

After Super Thursday ...

Communist Euro challenge to Blair

The left is weak, but Scargill is no answer

Last week's elections for the Scottish parliament, Welsh assembly and local councils throughout Britain must surely have laid to rest once and for all the insistence by sections of the left that Tony Blair is unpopular and a working class fightback is gathering pace.

Although New Labour lost ground to the nationalists, it remains easily the largest party in both Scotland and Wales, and in local elections it polled around 36% of the total vote, as against 33% for the Tories. Despite losing 1,145 seats and relinquishing control of 32 councils, Labour's mid-term showing - at a time when governments are normally at their lowest ebb - must be pleasing for Blair. The fact that he did not achieve the 50%-plus of recent opinion polls can be partially explained by the turnout of around 29%.

In general the left's vote was no better - often worse - than in recent years. Again this gives the lie to assertions - most notably by the likes of the Socialist Workers Party - that there has "never been a better time to be a socialist" and we are on the verge of some spontaneous upsurge in workers' anger. If that were the case, surely we could have expected this to be reflected in an increase in support.

It is true that the Scottish Socialist Party achieved some good results in the first-past-the-post ballots - but only in Glasgow, where Tommy Sheridan was elected on the back of a city-wide showing of over seven percent. Comrade Sheridan and three other SSP candidates saved their deposits. But the fact is that the SSP's Glasgow vote made up 40% of its total. It gained 46,635 (1.99%) in the second ballot (party lists) across Scotland. Outside the proletarian capital it received well under two percent everywhere. In Glasgow the SSP is still riding on the wave of comrade Sheridan's popularity as leader of the anti-poll tax revolt - and is no doubt gaining to some degree also from its openly nationalist politics.

The Socialist Labour Party has no more than a couple of dozen members in Scotland, and managed to stand a candidate in just five constituencies, as compared to the SSP's 17. John Milligan won 6.39% in Motherwell

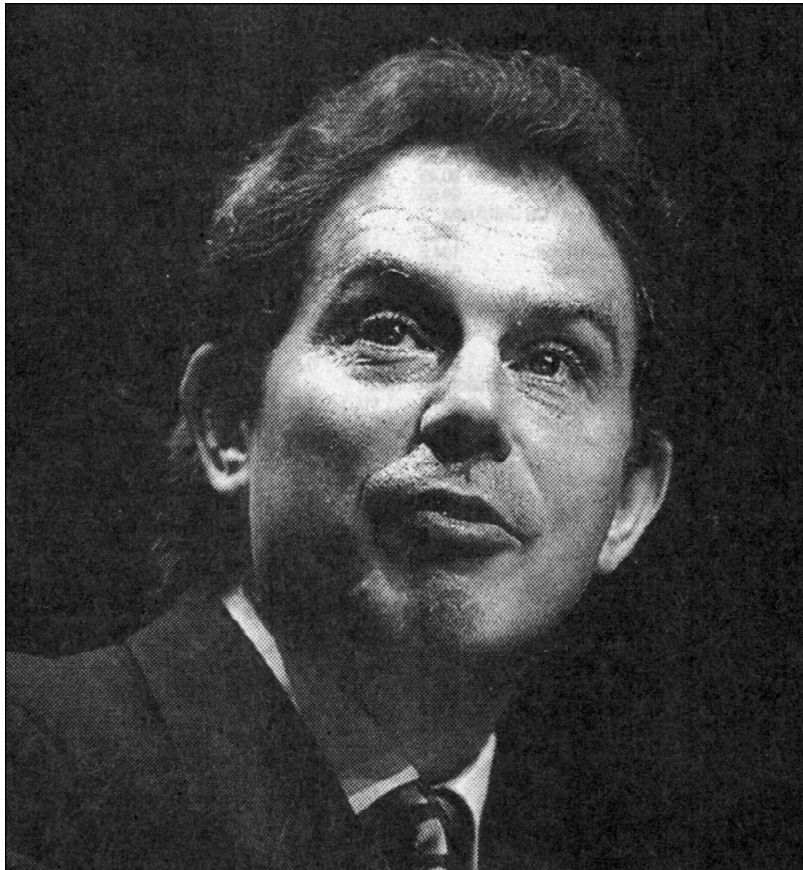
and Wishaw, and former leader of the Labour council Raymond Stead just failed to save Socialist Labour's deposit in Falkirk East. But in Glasgow the SLP result was poor, despite its TV party political broadcast. Remarkably however, outside Glasgow the SLP easily surpassed the SSP, gaining 55,232 votes (2.36% of the total vote) throughout Scotland in the second ballot. Thousands of workers were voting for a party without any organisation, structure or real membership, just on the basis of Arthur Scargill's reputation. In Scotland South the SLP polled 4.36% - not too far from winning a top-up seat - despite being unable to stand a single individual candidate in the region.

In Wales the SLP is in an even more parlous state and could not find the resources in terms of either members or cash to contest any of the constituency seats. But Scargill managed to rustle up the £500 deposit in three out of the five Welsh regions, ensuring the SLP was an option on the second ballot. He received 10,720 votes - over one percent of the total for the whole of Wales.

By contrast the United Socialists could only manage a total of 3,590 votes in the second ballot, despite contesting in four regions - one more than the SLP. The United Socialists - an alliance of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, the SWP and the left nationalist Cymru Goch - stood in nine constituencies. The best result was the 508 votes (2.33%) achieved by Cymru Goch's Maurice Jones in Clwyd South, and the worst was the 263 (1.11%) won by SPEW's Alec Thraves in Swansea West.

The SWP's first electoral sortie for two decades was not a happy one. Its four candidates in Wales polled less than 2,000 votes in total, with only Huw Pudner in Aberavon breaking the two percent barrier. In Scotland its five candidates gained around 2,700 votes, with results varying from Roddy Slorach's 3.41% in Glasgow Cathcart to Scott Sutherland's 0.59% in Aberdeen South. These are certainly no worse than the left has been receiving throughout the 90s, yet for the SWP they are sure to bring its contradictions to the surface.

Flying in the face of reality, its



No support for his war on June 10

'crisis of expectations' theory proclaimed that a real breakthrough was in the offing. Thousands of workers, disappointed and dismayed by New Labour's failure to deliver genuine change, were supposedly looking for the 'socialist alternative'. The split at the top of the SWP is between those who actually believe this fantasy (or claim to) and those who realise that to test it out would precipitate a crisis in its own ranks. Last month, after more than three weeks of paralysis - when the political committee was split between staying in and pulling out of the Socialist Alliance EU electoral bloc - a compromise was reached: auto-Labourism would go, the limited interventions in Scotland and Wales would proceed (it was in any case too late to step back), but the SWP would withdraw from the real test of its 'theory' that a nationwide contest on June 10 would provide.

Because of the SLP - or so the excuse ran - a left intervention was no longer 'viable', especially after Scargill announced that he was to head his list in London. How does this retreat square with the SWP's constant propaganda, that workers

are about to turn to the left in their millions? The results in Scotland and Wales will surely have strengthened the hand of the conservative wing, who have resisted the electoral turn all along the line.

Yet what other approach to elections can the organisation take? The SWP's break from auto-Labourism has gone too far to be reversed, as has New Labour's rightward march. The only way out is for an open, honest reappraisal of its entire strategy - something the SWP is hardly renowned for. Much more likely is the announcement of some new opportunistic twist, leading to yet more internal divisions. Try as it may to keep the lid on this bubbling cauldron, the SWP will sooner or later see it blown off, as one leadership group or another will feel impelled to go public to 'save' the party. It is no exaggeration to say that such a development could shatter the organisation WRP-style.

In the local elections the indications are that the left's showing was varied. SPEW's results were generally low and the breakaway Merseyside Socialists also did poorly in the four council seats it contested. For example, Lesley Mahmood won just

52 votes (1.87%) for the Socialist Alliance in Liverpool's County ward. Comrade Mahmood won 6.5% for Militant Labour in the July 1991 Walton by-election for 'Real Labour'. Since then of course the fortunes of Peter Taaffe's organisation have sharply declined. Last week SPEW was unable to stand anywhere in its former bastion of Merseyside.

The SLP's scattered forces contested in some areas, but the organisation's disarray means that Scargill will not be able to piece together the full picture easily. Its results were also mixed. Scargill's prize recruit, paraded at the November 1998 special congress, Liverpool councillor Jimmy Rutledge, was turfed out of his Everton seat, winning just 44 votes (3.91%), way behind both the victorious rebel Ward Labour and the official Blairite candidates. By contrast the SLP's Dave Flynn won 242 votes (14.13%) in Litherland.

While some SLP candidates are clearly able to muster a personal following, overwhelmingly the reason why Socialist Labour does better than the rest of the left is because of the Scargill name. Its real membership is now down to around 200, yet it can easily get bigger votes than much larger organisations (the SWP claims 8,000 members). Where others lack self-belief, Scargill's egoistic ambition drives him on.

Because class conscious workers feel weak, they can easily turn to what appears strong. They will not follow groups like the SWP or SPEW, who do not even believe in themselves. A would-be labour dictator like Scargill can attract them - even though his organisation has crumbled to virtually nothing. Those who are prepared to give him a clear run on June 10 are conniving at his misleadership. If Scargill gains a foothold, he will lead our class not to self-liberation, but to a national socialist disaster. The left must act to challenge not only the warmongering bourgeois parties, but also the SLP red-brown dead end.

That is why the Communist Party will stand in the June 10 EU elections. Although we have been banned from standing under our own name, our 'Weekly Worker' list will contest where our Socialist Alliance allies have deserted the field. But we need every bit of help that comrades are prepared to give - not least the money to fund a successful campaign in both London and the North West England regions.

Join us and help build the genuine alternative ●

Jim Blackstock



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

Second coming

Dave Norman's last letter (*Weekly Worker* May 6) reminds me that one man's logic is another man's illogic. 'Stop Nato bombing' and 'Nato out of the Balkans' are calls for action by the working class, not pleas to the government. The success of the slogans would be a defeat for Nato by the working class.

But the working class needs more than oppositional slogans if it is to replace the bourgeoisie as the ruling class. We need a programme that leads to the liberation of all humanity. For this reason we cannot allow Nato to hijack the slogan, 'Stop ethnic cleansing'. We are discussing a basic human right. For comrade Norman 'Stop ethnic cleansing' becomes a call for Nato to bomb the Serbs rather than a call on the workers, not excluding those in Yugoslavia, to take a stand against inhumanity.

On the question of how 'Nato out of the Balkans' squares with the slogan, 'Arm the KLA'. Well technically Nato could withdraw from the Balkans and leave the fighting to the Albanians. But that is not the point. The Kosovars have the right to defend themselves against ethnic cleansing with armed force and to enter into deals to ensure military supplies. Otherwise they may as well stay in the refugee camps and wait for the 'second coming' of Christ to deliver them from suffering. Presently they are totally dependent on Nato: armed, they would have a degree of independence.

The CPGB has not described either Iraq or Yugoslavia as imperialist states. They are both reactionary anti-working class regimes. The working class should not struggle to preserve them, but take the opportunity presented by imperialism's attack to liberate themselves from both evils. Imperialism has no convincing programme for peace. Hence its reluctance to commit land forces for fear of being drawn into a quagmire. It is in the social and political arena where communists have answers and Nato has none.

Dave states: "In the present conflict, the principle of self-determination has to be subordinated to the principle of unconditional opposition to global imperialism." The fact is self-determination is part of unconditional opposition to imperialism.

Phil Kent
North London

What conditions?

As it has its own agenda, the KLA is certainly not simply a "tool of imperialism", as Michael Malkin (*Weekly Worker* May 6) persistently points out in his endeavour to defend the CPGB's slogan, 'Arm the KLA'.

Malkin insists that the KLA has the absolute right to "get military aid where and when they can", including, of course, from Nato. He then refers to the Provisional IRA acquiring arms from Libya and money from the Boston Irish, as though the former, an actual target of imperialism, and the latter can be equated with global imperialism, and forgetting that the IRA was struggling for the unity of Ireland against a major imperialist power.

It is not, however, just a matter of the KLA trying to acquire arms from Nato. It has consciously and deliberately become the military ally of Nato within Yugoslavia. That process began when the Kosovar Albanians signed the imperialist Rambouillet Accord in the full knowledge that it required the Yugoslav government to relinquish all claims to sovereignty over the whole of its own territory. In signing the accord, the Albanian Kosovars, in effect, signed the order for the Nato war machine to go into action. The position of the KLA itself

was summed up at a recent press conference by one of its leaders who stated that:

"The things we urgently want to ask Nato for are modern arms supplies for the KLA. At the same time, we are asking Nato to start using the Apache helicopters to strike the Serbian forces, and for ground troops to go with us together into Kosova. This is why we are asking for arms for the KLA [before a Nato ground offensive], so that casualties among Nato ground troops will be as low as possible."

In the face of this, Michael Malkin argues that the CPGB's "support for the KLA's military operations (as distinct from the political cause of Kosovar self-determination)" is conditional. Where are the CPGB's conditions? Malkin vaguely suggests a future, possible condition. If Nato occupies Kosova following a successful ground offensive and "the KLA indulges in ethnic cleansing on its own account, then it would clearly cease to merit support as a force for Kosovar liberation". He continues that it is not too difficult to foresee other contingencies in which the KLA would forfeit the critical support of communists.

Malkin remains blind to the fact that the condition for denying support to the KLA already exists, in its military alliance with Nato, an alliance which began with its political activation at Rambouillet.

Dave Norman
West London

Post-Fordist

I note that your left-bashing correspondent, Eddie Ford, has at last revealed his political trajectory. In his article, 'Guns, bombs and workers' control' (*Weekly Worker* May 6), he declares his view that it is "most unlikely that any effective opposition to Blairite ideology will come from the revolutionary left as it is presently constituted".

This could have been lifted straight from the pronouncements that poured forth from Frank Furedi and Mick Hulme during their Revolutionary Communist Party-cum-Living Marxism-cum-LM journey into the world of 'humanist' pure criticism. Both are now self-confessed non-Marxists and it seems certain that comrade Ford is right behind them. I await with anticipation his proposals for a demarcatory renaming of the *Weekly Worker* - *WW*? Or perhaps *Critical Criticism*?

If effective opposition to Blairite ideology will not come from the revolutionary left, then where will it come from? Since the revolutionary left is the advanced section of the working class, then I have to presume that comrade Ford thinks that such opposition can only come from outside the working class, or just maybe from some elitist sect that deliberately sets itself apart from the workers' movement.

There is also the point that opposition can only be effective when it is built around action. Since comrade Ford decries the left's "shouting of anti-racist slogans from the sidelines", I wonder what, if any, slogans he would have his ideological opposition shouting: anti-anti-racist ones?

John Pearson
Manchester

Peace pledge

In her article, 'Peace or class war' (April 22), Mary Godwin writes: "In the 1930s SWP-type pacifism was a mass movement in Britain, and millions signed the pledge of the Peace Pledge Union." Mary Godwin may have her own quarrel with the SWP, for whom I hold no brief, but it is irrelevant and misleading to drag the Peace Pledge Union into it.

I am not aware that the SWP has ever claimed to profess pacifism and, whatever is meant by 'SWP-type pacifism', it has nothing to do with the Peace Pledge Union, which since its founding in 1934 has professed unequivocal pacifism - the total rejection of war, whatever the alleged cause, whatever the proposed means. Members of the PPU came from a variety of backgrounds - religious, humanitarian and political - but the politics of the latter group were those of the ILP or the Labour Party. George Lansbury, indeed, after being ousted from the leadership of the Labour Party (in what Mary Godwin calls a 'conference coup'), became first president of the PPU. Lansbury and other members of the Parliamentary Pacifist Group, who worked closely with the PPU, could never be described as 'quasi-pacifists', as Mary Godwin terms those associated with the Committee for Peace in the Balkans.

As a matter of record, I would also point out that it was not "millions" who signed the Peace Pledge, but rather 140,000 between 1934 and 1940. Mary Godwin is also wrong in stating that the 1935 'peace ballot' was sponsored by the League of Nations - it was sponsored by the League of Nations Union, the equivalent of the United Nations Association; and she is wrong again in asserting that, of the 11 million who took part in the ballot, "the overwhelming majority voted against war" - 6.75 million voted for 'military sanctions', the euphemism of the day for war.

On Mary Godwin's protestation of the virtue of war - "Wars produce crises which can lead to social revolution" - I would simply answer with the words of another of the PPU's founder members, Aldous Huxley, arguing against those who believe that their ends are so good that they are justified in using the worst means to achieve them: "The more violence, the less revolution".

William Hetherington
Honorary archivist
Peace Pledge Union

Challenge

Six candidates representing the striking careworkers stood as Defend Public Services in last week's Tameside council elections. They took about 10% of the vote and certainly had the council worried. The comments against the women in the campaign by the other groups standing, such as 'they are only a crazy bunch of women' and 'they will get less than 50 votes' vanished in the air. In fact none of the women came last in their wards and a number beat the Liberals and the People's Alliance (disenchanted ex-Labour councillors).

The best result was Pat Hughes, who took 316 votes and came second in the St Peters Ward, beating three other candidates. Standing against the council leader's wife, Joan Ashton took 268 votes. Rose(mary) Young took 267 votes, Sheila Carpenter took 238 votes, Liz Taylor took 189 votes and Hazel O'Neill took 108 votes.

The vote was just the tip of the iceberg and did not reflect the extent of the support the candidates had in the area. It was a brave stance to make, but now it needs to be developed. A new political organisation needs to come out of this.

In a social gathering after the elections Noel Pine pointed out that all the candidates except the Labour Party ones had expressed, opportunistically, their opposition to the housing transfer which the council is proposing. Hazel O'Neill expressed the deeply felt gratitude of the women to all those who had supported them, especially their husbands, children, the Tameside strike support group and all those who had given their time and effort. She added without the strike

support group the strike would not have lasted as long as it has.

The issues in the Tameside election were council services. Labour Party propaganda made it clear that, for example, there would be no improvements in council houses repairs for many years unless a trust (semi-privatisation) was set up to look after the housing. The Labour council has set or is setting in motion the privatisation, in one way or another, of care, the entire housing stock, leisure services and education. To do this it needs to remove accountability, which was another strong point in the campaign. The council leader announced just days before the election that there would be no council committees in future. The council will be run by a small executive group of about 10 councillors. The Labour group identified completely with Tony Blair's policies and clearly has the green light from the central government.

One comment which kept on coming up last night was "If this is what we can do in six weeks, imagine what we can do in a year". Husbands and other strikers expressed also their desire to stand next year.

The development in Tameside shows how wrong the groups were who pulled away from standing candidates in a Socialist Alliance slate in the Euro elections. In particular the SWP, who were the first to pull away, did not consider that a Tameside striker standing in the slate would

carry much weight - just imagine the political development in Tameside and the surrounding areas if the campaign for the strike and to defend public services now continued in the Euro elections. Some of the strikers did ask exactly what happened to it. Some kind of Defend Public Services/Socialist Alliance should emerge as a permanent body in Tameside after all this.

The candidates want to extend their thanks to all those who helped in the campaign but were not able to be with them last night. They are still £200 short of what they need for the election and ask if anyone can send a donation they would very much appreciate it.

The strike support group meets every Monday night in the Station pub, Ashton under Lyne.

Martin Ralph
Tameside strike support group

Appreciated

We receive regular copies of the *Weekly Worker* which is widely read here by the POWs, and the copies you send are much appreciated - keep up the good fight.

Rory McCallan
Long Kesh

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 * **Mark Fischer** on the fragmentation of Yugoslavia * **Dave Craig** on the bourgeois revolution * **Marion Haldane** on GMOs * **Peter Manson** on 'institutional racism'

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

Warning bells

After last week's good start towards our target for May, things appeared to have slowed alarmingly - with only £65 in this week's mailbag.

This ought to set warning bells ringing. Comrades, the £400 we call for every month is not some add-on extra. It is the bare minimum we need to ensure that the *Weekly Worker* not only comes out every

week, but continues to expand its influence.

Thanks this week go to comrades PS (£25), DG (£15) and AS (£15) for their much needed help. Our May total stands at £172 ●

Robbie Rix

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

Devolution and nationalism

English backlash?

As expected, Labour emerged as the biggest party in both the Scottish and Welsh devolution elections last week. While Blair hoped to win an overall majority, especially in Wales, ironically the fact that he will now be forced to work as a minority government with the aid of unofficial coalition partners - not only the Liberal Democrats, but the nationalists - will not be too much of a disappointment.

After all, had Blair wanted to ensure an exclusively Labour administrations, he would not have introduced a proportional element into the electoral system for the new bodies. Both PR and coalition politics herald the kind of arrangement envisaged for Westminster itself. Under Blair's constitutional revolution from above, the centre - with New Labour at its heart - will hold permanent sway.

The Hague Tories will be consigned to a powerless rump and the Conservative left wing continually tempted to split away. It is no coincidence that PR for local elections is also on the table as a Labour bargaining chip in its negotiations with the Lib Dems over the programmes of both the Scottish and Welsh administrations.

Thus, while Blair aims to permanently sideline the Tories, paradoxically the means used at least ensures they will retain some re-

sidual representation. Nevertheless the Conservative vote in Scotland dropped to just 16% last week - its lowest ever - yet the top-up, second-ballot system ensured that 18 Tory MSPs were elected, despite the party's failure to win a single constituency seat. In Wales the Tories lost a further four percent, compared to the 1997 general election, yet saw six members returned (five in the second ballot).

Although New Labour also lost ground, Blair will undoubtedly be pleased that the Tories lost more. So long as the nationalist surge represents no more than a mid-term blip, he is counting on being able to strengthen the UK constitutional monarchy, while his position at the next general election will be secure. The main Conservative opposition, despite gaining a half respectable vote in the local elections, looks in no shape to pose any threat.

The success of Dennis Canavan, who won the Falkirk West seat with a huge 55% majority, humiliating the official Labour candidate, was a blow that could have been avoided. However, the loss of the Labour left as a whole, in a general realignment of politics, would be more than compensated for by the new allies Blair hopes to gain from the right, in the shape of Lib-Dem coalition partners, and perhaps the Heseltine-Clarke Tories too.

Blair believes that he has beaten

the left for good and, like the Tories, the working class as a movement is permanently marginalised. Plaid Cymru's victories in the Welsh valleys, where Labour support dropped an incredible 29 points, would no doubt have confirmed in Blair's mind that the old certainties are dissolving. For the revolutionary left itself the fact that so many Welsh workers have rejected what they traditionally viewed as their party, only to turn to the nationalists, is a deeply contradictory development.

As for the Tories, a germ of an alternative strategy is starting to emerge. The slight percentage increase in support for the party, compared to 1997, gives Hague a breathing space after the recent private-public finance furore. But, more importantly, devolution has opened up new opportunities. While in Scotland and Wales the Tories seem to face extinction, in the rest of the country a section of the Conservatives is already talking the language of English nationalism. *De facto* the Tories are now the English National Party.

Philip Johnson, the home affairs editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, pointed to the disparity between government spending in England and Scotland: "Every Scottish resident gets 19% more public money than the United Kingdom average, and 24% more than people in England" (May 8). He added: "The dis-

parity in spending *per capita* between north and south of the border will come under scrutiny at a time when Scotland has become more prosperous than many of the English regions that receive proportionately less money."

Regarding the possibility that students in Scotland may not have to pay the same tuition fees as those elsewhere in the UK, Johnson stated: "English MPs and voters will start to ask serious questions as to why their Scottish counterparts at Westminster can vote on education matters affecting England when they are not even responsible for the policy in their own constituency." David Davis, Tory MP for Haltemprice and Howden, was reported as saying: "It would be frankly disgraceful if this sort of discrimination continued against other parts of the UK."

Johnson quoted other "Tory MPs, who are ready to mount a campaign for an English parliament with the same powers as Scotland" - as though the English cannot exercise self-determination within the UK state. It is entirely possible that Hague himself may seek salvation and a niche through such politics.

This would represent a new and potentially dangerous development. A Tory-inspired English nationalism would be utterly reactionary ●

Alan Fox

Left results

Scottish parliament

Scottish Socialist Party		
Glasgow Pollok Tommy Sheridan	5,611	21.51%
Glasgow Shettleston Rosie Kane	1,640	7.99%
Glasgow Baillieston Jim McVicar	1,864	7.86%
Glasgow Maryhill Gordon Scott	1,439	6.25%
Glasgow Kelvin Heather Ritchie	1,375	4.85%
Glasgow Govan Charlie McCarthy	1,275	4.83%
Glasgow Springburn Jimmy Friel	1,141	4.68%
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth Kenny McEwan	1,116	3.65%
Paisley North Fiona Macdonald	1,007	3.63%
Glasgow Anniesland Ann Lynch	1,000	3.51%
Dundee West Jimmy McFarlane	1,010	3.47%
Greenock and Inverclyde Dave Landels	857	2.99%
Glasgow Rutherglen Bill Bonnar	832	2.67%
Edinburgh North and Leith Ron Brown	907	2.48%
Edinburgh Central Kevin Williamson	830	2.22%
Aberdeen Central Andrew Cumbers	523	1.97%
Edinburgh East and Musselburgh Derrick White	697	1.88%
Dundee East Harvey Duke	530	1.67%
Socialist Labour Party		
Motherwell and Wishaw John Milligan	1,941	6.39%
Falkirk East Raymond Stead	1,643	4.67%
Hamilton North and Bellshill Kathy McGavigan	1,064	3.41%
Glasgow Rutherglen Jim Nisbet	481	1.66%
Glasgow Anniesland Edward Boyd	139	0.49%
Socialist Workers Party		
Glasgow Cathcart Roddy Slorach	920	3.41%
Paisley South Jackie Forrest	673	2.20%

Renfrewshire West Pat Clark	476	1.40%
Edinburgh South Willie Black	482	1.20%
Aberdeen South Scott Sutherland	206	0.59%
Communist Party of Britain		
Glasgow Govan John Foster	190	0.72%
Party lists		
Scottish Socialist Party		
Glasgow	18,581	7.25%
Highlands and Islands	1,770	0.88%
Lothians	5,237	1.58%
Scotland Central	5,739	1.74%
Scotland Mid and Fife	3,044	1.00%
Scotland North East	3,016	1.06%
Scotland South	3,304	1.04%
Scotland West	5,944	1.91%
Total vote	46,635	(1.99%)
Socialist Labour Party		
Glasgow	4,391	1.71%
Highlands and Islands	2,808	1.39%
Lothians	10,895	3.30%
Scotland Central	10,956	3.32%
Scotland Mid and Fife	4,266	1.40%
Scotland North East	3,557	1.25%
Scotland South	13,887	4.36%
Scotland West	4,472	1.44%
Total vote	55,232	(2.36%)
Communist Party of Britain		
Glasgow	521	0.20%
Socialist Party of Great Britain		
Glasgow	309	0.12%
Lothians	388	0.12%
Welsh assembly		
United Socialists		
Clwyd South Maurice Jones	508	2.33%

Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney Mike Jenkins (Cymru Goch)	580	2.31%
Aberavon Huw Pudner (SWP)	517	2.22%
Islwyn Ian Thomas (SWP)	475	1.99%
Neath Nick Duncan (SWP)	519	1.93%
Cardiff South and Penarth Dave Bartlett (SPEW)	355	1.54%
Caerphilly Tim Richards (Cymru Goch)	412	1.45%
Cardiff Central Julian Goss (SWP)	338	1.31%
Swansea West Alec Thraves (SPEW)	263	1.11%
Communist Party of Britain		
Alyn and Deeside Glyn Davies	329	1.73%
Pontypridd Robert Griffiths	280	0.95%
Local socialist		
Torfaen Stephen Smith	839	3.51%
Party lists		
United Socialists		
South Wales Central	602	0.28%
South Wales East	903	0.45%
South Wales West	1,257	0.75%
Wales Mid and West	not on list	
Wales North	828	0.38%
Total vote	3,590	(0.35%)
Socialist Labour Party		
South Wales Central	2,822	1.31%
South Wales East	4,879	2.41%
South Wales West	not on list	
Wales Mid and West	3,019	1.38%
Wales North	not on list	
Total vote	10,720	(1.05%)
Communist Party of Britain		
South Wales Central	652	0.30%
Wales North	714	0.33%

action

■ CPGB seminars

London: Sunday May 16, 5pm - 'Patterns of revolution and how not to quote Marx', using Hal Draper's *Karl Marx's Theory of revolution* Vol 2 as a study guide.
Sunday May 23, 5pm - 'Rosa Luxemburg's theory of underconsumption', using Simon Clarke's *Marx's theory of crisis* as a study guide.
Call 0181-459 7146 for details.

Manchester: Monday May 24, 7.30pm - Special seminar: 'Ideology in the Soviet Union'.
Call 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-3 pm. 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).

■ Freedom for Ocalan!

Demonstration on Saturday May 15: Assemble 1pm in Malet Street, WC1, Rally in Trafalgar Square at 3pm.

■ Is Britain breaking up?

Debate between CPGB and AWL - Thursday May 20, 7.30pm. Queen's Head pub, Acton Street (near Kings Cross).

■ Resist racist attacks

Public meeting of the Peace Movement Policy Forum, with Suresh Grover from the Stephen Lawrence Family Campaign - Thursday May 20, 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square.

■ Nato out of the Balkans

Demonstration starts at the main gate of the Fairford US air base in Gloucestershire, 10 miles north of Swindon - Sunday May 23, 2pm.

■ Stop the bombing

Activities organised by the Committee for Peace in the Balkans
Rally: 'Call for truth from the ministry of lies' - Thursday, May 20, 6.30pm at the ministry of defence, Whitehall, SW1.
Benefit Concert: Sunday May 23, 7.30pm in Hackney Empire, Mare Street. With Jeremy Hardy, Mark Steele, Germaine Greer. £8/£6 concessions.

National demonstration: Saturday June 5. Assemble 1.30pm, Victoria Embankment.

Picket: Every Thursday, 6-7pm, Downing Street.

Student committee: Every Wednesday, 6pm, room S16, Institute of Education SU, Bedford Way (contact 0976-374 146).

■ 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.

■ 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.

Over the last couple of months or so the *Weekly Worker* has carried an extensive exchange on the issue of national self-determination and its place in the communist programme. Naturally, given events in the Balkans and Nato's air war against Serbia, this has been generated by, and to a considerable degree centres on, the Kosova question. Nevertheless it also encompasses the United Kingdom and involves criticism of the CPGB's demand for a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales.

Numerous articles and letters have outlined often sharply conflictive positions. Inevitably the language and manner of expression has on occasion been robust. As one who earnestly believes that a rational, but unfettered dialogue provides the sure road to truth and enlightenment, I have no problem here. Yet, whatever the polemical style, or immediate aim, of this or that writer, underlying the whole controversy is the challenge to spontaneous economism - no matter how muscle-bound in its leftism - represented by the politics of revolutionary democracy. Nowadays this finds its highest expression in the CPGB's *Draft programme*.

Tom Delargy, of the Scottish Socialist Party, articulates the prejudices the economists in his article, "What sort of federal republic?" (*Weekly Worker* April 15). The comrade holds a generally correct position when it comes to Kosova. Unfortunately this owes more to healthy gut reaction against the horrors inflicted on this tiny nation by Slobodan Milosevic's Socialist Party regime than commitment to revolutionary democracy and the method of Marxism. Indeed in his polemic by proxy with his silent partners in the Campaign for a Federal Republic - an SSP factional platform - the comrade actually turns to Jack Conrad and rhetorically asks him to supply an answer to the question - "What is revolutionary democracy?"

How to reply? We will begin by recapitulating comrade Delargy's argument against what he imagines revolutionary democracy to be. In so doing I will of necessity discuss the politics of Marx and Engels, and then turn to the history of Bolshevism. Like Marx and Engels before them, the Bolsheviks described themselves as revolutionary democrats. A partisan grasp of Bolshevism also allows us to show where comrade Delargy is blinkered by the myths of Trotskyism.

Undoubtedly all this is germane to the main subject at hand. That is economism and how it disarms the working class programmatically. Bolshevism in particular formed itself through unremitting struggle, not only against the economists or strikists of the trade unionist variety but against the 'imperialist economists'. Beating the drum of the new socialist epoch they famously downplayed or dismissed the political fight for democracy under capitalism, in particular when it came to championing the right of nations to self-determination. The national question has taken on new forms in the post-colonial, post-Cold War world. Nevertheless Bolshevism, for all its faults and limitations, is far from outdated. Its advocacy of the fullest democracy under capitalism and steadfast stand on the right of nations to self-determination retain their relevance. Having explored this in some detail in the next part of my article, I will go on to discuss the criticisms of those such as comrade Sandy McBurney and explain our revolutionary democratic approach to the conquest of socialism by the working class and how the communist programme differs from the sorry incoherence of economism.

What then of comrade Delargy? Our friend seems convinced that revolutionary democracy is a 666-type mark characteristic of Kautskyism: ie,

Spontaneous economism and the challenge of revolutionary democracy - part one

Marxism and the democratic republic

it is "above-class democracy". That cardinal sin no doubt explains why he poses the following query: "Under revolutionary democracy who is the ruling class?" It "cannot be the working class", he reasons. "Otherwise, there would be no sense in positing it as a separate stage prior to workers' power."

This conclusion in turn explains why comrade Delargy wheels out that old warhorse *The proletarian revolution and the renegade Kautsky*. The comrade knits together a long quote from Lenin to the effect that "Pure democracy" is the mendacious phrase of the liberal who wants to fool the workers" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 28, Moscow 1977, p242). Revolutionary democracy, in the credo of comrade Delargy, presumably originates with Karl Kautsky after his break with Marxism, but was also swallowed by 'old' Bolsheviks, above all Zinoviev and Kamenev, "who proposed transforming dual power (the coexistence of workers' councils alongside a bourgeois government) into a constitutionally stable entity". This "centrist project", says comrade Delargy, "was and remains an objectively counter-revolutionary project" (*Weekly Worker* April 15).

There is a rather thorny problem. The comrade appears blissfully unaware that Marx and Engels were revolutionary democrats before they became communists; and that then on after they remained revolutionary democrats till the end of their days. Revolutionary democracy is no sneaky code word invented by revisionists as a cynical cover for capitulation before bourgeois democracy. On the contrary it describes the method required by the working class itself, if it is to liberate itself, and in the process the whole of humanity.

Neither socialism nor communism can be delivered from on high. Not by a leftwing government in Edinburgh or Westminster, nor by a benign despot like Castro, nor a labour dictator such as Arthur Scargill. Communist revolutionary democrats therefore distinguish themselves from other socialisms - elitist schools of socialism and communism such as bureaucratic socialism, military socialism, bourgeois socialism, critical-utopian communism, etc. We proletarian communists do not set ourselves apart from the working class, but seek at all times to show what is in the general interest of the movement. That can be summed up as fighting at every turn of events to maximise democracy: ie, power and control from below - under capitalism (and then under socialism). Only in this way, from below, can the goal of communism be realised. The workers make themselves into a universal class through taking the lead in the struggle to socialise democracy.

That concern for creating the most fertile conditions for mass initiative explicitly informs the platform of the Communist Party in Germany in 1848. Its 'Demands', written jointly by Marx and Engels, were what we would nowadays designate a minimum programme. For the sake of comrade Delargy it is well worth summarising. In the first place we find that "whole of Germany shall be declared a single

and indivisible republic" (1). Not, it should be noted, a *socialist* republic. Comrade Delargy, and others with a similar outlook, should think long and hard about that. Or were Marx and Engels renegades, "bowing" to bourgeois or pure democracy and thereby anticipating their wayward pupil, Karl Kautsky?

The 'Demands' go on to call for universal male suffrage (2); the "universal arming of the people" (3); "free" legal services (5); measures to aid the peasantry and small tenant farmers (6,7,8); "a state bank" (10); nationalisation of the "means of transport" (11); the "complete separation of church and state" (13); curbs on the right of inheritance (14); a steeply graduated income tax and "abolition of taxes on articles of consumption" (15); "state guarantees" for those who are "incapacitated for work" (16); and finally "universal free education" (17).

The short document concludes that it is in the interests of the German proletariat, petty bourgeoisie and small peasants "to support these demands": "Only by the realisation of these demands will the millions in Germany, who have hitherto been exploited by a handful of persons ... win the rights and attain to that power to which they are entitled as the producers of all wealth" (K Marx, F Engels *MECW* Vol 7, Moscow 1977, pp3-7).

Evidently Marx and Engels considered the republican demand for the abolition of the fragmented monarchy system in Germany a matter of the utmost importance. True, the realisation of their minimum programme presented in the 'Demands' was not within itself to transcend the bounds of bourgeois civil society. Rather it was to prepare the working class for higher tasks. Something that would be ensured by making the revolution permanent. In the mean time, during the period of transition, what was to replace the monarchy? As I have shown, not necessarily the socialist republic. The exact class content of the state is left open-ended. But its form is unmistakable. It is the democratic republic based on the "sovereignty of the German people". Here, as Engels explained in the launch issue of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, was the organ of the anti-monarchist revolution won by "fighting in the streets of almost all the cities and towns of the country, and especially the barricades of Vienna and Berlin" (F Engels *MECW* Vol 7, Moscow 1977, p16).

There is another thorny problem for comrade Delargy. The comrade is no innocent. He is intelligent and reasonably well read. Somewhere in the back of his brain lodges the memory that Lenin and the Bolsheviks called themselves revolutionary democrats. No matter. As a good Trotskyite comrade Delargy knows, or believes he knows, that he is on firm ground. Lenin broke from 'old' Bolshevism and its 'revolutionary democracy' and converted to Trotskyism. We can leave our friend to repeat his comforting fairy story:

"It is a measure of Lenin's genius that although he and his party entered the 1917 revolution armed with

a completely inadequate programme it took him no time at all to see the necessity of embracing Trotsky's, and it took him only a few weeks before winning the majority of his party. Lenin and Trotsky were never in any doubt as to which class would lead the revolution. What Lenin did fail to see until after February 1917 was that a tiny minority of the Russian population, the working class, could take state power and, backed by the immense peasantry (a non-socialistic, rural petty bourgeois class), retain it for long enough to be rescued by a victorious European working class, whose revolution the Russian Revolution could help precipitate" (*Weekly Worker* April 15).

Now we move onto comrade Delargy's dismissal of the modern-day revolutionary democracy advocated by the CPGB, which he equates with the goal of a *bourgeois* republic. "Lenin," he says, "may have been slower than Trotsky in seeing this potential in backward Russia." But he was "never in any doubt that the revolution in Britain (a country where the working class formed the overwhelming majority) would put the working class into the driving seat". In other words there is no need to fight for a republic under capitalism: ie, under today's social conditions. Presumably to do so is Kautskyism. Comrade Delargy's federal republic, is, you see, a federal *socialist* republic (logically he should reject working class demands for higher pay on the ground that socialists are for the abolition of the system of wage labour).

Economism is always very bold when it comes to the future. Very timid when it comes to today. The "working class in power in Britain (as in Russia)", comrade Delargy informs us - as if we did not know and constantly proclaim it - "would not be content with stopping with the overthrow of the monarchy and an unelected second chamber". "Of course" these would go, the comrade declares. But their "overthrow" would not "represent the pinnacle of the revolutionary movement": merely "some of the least important aspects of it" (*Weekly Worker* April 15).

There is a lot to disentangle. We can best begin with Trotsky. He was a great revolutionary. But his latter-day followers like comrade Delargy do him a grave disservice by lionising his pre-1917 role. In essence Trotsky took a centrist, "conciliationist" position from 1903 until May 1917, when he returned from the USA and placed himself "at the disposal of the Bolshevik Party". Trotsky later maintained that until then his "revolutionary ideas or proposals amounted to nothing but 'phrases'". Lenin on the other hand carried out "the only truly revolutionary work". That was, a contrite Trotsky argues, "work that helped the party take shape and grow stronger" (L Trotsky *The challenge of the Left Opposition: 1923-25* New York 1980, pp265, 267). Was Trotsky right? Absolutely!

Why does comrade Delargy pretend that it was Lenin who underwent a Trotskyite conversion in 1917, and not Trotsky who underwent a Leninite conversion? As we have seen from the passages reproduced

above, basically it stems from the comrade's economistic approach to present-day politics. Democratic questions are the "least important aspects", if not ghastly traps to be avoided. Crudely put, the role of revolutionaries in a country like the kingdom of Scotland is twofold. In the here and now support and give a socialist coloration to bread-and-butter issues like the minimum wage, cuts and trade union rights. That is practical politics, which in spite of the much vaunted 'transitional' claims of the Trotskyites, remain firmly within the narrow horizon of the monarchy system. Then in the indefinite future lies the socialist millennium. As there is no revolutionary situation in Britain, that resides in the realm of propaganda.

The minimum or immediate demand for a federal republic advanced by the CPGB - which enshrines the democratic unity of the working class in Britain - has no place in comrade Delargy's world view. The only republic he is willing to countenance is the *socialist* republic. Consistently the comrade also implies that the workers' state would abolish the unelected second chamber. Put another way, however, these "least important" demands will have to wait till the revolution before they can be realised. Up to the dawn of the new order the left should *critically* operate under the constitutional monarchy system and ignore siren calls for a democratic republic. The role of the left is to dream of the future and in the practical world support and encourage strikes and other such economic struggles. Comrade Delargy's anti-monarchism is therefore platonic, not revolutionary.

Lenin is very inconvenient for comrade Delargy. Lenin did after all stress the necessity for working class hegemony in the struggle for a republic in Russia. Unlike comrade Delargy, for Lenin the "overthrow of the monarchy" was far from unimportant. It was a crucial strategic aim. Unless the workers took the lead against the tsarist system there could be no hope of a revolutionary seizure of power.

In contrast, because he was anti-Lenin, a caricatured pre-1917 Trotsky serves comrade Delargy's economism admirably. Lenin might have been right and Trotsky wrong about building the Party. But Trotsky was right and Lenin was wrong about the Russian Revolution. So says our comrade Delargy.

As we have read, comrade Delargy insists that in order to lead the October Revolution, Lenin had to embrace Trotsky's programme and abandon his "completely inadequate programme" of revolutionary democracy. Lenin, it should be said, advocated what he might have called a bourgeois revolution *sui generis*, in which the role of the revolutionary government of the Jacobin type (clearing the medieval barriers to capitalist development) would be played by the 'democratic dictatorship'. Full socialism only becomes materially possible after a whole period of economic development.

Comrade Delargy ridicules Lenin's demand for the revolutionary democratic dictatorship - ie, rule - of the proletariat and peasantry. His whole

account is disjointed. Nevertheless the comrade sings from the Trotskyite songbook. So it takes no effort to present the comrade's version of Lenin's theory. He indignantly complains that Lenin - and modern-day Leninists - posit "a separate stage prior to workers' power" (*Weekly Worker* April 15). Such a 'theory of stages' is by definition a cardinal sin for any self-respecting Trotskyite. How was this theory supposed to work in Russia?

First stage, there would be an anti-tsarist revolution. It could not be led by the bourgeoisie. That class, said Lenin, was too cowardly and compromised with the autocracy. The proletariat would have to substitute and lead the peasant millions and the 'bourgeois democratic revolution'. However, though carried out in a novel way, the revolution would only bring socialism nearer by laying the basis for capitalist development under democratic conditions. Once that capitalist stage had been completed, the working class could think about putting forward its own class agenda and preparing for the second, socialist, revolution. The 'democratic dictatorship' is, for comrade Delargy, synonymous with bourgeois freedom and bourgeois progress and thus with a "bourgeois republic".

Actually the real theory of *artificial* stages in Russia was advocated by the Mensheviks. Their analysis flowed from crude historical analogies and was thus very superficial. The only difference with the above sketch being that the 'bourgeois revolution' would necessarily be finished by the bourgeoisie. The proletariat had to support the bourgeoisie in carrying through its predetermined historic mission. That could involve independent militant action. However, in the event that a popular revolution proved successful in Russia, the proletariat puts the bourgeoisie in power. Obeying the 'laws of history', it then patiently waits in the wings, as a "party of extreme opposition", until capitalism has been fully developed and the conditions created for socialism. For Mensheviks then, there would have to be two revolutions in Russia. One bourgeois with a bourgeois state. The other, coming a long time after, was socialist, with a socialist state. The two are separated by a definite historical stage and crucially by distinct and antagonistically opposed regimes.

Lenin explicitly rejected this mechanical schema. His theory was based on Marx's permanent revolution. As we have said, Lenin considered the bourgeoisie in Russia counterrevolutionary. As a class it could not even begin the 'bourgeois revolution'. The workers would have to take the initiative in overthrowing tsarism at the "head of the whole people, and particularly the peasantry". The main *political* slogans of the Bolsheviks were 'Abolish the monarchy' and 'For the democratic republic'.

If their popular uprising proved successful - and remained under proletarian hegemony - the revolutionary dictatorship (rule) of the proletariat and peasantry would *not* meekly make way for the bourgeoisie. Yes, capitalism would be "strengthened": ie, allowed to develop. But there would be strict limitations. Not only an eight-hour day, trade union rights and complete political liberty, but an "armed proletariat" in possession of *state power*. The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry would wage a "relentless struggle against all counterrevolutionary attempts", not least from the bourgeoisie.

Such a hybrid regime could not survive in isolation. It would, and must, act to "rouse" the European socialist revolution. The proletariat of advanced Europe would in turn help Russia move to socialism (which requires definite material conditions in

terms of the development of the productive forces). Inevitably there would, with the course of material progress, be a differentiation between the proletariat and the peasantry. But not necessarily a specifically *socialist* revolution: ie, the violent overthrow of the state in Russia.

There would *not* be a democratic or bourgeois stage and then a socialist stage at the level of regime. Democratic and socialist tasks are distinct and premised on different material, social and political conditions. But particular elements interweave. The revolution could, given the right internal and external conditions, proceed *uninterruptedly* from democratic to socialist tasks through the proletariat fighting not only from below, but from above: ie, from a salient of state power. The revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat thereby peacefully grows over into the dictatorship of the proletariat, assuming internal proletarian hegemony and external proletarian aid from a socialist Europe. Here is Lenin's *real* theory elaborated in his pamphlet *Two tactics of social democracy in the democratic revolution* (see VI Lenin *CW* Vol 9, Moscow 1977, pp15-130). It is readily available, easily checked and not difficult to grasp. So why does comrade Delargy mischievously paint Lenin in the false colours of Menshevism?

What of Trotsky, whose programme was so superior compared with Lenin's "completely inadequate" one? Comrade Delargy takes it for granted that it was qualitatively different, compared to Lenin's. Actually an objective observer can only but be struck by the remarkable similarity. In his *Results and prospects*, published in 1906, Trotsky explained his application of Marx's theory to Russia. Along with Lenin he dismissed any revolutionary potential of the bourgeoisie. The working class had to form a revolutionary government "as the leading force". They would do so in "alliance with the peasantry". But, given the circumstances of Russia, the fact of proletarian state power would destroy the "borderline between the minimum and maximum programme: that is to say, it places collectivism on the order of the day". However, one should not interpret such a formulation to mean Trotsky entertained the conceit of a backward and isolated Russia as ripe for socialism. No communist then believed any such thing. Trotsky, to his credit, remained implacably hostile to "national socialism" till his untimely death in 1940 (L Trotsky *The permanent revolution* New York 1978, p159). So Trotsky understood that the revolution would have to be permanent, or uninterrupted, if the working class in Russia was not to be "crushed". European revolution was vital. Suffice to say, the differences with Lenin's theory are those of nuance.

True, in *Results and prospects* and subsequent works, and in Lenin's so-called replies, there was a very unrewarding polemic between the two men. Factional interests produced more heat than light in both cases. Trotsky dismissed out of hand any suggestion of a "special form of the proletarian dictatorship in the bourgeois revolution". He was intent on rubbishing and equating both the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. Lenin in turn attacked Trotsky for "underestimating" the peasantry by raising the slogan, 'Not a tsar's government, but a workers' government'.

On the basis of such evidence Trotsky is no doubt right when he concludes that Lenin had "never read my basic work". The above slogan was proclaimed not by Trotsky, but his (then) friend and collaborator, Parvus. "Never did Lenin anywhere analyse or quote," says Trotsky, "even in passing, *Results and prospects*" (L Trotsky *The permanent revolution* New York 1978, p166). He

goes on to cite the "solidarity" that existed between himself and the Bolsheviks during and immediately after the 1905 revolution. And for those who demonise the term 'stage' and belittle the pre-1917 Lenin, Trotsky's boast that he "formulated the tasks of the successive stages of the revolution in exactly the same manner as Lenin" should provide them with food for thought (*ibid* p168). The same can be said for Trotsky's confident affirmation about how "Lenin's formula" closely "approximated" to his own "formula of permanent revolution" (*ibid* p198). Comrade Delargy can carry on claiming that Trotsky's theory was superior to Lenin's "completely inadequate programme". But that only shows he is more interested in endlessly repeating fairy stories than grasping the truth.

What of Lenin abandoning his theory of the 'democratic dictatorship' in order to lead the October Revolution, as asserted by comrade Delargy? Here is a fable hatched by Trotsky himself after Lenin's death in 1924. No doubt he was desperate to counter the campaign against 'Trotskyism' launched by the triumvirate of Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev. By pretending that Lenin had undergone a Trotskyite conversion in April 1917, he could enhance his own reputation and at the same time highlight the negative role played by Kamenev and Zinoviev during 1917. Notoriously they 'scabbed' on Lenin's call for 'All power to the soviets' and a second revolution (that, it should be pointed out, did not prevent both men occupying positions of the highest responsibility after the revolution).

In February 1917 tsarism collapsed in face of defeats at the hands of the German imperial army and an outburst of popular protest. The fall of the monarchy was a watershed. It was the beginning of the revolution. A provisional government was formed, headed first by prince Lvov and, following his departure in July, by the Socialist Revolutionary, Alexander Kerensky. The (unelected) provisional government continued Russia's involvement in the imperialist slaughter, refused peasant demands for land redistribution and constantly delayed the convening of a constituent assembly. In short the proletariat and peasantry had "placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie". Nevertheless Russia was the freest of the belligerent countries and alongside, and in parallel to, the provisional government there stood the soviets, or councils, of workers, soldiers and peasants. There was dual power.

What was Lenin's programme during this "first stage of the revolution"? Did he junk his old theory? On return from exile he issued the call for the Party to *amend* "our out-of-date minimum programme" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 24, Moscow 1977, p24). Obviously the demand to overthrow the tsar was now obsolete. The key was to combat 'honest' popular illusions in the provisional government and raise sights. The Bolsheviks were a small minority in the soviets. Their task was to become the majority by agitating for the confiscation of the landlords' estates and the nationalisation and redistribution of land, the abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy, and the amalgamation of the banks under workers' control. This would prepare the conditions for the "second stage of the revolution" and the transfer of all power into "the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants". The "only possible form of revolutionary government" was a "republic of soviets of workers", agricultural labourers' and peasants' deputies" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 24, Moscow 1977, p23). Lenin made no claims that the Party's "immediate task" was to "introduce" socialism. Only that production and distribution had to

be put under workers' control to prevent the impending meltdown of the economy.

Do these 'stageist' programmatic formulations and the perspective of a workers' and peasants' republic indicate an abandonment or a development of Lenin's theory in light of new and unexpected circumstances? I make no excuse for turning to Lenin for an answer. In the article 'The dual power', he writes the following: "The highly remarkable feature of our revolution is that it has brought about a *dual power*. This fact must be grasped first and foremost: unless it is understood, we cannot advance. We must know how to supplement and amend old 'formulas' - for example, those of Bolshevism - for, while they have been found to be correct on the whole, their concrete realisation *has turned out to be* different. *Nobody* previously thought, or could have thought, of a dual power" (*ibid* p38).

Lenin faced stiff opposition from amongst the 'old' Bolsheviks. Their confused, and semi-Menshevik, position brought about by the unique situation was summed up by Kamenev in *Pravda*: "As for comrade Lenin's general scheme, it appears unacceptable, inasmuch as it proceeds from the assumption that the bourgeois democratic revolution is *completed*, and builds on the immediate transformation of this revolution into a socialist revolution."

The criticism was wrong on two accounts. Firstly, though state power had been transferred, that did not fully meet the immediate programmatic aims of the Bolsheviks. Things were very complex. The old Romanov order had been politically overthrown. To that extent, argued Lenin, the programme had been fulfilled. But the 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants' in the form of the soviets had voluntarily ceded power to the bourgeoisie. Life for the moment was in that sense closer to the programme of the Mensheviks. To bring it in line with that of the Bolsheviks required carrying through the agrarian revolution - the landlords still held their estates - and splitting the peasants from the bourgeoisie. "That," asserted Lenin, "has not even started" (*ibid* p44).

Repetition of the slogan 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' *in general* had become a mere abstraction. Events had "clothed it with flesh and bone, concretised it and *thereby* modified it" (*ibid* p45). The soviets (councils) were real. The Bolsheviks, or those whom Lenin was now calling the communists, had to deal with the actual situation where instead of coming to power this 'revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' existed side by side with, and subordinate to, a weak government of the bourgeoisie. Lenin energetically fought for the Party to struggle for influence in the soviets. Once they had a majority, the programme could genuinely be completed.

The dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry had therefore become interwoven with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The Russian Revolution had gone further than the classical bourgeois revolutions of England 1645 or France 1789, but in Lenin's words "has not yet reached a 'pure' dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" (*ibid* 61). There can be dual power, but not a dual power state (comrade Delargy is right on this). One of the dictatorships - ie, powers - has to die. Either the revolution was completed under the hegemony of the proletariat or popular power would be killed by counterrevolution. It was one or the other.

Secondly, there was Kamenev's fear of voluntarism, of going straight to socialism. Lenin swore that there was no such intention. "I might have incurred this danger," explained Lenin, "if I said: 'No tsar, but a work-

ers' government'. But I did *not* say that; I said something else" - ie, that power must pass to the workers' and peasants' soviets (*ibid* p48). The peasant movement could not be "skipped". The idea of playing at the seizure of power by a workers' government would not be Marxism, but Blanquism. Power had to be exercised by the majority.

Far from rejecting his old formulation of the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry', Lenin quoted his 1905 *Two tactics* pamphlet to back up his concrete application of it in 1917. Like everything else such a slogan had a "past and a future". Its past is "autocracy, serfdom, monarchy and privilege ... Its future is the struggle against private property, the struggle of the wage worker against the employer, the struggle for socialism" (*ibid* p52). Kamenev and the 'old' Bolsheviks could only see the past. That is why they sought unity with the Mensheviks. But in 1917 the future had begun, above all around the attitude towards 'defencism' and preventing the economic collapse caused by the imperialist war. Russia and its people could only be saved by the soviets of workers and peasants. That was not socialism. It would though bring socialism nearer.

Perhaps comrade Delargy would argue that what was good for backward Germany in 1848 and backward Russia in 1917 is no good for advanced capitalist countries. He might care to ponder then that in his 'Critique of the Erfurt programme', written in 1891, Engels attacks his SPD comrades for failing to raise the demand for the republic in a now industrialised Germany. They used the threat of a new anti-socialist clampdown by the Bismarck government as an excuse. Engels suggests various ways round the problem. Whatever the precise formulation, the hold of Prussianism and its monarchy must be abolished. What is needed? "In my view," says Engels, "the proletariat can only use the form of the one and indivisible republic" (F Engels *MECW* Vol 27, London 1990, p228).

In the same work Engels reiterates that in the British Isles a "federal republic" - presumably formed between Britain and Ireland, but conceivably an England-Ireland-Scotland-Wales federal republic - "would be a step forward" (*ibid*). Marx and Engels had on a whole number of occasions raised that demand for the British Isles. For them the workers in Britain must struggle for the fullest democracy. Lenin approvingly cites the call by Marx and Engels for a federal republic in the British Isles in *State and revolution*.

That does not mean the slogan is necessarily correct. But to arrogantly dismiss it, to equate it with Kautskyism and class treachery, is surely a sign of a big political problem for those who would use the name of Marxism.

Trotsky's writings on Spain in 1930 are instructive too. Spain was still a monarchy. Trotsky therefore calls for a democratic republic and tells the communists to "struggle resolutely, audaciously, and energetically for *democratic slogans*". Not to do so "would be commit the greatest sectarian mistake". The communists should distinguish themselves from all the "leftists" not by "rejecting democracy" (as the anarchists, syndicalists and economists), but by "struggling resolutely and openly for it" (L Trotsky *The Spanish revolution* New York 1973, pp59-60). The proletariat "needs a clear revolutionary democratic programme", he insists (*ibid* p77). Only so armed can the proletariat lead the coming revolution, says Trotsky.

Was Trotsky right? Again, absolutely! ●

Jack Conrad

Distortion of democracy

Dave Craig responds to Tom Delargy's criticisms (*Weekly Worker* April 15)

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

The second point deals with the question of workers' power. It says: "We support the democratic self-organisation of the working class in trade unions, workplaces and communities. We are in favour of workers' control of all industries and services. We are in favour of replacing parliamentary democracy with a more advanced form of democracy, based on workplace and workers' councils electing delegates to a workers' parliament. This must be defended by an armed working class organised as the state (ie, the dictatorship of the proletariat)."

This statement is endorsed by the CPGB, the Revolutionary Democratic Group and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. The Communist Tendency have endorsed the slogan of revolutionary democracy and workers' power. I have no reason to believe they disagree with the above statement. Even the British section of the International Bolshevik Tendency say they do not disagree with it.

This statement has been printed on at least five separate occasions in the *Weekly Worker*. There have been numerous articles on the subject. There have been a number of debates on this, in which I have been involved. My views have been spelt out in detail on many occasions, as regular readers may know. If Tom Delargy was serious he would have started to criticise the above statement concretely and shown how and why it is wrong. He has not done this so far and, until he does, he cannot be treated seriously, at least on this issue.

Instead of dealing with the revolutionary democratic message, he is trying to discredit the messenger. It is an old Stalinist trick. So he calls me a liar, a slanderer, a non-Marxist and a Kautskyite. In last week's *Weekly Worker* (May 6) he had calmed down a little and only called me "somewhat less than honest", and a "dubious source". I was accused, without any concrete evidence, except statements made by comrade Delargy himself and attributed to me, of having "rightwing Kautskyite politics". The slogan of revolutionary democracy was attacked as nothing more than the "meaningless soundbite politics" of Dave Craig.

I object to all of this nonsense. I protest most strongly against this method of polemic. But even if it were all true and I was a total and absolute bastard as well (as no doubt some people think!), it would not change one jot or comma or undermine the truth of the politics of the joint statement. Neither would it make any difference if Tom Delargy was to claim

.....
 'Therefore, insofar as democracy can be extended, democratic reform is the only possible method'

that I am the heir to a dry cleaning fortune.

Let us begin with the central question which Tom Delargy considers to be unanswered and unanswerable - "What is revolutionary democracy?" He claims: "The question I pose is not just troublesome for the Revolutionary Democratic Group. Their Revolutionary Democratic Communist Tendency partners [ie, the CPGB] are no less in need of tackling it." Even before I can put pen to paper Tom has marked me down as someone not having "a firm enough grasp of Marxism to be capable of offering a considered response".

Tom's mission is to save us. As he says so eloquently, "Patronising though this might sound, when I come across talented revolutionary socialists making serious errors (or what I take to be errors), I see it as my duty to try to shift them onto the right path." Sad to say, this 'help' is intended only for the CPGB. The RDG comrades are beyond the pale and beneath contempt.

Tom invents his own theory of revolutionary democracy. He defines it as "an above-class democracy, an abstract democracy, a pure democracy". This "pure democracy", thinks Tom, must be some kind of state. In which case who is in charge? Who is the ruling class? He then triumphantly hits us with Lenin's pamphlet on the "renegade Kautsky". "Pure democracy," says Lenin, "is the mendacious phrase of the liberal who wants to fool the workers."

Tom then claims that revolutionary democracy must be a stage prior to workers' power. If "this means anything at all, it must be an oblique reference to dual power". You might think from this that I had made this "oblique reference" as part of my alleged general evasiveness on the subject. But you will recall that I stand accused of refusing to say anything at all on the subject. Clearly the oblique reference to dual power did not come from me. In fact it was Tom who calls revolutionary democracy "a stage prior to dual power" and then exposes himself as guilty of making this "oblique reference".

Tom then comes up with the idea that dual power could be turned "into a constitutionally stable entity". This is then correctly attributed to Hilferding and Kautsky, whose "centrist project was, and remains, an objectively counterrevolutionary project". This, on the basis of zero evidence, is supposed to represent the

views of revolutionary democrats!

Tom's theory of revolutionary democracy is certainly Kautskyism. It is so easy for any Marxist to shoot this nonsense down in flames. We do not even need quotes from Lenin. There can be no such thing as pure, non-class democracy. Every state is the dictatorship of a ruling class, even the most democratic. This includes the former bureaucratic USSR, which was also a class dictatorship. There is no such thing as a constitutionally stable 'dual power' situation.

Unfortunately the Delargy method of polemic is worse even than his theory of revolutionary democracy. His idea of a good debate is to invent this nonsense and attribute it, without any evidence whatsoever, to his opponents. If he, or indeed any of the Trotskyite economists, want to have a serious debate, they have to argue with and expose what is wrong with what we revolutionary democrats actually say.

Let me once again explain the RDG's views on revolutionary democracy. It provides a distinct approach to communist politics which we have called the 'revolutionary democratic road to communism'. The essential features of this are the revolutionary struggle to extend democracy, the democratic revolution, and the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat.

Let us examine the meaning of the "revolutionary struggle to extend democracy". How far can democracy be extended? It can be extended up to and including workers' power. The RDCT statement calls this "a more advanced form of democracy, based on workplace and workers' councils" supported by armed militia. We call this the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat. This term emphasises the revolutionary and democratic character of the workers' state. This is not 'dual power'.

The best of the Trotskyists understand and agree. Those who are politically honest will accept that we revolutionary democrats are in favour of this. Only the most unprincipled scoundrels amongst them keep repeating the lie that revolutionary democrats only want a bourgeois republic or want to go no further than dual power.

Whilst we are in favour of the workers' state, the maximum extension of democracy, are we in favour of more limited extensions? Yes, genuine communists fight for partial democratic reforms within bourgeois democracy. Such partial extensions of democracy do not in themselves contradict the aim of a workers' state. Fighting for universal suffrage or votes for women or annual parliaments does not undermine or diminish the struggle for a democratic workers' state. On the contrary every real extension of democracy provides a better terrain for the class struggle. The only qualification to this is that every situation must be looked at concretely and tactics weighed up on that basis.

Let us turn to the question of revolutionary struggle as the means to extend democracy. What is the highest form of revolutionary struggle? What is the most radical method of extending democracy? The answer is the democratic revolution. This is the process through which the broad masses become active participants in the struggle to extend democracy. The old constitution is not extended, but overthrown. Society awakes and mobilises. Democracy, no longer the preserve of the 'chattering classes', becomes the product of direct action by the masses and the working class themselves.

Democratic revolution uproots the old order and extends democracy more rapidly in the broadest and deepest way. If revolution is the locomotive of history, then democratic revolutions are the express trains of democracy.

It is worth noting that the Stalinists and many varieties of Trotskyists reject democratic revolution. According to their 'iron law of stages', democratic revolution is not possible in an advanced country. They think that, since the UK has already had a democratic revolution, it has passed the historic stage when such revolution is possible. Therefore, insofar as democracy can be extended, democratic reform is the only possible method. Democratic revolution is ruled out. This is why we accuse them of being democratic reformists.

How can democracy be extended when there is no general democratic revolution? We contrast revolutionary methods to legal-constitutional, reformist methods. The revolutionary struggle to extend democracy involves the mass use of force to decide the issue. The IRA has deployed extra-parliamentary force in their struggle for an extension of democracy in Ireland: that is, a united Ireland. Mass demonstrations, strikes, general political strikes and armed uprisings also constitute the use of force. This in turn requires the organisation of self-defence against the violence of the state.

Take the example of the poll tax. The legal-constitutional method was to wait patiently to elect a Labour government, who might perhaps abolish the tax. But a mass extra-parliamentary campaign of civil disobedience was built up. It was an illegal and unconstitutional campaign. This came to a head in the demonstration and riot in Trafalgar Square. The state used force against the masses, who fought back with sticks and stones and set fire to buildings. Mass violence for political ends was an, albeit limited, form of revolutionary action. It had a major impact on the Thatcher government, which was left with no option but to retreat. Nobody waited for Neil Kinnock to be elected. The use of mass force did not overthrow the constitution or begin a democratic revolution. But this violence did a great deal to force Thatcher out of office and pave the way for Blair's constitutional reforms.

We have many examples of the use of extra-parliamentary force to achieve democratic gains from Cromwell, the Chartists, the French Jacobins, the women workers in Petrograd in February 1917 and the use of force by the Bolsheviks to overturn Kerensky's government. Tom Delargy provides his own example. He says: "Consider the German revolution of 1918. The monarchy was brought crashing down, and a republic proclaimed." As we know, the social democrats were able to seize the moment and organise counterrevolutionary force against the workers. But Tom's main argument is to dismiss the achievement of a republic. Look, he says, the republic was a bourgeois state and butchered the workers. These murders were carried out by the very social democrats who always condemned the use of force by the working class in favour of peaceful-legal reforms.

In his rush to oppose the republic he fails to notice his own words. He says, "The monarchy was brought crashing down." Who brought it crashing down? Was it by the peaceful and legal methods of parliamentary reform? No, it was brought crashing down by the use of mass revolutionary action led by the sail-

ors and workers. This revolutionary democratic action by the German masses brought counterrevolutionary violence by the bourgeoisie. But it also began a German revolution which did not finally end until 1923.

Trotsky, writing on Britain in the 1920s, gives many examples of the connection between revolutionary democratic mass force and the process of reform. He says, for example: "The revolutionary movement of Chartism led in 1844-47 to the introduction of the 10-hour working day and in 1846 to the repeal of the Corn Laws" (L Trotsky *Writings on Britain* London 1974, Vol 2, p26). He notes that the "radical reorganisation of the administration of Canada, giving much greater autonomy, was carried out only after the rising in Canada of 1837-38". He says that "the Russian Revolution of 1917 was an important stimulus to this reform", and connects this to electoral reform in Britain in 1918. He concludes from these and many other examples that, "even for the passing of reforms, the principle of gradualism is insufficient and the real threat of revolution is necessary" (p26).

In bourgeois democracies, the legal-constitutional reformist want to ban the use of force to extend democracy. Democracy must be extended only by peaceful parliamentary means. Trotsky pours scorn on this. He asks: "Which countries does the ban on force [by reformist democrats] cover? Can for example a state be called a democracy where there is a monarchy and an aristocratic chamber? Is it permissible to adopt revolutionary methods to topple these institutions?" Every revolutionary democrat, including Trotsky himself, answers 'yes'. Trotsky goes further. He later says: "We have shown above that the present British parliament forms a monstrous distortion of the principle of bourgeois democracy and that without adopting revolutionary force one can hardly obtain in Britain even an honest division of parliamentary constituencies or the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords." Nothing that has happened in the 70 years since Trotsky wrote this brilliant insight into British politics has changed that assessment or proved it wrong.

It is important to note that Trotsky measures democracy not simply by crudely counterposing it to a pure workers' democracy. He examines British democracy in its own terms, as a very undemocratic form of bourgeois democracy. When Lenin wrote *State and revolution* he did not simply contrast bourgeois to workers' democracy. He followed Marx in examining and contrasting a variety of forms of bourgeois democracy, dealing with the differences for example between a constitutional monarchy, federal republic and centralised republic. This is absolutely vital information for revolutionary democrats engaged in a revolutionary struggle to extend democracy. It is irrelevant for ultra-leftism and anarchists who simply and solely oppose bourgeois democracy against workers' democracy.

Tom Delargy was outraged and offended that I called him a reformist democrat. But this was the logic of his own position. If he continues to reject revolutionary struggle for democracy, then simple logic tells us that he is either a reformist democrat, a conservative democrat or an anti-democrat. Tom Delargy should explain his view of democracy, rather than invent more rubbish about our position ●

'Left Trotskyism' and imperialism

The current war between Serbia and the Nato imperialists, fought over the question of Kosova, poses an acute dilemma for many would-be socialists. In this situation you have two distinct strands: the monstrous oppression of the ethnic Albanian population of Kosova by the ultra-rightwing, racist Milosevic regime in Serbia; and the increasingly indiscriminate bombing of Serbia itself by Nato.

Many more serious elements on the left, particularly the 'harder' Trotskyist formations, find themselves caught in a particular cleft stick over Kosova. For them, 'unconditional military defence' of any force in a backward country that gets into a fire-fight with the imperialists is a point of honour. But for communists there is another principle - that of defence of the rights of the oppressed against their oppressors. The particular configuration of the current Balkans war, the naked clash of these two principles in a war fought centrally over the question of Serb attempts to forcibly retain Kosova against the will of the overwhelming majority of its population, and indeed its being quite prepared to simply expel the Kosovar population in order to populate it with Serb settlers, poses this dilemma point blank. This is where a false dogma comes up against life itself, and the result has propelled several of these groupings to the opposite side of the barricades to the historic, and indeed the immediate, interests of the working class.

For Marxists, opposition to national oppression, genocide and mass forced population transfers is a question of principle. That is why Marxists give critical, but unconditional support to all struggles against such oppression. The actual way in which such questions are posed varies according to circumstance - our fundamental purpose in opposing national oppression is to 'solve' the democratic questions as much as is possible under capitalism, in order to demonstrate to the workers and the oppressed masses that it is not extra-class forms of oppression that are the main obstacle to human liberation, but capitalism itself. Thus, while supporting struggles against national oppression, we only support the aspects of such struggles that have a real democratic content. Fundamentally, we are for the equality of *all* peoples, and in situations where one people oppresses another of comparable social weight, Marxists must be *particularly* careful to oppose forms of revanchist chauvinism from the currently oppressed population that simply aim to reverse the current relations of oppression.

However, this is not the situation in Kosova. According to the 1991 Yugoslav census, the percentage of the Kosovar population that is ethnic Albanian is approximately 85%. The percentage that is Serbian is around eight percent. The remainder consists of small numbers of Turks, Roma and some Slavic muslims. If anything, in fact, the 1991 census likely *understates* the ethnic Albanian population of Kosova, since in 1991 there was an ethnic Albanian boycott of the census, in protest at Milosevic's removal of Kosova's status as an autonomous region and its forcible incorporation into Serbia. The Serbian population is a national minority that is entitled to full equality. But there is no way it can be allowed to play a role out of proportion to its numbers in determining the national rights of the Kosovar population.

In Kosova, in other words, you have a straightforward democratic question. Yet the intervention of Nato has complicated matters considerably. For it is a fact that, rather than allowing the right of self-determination of the Kosovar Albanians, Nato aims to carve out a 'protectorate' of at least part of Kosova, which may well become a highly contaminated

and ruined 'Gaza strip' for what is left of the Kosovar people after the war. This is obviously not liberation for the Albanian people, and thus socialists should stand for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of the Nato forces, and should seek to agitate against the war. The workers' movement should be for the defeat of the Nato forces - but they should be relieved of their weaponry as they leave by the armed formations fighting for the liberation of the Kosova Albanians.

By contrast the position of many so-called 'left Trotskyists' is not primarily motivated by the aim of liberation of the oppressed. It is the dogma of 'defence' of Serbia that is their primary consideration. However, since the proclaimed war aims of the imperialists are to force Milosevic to relinquish the Serbs' monopoly of armed force in Kosova, this 'defence' of Serbia, when push comes to shove, has nothing whatsoever to do with any defence of the rights of the Serb people to self-determination. Of course, in the event of an attempt by the imperialists to turn Serbia into a colony, Marxists would defend the right of the Serbian people to self-determination just as much as the Kosovars. But at this point this is not at stake. Rather, the defence of Serbia by the 'left' Trotskyists comes down to the defence of the right of Serbia to occupy Kosova, irrespective of the views of the Albanian population.

This is a scandalous position, that quite clearly puts these 'left Trotskyists' on the side of the oppressor against the oppressed. It amounts to *de facto* support of forces involved in massive forcible population transfers, against the victims of those population transfers. It is a position that - in practice, if not in theory - amounts to support for ethnic cleansing, dressed up as anti-imperialism. Indeed, so scandalous are the implications of this, that they are keen to dress up their position in euphemistic language, avoiding baldly stating the real reactionary implications of their position, which in reality puts them on the 'left' wing of a red-brown coalition.

The dogma that it is the duty of the left to become 'revolutionary defencists' for *any* underdeveloped country that comes into conflict with the imperialists, *irrespective* of the issues of the war, has produced some interesting contradictions in one of these 'left Trotskyist' organisations, the International Bolshevik Tendency. After the war began, the IBT wrote, hypothetically, if somewhat bizarrely:

"We call for the defence of Yugoslavia (including Kosovo) against Nato forces, but we do not defend the 'territorial integrity' of the existing Serbian state. We adamantly oppose the renewed wave of murderous 'ethnic cleansing' being carried out by Milosevic against Kosovo's Albanian citizens in the wake of Nato's attack. The Kosovars have every right to forcibly resist their Serb oppressors and to determine their own future. All communities (including members of Kosovo's Serb minority) have the right to self-defence against communist pogroms.

"The Kosovo Liberation Army is made up of people who are just as committed to a programme of national exclusiveness as Milosevic and his ilk. The KLA is determined to gain independence from the Serbs and only signed the Rambouillet agreement

(which specifies that Kosovo remain nominally part of Serbia for three years) as a manoeuvre. They hoped that Serb intransigence would lead Nato to attack.

"While we offer no political support to the bourgeois-nationalist KLA, we nonetheless side with them militarily in their struggle for freedom from their Serb oppressors. If, in the course of the present conflict, the KLA should become subordinated to, or begin to operate essentially as an auxiliary of, the Nato aggressors, our attitude would change to one of favouring the victory of the Yugoslav army over both the imperialists and their auxiliaries" (IBT statement, March 30).

This position shows the absurdity of the dogma of 'revolutionary defencism' of counterrevolutionary bourgeois regimes, applied *in extremis*. The IBT, effectively advises its hypothetical forces on the ground that they should support one side in a war, characterising their struggle as a "struggle for freedom". But with the proviso that if, at some future point, these forces do not behave in a manner that the IBT approves of, their forces should *change sides in the middle of a war* and support the *crushing* of the forces it previously characterised as waging a "struggle for freedom" by their Serb "oppressors". It would seem to anyone with any knowledge of warfare that such hypothetical IBT formations could legitimately be shot by *either* side as being a dead cert to become enemy agents!

The IBT have apparently drawn this to its logical conclusion. They now write: "The KLA can no longer be considered as any kind of national liberation movement - it is today simply a cat's paw of imperialism. We have therefore dropped the call for 'independence for Kosovo' as an immediate, agitational, demand because in the present context it can only serve as a cover for the schemes of the imperialists." (IBT statement, May 8).

Yet they are strangely sanguine in their more recent statement. Nowhere in this statement do they quote or reiterate their earlier point that in such an event they would favour "the victory of the Yugoslav army over both the imperialists and their auxiliaries". Instead they regail us with a quotation from Lenin against reactionary Polish nationalists thus: "We stand in the tradition of Vladimir Lenin who, in the midst of World War I, asserted that: 'To be in favour of an all-European war merely for the sake of restoring Poland is to be a nationalist of the worst sort ...' ('The discussion on self-determination summed up'). Lenin observed that Marxists do not regard the right of self-determination as a categorical imperative ..." And they cite chapter and verse: "The several demands of democracy, including self-determination, are not an absolute, but only a *small part* of the general-democratic [now: general-socialist - IBT] world movement. In individual concrete cases, the part may contradict the whole; if so, it must be rejected. It is possible that the republican movement in one country may be merely an instrument of the clerical or financial-monarchist intrigues of other countries; if so, we must *not* support this particular, concrete movement..."

However, this comparison is absurd. It could equally be said that we should on the same basis condemn

Milosevic and the Serb nationalists for being prepared to provoke a general Balkans war, dragging in the imperialists, in order to hang onto Kosova against the will of its inhabitants. In any case, Lenin was not advocating support for the *suppression* of Polish nationalists by either tsarist Russia or the kaiser's Germany. Such a course he would have condemned as social chauvinism and class treason on the part of anyone who advocated it. The IBT does not *merely* condemn the undoubted chauvinism of the Albanian nationalists as being comparable to that of the Polish nationalists of the World War I period (which of course in many ways it is - though this did not stop Lenin from supporting Poland's *right* to self-determination as a weapon against that same reactionary nationalism). No. They go qualitatively further than that, and advocate the victory of the oppressor over the oppressed.

'Ah,' the IBT will say, 'but in this instance, Milosevic is fighting imperialism.' In a sense, this is true. But one has to ask - what is Milosevic fighting imperialism *about*? He is fighting for the right to rule Kosova, against the will of its inhabitants. Is this a progressive aim?

The IBT will of course say, no. This is not in itself a progressive aim. But for them the presence of imperialism *makes* it a progressive aim, because any victory of an underdeveloped state against the imperialists is *by definition* progressive, irrespective of what the intrinsic issues of the conflict may be. But here they part company, not only with reality, but even with the Lenin that they misuse to justify their dogma. For unlike them, Lenin did not consider that *any* struggle against imperialism was 'progressive'. Quite the opposite, and the IBT's delving into the discussions among the Bolsheviks on the national question during World War I misrepresents the positions of Lenin by omission. Of course, as Marxists we should be able to think for ourselves, and not have to depend excessively on uncritically regurgitating quotes from the old masters when formulating a line. But it is a bit rich to quote poor old Lenin to justify giving 'military support' to Milosevic's genocidal and reactionary 'anti-imperialism' when Lenin made it quite clear that in his view:

"Imperialism is as much our 'mortal' enemy as is capitalism. That is so. No Marxist will forget, however, that capitalism is progressive compared with feudalism, and that imperialism is progressive compared with pre-monopoly capitalism. Hence, it is *not* every struggle against imperialism that we should support. We will *not* support a struggle of the reactionary classes against imperialism; we will *not* support an uprising of the reactionary classes against imperialism and capitalism" (VI Lenin 'A caricature of Marxism and imperialist economism' *CW* Vol 23, p63).

And today we should not support the venal Serbian bureaucratic/mafia proto-bourgeoisie in its struggle against 'democratic' imperialism to re-establish the reactionary Serbian medieval myth of Kosova and carve a Greater Serbian state out of the living body of the Albanian people. This is a reactionary struggle against imperialism *par excellence* ●

Ian Donovan

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.

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Internationalists rally

'Stop Nato's bombing. Independence for Kosovo. Open the borders to the refugees.' These were the slogans around which a meeting was convened on Tuesday May 11 by a wide range of left organisations, including the CPGB.

Chairing the packed meeting of around 100, comrade Alan Thornett (Socialist Outlook) explained that its purpose was to redress the imbalance created by the one-sided Campaign for Peace in the Balkans. By its almost total lack of attention to the issue of Kosovar independence, its failure to address the outrage of ethnic cleansing and the plight of the Kosovar refugees, the Campaign for Peace in the Balkans had effectively sided with the Serbs in calling for an immediate end to Nato bombing, but nothing else.

In fact the question of Kosovar independence dominated the entire meeting. It is heartening to report that all the platform speakers spoke in favour of it, and backed the armed struggle of the KLA in furthering that objective. The body of the meeting, with the predictable exception of the

International Communist League - ie Spartacist League - and with some reservations on the part of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, was unequivocal in its support for the same goals.

Comrade Greg Tucker of RMT reminded us of the long history of imperialist treachery towards all oppressed peoples, in the Balkans and elsewhere. He pointed out that, as we ourselves have long argued, the imperialists never had any intention of allowing real Kosovar self-determination - neither at Rambouillet, nor at the recent G8 meeting in Bonn. The imperialists' stated aim remains to disarm the KLA and impose some form of protectorate status on Kosova. Comrade Tucker called for the arming of the KLA and for the creation of a mass movement in support of Kosovar independence, a movement in which there could be no room for Yugoslav defencists or national-chauvinists.

Indiana Harper of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Association denounced what she called the imperialists' "treachery" towards Bosnia, and the

“appeasement” of Milosevic by the western powers, which, she said, sent him the message that ethnic cleansing in Bosnia had worked. Harper called for the arming of the KLA by Nato, but openly opposed two of the slogans she was supposed to be supporting: ‘Stop the bombing’ and ‘Open the borders’. Clearly CPGB comrades who had opposed the representation of the BHA as official speakers had been vindicated.

A comrade from the United Kurdish Committee lent his support to the right of Kosova to self-determination and to the arming of the KLA. Nobody surely needed reminding that the western powers' campaigns against 'little Hitlers' had been highly selective: the plight of the Kurdish people was supreme proof of Nato's hypocrisy and its turning a blind eye to Turkish repression because of Turkey's membership of the alliance.

The most poignant contribution from the platform came from Marta Gozdeda, an ethnic Albanian activist, whose vivid account of the situation in Kosovo left nobody unmoved. Speaking from a frankly bourgeois-nationalist perspective ("We want our land ... the only imperialism I see in Kosovo is Serbian imperialism ..."), Gozdeda said that people must put aside ideologies and give wholehearted support to the struggle of the Kosovars and the KLA, whose involvement with Nato was simply a result of the fact that they had nowhere else to turn for help. The Kosovars had spent 10 years looking for a peaceful, negotiated settlement, but to no avail.

In the meantime Serb repression had intensified, and the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, though unexpected in its ferocity, was clearly foreseeable in the light of the west's "protracted courtship" of Milosevic. Gozdeda realised that her stance, particularly the willing embrace of Nato assistance, would not be politically acceptable to many present, but she urged the audience to try and understand what the Kosovars were going through.

A sharp debate from the floor ensued, at first characterised by wholehearted support for the line taken by the platform. Workers International, for example, in giving its unconditional support to the Kosovars and the armed struggle of the KLA, said that it was time to "take sides" definitively on the side of Kosova. A united front by the left was essential. Others took the same line.

When Jo Woodward of the Spartacist League rose to speak, however, the situation became tense and unruly. After only a few words, in which she condemned the meeting for inviting a “pro-Nato” speaker, comrade Woodward was shouted down. “You’re in the wrong meeting,” said one comrade. “How dare you speak like that in the presence of a Kosovar?” said another. For a minute or so the chair lost control, but eventually ordered Woodward to sit down.



SWP, Yugoslav defencists and pacifists - silence on Kosovar rights

Stop the bombing

Last Saturday's national 'Stop the bombing' march in London, organised by the Committee for Peace in the Balkan, was the largest of recent weeks. Over 3,500 took part, around 2,000 of whom trooped behind the banners of the Socialist Workers Party.

Parliamentarians, including Tony Benn MP, headed the march. Pacifists of various stripes made up the leading section, followed by the large SWP contingent, personifying economic social-pacifism. Although militant and raring to go, the SWPers were restricted by their leaders/minders into shouting slogans, such as that old favourite - 'Welfare, not warfare'. National socialists from the Communist Party of Britain and the New Communist Party were only present in token numbers. Further back, the residue of the Workers Revolutionary Party were the most overt of the Serb defensists, chanting 'Victory to Yugoslavia'.

Despite their minders, some individual members of the SWP were ready to engage with CPGBers, who tackled them about their party's collapse in face of labour dictator Arthur Scargill's announcement that he will be heading the Socialist Labour Party's list in London for the June 10 EU elections. A few SWPers refused to discuss their party's abandonment of the Socialist Alliance project - or anything else - *now* 'not being the time' to debate, in view of the Balkans war.

Saturday saw many Serbian flags, with a few national flags of Greece and Yugoslavia. Some nationalist Serbs marched in military forage caps; there were also several orthodox priests in

black habits. This section reacted furiously as the march passed some 150 Kosovar counter-demonstrators. From some of the Serb nationalists' comments, they would like nothing more than the opportunity to introduce a little ethnic cleansing to London's streets; as we have now heard too many times, chauvinist shouts of 'Kosova is ours, Kosova is Serbian' came from the Serb nationalist and fascist ranks.

Kosovar counter-demonstrators were openly pro-imperialist. Union flags, stars and stripes and pro-Nato placards were more prominent than KLA banners. Shouts for Kosovar independence alternated with chants in support of Nato - an organisation which seeks to deny the Kosovars' right to self-determination under the guise of a western 'protectorate'. Despite rumours of a new anti-Nato faction within the KLA, there was no sign of it on this occasion.

Calling for independence for Kosovo as well as an end to the Nato air war, internationalist comrades marched together, partly for security reasons because of previous threats from Serb nationalists. This contingent provided a healthy contrast with other groups of pacifists, social-pacifists, red-browns, Yugoslav defencists, Serb nationalists and fascists. However, somewhat contradictorily, this bloc contains such 'anti-war' elements as Workers Power, which called for a vote for bomber Blair's New Labour Party in the Scots and Welsh elections ●

Tom Ball

Frankly, this was entirely counterproductive. The way to defeat wrong ideas, such as the Spartacists' refusal to recognise Kosovar rights, is through open debate, not through gagging. The fact that most Kosovars look to Nato is regrettable, but entirely understandable, given the lack of mass support from anti-imperialists.

For the CPGB, comrade Stan Kelsey emphasised the legitimacy of the Kosovars' democratic aspirations to self-determination and the fact that, in their hour of need, they had the right to seek arms and assistance from whatever quarter they could find them. United intervention by the left in the peace movement was essential, otherwise the pacifism of the Campaign for Peace in the Balkans would persist - a nonsensical position, because calls for 'peace' by themselves amounted to nothing more than calling for an imperialist war to be replaced by an imperialist peace.

A comrade from SPEW spoke eloquently about his organisation's support for Kosovar self-determination, but balked at the idea of supporting the KLA, since it was fighting alongside imperialism. Milosevic and Nato were both mass-murderers and by implication the KLA too had to be denounced in similar vein. In other

words, SPEW evidently wills the end, but not the means. As comrade Marcus Larsen of the CPGB pointed out in reply, such a position is incoherent, mere “empty words”, whereby the call for Kosovar self-determination is reduced to an abstraction. Revolutionaries needed above all to look at the situation in a truthful way - contrary to the position taken by the likes of Candy Udwin of the SWP, we must see that we are living in the dark days of a period of reaction. It was the total absence of any alternative that drove the Kosovars and the KLA to nurture false hopes in imperialism.

Comrade Larsen, echoing comrade Kelsey, emphasised the Leninist dictum that the only true kind of internationalism means fighting for the revolutionary overthrow of “the main enemy” at home. Hence his urgent call to all organisations on the left, in the wake of the collapse of the Socialist Alliance’s bid to fight the European Union elections, to support the ‘Weekly Worker’ list on June 10. This would not only be the most concrete demonstration of left unity. It would be a practical way of opposing both bomber Blair’s air war and the Yugoslav defensism of Scargill’s SLP ●

Michael Malkin