theory says that as the capitalist free market sinks deeper and deeper into inter-imperialist warmongering slump and crisis, so will the considerable achievements of the workers’ states (in supporting anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements worldwide, in stalemating western nuclear-imperialist military domination, and in so spreading certain universal educational, economic, social and cultural rights as to make capitalist welfare state development obligatory in the west) become increasingly attractive with hindsight.

Current demands to ban fascist nail bombers in Britain. But even some Trots can see the pitfalls and contradictions of asking the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie behind a largely police-dominated ‘democratic state’ to exercise even more political-banning powers, and with ostensibly ‘left’ encouragement. Political leadership in the Marxist science of class-state dictatorship would be the best ‘practical action’ to start off with. But, one, Delphi would not see that as ‘practical action’ and two, Delphi is against all such “didactic” theory anyway - all supposedly so far from “where the worker or peasant actually is”.

What is clear, however, is that Trot academics who cannot tell the difference between inter-imperialist struggle (United Kingdom versus United States of America) and anti-imperialist struggle (Cuba) are out of order in presuming to decide “where the workers are actually at”. Let such middle class philistinism just speak for itself. Workers do not fall for every petty bourgeois stupidity, even under the most dumbing-down influences of the greatest consumer boom in capitalist history.

Your ‘Delphic’ Fiscite is not so much ambiguous (for which the oracle was notorious) as plain muddled - pretending amazement at *EPSR* views which slate Scargillist reactionary bureaucracy yet which still support the SLP project in general, yet having themselves circulated vice-president Sikorski’s famous attacks on the party leadership for producing “weakness in organisation”, and “recreates all the old demoralisation, factionalism and cynicism so familiar on the traditional left”, while still on board.

I certainly did “put myself forward as vice-president”, but with known published criticism of many of Scargillism’s limitations, and with open agitation, through motions and contributed articles (often not published), calling for vastly improved political analysis in the party, and a regular structure of regional and national schools to develop a serious cadre force. But unlike Sikorski, who also put himself forward as vice-president last November, just the same, despite criticisms, I knew *nothing* about how Scargillism’s leadership operated.

It is, of course, an utterly ludicrous stage-managed joke, and Heron and

co need to explain why Scargill saw the need to instantly invent reasons for expelling me from the party the moment I get elected onto its NEC, for fear of what I would see and say there - yet he could tolerate the Sikorskis and Heron being ‘in’ on this autocracy seemingly endlessly (two years or more). In whose ‘sincerity’ and political judgement should SLP members have confidence in the light of this? Who should they distrust for their ‘duplicity’? Scargill feared the *EPSR* and *instantly* moved to have it closed down from the NEC (and then the party) at the very first meeting I attended.

But having trusted getting elected would at least give the opportunity to raise arguments and help organise agreed motions, it was important to then take up Scargillism for its underlying political/philosophical bankruptcy and not just for its instantly observable mafia-like autocracy and sycophancy (as unpleasant and significant as they are) which immediately frustrated that trust.

Scargillism’s grotesque ‘disciplinary’ stitch-ups - a sordid insult to human intelligence - were a new factor, not necessarily revealed in the earlier inevitable decisions to refuse membership to open factional recruiting and agitation inside the SLP (the *EPSR* rejects factionalising too, then and now). In the light of these ludicrous stitch-ups, the underlying political backwardness of Scargillism (which was unavoidably going to come into ever greater prominence as world developments moved on, leaving Scargillism further and further behind, and is already doing so) has had to be re-emphasised; and continuing support for the SLP project has had to be advised to quickly turn to fighting backwardness as openly and noisily as possible in Scargillism’s grossly bent and uneven arena.

The SLP’s response to Nato warmongering has been utterly pathetic, failing to expose the stooge role played for imperialist aggression by academic dilettantes from the ‘left’ swamp airing their knowledge about ‘minority self-determination rights’ in the catastrophically wrong context; failing to explain the whole imperialist system’s crisis-driven need to turn to warmongering destruction at this stage of its ‘overproduction’ and collapse nightmare; and eventually slithering onto pro-KLA (and pro-war-mongering) stoogery itself in the latest *Socialist News*.

On Europe too, events have caught up unreconstructed SLP backwardness, typified by Delphi who declares bluntly that the Marxist-Leninist science (of inter-imperialist splits being the most vital to understanding 20th century class struggle) is a complete invention by the *EPSR*, choosing to pretend that the EU has been described as “anti-imperialist”. No such nonsense.

And Delphi’s total rejection of all concept of *inter-imperialist* conflict as the crucial ground for future world socialist revolution demonstrates a complete rejection of all Marxist understanding. Being in or out of the EU is not the point. The problem is with the SLP *misleading* the working class that any specific rearrangement of inter-imperialist trading relationships, as such, can significantly alter (for Britain or anywhere else) the long-term consequence of the systemic monopoly-imperialist crisis. It cannot.

The revolutionary *overthrow* of the slump and war-ridden monopoly capitalist system is the only scientific perspective ●

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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Ballots and the Balkans

The CPGB's 16th Summer Offensive was launched on May 2 after a day of debate on working class issues and strategies in the light of the Balkans conflict. This event was important in terms of a deeper exploration of the question of war in general. It also put into context the situation in which we will contest the forthcoming June 10 European Union elections and underlined just how vital it is not to miss the opportunity of fighting bomber Blair in the ballot box.

The day began with an opening from comrade Tina Becker on the Marxist theory of war. Fundamentally war must not be understood as something abnormal. War and peace are but opposites within a political unity. As Clausewitz - the Prussian soldier-philosopher - famously said, "War is the continuation of policy by other, violent, means". Comrade Becker pointed out that while war has existed throughout class society, we need to distinguish between other class societies and capitalism. She argued that capitalism - at its monopoly or imperialist stage - is distinctive in that objective laws drive it inexorably towards war: Its need for expansionism or offloading imminent crisis onto others, leads, where peaceful means fail, to armed conflict.

Today's world is no longer dominated by the Cold War system characterised by the military-strategic rivalry of the Soviet bloc and US-led imperialism. We are living in a New World Order dominated by US 'super-imperialism'. This is the context within which the laws of uneven development operate - where the USA tries to spread monopolistic competition to the rest of the world and police small to medium powers that refuse to recognise and comply with the new rules.

Stabilising the troublesome Balkans, stopping the effects of ethnic strife spilling into the rest of Europe and advancing the US-Nato sphere of influence towards Russia's near abroad lies behind the air war against rump Yugoslavia.

Like the SWP we argue that imperialism should not be allowed to bomb minor powers into submission. However, unlike them we refuse to collapse into social pacifism. We recognise that there are just wars and movements which ought to be critically defended. The SWP refuses to call for Kosova independence or arming the KLA. Instead the comrades actually warn of the "danger" that a KLA victory could bring to the region. For communists the Kosovar fight for national self-determination has an undeniable democratic content which must be supported. That principled stance is no abstraction. Till the Serbian working class sides with the people of Kosova, it can never be free.

The discussion which followed brought out an important difference on this question. Comrade Phil Walden argued that the fight for national rights is reactionary in today's globalised economy. We need "simultaneous revolutions", not "national revolutions which will create unviable states". This line has also been advanced by comrade Sandy McBurney from Glasgow, who says that "the progressive content to the struggle for national self-determination has disappeared with globalisation" (Let-



Break from Blair to stop the bombing

ters *Weekly Worker* April 29).

But other comrades argued that this was simply a 1999 example of what Lenin termed 'imperialist economism' in his polemics against Rosa Luxemburg and her Bolshevik followers Bukharin, Radek and Pyatakov (Kievsky). John Bridge of the CPGB was pleased that comrade Walden had finally caught up with the Marxist aim of "simultaneous revolutions". Marx and Engels had argued for it in 1845. But this could only be achieved if communists championed the fullest democratic rights in every country. As comrade Stan Kelsey argued, "the fight for revolutionary democracy cannot be the victim of some abstract economism. The working class must taken up the democratic rights of others in order to become hegemonic. It is the struggle for the working class itself to provide answers which is pivotal."

The distinction that some Trotskyist groups make between political and military support was also strongly criticised. Such an unwarranted distinction defies both logic and reality. Communists should politically support progressive struggles. This implies using whatever means available, including armed support if desirable and/or possible. If we agree that war is policy by other means, how can 'military support' not be political?

The school moved on to discuss revolutionary defeatism with an opening given by comrade Marcus Larsen. He too argued that the specifics of the situation need to be our starting point. Nevertheless history, especially 1914, teaches important lessons. The success of revolutionary defeatism in leading to the first socialist revolution illustrates both the limitations of SWP-type pacifism and the need for war in the cause of socialism.

Comrade Larsen polemicised both against the red-brown, pro-Milosevic camp and the first-camp politics of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, who "seem to have forgotten that the main enemy is at home in their eagerness to take a stand against Milosevic". Unfortunately, such comrades appear to have surrendered before bomber Blair. Who will they back in the June 10 EU general election? New Labour? Scargill? The 'Weekly Worker' list?

The discussion which followed centred mainly on our defence of the KLA. While its fight for independence is a just one, clearly it is in danger of becoming simply a tool of imperialism. At the moment Nato does not see the KLA as trustworthy - hardly surprising, given its pan-Albanian ambitions. However, it is far from impossible that the KLA could be moulded into a Nato-sponsored army policing a Nato

protectorate. If this becomes the case, clearly our slogans will change. While we would still be calling for self-determination for Kosova - this time against Nato - we would no longer give any support to the KLA.

Some comrades voiced concern that we need to be very clear with our slogans - that whilst we support the right of the KLA to be armed in its fight for self-determination, we are not 'KLAists' and certainly do not support its nationalist programme. We defend the democratic content of its programme, as we did with the IRA. But, however much we need to criticise the politics of the KLA, the cause of today's crisis lies with the failure of the working class movement to support Kosovar rights. Without that Kosovars are bound to look towards the KLA and nationalism.

The final opening of the day was given by comrade John Bridge. He addressed his remarks mainly to the tasks facing us as an organisation during this period of air war and preparation for ground war. While the collapse of the Socialist Alliance electoral bloc is a setback, there still are possibilities. Two years of Blairism have clearly not brought the 'crisis of expectations' so excitedly predicted by the majority of the left. It is not, as leading SWPer Candy Udwin proclaims, "the best time to be a socialist". It is a period of reaction - but one of a special type. Things can change very rapidly. The SWP, SPEW and others have taken a cowardly step back - unable to take on the SLP. As comrade Bridge argued, "While they can fool themselves that they will fight after the European elections, they will not have created either the space or garnered the political courage to take on Scargill in the London Assembly elections." The CPGB, through standing in this election, can "give leadership to the left and fight to ensure that Scargill's attempt to revitalise his Stalinite shell of a party does not go unchallenged".

The meeting concluded with the Summer Offensive. With a total of over £10,000 pledged at this one meeting, we are off to a good start. But we need the involvement of all those who in one way or another, or to one degree or another, support our EU election platform and the fight for principled unity. By donating to our fundraising campaign - we have a £25,000 target - you will play an important part in furthering the politics of revolutionary democracy against both Blairism and the national socialism of Scargill.

Anne Murphy