



*No to bomber Blair!*  
*No to red-brown Scargill!*  
**Vote 'Weekly Worker'**  
**on June 10**

# SPEW set to splinter

Dissidents from a number of regions about to walk out

**T**here are alarming signs for the beleaguered leadership of the Socialist Party in England and Wales of a new series of splits from what remains of its organisation. The talk is of the imminent decamping of the bulk of its Nottingham branch, of links between leading figures in Manchester and the recent Merseyside Socialists split from SPEW. However, most serious is the challenge looming in London.

It is claimed that 30 to 40 members in London - including long-term cadre - have been involved in discussions with comrades from the Socialist Democracy Group - the core of which began with a SPEW split around Phil Hearse - with a view to establishing a new organisation - London Socialist. A handful of comrades from other groups are said to be involved, but SPEW dissidents and the SDG are the two key components in London.

This latest exodus from Peter Taaffe's disintegrating group is in open political sympathy with the recent Merseyside split - now the Merseyside Socialists - and apparently have the active sympathy of the Committee for a Workers International faction within the Scottish Socialist Party.

Oppositionists in London have been meeting for some time. An informant described their political evolution as "ending up going in the same direction, reaching the same conclusions" as the Merseyside Socialists and the SDG. Supposedly these are "further down the track", but there appears to be agreement on another split. Personal and political ties have facilitated this liaison. For example, SDG members who had been in SPEW have been attending some meetings in London.

An important development came in London when meetings were thrown open to SDGers in general, a move that seems to indicate that "there are no obstacles to a merger", in the words of an SDG comrade. Another meeting is scheduled for June 19 where, according to one source, "if everything goes well we will dis-

solve" into a new formation.

Thus, June 19 is the scheduled date for a substantial split from the already anaemic SPEW in London and the creation of an anti-Taaffe organisation, in explicit sympathy with the Merseyside split, and to be followed shortly by Manchester and Nottingham versions. A national meeting is planned for later in the year with - some people have even suggested - the attendance of Tommy Sheridan, although whether this will be as an MSP or as an SSP representative has not been made clear.

It is understood that comrade Sheridan will be touring England after the European elections undertaking a number of meetings, both for SPEW "and others". If the comrade does indeed agree to appear on the platforms of the new split, it will be a stinging slap in the face for general secretary Taaffe. SPEW's central leadership has been at pains to mute any criticism of the SSP, to ensure that the divorce between Scottish Militant Labour and SPEW is as 'uncontroversial' as possible.

The May 21 issue of *The Socialist* hypes Sheridan's election to the Scottish parliament as a "historic election victory". If this prominent comrade - a "member of our sister party in Scotland" - was seen to be even implicitly endorsing such a split, what price the integrity of the organisation? The dissidents are talking of "doing an SSP in England". How can Taaffe fight now, after ducking the battle in Scotland?

In fact, the all-too-rare successes in the recent round of elections on May 6 are a double-edged sword for the Taaffe leadership. The only significant progress came in areas that are clearly pursuing projects *distinct* from the central leadership's. Gaining a second councillor in Coventry for example poses a challenge because the line pursued by Socialist Alternative (Nellist) is altogether different from the SPEW majority. It is clear that Dave Nellist does not concur with Taaffe's assessment of the potential

of the Socialist Alliances, and his strength in Coventry undermines the argument of his own leadership. He is also reportedly close to many of the comrades in London currently contemplating a split.

While *The Socialist* may celebrate the successes of "our" organisation in Scotland, the SSP has resulted essentially from a nationalist split in the ranks of the CWI, even if this has yet to go from separation to divorce.

Supporters of the walkout from SPEW are talking of a group of between 50-60 people in London. Others put the potential far lower - some at 10 to 15. Either way, this new crack in the façade of Taaffe's 'small mass party' could have severe effects on the morale of his fast declining sect.

Clearly, SPEW's forced optimism is already wearing thin. In the issue of *The Socialist* cited above, Hannah Sell - on behalf of the executive - is reduced to writing political nonsense about the recent election results. She asks us to believe that what she herself characterises as "modest" successes gave "confidence to lefts, including the few remaining in the Labour Party". Indeed, "it is likely that the number of MPs who have rebelled against the cuts in disability benefit was increased when they saw how popular socialist ideas would be". When central SPEW apparatchiks are reduced to such desperate rescue attempts on their myopically 'upbeat' perspectives, clearly something is very sick in the organisation.

The discussion document we reproduce opposite, penned for the putative new group by a SPEW member, is clearly a reaction against this type of sterile, self-consoling vista of the imminent collapse of world capitalism that SPEW members have been dulled with by their leadership. It underlines that the purpose of the new group is "not to focus our energies on predicting capitalism's collapse". Yet its main thrust defines it - just like its parallel development in Merseyside - as a *liquidationist* trend, a move to the right - but one relatively open to debate and clarification.

We could be seeing 'endgame' for SPEW. Active loyalists in London must now number a few dozen. Yet the various 'Socialist' formations clearly offer no solution. They appear

to lack sufficient political coherence to form anything other than a network, linked by a vague comprehension of what they do *not* like - 'democratic centralism', as experienced at the hands of the bureaucratised SPEW leadership; an opposition to narrowly sectarian, 'build the party' perspectives; and mechanical predictions of the impending collapse of capitalism. What these comrades are positively *for* is far more problematic.

The Taaffe leadership appears to

have lost the capacity for any meaningful political initiative at all. Whether it has the capacity to launch a counter-offensive is extremely doubtful. It has certainly shown no such competence up to this point. Its more likely fate is to stand as a historical example of how the fight for hard political principle is the only way to build coherent organisations in the long run.

A *negative* example of that simple truth, of course ●

Mark Fischer

## Militant talk

Document produced by a SPEW comrade involved in 'London Socialist' split discussions

### Objectives of the Network

**1. Criticism** To contribute to criticism of capitalism and its principal institutions. To participate in the development of new ways of criticising capitalism in the new world situation. To expose the hidden motives behind liberal ideology, to highlight the need for revolutionary change, and to encourage people to imagine what a socialist society could be like.

**... not prophecies** Not to focus our energies on predicting capitalism's collapse.

**2. Debate** To stimulate debate, among Network members and all anti-capitalist organisations and individuals, on the way forward. Not to imprison this debate within one tradition of analysis, but to draw on ideas from a wide variety of Marxist and radical thinkers, anti-imperialist revolutionaries, and the workers', feminist, environmentalist, black, gay and disabled liberation movements. To carry out this debate in an atmosphere of comradeship at all times.

**... not party line** Not to aim to convert others to our ideas, but to seek a productive exchange which will enrich the understanding of all. Within the Network, to encourage the coexistence of divergent views and the active participation of all in debate.

**3. Solidarity** To permit Network members to link up the campaigns they are involved in in their workplaces, community, or particular field of interest. To encourage solidarity and collaboration between all movements which challenge oppression and exploitation.

**... not recruitment drives** Not to see campaigns as a means to recruit. To prioritise the health of the movement as a whole over our own numbers.

**4. Cooperation** To encourage ever-increasing cooperation between different anti-capitalist organisations in London, nationally and internationally. To participate, in the long term, in building a mass socialist party as part of a worldwide anti-capitalist alliance.

**... not domination** Not to form branches of the Network in different countries. To respect national and regional differences, and recognise the intellectual contribution of other organisations, particularly those from the third world.

**Postscript** "The communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties. They have no interest separate and apart from those of the working class as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement." - *The communist manifesto* ●



## Permanent present

So Dave Norman (*Weekly Worker* May 20) agrees with me that independent action by the working class differs from "a demand on government" - though his example of two militants launching missiles from a channel ferry is not what I had in mind. Rather I was thinking that we should campaign for the working class to champion the right of the Kosovars to fight to defend their homes, and for workers in Yugoslavia to support their right to independence.

However, the example does throw light on Dave's mindset. Firstly his view of class is essentially a national one (I presume "the channel ferry" referred to is the one that plies the English Channel, not the more strategically placed Adriatic).

Secondly he restricts the term 'working class' to those militants directly involved in the anti-war movement. The strike on the Jolly George started over trade union demands, but they intersected with the Hands Off Russia movement and forced Lloyd George to stop sending munitions to be used against the Bolsheviks. Dave's linear thinking makes him believe that effective anti-war action can only arise directly from the slogans of the anti-war movement and that the workers can only oppose bombing by military measures.

Thirdly his desire to put demands upon the government expresses a belief that the working class does not exist as a political reality in any meaningful way. In so far as this is true, it is clearly related to the shoddy goods that the left has tried to pass off over so many years - like 'the Soviet Union is the answer', or 'social democracy leads to socialism'.

Dave wants to add to this catalogue of rubbish. He lives in what the post-modernists call the permanent present. He says we should judge the Kosovar situation only by its present leadership. He has no concept of the Kosovars as human beings traumatised by war or of Serbs disorientated by the disintegration of the world they grew up in. A human solution is needed superior to those being offered by Milosevic or Nato. One that takes into account the political and emotional reality the people are going through. The need now is for a just outcome to the present war that lays the basis for future reconciliation. Without this all talk of socialism is just hot air.

In the last week we have heard claims that there have been demonstrations in Yugoslavia against Milosevic aimed at ending the war. I expect Dave will oppose this movement because they seem ready to make peace with Nato. I do support the right of Yugoslavs (all its peoples, not the state) to self-determination. Dave only supports the right of the state to exist and he only supports that because it is at war with Nato or, should I say, imperialism.

I do not follow Dave's claim that the CPGB is "absolutising" revolutionary defeatism. It has always been applied to specific situations. I think it is Dave who is "absolutising" imperialism, even giving it the honorific "global". This mega beast has to be opposed absolutely. In reality Nato, which seems to be coterminous with global imperialism in the comrade's mind, is behaving like a giant with the strength of an invalid, because it is really an alliance of states with very different political agendas. Agendas moreover shaped by the pressure of public opinion. The influence of the working class may be diffuse, but it is still crucial. Capitalism coordinates its activities across states, so the working class needs to do the same.

We need a common approach from Greece to California to maximise our influence.

In Dave's previous letter he looked forward to the day when we could demand that the government abolished Nato. I can imagine the government accepting his demand in favour of an alliance that is more united and consequently much more dangerous. The great advantage of living in the permanent present is it keeps things nice and simple, but it does nothing to provide our class with an adequate understanding to become a ruling class.

**Phil Kent**  
North London

## Unprincipled left

One of the most fascinating aspects of the current Balkans war has been the response of the 'anti-war' radicals. When you examine the writings of leftist and left-leaning opponents of Nato's war against rump Yugoslavia - John Pilger, Tony Benn, Harold Pinter, Richard Gott, Christopher Hitchens, Noam Chomsky, etc - one thing becomes immediately apparent. To my knowledge, not one of these radicals has come out in defence of the right of the Kosovars to self-determination (ie, independence). If anything, some of the writings have a pro-Serbist tinge to them. Whether out of narrow anti-Americanism or a puerile desire to shock, the anti-war stance of these pinko doves is objectively anti-democratic and hence reactionary.

A fairly wretched example of this fundamentally anti-democratic approach was trotted out by the SWP fellow-traveller, Jeremy Hardy, in the pages of *The Guardian* recently. Like his 'leftwing' mates, Pilger, Pinter, etc, Hardy has completely lost the plot over Kosova/Serbia. So, Pontius Pilate-like, Hardy tells us that he is "not taking sides" in the war, because he cannot bring himself to back "any nationalism" (May 22). This is of course fully in accord with SWP social pacifistic doctrine, which states that socialism "means rejecting taking either the side of the Serb regime or the KLA", as "war makes things worse for working people" (Lindsey German *Socialist Review* May).

This is a scandalous position. Socialists, by definition, support the struggle of the oppressed against the oppressor - such as the ANC, PLO, Sinn Féin, etc. Kosova is an oppressed nation. Nobody in the 'international community' (especially the United Nations) supports the right of the Kosovars to self-determination. It is therefore the duty of socialists to oppose Nato's militaristic campaign in the region and champion the right of the Kosovars to independence - that is, back the KLA's just war against the Serbian state terror machine.

But Hardy's position gets worse. He informs us that Kosova is "not in fact a Serb colony", and that Yugoslavia was "such a multicultural society that it recognised the futility of separatist ideology". Under both Milosevic's and Tito's regimes the Kosovars, for instance, were and are denied the democratic right to self-determination, and the present war is partly a tragic consequence of that. For Hardy to fail to mention this basic fact can only mean he is indeed a *de facto* Serb apologist.

After all, is it such a long way from Hardy's 'neo-Titoist' views above to, let us say, the pro-Serb nationalist ravings of former SLP vice-president Roy Bull in the *Economic and Philosophic Science Review*? Not really. Or at least, it is hard not to see a line of continuum between the anti-KLAism of Hardy and the Yugoslav/Serb defencist anti-KLAism of Bull and co. Both of them diminish the

struggle for democracy.

And this seems to stretch even to the newly (re)formed "Red Brigades for the Construction of the Combative Communist Party", who last week assassinated Massimo D'Antona, a senior government adviser in Italy. In its communiqué, the Red Brigadists denounced "Nato-Kosova secessionism" and the imperialist conspiracy, as they see it, against rump Yugoslavia. The use of the Stalinite/'official communist'-type word "secessionism" implies to me that the Red Brigades for the Construction of the Combative Communist Party also oppose the right of the Kosovars to independence.

It seems that vast chunks of the left, however defined, are quite prepared to leave the Kosovars and the KLA to their fate.

**Paul Greenaway**  
Sussex

## Missing the point

I notice that in the *EPSR* No 999 (May 19), Royston Bull tells his readers how "one Trot scribbler in the *Weekly Worker* has decided to end the 'left' middle class dilemma of being for the Albanian KLA 'self-determination struggle' but *against* their Nato imperialist allies by declaring the west's barbaric onslaught on tiny Serbia to be a 'progressive' historical development by 'democratic' imperialism" (original emphasis).

This is a reference to the May 13 edition of the *Weekly Worker*. Well, I have scoured this issue and nowhere can I find a scribbler, of any political coloration, making such a comment. I am not aware of any left group describing the Nato air war as "progressive", even if you take into account some of the more extreme 'first campist' utterances you can sometimes find in *Workers' Liberty*. Would Royston Bull kindly oblige and send us proof for his statement? Exactly who said it: when, where and in what context? All in the interests of dispassionate and objective journalism of course.

**Danny Hammill**  
South London

## Merseyside Socialist Party

Reports of the death of the Socialist Party in Merseyside have been greatly exaggerated (*Weekly Worker* May 13). Contrary to your article, the Socialist Party did indeed stand a candidate in the local elections - Peter Glover, who stood in Orrell Ward in Bootle.

The 14.13% of the vote scored by Dave Flynn in Litherland, Bootle, for the SLP was not the highest proportion of the vote in Merseyside. In fact, the vote of our candidate, who won 14.6% of the vote was the biggest success of any left candidate in the Mersey basin. The SLP vote was indeed encouraging, based as it is on the work done over the years by the Socialist Party in Bootle, especially by our candidate, Peter Glover, who stood as a parliamentary candidate for the area.

Thank you for allowing me to set the record straight.  
**James McCabe**  
Merseyside

**Editor's note:** We apologise for the error. However, it could have been avoided, had Socialist Party HQ not refused our request for information regarding its local election results.

## So simple

I noted with amusement Jack Conrad's facetious comment (*Weekly*

*Worker* May 13) that socialists who are making political demands under capitalism (eg, for a capitalist federal republic) should logically reject working class demands for higher pay on the grounds that they are for the abolition of wage labour.

The wages struggle is a bread and butter issue which workers are forced to be involved in simply because we are in a society where you must get money to survive. As Marx put it in *Wages, price and profit*, "By cowardly giving way in their everyday conflict with capital [the wages struggle] workers would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement ... [but] they ought not to forget they are fighting with the effects but not with the cause of those effects." The only solution to workers' problems under capitalism was: "The abolition of the wages system!"

So whilst of necessity workers had to engage in the *economic* struggle for survival under capitalism, *politically* they should struggle for the revolutionary establishment of socialism.

Those who argue for political demands falling short of the abolition of capitalism such as the establishment of a republic are essentially reformists who believe workers are simply unable to understand the basic case for socialism and the abolition of capitalism. They have to be led by clever intellectuals like Jack Conrad.

There is a simple choice. You either urge workers to make reformist demands under capitalism or you encourage them to abolish it. You cannot do both. People are not stupid. If they understand the need to scrap capitalism, why are they going to support reforms to improve it and make it more democratic?

All these very lengthy articles arguing for the need to make political demands under capitalism in order to make workers aware of all the issues and help form them into a new ruling class represent time and effort which could have been used to make the basic case for socialism. By choosing that approach, Jack Conrad and the CPGB are objectively supporting the continuation of capitalism and are doing nothing else but try to manoeuvre for a position of power and influence within it.

**Andrew Northall**  
Northants

## Anarcho May

Your account of the origins of May Day (*Weekly Worker* April 29) reminds me of those photographs of the Bolsheviks in which Stalin appears, where his political opponents - Trotsky, Zinoviev, etc - have been tipped out of the picture.

The events that established May Day as an international day of action did not directly involve the shooting of workers at the McCormick Harvester works in 1886, although this set the scene for the events to come. By the way, Mary Godwin is wrong - accounts are confused, some saying at least two were killed, but at the most four workers were shot by the police and not the six claimed by Godwin.

The events that established May Day happened later in the evening at Haymarket Square in Chicago. Here a crowd addressed by anarchist speakers protested against police violence. This was broken up by the police. In the following confusion, a bomb was thrown at the police, killing one outright and fatally wounding six others. Evidence came to light later that the bomb was thrown by a police agent. Four workers were killed by the police.

As a result four anarchists were hanged (some of whom had not even

been at the meeting) and another escaped the noose by committing suicide the day before the execution.

It is these events and these militants - the Chicago martyrs - which are generally regarded to have led to the enshrinement of May 1 as an international day of action. The "martyred dead" of the song 'The red flag' refers to those of Chicago.

I do hope that Mary Godwin - brought up on another occasion over her lack of assiduity in the subject of history - has not deliberately written out the key role of anarchists in the history of May Day for purely partisan purposes.

**Nathan South**  
London

## Whose life?

It took a flight across the Atlantic to show me how tightly concerted capitalist propagandists are, and I would like to detail it for you. When I left Toronto the *Globe and Mail* was running a picture of Clinton gravely listening to the woes of an Albanian peasant; also a story of a Canadian doctor prosecuted for lethally injecting a cancer patient. I arrived to find the so-called *Independent* with a picture of Blair gravely listening to another Albanian peasant, and a story about an English doctor who ... etc, etc.

I know little about the rent-a-peasant business, but have worked long enough in the medical world to recognise that the cancer-death issue - if it is an issue at all - has been got up as a distraction. For centuries it has been taken for granted that doctors will use their common sense when dealing with terminal agony.

Take the case of Freud in 1939, for example. After a dozen painful operations to trim back a cancer of nose and throat, after using the borrowed time to write a final brilliant book, he observed that his dog no longer recognised him. He called his personal physician, explained that the time had come, and received a terminal heavy dose of morphine. Nobody debated or protested the manner of his end. The doctor neither hid nor publicised his action. This common-sense approach was, then, normal practice. Are there any among us who, when faced with certain doom, would not wish our doctors to use their skill to allow us a dignified exit?

This non-issue is packaged under the label 'sanctity of life' whenever 'life' is being outraged by unemployment, massacre and famine. The inquisition prided itself on never violating the sanctity of heretic lives. They passed their victims to the secular authorities, then absolved the ensuing murders.

Consider the fate of a man who has been required to work in asbestos dust in order to feed his family. Now he has lung cancer and is slowly choking to death. Shall his doctor be forbidden to speed his end? After 20 years of life have been stolen from him, officious idealists attempt to compensate him with 20 more days of unnecessary agony. They would prosecute a merciful doctor sooner than a careless employer.

With honourable exceptions, like your paper, we do not see many stories in the press about the cancers from industrial dirt. The professional indignants of the bourgeois media resemble hound dogs. They will follow a trail - after being given a glove to smell. And who decides the glove of the week?

**John Blakiston**  
Cambridge

# Defend the jury

**John Walsh presents a communist view on bourgeois legality**

**H**ome Secretary Jack Straw's latest proposals to deny trial by jury for a whole raft of offences constitutes an anti-democratic assault on a basic right, which must be opposed.

The jury system is a feature of tribal society that has continued into the modern world. Of itself it does not guarantee a true verdict, nor does it ensure that the law acts in the interests of the working class. Its existence does not necessarily prevent unlawful interference by the police or other state agencies. Nor does it mean that prosecutors will not seek to conceal evidence that might at least instil reasonable doubt in the minds of jurors. Political pressure can and does exert an influence on many levels, serving to pervert the system's operation.

In recent years not only has the right to silence been limited, but moves have been made to give the prosecution the right to decide what evidence is relevant and therefore what is to be made available to the defence.

Nonetheless the CPGB in policy statements and its draft programme, has declared in favour of the jury system, along with the vast majority of the left and all civil rights organisations. On the other hand, Straw has been determined, along with a number of other British governments in the recent past, to limit the jury system. The latest affront is a proposal to allow the magistrates to determine 'either way' cases, where at present defendants have the right to choose a jury trial. However, there have been other restrictions on the jury system in recent times, including the removal of the requirement of unanimity and new restrictions on persons deemed qualified to sit on juries. The removal of trial by jury from almost all civil cases almost certainly affected the verdict in the 'McLibel' case. At the same time legal aid is often withheld in such cases.

There have always been some offences that have not been tried by jury. The feudal ruling class inflicted trial by ordeal on the poor before 1215, and used trial by battle for many centuries afterwards. The local manorial courts treated justice as a private fief of the lord. Strictly speaking, the House of Lords and the House of Commons constituted "the high court of parliament" and had powers to try their own members. This was not abolished until 1948. (In the case of the Lords this really was trial by their 'peers', and thus we have always demanded the same right.)

In reality, trial by jury was a democratic victory gained and secured by the English Revolution of 1648. Until recently there were a variety of restrictions on the jury system. Up to the 1920s women were excluded, and until 1972 people without freehold or leasehold property could not serve. These restrictions did not necessarily apply to other common law countries (although not many blacks served on juries in Alabama!). Of course certain exclusions are justifiable: for example, the mentally deficient, the extremely aged, judges, police officers, and certain other state officials. It must also be open to debate whether some physical handicaps should justifiably lead to

exclusion. However, subject to a statutory number of objections on the part of the accused, and to jury qualification, juries should be chosen at random, free from any manipulation.

Why do we support such a position? "The whole machinery of the state, all the apparatus of the system and its varied workings, end simply in bringing 12 good men into a box" - so said Lord Brougham in 1828. While Brougham referred to "good men", who no doubt defended the existing order, we want to ensure that juries are filled with 'our people'.

Why have governments since 1972 been continually seeking to change the way the jury system works? The most obvious reason is that it has become less amenable to the dictates of either state or government and is certainly more democratic than in Brougham's day. This is best illustrated by acquittals where the accused were obviously guilty, if you accept bourgeois law.

Women peaceniks who smash up aircraft destined for Indonesia; the two liberals, Randle and Pottle, who organised the escape of master spy George Blake and then published their story in a book to justify their action; the doctors or next of kin who help people to die and then publicly admit as much. Even worse from the state point of view, the general public has become far more sceptical about police evidence, leading to acquittals or - more importantly in the case of coroners' juries - the returning of verdicts of unlawful killings by the police.

There is another reason for Straw's attitude: money. Jury trials have judges, not magistrates. And legal defence costs are also higher, not to mention jury members' expenses. Although the government has tried to cut legal aid for most civil questions, it has had to recognise that it would be politically unacceptable to do the same for criminal trials. It has also to be noted that juries acquit more often than magistrates.

Though I have been an active communist for more than 40 years, I have never heard of any real discussion of where we want the jury system to go. The following questions should be asked. Do we propose that all crimes should be tried by jury? Even if the answer is 'yes', does that include non-criminal offences such as traffic violations? Should civil cases involving custody of children be heard before a jury? Are majority verdicts acceptable, as in Scotland, though there are 15 jurors? Should the jury have a say in the sentencing of people or in the penalties imposed in civil cases?

I have assumed that the standard of proof should be beyond reasonable doubt in criminal cases and the balance of probability in civil actions, but it is very difficult to define 'reasonable doubt' accurately. If the reader should question this, try then asking people to give you a percentage of certainty. Most people would say that they wish to get it right 90% of the time. I am extremely distressed by such replies - I ask myself how certain does one have to be before Fred West is locked up.

Be that as it may, it is imperative that communists defend the jury system. Straw is showing so many of the



**Jack Straw: all power to judges**

tendencies of an authoritarian reactionary, that even the legal profession is against him. However, it is neces-

sary for the defenders of civil rights to have a positive programme, not just react to bourgeois offensives ●

## Communist University '99

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

**Saturday July 31 to  
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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 the 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 Goch** 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' \* **Dave Osler** on Scargillism \* **Michael Malkin** on Livingstoneism

Brunel University, Cleveland Road, Uxbridge, west London - 15 minutes walk from Uxbridge tube. Limited residential spaces available - send £20 deposit 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

## Desperate

With just four days to go to reach our monthly target of £400 we are now in desperate straits.

Last week's post brought us only £65, leaving us well short on £292. Comrades, there is no time to waste. Don't forget, we are entering a Bank Holiday weekend, meaning inevitable delays in mail delivery. Our May fund must reach

the full £400 by Tuesday June 1. There is only one solution - please send us your donation *today*.

Thanks this week to comrades LG and TS (both £20) ●

**Robbie Rix**

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

## action

### ■ CPGB seminars

**London:** Sunday May 30, 5pm - 'The international debate on "dictatorship"', using Hal Draper's *The dictatorship of the proletariat from Marx to Lenin* as a study guide.

Sunday June 6, 5pm - 'The special class', using Hal Draper's *Karl Marx's Theory of revolution* vol II as a study guide.

Call 0181-459 7146 for details.

**Manchester:** Monday June 7, 7.30pm - 'Theories of crisis in over-view'.

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.

### ■ Stop Nato

Activities organised by the Committee for Peace in the Balkans *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!

EU heads of government summit, May 29.

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

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# New cricket test

New Labour's official ideology of anti-racism has now reached the normally conservative world of cricket.

Mathew Engel recently won the praise of reviewers for his comments in the 1999 edition of *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack*, in which he criticised "clannish" cricket clubs for their "passive discrimination, a refusal to go the extra inch and welcome outsiders".

He lamented the fact that ethnic minority players gravitate towards their own clubs, with poorer pitches than their white counterparts: "In an informal, unspoken, very English way cricketing apartheid has become accepted practice in England" - with the result that the development of future black English world-beaters may be held back. "County scorecards are starting to be enriched by names like Habib and Mirza and Sheriyyar, all English-born. But there would be a great deal more if the white majority made a greater effort to encourage them. This is a moral issue. But for English cricket, it is also a question of self-interest."

The attitude of the establishment to ethnic minority groups has changed. In 1990 former Conservative Party chairman Norman Tebbit, fighting for tougher immigration controls, declared that migrants from the West Indies, Africa and the Indian subcontinent - and their children - cannot be classified as properly English because they would not support the England team in test matches against the country of their (or their parents') origin.

In cricket's World Cup, as Nick Harris wrote in *The Independent* on May 12, "Spectators happily fail the Tebbit test". Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and West Indian communities are fully accepted as English, even though they support their own national cricket teams, so long as they accept the values defined by Trevor Phillips as "the secret of Englishness" - "decency, tolerance, respect for privacy and individualism".

Harris rejoices in the fact that visiting teams such as India and Bangladesh have a large following in England, and that tickets for games involving them have long been sold out, as eager support for all the participating teams will enhance the 'carnival of cricket' atmosphere the tournament organisers were aiming for.

*The Independent* published a list of potential UK-based support for each of the 12 competing teams: for example, England - 50 million; Scotland - 3.5 million; South Africa - 100,000 "long-term UK residents as defined by embassy"; India - 900,000; and West Indies - 500,000.

In the days of Tebbit, some sections of the establishment still questioned the right of Pakistan or West Indian cricket fans to be counted as truly British because

.....  
 '... the experience of the 500 or so Bangladesh supporters who came to see their team play highlights the limited, reactionary and chauvinist nature of bourgeois anti-racism'  
 .....

of their allegiance to Imran Khan or Viv Richards. Today supporters of such a line are a dying minority. Diversity is welcome - so says official Britain.

However, the experience of the 500 or so Bangladesh supporters who came to see their team play highlights the limited, reactionary and chauvinist nature of bourgeois anti-racism. Free movement of workers across national boundaries is not in the interests of the capitalist class - only the product. Indeed, in conditions of permanently high unemployment, unlike in the 1950s when there was a labour shortage in Britain, immigration by low-skill labour must be curbed. Fans from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan on their way to the UK were questioned by immigration officials to assess their knowledge of cricket - a new version of the 'cricket test'. The immigration officials suspect that among them may be those using the World Cup as a way to sneak into Britain. While capital moves across frontiers, workers who seek to do the same are subject to the most stringent of restrictions. Those who try to avoid them are criminalised as 'illegal immigrants'.

Supporters from the Indian subcontinent who failed to correctly name the captain of Bangladesh or Pakistan's leading batsman have been turned away. Apparently followers of the Australian team were not sent back to Sydney for failing to give a coherent account of the lbw law.

Official anti-racism only goes so far. Routine discrimination on the 'racial' grounds of being low-skill labour remains the norm. The CPGB calls for the free movement of all workers - scrap *all* immigration laws, not just 'racist' controls. We also demand full citizenship rights for all workers - our only 'test' is six months' residence ●

Mary Godwin

# Demon drugs and Dallaglio

## Communists are for a rational approach to recreational drug use

Many at the helm of society, including MPs and newspaper journalists, are often drugged up to the eyeballs: their traditional drug of choice, however, is alcohol. Winston Churchill famously consumed a bottle of brandy - daily.

Lawrence Dallaglio, England's now former Rugby Union team captain, told an undercover *News of the World* reporter, then later denied, that he took cocaine and ecstasy with two other members of the British Lions squad during their victorious tour of South Africa in 1997.

Drinkers and smokers on rugby's governing body, which accepts the right of this Murdoch rag to present a *prima facie* case against Dallaglio, carry on drinking and smoking while Dallaglio faces public opprobrium for admitting only to a long past illegal drug use. Blair's minister of sport has welcomed the rugby captain's resignation. The sick irony, of course, is that the consumption of illegal drugs is endemic. Moreover rugby football in particular operates within a subculture that positively encourages over-indulgence in the game's favourite legal drug, alcohol.

Britain's ruling class simply does not want those it rules to get away from their control, even if temporary and illusory, when the escape is fuelled by illicit narcotics. Profits can be made out of those that are, quite arbitrarily, legal drugs, whether on medical prescription or sold by publicans and tobacconists. The state gives its blessing to the use of legal drugs because it has the power to do so. Even though the dangers of use, let alone abuse, of alcohol and tobacco have become known, there is not the slightest prospect of the capitalist state prohibiting them.

Control via licensing and taxing is

as far as our rulers find it necessary to go when it comes to these dangerous, but legal, drugs.

They concede that adults should be allowed to decide their own use of alcoholic beverages and tobacco, even if it means there is a risk that some (ab)users may endanger their health or cause danger to others (eg, drunk driving). Adults are simply advised of the dangers by public health propaganda. Largely because of secondary smoking fears, restrictions on where smokers can puff away in public have tightened; but there is still no prohibition on anyone over 16 purchasing cigarettes, cigars, or pipe tobacco, nor is there likely to be any.

On the contrary, outlets for the legal sale of alcoholic drinks have increased dramatically over recent decades: off-licences and supermarket retailers exist where previously there were none. Tobacco and drink distribution and sale are regulated (though in terms of sales of tobacco products to under-16s, not particularly strongly), taxed, and controlled by the state, at least to some degree. Their use is considered perfectly acceptable.

On the other hand, Dallaglio presents an example of how those who might kick over the traces are whipped to heel. Following the *News of the World* article (May 23), he issued a statement which said, in part, "1. I categorically deny ever having dealt in illegal drugs in any way whatsoever. 2. I categorically deny ever having used illegal drugs, whether on the 1997 tour of South Africa or at any other time during my rugby career ... any use of illegal drugs is wrong and unacceptable."

In order to have even a chance of playing in the England team again, the man has had to eat crow, to be de-

meaned into answering questions about himself which the state considers its ultimate prerogative to ask. Police, the courts, and prisons, the whole criminal justice system, are there to ensure compliance with the arbitrary nature of the British drugs laws (the legal systems of England and Wales and that of Scotland are separate but equal on this one). Even in those areas where the police give cautions or magistrates give conditional discharges for possession, the state is still insisting on its rights to control us. Slaves we are indeed when we cannot decide what we put in our own bodies.

Use of narcotic and stimulant drugs has been a human pastime since pre-history. Alcoholic drinks have been brewed, peyote eaten, coca leaves chewed, and cannabis, opium and tobacco smoked for centuries. The state determines which of these substances adults shall be allowed to consume and which they shall be punished for using. The absence of choice in this matter is in fact a question of democracy, a question which it is the duty of workers and their organisations to take up to expose the state's oppressive exercise of its power.

*News of the World* reporter Louise Oswald and all the other 'public interest' hacks who have outed high profile illegal drug users are deluding themselves and those duped by their lies that they are acting as arbiters of the general good. In fact, their purpose is to ensure that the rest of us see how even those in the public eye like Lawrence Dallaglio can be cut down to size, can be made to knuckle down, can be forced to meet criteria the state unreasonably and arbitrarily lays down. By challenging the state's right to dictate what we shall or shall not do with our bodies we actually start to challenge its right to exist.

As part of the Communist Party's minimum programme, we call for the full legalisation of all drugs ●

Tom Ball

**review**

# Human affirmation

## John Coltrane *A love supreme* Impulse CD

Considering that it was originally released in 1964, it might seem an odd decision to review this record now. There again the influence and popularity of *A love supreme* never seems to wane, having become Coltrane's defining moment and one of the biggest selling jazz releases in history.

One could go deeper and pose that *A love supreme* has a mystique unrivalled in the canon of 20th century jazz, familiarised by its first movement - 'Acknowledgement' - with Jimmy Garrison's hypnotic bass line and the mantra-like chant at the climax. This sense of aura partly emanates from the lush textures of its composition. However, it is also a deeply personal recording.

In the liner notes, Coltrane recalls: "During the year 1957, I experienced, by the grace of god, a spiritual awakening which was to lead me to a richer,

fuller, more productive life." *A love supreme* is essentially Coltrane's reflection on the manner in which he sees god working through others. One does not have to share Coltrane's belief to be affected by the sense of directness and purpose with which he infuses his artistic creation and our reaction to it. *A love supreme* is an intensely human artefact, mediated precisely by the very particular ideological form in which it is conveyed. It is this ideological formation that forms the crux of Coltrane's masterpiece.

'Acknowledgement' is framed by an atmosphere of sobriety. In contrast the dominant impression of the middle sections - 'Resolution' and 'Pursuance' - is of Coltrane's taut tenor sax and pianist McCoy Tyner's jewelled dexterity. Coltrane and Tyner modify the hushed tones of the opening into something more muscular and energetic. By the fourth movement -

'Psalm' - Coltrane's saxophone slides once more into a meditative tone, underpinned by rumbling drums and bass which solemnly take over and fade off into the middle distance as the piece ends.

The compositional structure of *A love supreme* is thus moulded by the didactic purpose of its author. In the liner notes Coltrane's cardinal motif is one of humility in the face of an omnipotent god, something which appears to lead directly to the sombre beauty of the work's thematic frame. We therefore come away questioning the simple humanity that Coltrane apparently affirms.

Only a very few artists have grasped these contradictions with the skill and poise of John Coltrane. Therein lies the secret of *A love supreme*'s continuing and justified influence ●

Phil Watson

# Socialist Labour bull

**R**oyston Bull may have been squeezed out of the Socialist Labour Party, but 'Bullism' (perhaps 'Bullshit' would be a more accurate term) lives on in the pages of the SLP's official organ, *Socialist News*.

Witness the article by Dave Coates, a supporter of Bull's *Economic and Philosophic Science Review*, in the May-June issue of Scargill's paper. In seeking to provide some kind of intellectual justification for craven 'Yugoslav defencism', comrade Coates plumbs new depths of absurdity by offering his readers a short essay on the theme of history as grand conspiracy.

Under the lurid headline 'A bloody war secretly planned', Coates tells us that the imperialists' offensive against Serbia "has been planned for 20 years" and that "like all wars, it was planned in secret". The "destabilisation of Yugoslavia actually started in 1980, with the withdrawal of United States-backed financial support for the Yugoslav economy. The effect: economic, then ethnic friction - and by 1989 when inflation peaked at 2,000%, friction had already turned bloody."

Think about this statement for a moment. The only logical conclusion to be drawn from it actually amounts to an argument *in favour* of imperialist 'aid': ie, if only the US and other imperialist powers had continued to pump resources into their 'socialist' client, then all would have been well. The sacred 'integrity' of the Yugoslav 'workers' state' would have been preserved by foreign loans. This is indeed a grotesque position for any 'Marxist' to adopt, but then we are dealing with the fetid mind of a supporter of the Stalinist *EPSR*.

In the interests of consistency, Coates should surely be arguing that the problems of Yugoslavia began not in 1980, but in 1948, with Tito's break with Stalin's 'socialist' bloc, Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform and the acceptance of western protection and arms supplies. Coates is no doubt aware that Stalin and his cohorts denounced Tito and the Yugoslav 'official communists' as fascist-Trotskyists, and for the sake of Coates - and certainly his fellow SLPer Harpal Brar - it is also worth citing the ultra-Stalinist Enver Hoxha: "After many patient efforts to bring the renegade Tito into line, when they were convinced that he was incorrigible, Stalin, the Bolshevik Party and all the other genuine communist parties of the world unanimously condemned him. It became obvious that the work of Tito was in the service of world imperialism. Therefore he relied on and was supported by American imperialism and the other capitalist states. Joining the chorus of the bourgeois propaganda and in order to earn the credits he received from the imperialists, Tito, among other things, slandered that Stalin allegedly prepared the attack against Yugoslavia. Time proved that Tito was lying" (E Hoxha *With Stalin* Tirana 1984, pp25-26).

As any schoolboy knows, Tito's Yugoslavia, whatever its merits as a 'workers' state', was in hock to imperialism for decades. The exigencies of the present times, however, particularly the need to portray Serbia - with Coates and others the terms 'Serbia' and 'Yugoslavia' are tellingly interchangeable - as an innocent victim of imperialist plotting, mean that the old Stalinist orthodoxy must be suppressed. Yugoslavia's supposed status as an imperialist client must somehow be ignored, its balancing off international capital depicted as some-

thing on which the perfidious imperialists began to renege some "20 years ago".

According to Coates, imperialism's conspiratorial "hidden agenda" in the Balkans was "to trigger nationalist separatist movements in Bosnia and Kosovo, with the ultimate aim of further destabilising Yugoslavia". This proposition does not bear serious examination where Kosova is concerned. As we have laboriously explained on many occasions, the imperialists have nothing to gain, and potentially much to lose, from Kosovar independence. Their strategic geopolitical design for the region encompasses the creation of stable, economically viable states amenable to exploitation. Where Coates sees a covert conspiracy, history itself provides abundant evidence of a very overt cock-up. Ever since Germany's precipitate recognition of Slovenian statehood and independence, the imperialist powers' handling of the Balkans has been a long record of miscalculation and hasty improvisation rather than the fantasy of astute and devilish "planning" that Coates would have us believe.

Facile talk of giant conspiracies is bad enough, but there is worse to follow. More than half of Coates's article is taken up with a breathless, almost hysterical litany of atrocity stories - no doubt kindly provided by the Tanjug press agency in Belgrade - aimed at discrediting the Kosova Liberation Army. Among the "reports on Kosovo you will never see or hear through our press, radio or television" are allegations about attacks on Slavic churches, poisoned wells, burnt crops and "Slavic boys knifed". The crescendo comes with stories of a little boy who was raped and had his ear cut off by the "Albanian death squad butcher", Lyan Mazreku, not to mention the "amputations, eye-gougings and decapitations" purportedly carried out by the KLA. In short, to quote one of Coates's more subdued utterances: "KLA forces, backed by the CIA, are up to their necks in the blood of murdered civilians." We who have memories cannot but recall similar stuff about the IRA in Ireland and the NLF in Vietnam.

Coates's message is that, in order to justify its bombing, Nato has "whipped up a campaign to demonise president Slobodan Milosevic". The "truth", however, is that the Serbian regime is composed of lily-white innocents - indeed, he tells us that, prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the Serbian government was "planning to give financial assistance for repair and rebuilding to those Albanians whose homes had been damaged or destroyed by the KLA". Not a word from Coates, of course, about the 'ethnic cleansing': ie, mass murder, rapes, arson and deportations systematically carried out by Serbian army and special forces in the last two months. The hundreds of thousands of refugees are a material fact that cannot be disguised by the war propaganda of any side. Coates, unlike his counterparts among other 'Yugoslav defencists', does not even bother to try and represent this act of state terrorism as a 'justifiable' counterstroke to the atrocities supposedly performed by the KLA. He merely observes a very significant silence on the subject.

The attitude of the *Weekly Worker* to the KLA is well known. We support the just struggle of the Kosovars for self-determination and independence, but we do not see the KLA through rose-tinted spectacles. Like

all *national* liberation movements led by petty bourgeois or national bourgeois elements, it is deeply flawed. There have no doubt been occasions on which the KLA - in conditions of extreme provocation and organisational weakness - has replied to barbarism with barbarism. We condemn atrocities from whatever quarter, but we also unreservedly condemn the way in which certain organisations on the left - particularly the SLP, the *Morning Star* and the New Communist Party - set out to deceive the

working class by giving a totally distorted picture of the Serbian conflict.

*Socialist News* tells us that "signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors". It is time then that the SLP's labour dictator, Arthur Scargill, gave his considered opinion in a *serious* article. That for the moment he is prepared Bonapartistically to allow his remaining left liberals to prattle on, while they are verbally assaulted by the *EPSR* and Brarite Stalinists tells us much about the theoretical and moral

bankruptcy of his party.

Socialists are duty bound to take sides: against Nato's air war, against Milosevic, for Kosovar self-determination and independence. Blair's candidates for the EU parliament are for imperialism and Nato. On June 10 the SLP will stand to all intents and purposes as a red-brown extension of Belgrade. Only the *Weekly Worker* list is for international solidarity and anti-imperialism. The bigger our vote, the better ●

Michael Malkin

## Defend tiny Serbia

Former SLP vice-president **Royston Bull** says defeating Nato is the only issue at stake



Kosovars wait to be transported further into Albania

**T**he argument in the *Weekly Worker* (Jack Conrad May 20) that socialist demands are currently irrelevant in Kosovo (because Serbia has other plans) is just as applicable to the Albanian minority over their supposed "democratic demand for self-determination". Albanian annexation of Kosovo would mean anything but "democratic rights" for its 20% Serb minority population.

The long polemic on the struggle for "democracy" supposedly being the essence of a 'Marxist' revolution-by-stages approach ("The minimum programme and the struggle for democracy cannot be skipped" - Jack Conrad) gets round the unfortunate brutal reality of *mutual* slaughter in Kosovo by just slipping in - unjustified and undocumented - a totally biased version of what that civil war conflict (currently rumbling in its present phase for nearly 13 years now, and a struggle with origins going back a century and more) is all about.

"Serbia is fighting for its sacred right to oppress the Kosovars [an emotive way of describing the Albanians in Kosovo; the Serbs also consider themselves to be Kosovars] - to the point of driving the entire population from their homeland. For any democrat it follows that the resistance of the Kosovars [ie, Albanians] is just."

How is 'democracy' for anyone served by such poisonous nonsense? This is exactly why the Trot

fence-sitting of being "*against* Nato war" while *for* the annexation of Kosovo is such a fraud. To unleash civil war for this separation would have been *unthinkable* without subversive imperialist support *from the start* of this modern phase of conflict (from when the Yugoslav workers' state began to look doomed from the late 1980s onwards, as Gorbachev began openly to embrace full collaboration with an imperialist-run world). Thus to an important degree this "self-determination" struggle has always been a Nato war from the start. It has always been impossible to be *for* one but *against* the other - except in the world of subjective academic 'Marxist' fantasy.

And this is made even clearer by the ludicrous 'justification' of admitted KLA reactionariness ("The KLA would certainly suppress workers' strikes and peasant land occupations" if it took over Kosovo, Jack Conrad admits - suppress any communist activity, in other words) - all declared acceptable by the astonishing analogy that 19th century Irish national liberationists were quite conservative "with no thought of women's sexual equality", yet were lauded by Marx for their struggle.

Ireland happened to be an identifiable, undisputed homeland of the Irish. The British presence was an equally indisputable imperialist invasion, conquest and colonisation. Brit-

ain was a very major world colonial power. Any revolt against such a mighty empire would have an electrifying effect on national liberation struggles the whole world over. No wonder that *any* anti-imperialism in Ireland, however conservative its background, met with the approval of Marxist-Leninism's founders.

What possible comparison could there be with this opportunist armed land grab in Kosovo? If it is an identifiable homeland at all, it is of Serbs. It is certainly not undisputed territory of Albanians. Who did what to whom in the area is a bitterly contested complex question going back centuries. But the idea that tiny Serbia (population roughly what Greater London's used to be and never an independent state, even in the modern imperialist era) can be seen as an equivalent to the Great Britain colonising empire of the 19th century, dominating the world and rightly despised as a target for national liberators everywhere, is just insane. There are almost as many Albanians in the region as there are Serbs; and Greater Albania nationalist ambitions over the last century have been little different from Greater Serbia ambitions.

Of course the Albanian minority in Serbia are at liberty to declare yet another Balkan ethnic-territorial war; but let them take their chances against the Serbian state and the local Serbian population *on their own*. It is obvious they would never have done so if outside imperialist guarantees of support for annexation of Kosovo had not been conspiring from the very beginning in the 1980s. It is criminally stupid for academic 'Marxism' to effectively bolster this imperialist warmongering stunt with totally inappropriate long-range guesswork about "democratic rights" in such a foully corrupted political situation of international capitalist racketeering.

The brutality is mutual in this Kosovo civil war, and although a multinational working class fight for socialism may seem a million miles away from such intense nationalist fear and hatred, the idea of calm multinational bourgeois democracy prevailing in such a cauldron (and with total worldwide free-market economic crisis in the background) must be seen as just as unlikely.

What exists is total ethnic enmity and war on the surface, and the great mistake to be avoided is the one all the fake 'left' have made - failing to see that the Nato imperialist intervention into the war is *the overwhelmingly important factor* - nothing else. The *only* issue for international communists is to denounce this warmongering, and *explain its origins and purpose* and then to work for its *defeat*. Nothing else ●

# Marxism and democracy

**J**ack Conrad wants to claim Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky for revolutionary democracy, and locates this political tradition with the Marx and Engels of 1847-48 (*Weekly Worker* May 13).

Marx and Engels are said to be advocates of a bourgeois democratic republic in 1847-48, but what Conrad fails to mention is that the working class was in a tiny minority at this time, and Marx felt it was still possible to put pressure on the liberal bourgeoisie to strive for a republic to replace the rule of the monarchy. Marx and Engels had to go through the experience of the 1848 revolutions in order to comprehend that the liberal bourgeoisie ultimately preferred accommodation to the feudal monarchy rather than realise a bourgeois democratic republic.

This development of the reactionary character of the liberal bourgeoisie led Marx to advocate the permanent revolution, with an emphasis upon the proletariat leading the struggle for a bourgeois democratic republic. By 1871 Marx and Engels were prepared to openly support the Paris Commune as a potential dictatorship of the proletariat. Marx knew that the parties which dominated the Commune were petty bourgeois, but the social weight of the proletariat meant it could strive to realise the highest forms of democracy on the basis of bringing about proletarian revolution. Marx had finally connected the realisation of democracy to the onset of proletarian dictatorship, whereas Conrad prefers to link proletarian democracy to the attainment of a bourgeois democratic republic.

Conrad connects his approach to uncritical support for Lenin's original theory of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. This approach advocates a dual power situation: the workers and peasants have political hegemony, but the bourgeoisie still has economic domination.

Trotsky posed some important questions for Lenin to answer. Would the proletariat be willing to accept capitalist control of industry when it had the political power to denationalise industry under workers' control? The workers' and peasants' government was committed to giving land to the peasantry and carrying out other aspects of the bourgeois democratic revolution, so why could it not establish proletarian control of industry? To Trotsky, the development of soviets in 1905 showed the possibility for the economic and political hegemony of the proletariat (workers' control of production).

In contrast Lenin ignored the potential of the soviets and emphasised only the role of a hypothetical provisional revolutionary government, and therefore he underestimated the independent class power of the proletariat to transform society, which was expressed through the development of the soviets. This minimising of the role of the soviets meant Lenin limited revolution to the bourgeois democratic - such as land reform, formation of a republic and shorter working day.

In the period 1916-1917 Lenin had a critical engagement with Bukharin about the state, and this dialogue led Lenin to support Bukharin's conception of the smashing of the state. Lenin then developed the understanding that only the soviets could smash the modern bourgeois state, and the soviets would become the basis for a new type of state that would be based upon participatory democracy. Thus the proletariat had the potential to run society through the formation of soviets - this was a possibility even

## Phil Sharpe replies to Jack Conrad and Dave Craig

in semi-feudal Russia.

After the February 1917 revolution the soviets were dominated by the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, who to Lenin represented the counterrevolutionary realisation of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. Hence what was necessary was to combine the bourgeois democratic revolution and proletarian revolution through establishing revolutionary leadership of the soviets. This situation would not represent socialism, which required international revolution, but was instead the hegemony of the proletariat in alliance with the peasantry. The republic was fully established as the soviet state, and bourgeois democracy was linked to meeting the aspirations of the peasantry.

Consequently Lenin and Trotsky had a similar perspective in 1917, that was to realise the democratic republic and dictatorship of the proletariat in an uninterrupted manner. Lenin knew that it was possible for the workers to win the support of the peasants, because the Provisional government was refusing to implement the democratic demand of land to the peasants. But in a complex manner the government had the support of the traditional representatives of the workers and peasants (Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries). This meant the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry was realised in a counterrevolutionary context, and so this perspective needed to be replaced by the slogan of 'All power to the soviets'. Lenin was for putting the old theoretical approach in the archives because Zinoviev and Kamenev were using the democratic dictatorship standpoint in order to emphasise bourgeois democracy and thereby reject the struggle for 'All power to the soviets'.

Trotsky and Lenin are united by the standpoint that capitalism in Russia is no longer a potential and protracted bourgeois democratic stage of historical development. The stageist view of Lenin's *Two tactics* is replaced by the perspective that the bourgeois Provisional government cannot develop Russia economically and politically, and so what is necessary is a second revolution that establishes the dictatorship of the proletariat (soviet power) and encourages international revolution.

In contrast the bourgeois government is counterrevolutionary and cannot realise the bourgeois democratic programme of peace, land, bread and freedom, so the only way to realise bourgeois democracy is through establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. Bourgeois democracy is expressed through the dictatorship of the proletariat, and is not represented by the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. The dictatorship of the proletariat as the commune state has participatory democracy to realise bourgeois democracy, such as through the Constituent Assembly and giving land to the peasants.

Dave Craig contends that in 1918 Germany a bourgeois republic was established through the revolutionary activity of the proletariat. This view does not establish the class dynamic of the situation. The onset of the Weimar republic was also a counterrevolution, in that the bourgeoisie acted to oppose and repress

the revolutionary mass activity of the proletariat, and they isolated the revolutionary party of Luxemburg. This situation shows that bourgeois democratic gains can only be maintained and developed through establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. The onset of dual power between the bourgeoisie and proletariat can only last for a short time before establishing the class rule of the working class or bourgeoisie.

Conrad seems reluctant to evaluate the democratic credentials of the Bolsheviks in power, but it is an appraisal of the Soviet government that will enable us to establish whether it is possible to realise bourgeois democracy through the actions of proletarian dictatorship. To establish credibility for this type of analysis we need to give a voice to the most eminent Marxist critics of the Soviet government.

The first critic is Kautsky, the most prestigious of the orthodox Marxist opposition to the Bolshevik revolution. Kautsky maintained that the October Revolution was premature. Russia needed to go through protracted capitalist development and develop bourgeois democracy before proletarian revolution was feasible.

Lenin showed that Kautsky's approach was an accommodation to imperialist bourgeois democracy, and this opportunism did nothing to contribute to the task of international revolution, which was the strategic perspective of the Bolsheviks. The world revolution would overcome the problem of low development of the productive forces, and in the meantime the proletariat and peasant alliance would act to thwart the processes of bureaucratic degeneration.

Secondly, in the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution Zinoviev and Kamenev tried to construct a coalition government of Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries. They asked Lenin and Trotsky not to enter this proposed government in order to maintain unity. The main aim of this government would be to carry out bourgeois democratic reforms. Lenin and Trotsky defined this proposed government as an opportunist alliance that would not carry out bourgeois democratic revolution, but would instead accommodate to the forces of bourgeois counterrevolution, and so they did not agree to the proposals for coalition government. Instead a genuine workers' and peasants government was formed on the basis of soviet power - a coalition of the Bolsheviks and Left Socialist Revolutionaries.

Thirdly, Rosa Luxemburg developed her revolutionary criticism of the Bolsheviks on the question of democracy. She contended that the Bolshevik revolution had to develop participatory democracy if state coercion was to be kept to a minimum. The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly was a mistake: the assembly was a reactionary agency of internal bourgeois and petty bourgeois class interests, but it also expressed peasant concerns and aspirations. The suppression of the Constituent Assembly could become a precedent for banning other organisations, such as the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks. To realise bourgeois democracy requires the widest plural democracy, both soviet and parliamen-

tary democracy. The alternative is authoritarianism.

To Lenin, Trotsky and Bukharin, the Constituent Assembly was counter-revolutionary, and would rally support to the organisation of counterrevolution against the soviets. The soviets do not want to ban other parties, but their role in the civil war meant the soviets had no alternative than to ban the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries.

Lenin's view was understandable, given the difficult political circumstances in which they had to make decisions. Nevertheless Luxemburg's approach was proved correct. The suppression of the Constituent Assembly facilitated the banning of political parties, and the soviets ended up with one-party rule. The period of bourgeois democracy lasted from October 1917 to the period of the revolt against the Brest-Litovsk treaty by the Left Socialist Revolutionaries in 1918. The coalition between the workers and peasants was effectively over, and the isolation of the Bolsheviks meant that they maintained the revolution against the other parties that were increasingly counterrevolutionary.

However, instead of trying to tackle this situation of isolation politically by allowing the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries to exist officially, these parties remained banned, and pluralist democracy was essentially over. So too the period of bourgeois democracy. This situation was not just the fault of the Bolsheviks: the opportunism and counterrevolutionary character of the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries created the prospect of being banned, but the Bolsheviks acted in an elitist manner and refused to compromise with the other parties. For example, Martov's left Mensheviks could have been won to a coalition government arrangement between 1917-18.

Primarily the dissolving of the Constituent Assembly, and the gradual demise of dynamic democracy in the soviets, showed the Bolsheviks no longer trusted the masses to make up their own minds, and instead the Bolsheviks become increasingly a substitute for the masses in governmental terms. The Bolsheviks had become a guardian of the workers and peasants: they acted on behalf of the workers and peasants, but were no longer accountable to them.

The introduction of war communism deepened the reaction against bourgeois democracy. This was because the cooperation of the peasantry for the development of the soviet system was repudiated, and instead coercion was introduced as the basis of relations between the workers and peasants. It is questionable whether any more grain was located for the hungry cities, because the peasants no longer cooperated with the grain collections.

By 1921 Lenin and Trotsky realised that the break-up of the proletarian and peasant alliance threatened to lead to the overthrow of the Soviet regime, which led Lenin to introduce the New Economic Policy. This represented the reintroduction of bourgeois democracy, or the restoration of egalitarian economic relations between the workers and peasants. There was also an attempt to overcome bureaucratic rule within the Soviet state apparatus, and increased support was expressed for international revolution. However, a ban was introduced on party factions that undermined the potential to redevelop pluralist democracy in soviet and parliamentary terms.

The Bolsheviks had reacted to the

difficult conditions of civil war by suppressing bourgeois democracy and this was represented by an ideological retreat to elitist and utopian socialism. The idealist illusion was generated that it would be possible to internally build the productive forces for socialism using the methods of war communism. In 1921 this elitist socialism was renounced by the introduction of the NEP that started to restore bourgeois democratic revolutionary relations between the workers and peasants.

What of national-self determination? Did this amount to the successful application of the bourgeois democratic programme by the Bolsheviks? The attempt by the Soviet government to give self-determination to the Ukraine and other nations led to the hegemony of the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie. This indicated, as Luxemburg was aware, that national self-determination is not a bourgeois democratic demand, but is linked to the dictatorship of the proletariat as proletarian self-determination.

This became apparent to the Bolsheviks during the civil war, when Luxemburg's stance was bureaucratically applied in the military terms of war communism. This meant that national aspirations became suppressed by bureaucratic centralisation, and the desire for national independence of the Soviet republics developed in the 1930s.

Trotsky argued that Stalinist Great Russian chauvinism had led to the aspiration for separation from the Soviet Union by republics such as the Ukraine. He called for the establishment of an independent Soviet Ukrainian republic, which expressed progressive proletarian self-determination. This unity of the national with social class interests could be the basis for new proletarian revolution within the Stalinist Soviet Union, with voluntary proletarian unity of the various Soviet republics replacing Stalinist centralisation. National self-determination is actually a proletarian democratic demand that is part of the class struggle to link the dictatorship of the proletariat to the highest possible forms of democracy.

In Russia the necessity of bourgeois democratic revolution is primarily about establishing and consolidating the proletariat and peasant alliance. This is why in the oppressed nations with a peasant population bourgeois democratic revolution is combined with proletarian revolution. In the major imperialist nations where there is no longer a peasantry the bourgeois democratic revolution has become either obsolete or a secondary question.

In contrast Dave Craig and Jack Conrad still emphasise the bourgeois democratic revolution in Britain because they equate it with abolition of the monarchy. But the monarchy is not primarily a survival of feudalism (even if it has a feudal ideology) and is instead integral to the modern bourgeois state. The abolition of the monarchy is part of smashing the state and replacing it with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The call by Conrad and Craig to abolish the monarchy and establish a bourgeois republic is to equate the proletarian revolution with an already completed bourgeois revolution. This approach does not establish the class content of bourgeois democracy, which is that of peasant class aspirations for land reform and democratic accountability within society. These aspirations complement, but are not identical to, the proletarian class struggle to realise soviet power ●



# Germany calling

As part of their ongoing pitch for bourgeois respectability, the British National Party's TV political broadcast for June's European elections screened on Friday May 21. Having stumped up the cash to stand in all English European constituencies, as well as in Scotland and Wales, John Tyndall's Hitler-saluting boneheads are making another attempt to make a breakthrough to the big time.

The film was full of the Union Flag, the Westminster parliament, British democracy and, incredibly, the sacrifice of ordinary Brits in World War II. The opening shot of the five-minute piece started with "Our glorious dead" etched into the cenotaph on Whitehall, panning down to a Churchillian John Tyndall, damning the European superstate and its threats to Britain. The broadcast never deviated from this script. Let's get out of Europe. British jobs for British people. Europe is destroying 'our' economic base. There was also reference to Britain's mythical 'thousand years of unbroken history' - echoes of John Major's 1997 election campaign.

Of course, the would-be Führer failed to mention his retrospective sympathies for and desire to emulate Nazi Germany, his belief that Britain and the Germans should have fought Russia side by side in World War II, his denial of the holocaust against Jews, gypsies, communists, gays and other 'alien' elements, nor his party's sickening racist 'send 'em back' programme. This self-censorship is part and parcel of Tyndall's 'constitutional' turn. A cynical or genuine turn which has led to former supporters splitting away into Combat 18 and other forms of deranged terrorism.

Far from parading fascist credentials, the BNP is attempting to present itself as a political alternative for a xenophobic British chauvinism. Fat chance. As its party political half-consciously reflects, official Britain has been moulded as an antithesis to the Hitlerite politics of the BNP. Modern Britishness is "our finest hour"; Churchill, the blitz, Dunkirk, D-Day and anti-Nazism. And as official Britain is being reshaped by Blair, the emergent consensus is based on inclusive, bourgeois anti-racism - against the outside world.

Yet much of the left had a near hysterical reaction to the BNP's broadcast. The SWP obviously fears the power of the BNP message. Either that or it fears for its own ability to answer the BNP and tear away its veil of respectability. Falling behind the liberals, the SWP implies that the BNP should be banned. It asks: why did the BBC and the state allow the BNP broadcast to go ahead? Of course, the SWP would have us believe that the state is involved in a vast conspiracy to protect the Nazis. While they fall short of actually calling on the state to ban the BNP or its propaganda, they do nothing to challenge this draconian demand from the likes of Mark Wadsworth and the Anti-Racist Alliance.

Given the BNP's pathetic sociopathic mimicking of Hitlerism, Tyndall's motley crew has no hope of cohering any serious base. They have no hope of following in the footsteps of the Saxe-Coburgs and becoming *British*. They are not an integral part of the high establishment. Their Hitlerphilia is too engrained, their ranks too tainted. On the contrary, they are viewed as thoroughly unBritish. The SWP's hysteria fits neatly into the ideology of the

ruling class, based as it is on 'us versus the Nazis'. The SWP's flirting with statism - bans limiting freedom of speech, legal restrictions, is utterly short-term and seems more to do with pursuing recruits and bolstering the sect than actually challenging the real sources of fascism. - the capitalist system.

Worryingly, the only organisation articulating any consistent or 'credible' little-British vision in the June 10 European elections is Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party. While any attempt to directly equate the SLP's politics with the BNP's would be out of order, the election campaigns of both organisations appear to be aimed at the same chauvinist nervous system - the main difference being the BNP appeals to an exclusive white Britishness, the SLP to a more 'modern' multi-ethnic Britishness. Announcing the launch of its Euro-election campaign, an SLP press

release declares it is "the *only socialist party* campaigning for Britain's immediate and complete withdrawal from the European Union" (emphasis added). The "only socialist" tag is needed because this central demand of the SLP is also the central demand of the BNP and the UK Independence Party. Amazingly, the respectable BNP broadcast was almost indistinguishable from the SLP's stress on British freedom from Brussels.

To cover themselves, the SLP's press release claims that "Socialist Labour is not nationalistic or jingoists [sic]; we want to get out of the EU and back into the world. We want to trade with the countries of Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America". As if British capitalism was not doing that today. But what Scargill has in mind is pulling Britain out of the EU and imposing a *national* socialism. Such a policy would, if implemented, condemn Britain to dire

poverty. It seamlessly segues with the thoughts of Ella Rule, SLP London candidate, Stalin Society member and secretary of the Korean Friendship Society when she says that North Korea gives us an image of "what we are all fighting for" and that the system in Britain that "replaces capitalism will be like North Korea".

Such a system has nothing to do with the proletarian socialism envisaged by Marx and Engels. Proletarian socialism - the first stage of communism - *must* be based on the advanced capitalist countries. In the contemporary world that means the economies of the European Union, Japan and North America. If the policy of "Vote us in to get us out" is ever successful - whether from the SLP or the BNP - it would spell disaster for the British working class and throw back the project of genuine socialism for many decades ●

Marcus Larsen

## Brar revelation rocks Scargill

Socialist Labour Party general secretary Arthur Scargill was stunned into incoherence at the press launch of the party's EU election campaign earlier this week.

A supporter of the 'Weekly Worker' slate of European candidates read out a statement from a paper delivered in May 1998 to the ultra-Stalinite Workers Party of Belgium by SLP national executive member Harpal Brar. It read: "The SLP honours and cherishes the great achievements of socialism in USSR. It refuses to denounce that legendary communist, Joseph Stalin. For that reason, deservedly in my view, comrade Scargill has been denounced by the counterrevolutionary Trots and revisionist liquidators as a dictatorial 'Stalinist' - a badge that I have told him he ought to wear with honour."

Comrade Brar is an SLP national executive member and a candidate on the party's London list for the June 10 elections - a position he shares with four other supporters of his Indian Workers Association-Stalin Society faction. It so happened that he was chairing the press launch.

The comrade from the 'Weekly Worker' (the name the Communist Party has been forced to adopt because of the ban imposed on the CPGB from standing under its own name by the registrar of political parties) asked Scargill whether this statement - taken from the WPB's website - was an accurate reflection of the SLP viewpoint: "Does the SLP honour and cherish the achievements of Joseph Stalin?"

Avoiding a direct answer, Scargill rambled on in a most unconfident and obfuscatory manner about how much you can misrepresent and falsify what is posted on the internet. He was not prepared to answer questions about what one of his candidates "supposedly" had said: "All the candidates agree on our platform on this election and this is the only thing that counts."

The CPGB comrade asked if Brar would perhaps confirm that the remarks were accurately quoted, to which Scargill replied that he was the

speaker, nobody else. "So you don't deny this pro-Stalin viewpoint?" persisted our comrade. "I am not going to say anything on this."

This was undoubtedly an embarrassing moment for the SLP general secretary, whose opportunism leads him to play to whatever audience he finds in front of him. Certainly journalists from the BBC, *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and others were more than a little interested in the company Scargill keeps. Of the dozen SLP members present, almost all were comrade Brar's close Association of Communist Workers supporters from Ealing and Southall - the only London SLP branch still functioning.

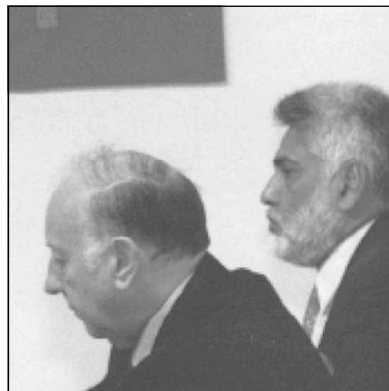
Scargill was then asked by another CPGB supporter whether the SLP supported the right of Kosova to self-determination. Again avoiding the question, he spoke - at some length - only of his party's condemnation of the Nato bombing. Pressed by the comrade, he then declared that the question was irrelevant, as Kosova was clearly part of Yugoslavia, whose sovereignty the west was violating.

Earlier Scargill had given a very long, boring speech on the theme of "pulling out" of the European Union (the "Common Market", as he insisted on calling it). Membership of the EU costs "Britain's taxpayers" £11million per day, or £4 billion per year, he said - a total of no less than £50 billion since "we" joined in 1973. This was enough for 200 new hospitals, 2,000 new schools ... And so he went on, churning out figure after figure.

The UK's membership of the EU was apparently solely responsible for Britain's mass unemployment, and leaving the EU would end it altogether.

Despite the boast of the SLP being the "only socialist party" contesting the EU elections which stood for "getting out", and the usual mention of trading with Cuba, there was nothing which could be considered remotely Marxist about Scargill's vision of national socialism ●

Alan Fox



*"So you don't deny this pro-Stalin viewpoint?" persisted our comrade. "I am not going to say anything on this," replied a rattled Arthur Scargill*

## What we fight for

● Our central aim is to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain. Without this Party the working class is nothing; with it, it is everything.

● The Communist Party serves the interests of the working class. We fight all forms of opportunism and revisionism in the workers' movement because they endanger those interests. We insist on open ideological struggle in order to fight out the correct way forward for our class.

● Marxism-Leninism is powerful because it is true. Communists relate theory to practice. We are materialists; we hold that ideas are determined by social reality and not the other way round.

● We believe in the highest level of unity among workers. We fight for the unity of the working class of all countries and subordinate the struggle in Britain to the world revolution itself. The liberation of humanity can only be achieved through world communism.

● The working class in Britain needs to strike as a fist. This means all communists should be organised into a single Party. We oppose all forms of separatism, which weakens our class.

● Socialism can never come through parliament. The capitalist class will never peacefully allow their system to be abolished. Socialism will only succeed through working class revolution and the replacement of the dictatorship of the capitalists with the dictatorship of the working class. Socialism lays the basis for the conscious planning of human affairs: ie, communism.

● We support the right of nations to self-determination. In Britain today this means the struggle for Irish freedom should be given full support by the British working class.

● Communists are champions of the oppressed. We fight for the liberation of women, the ending of racism, bigotry and all other forms of chauvinism. Oppression is a direct result of class society and will only finally be eradicated by the ending of class society.

● War and peace, pollution and the environment are class questions. No solution to the world's problems can be found within capitalism. Its ceaseless drive for profit puts the world at risk. The future of humanity depends on the triumph of communism.

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

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Simon Harvey of the SLP

## Scargill's Stalinist badge

**A**t first sight it appears quite remarkable that Harpal Brar's tiny band of supporters, grouped around the Stalin Society and the shadowy Association of Communist Workers, could rise to such positions of influence within the Socialist Labour Party.

Less than two years ago the SLP had over 2,000 members, several rival factions jockeying for position, and a sizeable minority layer of democrats and non-sectarian socialists. There was a glimmer of hope that our party had the potential to be transformed into some kind of vehicle for working class advance, despite the efforts of Arthur Scargill and his assorted courtiers to 'void' dissidents and stifle independent thought and membership self-activity.

But today there are no more than around 200 individuals on the books. Scargill's dictatorial regime has succeeded in draining away every ounce of enthusiasm. One by one all the factions have either dropped out or been driven away, as they fell foul of the general secretary's arbitrary and undemocratic moves to ensure his complete and undisputed control.

All factions bar one. Comrade Brar, editor of *Lalkar*, journal of the Indian Workers Association, has risen from obscurity to the point where he is now in effect Scargill's number two. President Frank Cave is in ill health and has never been more than a tame figurehead. The vice-presidency is vacant and Brar - who has that mean and hungry look - is now virtually the only member of the national executive upon whom Scargill can rely. And not only for competence before the media, but for a degree of initiative.

Comrade Brar ably chaired the press launch of Socialist Labour's campaign for the EU elections earlier this week. Clearly he has his own agenda. Five of the 10 candidates on the SLP's London list are his supporters, and the Brarites dominate both the youth and women's section (son Ranjit edits the youth journal *Spark* and daughter Joti edits *Women for socialism*).

This new relationship at the top was symbolised by a photograph published on the back page of the April-May edition of *Socialist News*, the official party paper. Taken by one of comrade Brar's close followers from his Ealing and Southall branch, the picture shows Scargill and Brar engaged in close conversation on a picket of Downing Street in protest at the bombing of Yugoslavia. Brar is clutching copies of *Lalkar* to his chest, while just behind them his son Ranjeet, is seen nonchalantly leafing through another Brarite factional publication, *Spark*.

Brar's meteoric rise has been possible only due to a refusal to utter a word of public criticism of Scargill, his residual Labourite prejudices and dictatorial appetite. All three publications under his control reek of dour

Stalinism and an official optimism that flies flat in the face of reality. The SLP is portrayed as moving ever upwards under the wise guidance of the Great Leader - it is "growing exponentially", according to an anonymous *Spark* contributor (No2, undated).

Yet comrade Brar did not at first embrace the SLP. Initially he roundly lambasted it for remaining trapped in social democracy. Soon, however, he began to sniff potential in terms of Association of Communist Workers entryism.

While not a word of criticism from Brar has been seen in his factional journals since he joined the SLP, a year ago he gave a lengthy speech at a seminar organised by the ultra-Stalinist Workers Party of Belgium, sister organisation of the ACW. On this unguarded occasion, he expounded his strategy and how those in the ACW "must do our best to help, to push, the SLP in a Marxist-Leninist direction".

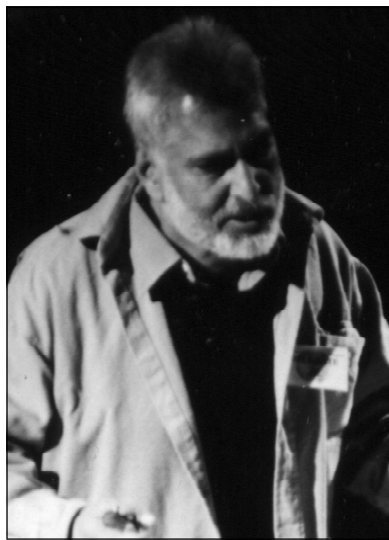
In his paper, 'The emergence of the Socialist Labour Party and resistance in the British working class against the onslaughts of monopoly capitalism', presented to the Brussels May Day gathering of Stalinists in 1998, he writes: "For comrade Scargill to break with Labour and yet maintain illusions in social democracy - the politics of social democratism - as was only too evident from his *Future strategy for the left* - was to persist in errors which, if uncorrected, could not but do irreparable damage to the cause of the working class."

He continued: "When the chapter on Genesis (clause four in this case) was expunged from it, [Scargill's] faith was broken and he could no longer stay a member of this church (the Labour Party). He broke away in revolt in order to re-establish the church in its pristine originality. He left to 'start to build a Socialist Labour Party that represents the principles, values, hopes and dreams which gave birth nearly a century ago to what has, sadly, now [only now! - Brar] become New Labour'."

Comrade Brar went on to slam the "political and ideological weaknesses of the SLP" and Scargill's "reformist and Keynesian illusions of the worst type" - his "fatal flaw". Nevertheless, despite what he called this "comradely critique", Brar listed the reasons why he considered it necessary for the ACW to work inside the SLP. The final reason is most instructive:

"Last, but not least, unlike the revisionists and Trotskyists, the SLP honours and cherishes the great achievements of socialism in the USSR. It refuses to denounce that legendary communist, Joseph Stalin. For that reason, deservedly in my view, comrade Scargill has been denounced by the counterrevolutionary Trots and revisionist liquidators as a dictatorial 'Stalinist' - a badge that I have told him he ought to wear with honour."

Comrade Brar held out the hope that



Harpal Brar

*"... the SLP honours and cherishes the great achievements of socialism in the USSR. It refuses to denounce that legendary communist, Joseph Stalin"*

..... the SLP, through "the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat" (ie, the dictatorship by a British Stalin over the proletariat), would "lose its petty bourgeois hangers-on, but also become greatly more capable of serving the interests of the proletariat than at present".

In fact, he concluded, "Our decision to join the SLP, notwithstanding its weaknesses as outlined above, has been proven correct by the 2nd Congress of the SLP. Many of the noisy and fractious Trotskyist groups, who had joined the SLP with the purpose of hijacking it, suffered serious defeat at that congress. Their entryist plans in ruins, they left the SLP, shouting

abuse at the 'Stalinist' Scargill. Their departure gave added strength to the SLP, cleansed as it was of the filthy scum whose constant endeavour is to sap the vitality and self-confidence of the working class; to keep working class struggle within the boundaries of the capitalist system by slandering the all-encompassing and earth-shattering achievements of socialism."

As a result comrade Brar's own "entryist plans" have come to fruition beyond his wildest dreams.

The full text of comrade Brar's speech can be found on the website of the Workers Party of Belgium at: 'http://www.wpb.be/icm/98en/98en19.htm'.

### ■ Balkans farce

Of the three SLP publications, *Socialist News* is the only one not yet under Brarite control. Consequently it retains its character as a strange mix of eclecticism and Scargillite official optimism.

One regular columnist has been *Guardian* journalist and well-meaning left liberal Victoria Brittain. She condemns Nato's air war in the Balkans from a bourgeois-legalistic, pacifist viewpoint in the April-May edition. "Yugoslavia," she writes, "is a sovereign state." It "has done nothing aggressive outside its own boundaries". The west's attacks bypassed the UN and were not sanctioned in advance by any national parliament or US congress. They were doomed to failure because they "could not prevent the ethnic cleansing ... but would be likely to exacerbate it".

Granted, comrade Brittain concedes, "Kosovo has been brutally emptied of its Albanian citizens", but imperialism went about intervening all the wrong way, showing "no appreciation of Serbian history". There should have been patient "negotiations on the future of Kosovo and its Albanian population ... under the aegis of the United Nations". Comrade Brittain recommends that the "peace-keeping forces ... are made up of nations with neutral affiliations" - she comes up with "India, Egypt, Ireland, Norway, Ukraine" as suitable candidates.

And who does our liberal friend look to in order to end the conflict? The international working class? Hardly: "It is not beyond the capacity of UN secretary general Kofi Annan, Russian prime minister [now ex] Yevgeni Primakov and the pope to devise a form of peace negotiations which would stop the bombing."

In the May-June issue of *Socialist News* comrade Brittain is still complaining that the bombing "immeasurably worsened the plight of the Albanian population of Kosovo, accelerating [the] ethnic cleansing". Yet an unsigned editorial goes further, bemoaning the "refugee crisis created by the bombing" (my emphasis). And on the facing page Dave Coates, one of the shrinking number of support-

ers of Roy Bull's *Economic and Philosophic Science Review* still in the SLP, obscenely implies that the ethnic cleansing has all been in the opposite direction - by the KLA against the Serbs (see Michael Malkin's article, p5).

So the SLP is *against* the bombing - but who are we *for*? Well, either Milosevic or the pope, depending on which page you have open at the time. Of course both *Women For Socialism* and *Spark* back the reactionary Yugoslav regime. For *Spark* the whole issue is black and white - it is simply a case of imperialist expansion: "Kosovo is the glittering prize for which Nato is fighting its dirty war" (No2, undated). Did it say "glittering prize"?

### ■ 'Our capitalists'

The latest *Socialist News* gloats immodestly over the SLP votes in the Scottish and Welsh elections. Darran Hickery claims to be "really delighted" at the one percent return in Wales, while the headline writer brags that "Socialist Labour tops 'left' vote in regional lists" in both elections. Chris Herriot, president of the SLP in Scotland, mentions that "token protests were made by a number of MSPs ... at having to swear an oath of loyalty to the queen". The words 'Tommy Sheridan' and 'Scottish Socialist Party' fell to the editor's red pen.

Frank Cave is already looking forward to yet more astounding successes in the EU elections in his front-page article. Stung by accusations of jingoism and little Englandism, Scargill has hit upon the idea of adding "into the world" to the SLP's slogan of "vote us in to get us out". This is how comrade Cave's piece is presented. However, hopes that the reader will be offered an internationalist, working class perspective are soon dashed: "We want Britain free from the endless EU regulations that have strangled thousands of small enterprises (including farming and fishing) which we believe should be sustained in a planned economy." He is arguing for good, old fashioned protectionism for 'our' capitalists, small and not so small - he mentions "shipbuilding, coal-mining and textile industries" that "the 'Common Market' has helped butcher".

Calls for "fair trade" with the rest of the world ring hollow in view of this, and mentioning Cuba as a beneficiary does not do much to give this chauvinism a left gloss. To show he means business though, our Frank is pictured, somewhat incongruously, alongside Fidel Castro on a recent visit to Havana. Castro appears to be offering the SLP president a gift in a large shoe box.

On an inside page an anonymous writer asks: "If a country like Norway - not a member of the EU - can have one of the most prosperous economies in the world *outside* the EU, why not Britain?" 'Socialist' Cuba, capitalist Norway - take your choice ●