



# Communist manifesto launched

# Vote 'Weekly

# Worker' on

# June 10!

**T**he Communist Party of Great Britain is standing in two regional constituencies in the forthcoming European elections - London and the North West.

On May 21, we launched our election manifesto on our newly revamped website and we reprint it in full in this issue. We call on all revolutionaries, socialists and consistent democrats to back our lists in these regions, to record their vote against Blair the warmonger and anti-democrat. Unfortunately, we have been forced to stand under the name of our paper in these elections, as the 'Weekly Worker' list.

We have been denied registration as the CPGB because of the "confusion" this may have caused with other organisations with 'communist' in their title. Despite this, the registrar of political parties - one John Holden in Cardiff's Companies House - has allowed five organisations with 'socialist' in their title, along with the Democratic Labour Party, the Pro-Euro Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and other organisations whose names seem just as likely to cause voter "confusion". In taking this arbitrary and crassly unjust decision, Holden has been 'advised' by a parliamentary committee chiefly composed of Blairite hand-raisers like Gwyneth Dunwoody and Gerald Kaufman.

This is typical of the authoritarianism that lies at the heart of the Blair project. While the man inscribes 'democracy' on his banner, every new measure he introduces has an autocratic core. The assault on rump Yugoslavia has been prosecuted as a "just war", a moral crusade to defend the Kosovar people. Yet there is no talk of the basic democratic right these people have fought for - the right to self-determination and independence. In effect, Nato's campaign is also a campaign *against* this democratic right of the Kosovar peoples. Essentially, the war is about legitimis-

ing Nato intervention and domination of south-eastern Europe.

While these are the first all-UK elections under proportional representation - formally a more democratic system than first-past-the-post - organisations like the Communist Party and the Socialist Party in England and Wales have been banned from standing under their party names. Other restrictions have been slipped in alongside the new electoral arrangements, measures which further limit the chance for smaller organisations to make their voice heard during the election campaign. The new tiers of government in Scotland and Wales have been introduced precisely to deny these peoples the right to self-determination; an anti-democratic sop.

Blair's establishment anti-racism delivers more powers into the hands of the chauvinist police force and courts to clamp down on 'unacceptable' extremist views. Inevitably, this restriction of democracy will rebound on the left, just as legislation like the Public Order Act - ostensibly introduced to deal with Mosley's fascists and actually campaigned for by the left - has been used to ban our activities in the past.

Clearly, there can be no excuse for anyone claiming to be a socialist - or even a democrat - to vote for Blair's deeply reactionary party. We urge readers to support the 'Weekly Worker' lists in London and North West England. Our candidates stand on a platform that pushes democracy to its furthest limits under the existing system and poses the need to go beyond these limits, to create a new society root and branch. By the same token, there should also be no excuse for anyone claiming to be a socialist or democrat to vote for Scargill's rump organisation in London or the North West. Half of his list in London are members of the Stalin Society. Yet - incredibly - SWP leaders say that they will call for a vote

for Scargill. This is shamefully irresponsible. If, through cowardice or inertia, the left gives him the chance, Scargill will lead our class to utter disaster. His politics are far nearer the red-brown politics of Milosevic than anything resembling working class socialism. Scargill aspires to be Britain's labour dictator, that is abundantly clear. The question is, why are organisations such as the SWP conspiring to help him?

There should be no question of handing over the leadership of the left wing of the workers' movement to Scargill. While his campaign has not attracted much in the way of bourgeois media interest so far, his real victory has been over sections of the British left. Every vote for the SLP will be an argument in favour of Scargill's personal dictatorship.

The SWP, Alliance for Workers' Liberty, the Socialist Party in England and Wales, Socialist Outlook, Independent Labour Network and the Communist Party of Great Britain were cooperating in the Socialist Alliance, a left electoral front that was to have mounted a principled challenge to Blair's Labour in London and elsewhere. Contemptibly, Scargill did not even deign to reply to requests that he join this bloc. Instead of stiffening the resolve to fight, this produced panic. One by one, the other organisations collapsed before the SLP dictator - a dishonourable retreat that they can now only partially redeem by supporting the 'Weekly Worker' list.

Every vote for the 'Weekly Worker' in London and North West England will be a vote not simply for a principled platform of action to defend the working class and democratic rights. It will also be a vote to purge the workers' movement of the discredited politics of the past represented by Scargill and his ugly parody of a workers' party, the SLP.

Mark Fischer



Nato out - independence for Kosova

## Summer Offensive: halfway stage

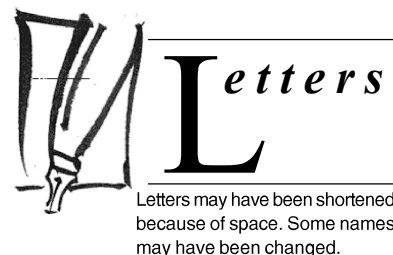
**T**he first month of the 16th Summer Offensive - our intense two-month period of fundraising work - has flashed by. Campaigning around our electoral challenge in London and the North West has taken up the time of many comrades. In that sense, we have been busy spending money rather than raising it.

We anticipated this being a problem. As we wrote in the *Weekly Worker* (April 29), our intervention has cost us "£10,000 in deposits alone, before we even start to think about running any sort of campaign". The total so far stands at just over £5,000 towards our £25,000 target. Clearly, the pace of the offensive has to be dramatically stepped up after the June 10

election has come and gone. In the meantime, despite their already full agendas, cell secretaries must ensure that Centre is kept fully updated on the progress of individual members, that the figures we hold in the national office are accurate and that money is fed in promptly.

Our Party aggregate in mid-June will take a major item on this year's SO. It is important that all secretaries timetable discussions in the cells before this so that individual problems and ideas for moneyraising can be aired. Comrades, we need to make this SO one of our most successful, despite the pressure of work crowding in on us. Let's all ensure we knuckle down to it very soon.

Ian Mahoney



## Arthur knows

Surely it can't be such a bourgeois concept as electoral rivalry which has led the *Weekly Worker* and its newly designed website to focus all its wrath on the SLP and Scargill? Space which could be used for valid criticism of the SLP is wasted in invective and insinuation. The terms "red-brown socialism", "national socialism", "little Englander" - "Pol Potism" even - are flung about without any regard to the validity of such terms.

Whatever Scargill's faults, nationalism is not one of them. His internationalism is above reproach, both as an NUM leader and a socialist. Nor do claims about his "Stalinism" wash with those who know him or have worked with him, unless that term is used in a vernacular, unMarxist way just to denote bureaucratic methods of working and centralised decision-making. But "Stalinism" as a historical phenomenon denotes much more. It should not be used in the same debased way that the left also sometimes uses the term 'fascism'.

Neither is the SLP describable as a Stalinist organisation. Arthur is well aware of the historic failure of the 'communist' parties. He also knows that any association with Stalinism would kill any credibility the SLP has in the British working class and particularly the trade unions. He also knows what Brar's game is. Unfortunately, Arthur, being naive and trusting, and not a good judge of character (eg. Roger Windsor), may be too lulled by Brar's personable nature into a false confidence that he can use Brar, or rather Brar's 'power base' in the Indian Workers Association, and then part company with his embarrassing sycophants. The problem is, by that time, will there be anyone left in the SLP except Stalinists?

Arthur can get shot of Brar any time, quite constitutionally, with ample evidence of his self-avowed entryism. Politics, like comedy, is all a matter of timing. Unfortunately it is not a foregone conclusion who will have the last laugh in this case.

The truth missed by the *Weekly Worker* is that the hard-line Stalinist element is still a minority in the SLP, despite its control of *Spark* and *Women for Socialism*. Some of this minority are amiable crackpots like Dave Coates. Few, apart from Brar, have any articulate replies to even the most basic criticism aimed at them by working class members.

Arthur does want to build the SLP. He does want the liberal socialists like John Hendy and Victoria Brittain in the party, and realises that he has to keep the Stalinist skeleton locked in the cupboard. He also sees the need to recruit youth, and knows that *Spark* is about as scintillating as reading the pig-iron figures of a five-year plan.

Delphi shares the *Weekly Worker's* interest in exposing Stalinism in the SLP. You because you want to wreck the SLP, and I because I want it to survive and build on its massive potential. Criticism, however, must be based on analysis and not on the supposed subjective motives of Scargill. Examine that fundamental contradiction: the reliance Scargill is apparently placing on the Brarites, versus his declared aim of building a mass working class party, free from the baggage of past failures.

Someone who has played a leading role in the NUM, first at regional and then at national level for 30 years, has bound to have picked up a few lessons in outmanoeuvring the opposition. Scargill has also demonstrated his readiness to break completely with those who do not share his vision of the SLP. A few more cuckoos will not go amiss from the nest. More importantly, he has shown his ability to tune into ordinary working class people.

In comparison, Brar is an amateur

intriguer playing at being an international proletarian revolutionary. Whether his clique is anything more sinister, only history will reveal. What history has already shown is that his ossified Stalinist world view has nothing to offer humanity. Scargill may play to the crowd at IWA meetings, but he is not ready to take up the poisoned chalice offered him by Brar and swallow the draft of 'Marxist-Leninist science' (1936 vintage, Uncle Joe's Lubyanka cellar).

**Delphi**

## Absurd

"... 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 ..."

What is this? The generation of a set of random Marxist phrases by some maliciously designed computer program? No, just comrade Phil Sharpe writing in the *Weekly Worker* (May 27).

If we accept, as comrade Sharpe does, that the principal and diametrically opposed combatants in the class war are the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, how can we then arrive at the conclusion that a task of proletarian rule is to establish *bourgeois* democracy? We cannot. Our job is to enshrine the revolutionary democracy of the majority, not the 'rights' of the exploiters.

But of course comrade Sharpe is not thinking of the rights of the capitalists. For him "bourgeois democracy" is needed to safeguard *peasant* interests. It has nothing to do with the bourgeoisie, who, he knows, are incapable of pursuing the "bourgeois democratic revolution".

Surely, in view of this, sophisticated Marxists such as comrade Sharpe need to consider whether categories like 'bourgeois democratic revolution' and 'bourgeois democratic tasks' serve to explain reality or act to obscure.

Such fixed categories did not originate with Marx, but with Second International theorists after his death. Misunderstanding his historical analysis of the development of capitalism, they held that the stages Marx elaborated - slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism - must be those that every society had to pass through. Thus Menshevism, with its belief that Russia had to endure a prolonged period of capitalism ruled over by a capitalist class, was but the logical outcome of 'orthodox Marxist' misinterpretation of Marx. Lenin accepted the categories, but fortunately filled them with revolutionary content.

The tragedy is that those who are still trapped in the same web of erroneous categories nearly a century later are driven by the logic of their usage along a path that has proved to be just as much a dead end as that of the Mensheviks - economism. For example, because for comrade Sharpe "the bourgeois democratic revolution has become either obsolete or a secondary question" in the advanced capitalist countries, there is no need to take up questions of democracy at all. "The monarchy is not primarily a survival of feudalism," he lectures us, "and is instead integral to the modern bourgeois state." As if the CPGB wanted to smash the monarchy in order to complete comrade Sharpe's "bourgeois democratic revolution"!

It is precisely *because* the monarchy is "integral to the modern bourgeois state" that we want to mobilise workers around the democratic demand of ditching this mainstay of the British constitutional order. Let the bourgeoisie attempt to defend the indefensible, while workers organise against the state. Should they do this using revolutionary democratic forms and methods - workers' councils or soviets - they will be well placed to

take their struggle towards proletarian power.

**Peter Manson**  
London

## RDG backing

The Revolutionary Democratic Group has decided unanimously to support the 'Weekly Worker' Euro-election campaign. The group has agreed to give £500 for a deposit to sponsor one of the 20 candidates on the Euro slate. We urge others on the revolutionary left to do the same. It is important that we put an alternative to Blair's imperialist Europe and Arthur Scargill's little Englander nationalism.

The working class will find the answer to its own and society's problems by taking up the struggle for democracy in a revolutionary way. The present imperialist war teaches the same lesson. The struggle of the people of Kosovo for self-determination and independence is a revolutionary and democratic struggle in opposition to the policies of Milosevic, Clinton and Blair. It must not be separated from the revolutionary and democratic interests of the Serbian working class. The reactionary policies of the Milosevic regime in Kosovo are paralleled with the suppression of democracy and the working class in Serbia.

For us the main enemy is at home in our own kingdom. Our fight is against US-Euro imperialism and its bombing of Serbian workers, and its refusal to arm the KLA. Our own constitutional monarchist state has proved once again to be the backbone of the most reactionary policies.

We urge 'Weekly Worker' to take up the arguments for a federal republic and make this one of the central slogans of the campaign. This was dropped from the programme in order to make an agreement with the SWP. Now that the SWP have again proved so weak and failed to stand up to Blair and Scargill, it should be reinstated as one of the central slogans of the 'Weekly Worker' anti-imperialist election campaign.

**Revolutionary Democratic Group**

## General strike

On May 21 the Basque Country came to a standstill in a general strike.

The strike, which was supported by the four main trade union federations demanded the introduction of a 35-hour week - an important objective of European trade unions, with the French and Italian governments being forced to agree to it.

The reason for its importance is clear: today in the EU we have 20 million unemployed, with five million in Germany, three million in France, and three million in Spain. The left must demand the immediate introduction of the 35-hour week with *no* exceptions, and *no* loss of pay. The Spanish employers say they 'can't afford' such a measure. This in a situation where they have been making record profits; this in a situation where, since 1993, the stock market has gone up by 125%!

As Friday morning dawned, it was clear that not many people were heeding the employers' call to "work as normal". Although the media did their best to find some strike-breaking "heroes" they did not have much success. By 6am thousands of pickets were in place, not only outside the factories and offices, but in all the main roads across the city. In San Sebastian, Vitoria, Bilbao, and a dozen smaller cities workers were seen directing traffic and communicating with each other by mobile phone.

The response of the Basque police varied a lot from area to area. In some places they more or less stood by, knowing it was after all only one day.

In other areas they were tooled up and looking for a fight, with at least 20 pickets needing hospital treatment.

By 10am pickets were doing the rounds in the city centres, reminding any shops and bars that had opened that they should be closed. At noon the demonstrations started, with more than 50,000 people taking part in demonstrations throughout the day.

One of the most positive things about this strike was that it was supported by *all* the trade union federations. The greatest source of weakness in the Basque trade union movement is the chronic division between the nationalists and those that exist in the whole of Spain. In this context it is disgraceful that the trade union leaders refused to hold joint demonstrations, preferring to maintain this division. In Bilbao, for example, both demonstrations assembled at the same time and at the same place. Both then set off to march, by different routes, around the city.

Despite this, May 21 can only be seen as a big success. It is only the first step in what will probably be a long fight against government and employers, in the Basque country and across Spain. The trade unions should set a date for a general strike in Spain as a whole.

**Jim Padmore**  
Vitoria, Spain

## 'Jury' abolished

The press has carried a little of the furore over Blair's ongoing attacks upon disability benefits and his intention to rob thousands of claimants of their entitlements by introducing means-testing. What is slipping by meantime without apparent comment or protest is the right to independent appeal against wrong decisions made by the DHSS on all and any benefit entitlement.

The independent tribunal is at present composed of two lay members, usually drawn from the trade union movement, voluntary sector, board of trade, etc and a lawyer acting as chair.

The last government and this one had made its dislike of the appeal system well known. Tribunals very often overturn the decisions of the DHSS and give people back their benefit entitlements. To combat this, major changes were made to restrict the area of discretion and judgement used in reviewing people's claims. Undoubtedly this caused more people to lose benefits than previously, but still more often than not tribunals have been finding in favour of claimants and restoring people's benefits.

Suddenly and without any widespread discussion or debate, the system of independent review will be abolished in October of this year, and instead of a tribunal 'jury', we will have simply a lawyer sitting alone.

This is equivalent to the abolishing of a jury in the court and serves the same effect - to greatly undermine the chances of the claimant getting a fair and balanced review of their case. The class prejudice and social position of the lawyer will without doubt swing heavily against the claimant.

**Dave Douglass**  
Doncaster

## No platform

While commenting on *The Guardian's* decision to print a letter from the BNP's publicity officer (*Weekly Worker* May 20), Eddie Ford expresses his alarm that the SWP does not believe that the BNP should have been given letter space. Presumably, Mr Ford believes the BNP has a 'democratic right' to publish its views - if he believes this, he should ask himself what he is doing in an organisation that calls itself communist.

The Nazis are the razor of the class

enemy and in times of crisis can become a threat of absolute critical importance to the life or death of the labour movement. For that reason all socialists must adopt a position of total no platform for fascists, from leaflets through doors to marches, to letters in *The Guardian*. Any attempt by the fascists to operate politically must be smashed by working class militants. This does not mean state bans, which would, of course, be used as sharply against the left as they would the right - what it means is organised working class self-defence against any form of fascist threat. It means our democracy - not theirs.

Does Mr Ford really believe in the democratic rights of the BNP to operate? Perhaps he should invite John Tyndall to debate the question at this year's Communist University? After all, Royston Bull, an organised homophobe, is already invited - why not an organised racist? You could even send the results of your discussion to *The Guardian*.

**Danny O'Sullivan**  
Cardiff

## Clear proof

Your correspondent Danny Hammill (*Weekly Worker* May 27) doubts that the *EPSR* could have correctly quoted "one Trot scribbler in the *Weekly Worker*" (May 13) declaring that the Nato air war was "a 'progressive' historical development by 'democratic' imperialism".

He adds: "I have scoured this issue and nowhere can I find a scribbler, of any political coloration, making such a comment."

The last two paragraphs on page seven of that issue state the following: "Imperialism is as much our 'mortal' enemy as is capitalism. That is so ... No Marxist will forget, however, that capitalism is progressive compared with feudalism, and that imperialism is progressive compared with premonopoly capitalism. Hence, it is *not* every struggle against imperialism that we should support. We will *not* support a struggle of the reactionary classes against imperialism; we will *not* support an uprising of the reactionary classes against imperialism and capitalism" (VI Lenin 'A caricature of Marxism and imperialist economism' *CW* Vol 23, p63). And today we should not support the venal Serb bureaucratic/mafia proto-bourgeoisie in its struggle against 'democratic' imperialism to re-establish the reactionary Serbian medieval myth of Kosovo and carve a Greater Serbian state out of the living body of the Albanian people. This is a reactionary struggle against imperialism *par excellence*."

Albeit quoting Lenin ludicrously inappropriately, this article clearly implies that the Nato *blitzkrieg* is a "progressive" act by "democratic" imperialism against "medieval Serbian reaction", exactly as the *EPSR* reported it.

Since his letter is headlined 'Missing the point', it seems that not just supporters are confused about the *Weekly Worker's* contents, but the editors too.

**Royston Bull**  
Stockport

## Scandalous

As an ex-member of the CPGB (1968), I feel morally compelled to let you know I consider your Party's stand concerning Yugoslavia as scandalous, anti-communist and acting as objective allies of Nato and imperialism.

**Alexander Moumbaris**  
Paris



## Tameside careworkers

## Unison pulls plug

The council workers' union Unison has withdrawn strike pay from the Tameside careworkers, who have been fighting for reinstatement since they were sacked whilst on strike against a pay cut.

Just one week before the workers' application for a judgement of unfair dismissal was to be heard at an industrial tribunal, Unison conducted a ballot on a 'final' monetary offer from Tameside Care Group, the 'arms length' private company which dismissed them. The company is controlled by the Tameside Labour council.

All 200 workers who had been Unison members at the time of the sacking were included in the secret ballot. The majority of these have, by now, obtained other employment, leaving about 80 still actively pursuing the dispute. The union's letter, accompanying the ballot paper, cautioned that any settlement achieved in the industrial tribunal might not exceed that on offer from the company. It also made clear that a majority vote for acceptance would mean the ending of strike pay and that the union would not represent any of the workers who wished to pursue their tribunal claims for reinstatement. Despite the clear implication that this decision was about whether the official dispute was to continue, no mass meeting was called to debate the issues. The union's tactics were designed to undermine the rank-and-file leaders whose work has sustained the strike for so long.

The outcome was that 85 voted to accept the offer - equivalent to the amount of state redundancy entitlement plus 60%, with a token £500 for those workers who would have had no redundancy entitlement due to having less than two years employment. The most active of the strikers - 63 in all - voted against, and of these

20 have signalled their intention to proceed with their tribunal cases, with private representation. This latter decision has infuriated Unison officials, because of the danger that the employer may withdraw the offer. The Tameside branch secretary, Socialist Party member Noel Pine, has suggested the debarment of the 20 'refuseniks' from the strike committee, should the employer indeed withdraw the offer and the strike continue.

This strike, like so many others in recent years, has been characterised by the almost total absence of traditional trade union solidarity. The official picket lines have been ignored by other Unison members. Social workers have continued to refer clients to the scab-run elderly persons homes, not only in breach of solidarity, but despite a whole succession of horror stories, many of them published in the local newspapers, concerning the deteriorated standards of care. Council finance workers have processed payments to the company which sacked 250 of their colleagues, as if nothing had happened. Refuse collectors - once a bastion of muscular trade unionism in the council - have passed through to empty the homes' bins as if the pickets were so many statues. At no time did the Unison branch attempt to argue for solidarity from these workers, preferring to assume that failure would be the result.

This strike is further evidence of the very sorry state of the trade union movement in Britain. As a corollary of this, the strike also had a feature that has become common to contemporary industrial struggles. It was sustained by a strike support group, drawing in wider layers of working class activists. The Tameside Careworkers Strike Support Group was inaugurated at a 150-strong public meeting (on the same evening as an England World Cup football match), in June 1998. Virtually the whole of the Manchester left were initially involved. One by one they dropped out, as their perspectives for the furtherance of the economic struggle of the working class were confounded.

First to depart (abandoning their several recruits in the process) were the Socialist Workers Party, whose recommended tactic was that of left pressure on the union bureaucracy: "Get Bickerstaffe down here to kick ass" was the SWP mantra. Unison general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe did eventually, and reluctantly, come to Tameside following an SWP-led resolution at the union's national conference. However, the only 'asses' he kicked were those of 'outsiders'. "This is a Unison dispute" were his opening words from the platform of the pathetically attended national demonstration in Ashton-under-Lyne last September.

Workers Power initially appeared to have a more effective blueprint. Well written and regular strike bulletins proposed militant anti-scabbing operations. WP led occupations of scab staffing agency offices, in the early days of the strike, which resulted in the temporary withdrawal of two such agencies from scab supply to TCG. These actions were substantially staffed at first - in a powerful challenge to the anti-union laws - by students and unemployed workers. Strikers themselves were slow to become involved, not least due to the advice of comrade Pine - that participation in occupations might lead to their victimisation after a return to

work. WP impatience with the conservatism of Unison and many of the strikers, however, led to their own departure not long afterwards.

As the months went by, the main tactic of the strikers became that of pursuing and embarrassing the council leader and his senior associates. In the council elections last month, six strikers, standing as 'Defend Public Services' candidates, polled an average 10% after a campaign which took on issues such as the privatisation of council housing and schools, in addition to those directly connected to the strike. A meeting of the support group on June 1, after the withdrawal of Unison backing, resolved to continue to function, with the three aims of supporting the tribunal 20; building a campaign against the housing sell-off; and launching 'Defend Public Services' as a permanent organisation. A conference is to be organised on July 10 to inaugurate the latter campaign.

More so than in the Liverpool dockers' and other recent defeated strikes, there does seem to be a determination from careworker activists to continue with political work beyond the end of the dispute. Whether this mood will outlast the conclusion of the industrial tribunal proceedings remains to be seen.

As always, it remains the role of communists to argue the need for directing the struggle of workers to the issues of democracy and state power, and to the urgent question of the building of a Communist Party.

Donations to the careworkers' fighting fund are urgently needed and should, henceforth, be sent to: 'Tameside Strike Support (Hardship) Fund', c/o 15 Springvale Close, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs. The strike support group continues to meet every Monday, at 7 pm in the Station pub, Warrington Street, Ashton ●

John Pearson

## Communist University '99

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

Saturday July 31 to  
Saturday August 7

Sessions and speakers include: **Jack Conrad** on the politics of the Balkans war \* **István Mészáros** on communism \* **Bob Pitt** on supporting the Labour Party under Blairism \* **Sean Matgamna** of 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: £85, including self-catering accommodation. Non-residential - £30 for the week (£40 after May), or £5 per session on the door.

## Fighting fund

## Tantalising

A brilliant surge of support in the last few days of May saw us just short of our monthly £400 target.

Typical was a donation from disillusioned SWP member JP (£10), who wrote: "Your coverage of the left, particularly the European elections, leaves *Socialist Worker* standing." The biggest single boost was from comrade SG, who

sent in £40. Thanks also to comrades TR and PL (£20 each) and CB (£5).

The total climbed to £387 with the last post of the month. Tantalisingly close! ●

Robbie Rix

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

## action

## ■ CPGB seminars

**London:** Sunday June 6, 5pm - 'The special class', using Hal Draper's *Karl Marx's theory of revolution* Vol 2 as a study guide.

Sunday June 13, 5pm - 'Crises associated with the falling rate of profit', using Simon Clarke's *Marx's theory of crisis* as a study guide. Call 0181-459 7146 for details.

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

Activities organised by the Committee for Peace in the Balkans  
*National demonstration:* Saturday June 5. Assemble 1.30pm, Victoria Embankment, London.

*Scottish demonstration:* Saturday June 5. Assemble 12 noon, Blythswood Square, Glasgow.

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

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

## ■ Nato, Serbia out

Socialist Outlook public meeting - Wednesday June 9, 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London.

## ■ Support Tameside careworkers

Support Group meets every Monday, 7pm, at the Station pub, Warrington Street, Ashton-under-Lyne.

Donations and solidarity to Tameside Strike Support (Hardship) Fund, 15 Springvale Close, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs.

## ■ Reclaim Our Rights

Annual general meeting - Saturday June 12, Natthe head office, 27 Britannia Street, Kings Cross, London, 11am-2pm. Open to delegates from paid-up affiliates and individuals. Motions and delegates' fees (£2 per delegate) to be received by John Hendy, PO Box 17556, London EC2Y 8PA, by June 11.

## ■ Glasgow Marxist Forum

Public meeting - 'Finance capital, imperialism and the war in Yugoslavia'. Speaker: Hillel Ticktin, Wednesday June 16, Partick Burgh Halls, 7.30pm. All welcome.

## Website

Visit our newly revamped website for all the latest on the 'Weekly Worker' Euro election campaign. The site also carries extensive background reports on the SLP's degeneration and a comprehensive archive section. [www.duntone.demon.co.uk/CPGB/](http://www.duntone.demon.co.uk/CPGB/)

## Where to get your Weekly Worker

## ■ London

**Bookmarks** Bloomsbury Street, WC1  
**Centre Prize Bookshop** 136-138 Kingsland High Street, E8 2NS

**Compendium Books** 234 Camden High Street, NW1 8QS

**Dillons Bookshop** Queen Mary College, 329 Mile End Road, E1

**Housemans** 5 Caledonian Road, N1 9DX

**Index Books** 16 Electric Avenue, SW9

**New Beacon Books** 76 Stroud Green Road, N4 3EN

## ■ Bristol

**Greenleaf** 82 Colston Street, BS1 5BB

## ■ Cardiff

**Rebecca Books** 131 Crwys Road, CF2 4NH

## ■ Edinburgh

**Word Power** 43 West Nicolson Street, EH8

## ■ Glasgow

**Barrett Newsagents** 263 Byres Road

## ■ Hull

**Page One Books** 9 Princes Avenue

## ■ Leicester

**Little Thorn** 73 Humberstone Gate, LE1 1WB

## ■ Liverpool

**News from Nowhere** 98 Bold Street, L1 4HY

## ■ Manchester

**Frontline Books** 255 Wilmslow Road, M14

## ■ Nottingham

**Mushroom Books** 12 Heathcote Street, NG1 3AA

## ■ Southampton

**October Books** 4 Onslow Road, SO2 0JB

# Entryism, Scargill

Extracts from a secret paper on the Socialist Labour Party presented by **Harpal Brar** at a 1998 May Day Brussels international seminar of Stalinites, hosted by the Workers Party of Belgium

**T**he decision of Arthur Scargill, the president of the NUM, taken a decade after the defeat of the miners, to break from Labour and form the Socialist Labour Party, is of immense historical significance. It is therefore necessary to look at the reasons for his decision to form the SLP to see if the SLP, notwithstanding its undoubted weaknesses, can really become the organisation required by the British working class for overthrowing capitalism, which is the declared aim of the SLP.

Why did Arthur Scargill break his life-long association with the Labour Party? The answer is to be found in a document entitled *Future strategy for the left*, written in the aftermath of the Labour Party's 1995 decision to ditch clause four of its constitution. Throughout this document Scargill peddled the illusion that the Labour Party was formed for the "eradication of capitalism, the establishment of socialism and common ownership", that it had hitherto always been possible to reverse rightwing policies, and that *only* since Blair's accession to the leadership and the changes in the Labour Party's constitution had it become impossible to fight for socialism within the Labour Party. This is the fatal flaw which throughout this document ran like a scarlet thread and derogated from the correct, and really courageous, step that Scargill had taken in breaking with Labour and forming the SLP.

The error Scargill shared (increasingly less and less so) with the Trotskyist and revisionist 'left' was the belief that the Labour Party was a mass party of the British working class with the potential to unify the British proletariat in its struggle for social emancipation, and be an instrument of socialism. We, however, have demonstrated that "Labour never has been, is not now, and will never in the future be, a party of the British proletariat" (see preface, H Brar *Social democracy, the enemy within* 1995).

We were delighted that at long last life had compelled comrade Scargill to arrive at the same conclusion that we had arrived at long ago. On this, the most courageous decision of his life, we offered him and his comrades our sincerest congratulations. We added, however, that it was not enough to break with Labour organisationally: one also had to break with it ideologically. 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* - was to persist in errors which, if uncorrected, could not but do irreparable damage to the cause of the working class.

Whatever the weaknesses of Scargill's position, he had gone further than the Trotskyist poseurs and revisionist liquidators in exposing the Labour Party as a capitalist party. Yet for Scargill, everything was fine in the old Labour Party, while things have gone badly wrong with New Labour. But even at the risk of being sus-

.....

*"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"*

.....

pected of supporting him, one has to admit that Tony Blair has introduced a modicum of honesty into Labour politics by so amending its constitution as to bring it into concordance with Labour's practice ever since its birth. In doing so he has exposed the fraud of Labour's socialist credentials and compelled honest people to re-examine their position *vis-à-vis* the Labour Party. This is what divides Arthur Scargill from the demented fraternity of Trotskyists, revisionists and Labour 'lefts'.

Scargill took his bible (Labour's constitution) seriously and he believed in it. When the chapter on Genesis (clause four in this case) was expunged from it, his 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!] become New Labour".

That the Labour Party was never socialist is beside the point. What is important is that Scargill has shown a degree of consistency, honesty and political courage which are completely absent among the totally degenerate pseudo-Marxists who are still mindlessly chanting, 'Kick the Tories out by electing a rightwing Blair government' under pressure to implement socialist policies. It is as though people were campaigning for a tribe of cannibals to be elected to office for the purpose of instituting strict vegetarianism.

When dealing with the question of unemployment, the SLP document lapses into reformist and Keynesian illusions of the worst type. Here is how *Future strategy* put the matter: "Labour has always had a commit-

ment to full employment - but the party now says: 'No-one pretends we can solve unemployment overnight' - a clear warning that unemployment will continue under a Labour Government.

"But a Labour Government could solve unemployment - even within a capitalist society - overnight, provided it introduced a four-day working week with no loss of pay, banned all non-essential overtime, and introduced voluntary retirement on full pay at age 55 - measures which are fundamental to the regeneration of Britain, but which are anathema to private enterprise and capitalism" (p4).

An SLP government would be confronted with the question of state power; it would be confronted with the question of smashing the bourgeois state machine (the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie) and putting in its place the dictatorship of the proletariat. Measures of the type suggested in *Future strategy* could not be introduced while capitalism remained intact, and, therefore, the problem of unemployment could not be solved "within a capitalist society", let alone "overnight". The SLP claims to be based on "Marxist philosophy" and should therefore address this question of state power (which must *not* be confused with being in government as a result of an election held under the conditions of bourgeois state power):

"One thing especially was proved by the Paris Commune: viz, that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes'" (K Marx and F Engels, preface to the *Communist manifesto*).

The SLP recognises the class struggle, but that is not enough; if it really wants to base itself on "Marxist philosophy", as is its insistence, it must extend this recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. By doing so it will lose its petty bourgeois hangers-on, but also become greatly more capable of serving the interests of the proletariat than at present.

Given that it is no longer possible for British imperialism to "provide anything like adequate" standards of life "for the vast majority of ordinary working people", as the SLP recognises, political parties have to state plainly on whose side they are - the privileged minority or the vast majority comprising the poorest, the most deprived and the underprivileged. The Labour Party has firmly come down on the side of the privileged minority. The SLP has not yet focused on the problem. If it fails to do so, it will drift towards labour aristocratic opportunism and probable annihilation, as there is no basis for having two social democratic parties. The task of communists is to recognise the split in the working class, to fight against the "bourgeois labour party", and "to go down lower and deeper, to the real masses", for "this is the

meaning and the whole content of the struggle against opportunism" (VI Lenin *Imperialism and the split in socialism*).

Will the SLP take such a bold step? Will it give up its baggage of 'left' social democratic reformism? Only time will tell. In the meantime, we are presented with the question of what attitude to adopt towards the SLP.

Notwithstanding the political and ideological weaknesses of the SLP, of which we have provided a comradely critique above, it is our considered opinion that communists ought to give the SLP support, and this is for the following reasons.

Its constitution says that it stands for the abolition of capitalism and its replacement by a socialist system (clause four, paragraph 3), for the "common/social ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange" (clause four, paragraph 4), the abolition of the House of Lords and the monarchy and the establishment of a republic (clause four, paragraph 10). It preaches defiance of unjust laws such as anti-trade union legislation through direct industrial and other extra-parliamentary struggles; it promises to give voice to those who are disenfranchised and marginalised in our society, becoming a natural home to campaigns for peace and the environment.

It promises to defend the NHS, protect the environment, and abolish private schools. It advocates Britain's withdrawal from the IMF, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation and the imperialist warmongering Nato. In regard to Britain's oldest colony, Ireland, the SLP advocates a complete and immediate withdrawal of British troops from the occupied Six Counties so that Ireland may be unified and the Irish people exercise their right of self-determination. The SLP stands for quitting the European Union and advocates unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Finally, the SLP not only denounces New Labour as a capitalist party but also, unlike the cowardly Trotskyite-revisionist fraternity, is prepared to challenge Labour during local and parliamentary elections.

These are reasons enough, despite the serious weaknesses of its ideological and political stances, to give the SLP support.

Recognising that the formation of the SLP is an extremely important development, specially in the fight to loosen the deadly grip of the Labour Party over the masses of the working class, we must do our best to help, to push, the SLP in a Marxist-Leninist direction. In the present conditions in Britain, this can only be done by joining the SLP and fully participating in its further development. Those who are yet not prepared to take this step can at the very least legitimately give electoral support to the SLP. The SLP says openly that it bases itself on "Marxist philosophy", that it has borrowed its name from the Socialist Labour Party of the legendary Clydebank Bolshevik, John Maclean, that it has taken its logo from the equally legendary Irish communist and national liberation fighter, James Connolly, and that it will "abolish capitalism". Sceptics should take the SLP at its word.

The Socialist Workers Party, degenerate even by Trotskyist standards, was at sixes and sevens in its criticism of the SLP. Not knowing whether to attack the SLP from a pseudo-left position or from a right

opportunist angle, it did both. It attacked the SLP's "electoralism", contrasting it to "class struggle" and "struggle outside the Commons". In an attempt to appear more revolutionary than, and to the left of, the SLP, the Trotskyites of the SWP pontificated:

"A Socialist Labour Party will soon face a choice. In words it is possible to talk about combining serious interventions in elections with struggle outside the Commons. In practice the two pull in opposite directions."

But what was the SWP's position? Their 'left' trend got thoroughly exposed when they tore the mask off their own faces by maintaining in their *Pre-conference bulletin*, 1995, that it would be a "disaster" for the working class not to support the Labour Party at the next election! By the time of the Hemsworth by-election the SWP had changed its mind yet again: it decided to support the SLP candidate, Brenda Nixon, after all. The SWP's position then changed again to advocate electoral support for the SLP - but only when the latter put up candidates in "safe Labour seats", not in marginal seats, for that might "split the vote and let the Tories in".

Yet "Arthur Scargill," the SWP was saying, "is absolutely right in his assessment of Tony Blair's New Labour." The SWP's "absolute" agreement with Scargill's assessment of New Labour, however, was entirely subordinate to its overriding concern for Labour's electoral requirements. So, while agreeing "absolutely" with the SLP's evaluation, *Socialist Worker* will still be urging a Labour vote in most areas at the next election" (January 10 1996).

The entryist Trots of *Socialist Outlook* greeted Scargill's initiative with an editorial entitled 'Wrong formula, wrong time'. While expressing ritual agreement that we need a "qualitatively different kind of party and programme", the editorial went on to object that "the new party threatens to divert from the fight to organise the left at the base of the unions, and from the necessary challenge to Blair inside the Labour Party itself."

Well, everyone knows what success the likes of Socialist Outlook had in organising the 'left' to challenge Blair, his plans to ditch clause four of Labour's constitution. Socialist Outlook issued blood-curdling threats and promised to fight to the death against Blair's attempt allegedly to cause "a profound shift in the politics of the Labour Party" by reversing "the working class nature of the Labour Party" and thus "change its identity". Nothing came of these noisy threats. Blair got the constitutional changes he wanted and presumably, according to Socialist Outlook's own logic, reversed "the working-class nature of the Labour Party". Notwithstanding this, Socialist Outlook continued working studiously for the election of a Labour government to kick the Tories out.

By their opposition to Scargill, the so-called 'left' within the Labour Party, too, has been compelled to come out in its true colours - as the fraud it always was. Its leading lights - Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Jeremy Corbyn and others - have been thoroughly discredited as people who value their careers as members of parliament a thousand times more than they value the working class. They all devoted themselves to bringing New Labour to power in violation of every single shred of socialist princi-

# and the left

ple they have feigned to uphold. The biggest 'left' charlatan of them all - namely, Ken Livingstone - frightened by the danger represented to Labour by the SLP, and being unable to deal with the political and ideological side of the issue, stooped to this disgusting smear against Scargill:

"My guess is that if Arthur had been serious and had pushed on with this project, the Tory Party would have given him a million pounds to get it off the ground because it could take just enough votes from Labour to give the Tories a chance. I'll bet Stella Rimington went to work on it immediately."

Well, Scargill has pushed on with his project, without Tory gold or assistance from the intelligence services. What he does have is political honesty and courage, concepts incomprehensible to Livingstone and his ilk, who can never understand considerations other than those of greed, pelf or place.

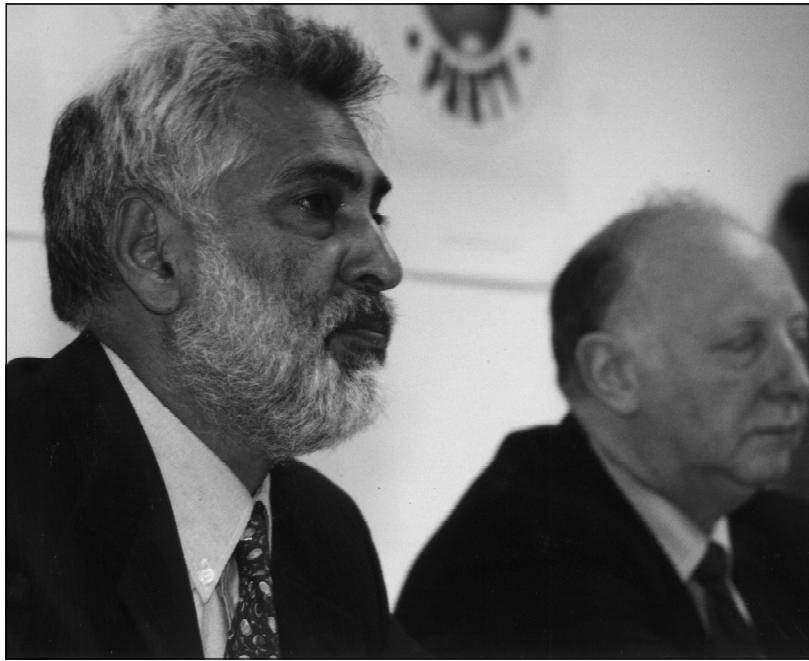
The revisionists have not lagged far behind in assailing Scargill's initiative. Through the columns of the *Morning Star*, leading lights of the Communist Party of Britain claimed that Scargill's new party would "divert the efforts of many committed socialists into a dead end" (Kenny Coyle, March 4 1996). Coyle, with not a shred of evidence, asserted that Scargill's call for a new party was based on "an underestimation of the left and the overestimation of Blair's transformation of the Labour Party".

His article's only coherence was its faultless incoherence. While it correctly maintained that the Labour Party "was not originally founded as a socialist party", and that "in government, regardless of clause four, the Labour Party never seriously challenged the foundations of capitalist society, not even with the great reforms of 1945", it went on nevertheless to say that the SLP was "wrong to write off the working class character of the Labour Party's base".

The trump card for Coyle is Labour's connections with the trade unions. Here is what he writes: "Trade unions retain 50% of the Labour Party conference vote and directly elect 12 out of 29 national executive members and have the largest vote in deciding the five seats reserved for women. This makes Labour a party entirely unlike the US Democrats or the Liberal Democrats in Britain. The Labour Party remains a mass working class party with strong ties to the trade unions, many of which remain committed to full employment and the welfare state."

Lenin responded to this type of false reasoning as follows: "One of the most common sophisms of Kautsky is his reference to the 'masses'; we do not want to break away from the masses and mass organisations! But think how Engels approached this question. In the 19th century, the 'mass organisations' of the English trade unions were on the side of the bourgeois labour party. Marx and Engels did not conciliate with it on this ground, but exposed it. They did not forget ... that the trade union organisations directly embrace the minority of the proletariat ..." (*Imperialism and the split in socialism*).

Coyle and people like him are guilty of this 'forgetfulness'. They 'forget', first, that today, out of a workforce of 27 million, only 7.5 million workers - that is, just over a quarter - belong to trade unions. The remaining 19.5 million, which in-



Brar to Scargill: 'Wear Stalinist badge with honour'

cludes the poorest and the lowest paid, do not. These teeming millions have no existence for our Kenny Coyles. Secondly, there is nothing in the record of the trade unions which encourages one to believe that they are more progressive than the Labour Party and might therefore be able to exercise even a mildly healthy influence on the latter.

The trade unions are increasingly dominated by a new labour aristocracy of non-manual, educated, managerial, professional and associated workers. And the unions, instead of collective representation of the workforce, are concentrating on the provision of personal services such as credit cards, private health insurance and cheap holidays, a factor which contributes to declining membership, as the low-paid, who cannot afford these services, see little reason to become, or remain, members of a trade union.

Coyle concluded by saying: "The Communist Party believes that no matter how unfavourable the current balance of forces, only a patient and determined battle for a left alternative strategy inside the labour movement, as it actually exists, can begin to break the influence of reformism and challenge the economic and political power of the monopolies. In our view, that represents the best future for the left and for socialist advance."

If this were indeed the case, there is then only one course open to the CPB, and other organisations, such as the New Communist Party, advocating a similar line, and that is to liquidate themselves and join the Labour Party in order to wage "a patient and determined battle for a left alternative" and to "begin to break the influence of reformism and challenge the economic and political power of the monopolies", for "that represents the best future for the left and for socialist advance"! Scargill has challenged them to explain why they do not do so. Neither the CPB nor the NCP have even attempted to give an answer.

In an editorial in its paper, the *New Worker*, the NCP, having made the customary ritual reference to Labour's betrayal of the coal strike of 1984-5, and to the Labour leadership's "policy of abject class collaboration", went on to say: "But Scargill is gravely mistaken in thinking that the only answer to Blair and co is to set up a new party of labour in opposition."

Like the Trotskyite SWP, the NCP, being unsure of whether to attack the SLP from a pseudo-left position or from a right opportunist angle, attacks it from both directions. In reality, however, its objections to the SLP, as those of the SWP, are of a right-opportunist nature and its overwhelming concern is to protect the electoral interests of the Labour Party. Vying with the SWP and the CPB in giving utterance to "obvious incongruities which deserve to be published in an anthology of logical absurdities for junior high school boys" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 16, p31), the NCP's 'left' and right opportunist objections to the SLP were stated thus - one following the other:

"It will become a focus for Trotskyite groups. It will plainly be social democratic - albeit of a leftwing orientation. It will probably be anti-communist and it will certainly divide the trade union movement. If the political will and resources exist for the establishment of a new workers' party with a leftwing programme, then surely those same attributes can be used to change the disastrous, anti-working class policies of the Labour Party today."

"In fact, to speak of the 'Socialist Labour Party' is to speak of defeat. It is an acceptance of the view that the right has won its historic contest with the left inside the Labour Party, and that the left is incapable of regrouping with the view of recapturing the party for the working class."

If the NCP is unwilling to endorse the SLP on the grounds that it "will become a focus for Trotskyist groups", that it "will probably be anti-communist", how come that the NCP has no qualms about supporting the Labour Party, which has been and still is a focus for scores of entryist Trotskyite groups, which has always been and is now social democratic, and of a very rightwing orientation, which has been and is now rabidly anti-communist? This does not make sense.

These, however, are not the NCP's real reasons for opposing the SLP; these are merely 'left' phrases to cover the NCP's right opportunist stance in support of social democracy. The real reasons of the NCP are set out in the very next two sentences in which it states that if the "will and resources exist" to found a new party with a leftwing programme, these can and ought to be used inside the La-

bour Party "to change the disastrous, anti-working class policies of the Labour Party today", and that Scargill is being defeatist in speaking about the SLP, for in doing so he is guilty of "an acceptance of the view that the right has won its historic contest ... inside the Labour Party, and that the left is incapable of regrouping with the view of recapturing the party for the working class" - "a defeatist and deeply pessimistic argument", which the NCP invites us to reject.

All this disgusting rigmarole amounts to is: nobody should rock the social democratic boat, notwithstanding the fact that to the sure knowledge of the NCP, the next Labour government "will [!] inevitably betray the movement", for its "main priority" will be "to hold office and perpetuate capitalism". Still the NCP wanted "a sweeping Labour victory at the next [May 1997] general election". Displaying a peculiar sense of humour, and little realising how these utterances on its part were in the nature of a self-portrayal, the NCP editorial stated:

"Reformism is mirrored by revisionism within the communist movement", but "we cannot fight reformism with more of the same kind, even if it's led by the president of the National Union of Mineworkers." Knowing the NCP's stance on the question of one's attitude to the Labour Party, it could only mean that reformism can be fought "with more of the same kind" as long as the fight takes place within the Labour Party but not outside of it!

The editorial concluded with the following mishmash in defence of social democracy to the accompaniment of 'revolutionary' rhetoric: "We want a sweeping Labour victory at the next general election, but we need to fight to end the system of exploitation once and for all. The socialist answer must be heard throughout the labour movement and the fight to build the communist movement begun."

There is comfort in the above words only for social democracy of the worst type.

In view of the foregoing, it is clear that the Trotskyists and revisionists opposed the formation of the SLP, and continue to oppose the SLP now, because of their overriding concern for the electoral interests of the Labour Party. According to our information, both tendencies have lost quite a few members to the SLP. On this account alone the birth of the SLP was something to celebrate.

The formation of the SLP opened a debate on the question of the socialist alternative to capitalism among wider sections of the working class than has been possible for the last decade. The job of those who call themselves communists (Marxist-Leninists) is to bring to the fore in this debate the importance of revolutionary theory, to insist that "without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement". This idea cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism "goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity", to emphasise that the "role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory" (VI Lenin *What is to be done?*).

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.

"The chief endeavour," said Stalin, "of the bourgeoisie of all countries and of its reformist hangers-on is to kill in the working class faith in its own strength, faith in the possibility and inevitability of its victory and thus to perpetuate capitalist slavery."

Trotskyism is one such variety of reformist hangers-on of the bourgeoisie which over a period of nine decades has done all it could to attack the revolutionary positions of Leninism on questions of revolutionary theory and organisation, which, through its denunciation of the achievements of socialism in the former USSR, has assisted international imperialism's relentless assault on socialism aimed at destroying the faith of the proletariat in its own strength, "faith in the possibility and the inevitability of its victory and thus to perpetuate capitalist slavery".

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 counter-revolutionary Trots and revisionist liquidators as a dictatorial 'Stalinist' - a badge that I have told him he ought to wear with honour.

In view of the above, it is the duty of Marxist-Leninists to join the SLP and bring to bear upon its development their knowledge of scientific socialism.

There is a dichotomy in the British working class movement. The SLP contains within itself the most advanced workers, but sadly lacks a thorough grounding in the science of Marxism-Leninism. Marxist-Leninist groups, on the other hand - at least some of them - have this knowledge, but have absolutely no contact with the working class movement. Is it not time that the two elements, so essential for the development of a revolutionary movement anywhere, were joined together?

There will be many, comrades, who will be inclined to pour scorn on our efforts; there will be many who will say that the SLP is not the kind of new party that VI Lenin would have set up. While conceding this, we are of the opinion that we are dealing with a situation to which no textbook of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin gives a direct answer. Nevertheless that answer has to be deduced from the teachings of these great proletarian leaders.

We are firmly of the opinion that it is right, in the present circumstances of the working class movement in Britain, to join the only organisation - the SLP - which contains the possibility of imbuing the advanced workers in Britain with the science of Marxism-Leninism and thus helping to establish a mighty revolutionary mass movement of the British proletariat ●

# Peasants, workers and self-determination

Jack Conrad in the *Weekly Worker* (May 20) considers political issues dogmatically, in the sense that Lenin is infallible and the Bolshevik Party made no mistakes after the revolution. The wisdom of hindsight is denied, and this means Conrad glosses over the most serious mistake of the Bolsheviks, which is their instrumental attitude towards the peasantry.

In specific terms Conrad does not outline a critical analysis of the Bolsheviks and democracy in relation to the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. Instead we are provided with a dogmatic description of events, and the deductive conclusion that the Bolsheviks were right to dissolve the Constituent Assembly. Indeed Conrad suggests that such an important action by the Bolsheviks was just a matter of expediency, not principle. Conrad contends that because the Constituent Assembly was primarily rightwing, with the majority being the Right Socialist Revolutionaries, there was no need for any fuss or agonising about dissolving it. The Bolsheviks and Left Socialist Revolutionaries were not organised efficiently at the time of the election, and this explained why they did not have a majority, which was a sufficient reason for closing down the Constituent Assembly. It was necessary to ensure that the Constituent Assembly did not become a rival alternative to soviet power.

Conrad's analysis shows that he has a one-sided approach to democracy: participatory democracy is necessary for the proletariat, but bourgeois democracy is to be denied to the peasants, who did not vote according to what the Bolsheviks and Left Socialist Revolutionaries wanted. Thus in the elitist terms of disregarding the election results the Bolsheviks closed down the Constituent Assembly as counterrevolutionary and reactionary.

The question then arises: how can the proletariat and peasant alliance be established and consolidated if the Bolsheviks are going to act in an elitist manner and repudiate an important aspect of the bourgeois democratic revolution? The peasants do not solely want land reform (to the Bolsheviks the peasants are concerned primarily about economic issues, which indicates that the Bolsheviks had an economic approach towards the peasants), but they also want democracy and the formation and functioning of a Constituent Assembly. However, these democratic aspirations were crushed by the Bolsheviks.

This bureaucratic elitism facilitated the onset of war communism, or the coercion of the peasants in order to obtain food. Only when peasant revolts started to develop in 1921 against the continuation of war communism did the Bolsheviks finally recognise the need to return to the proletariat and peasant alliance, and they developed the New Economic Policy as the economic programme to meet the needs of the peasants. Nevertheless there was no return to bourgeois democracy, so the proletariat-peasant alliance was economic rather than political.

During the civil war the peasants

mainly supported the Bolsheviks. This was not because they were politically sympathetic towards them, but instead the peasants knew that the victory of counterrevolution could lead to the return of semi-feudal economic relations to the countryside. Generally the peasants were treated by the Bolsheviks as instruments for the requirements of the urban centres, and only when war communism ended did the proletariat-peasant alliance start to be rebuilt, and the Bolsheviks started to return to the promises made in 1917, of involving the peasantry in the development of Soviet economic and political power.

Trotsky in his writings on China recognised the importance of the Constituent Assembly for the peasantry, and so seemed to have learnt the lessons of the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly by the soviet regime. In an often contradictory and ambiguous manner he eventually came to the conclusion that the soviets and Constituent Assembly were not counterposed, and the development of a Constituent Assembly was vital for expressing the views of the peasantry. The Constituent Assembly was important not just for the purpose of organising the peasants around democratic demands and for mobilising against the counterrevolutionary national bourgeoisie, but it was also important as a means to articulate the aspirations of the peasantry. Hence the Constituent Assembly and soviets could both exist as agencies for the development of participatory democracy, and they could both promote the revolutionary class interests of the proletariat and peasantry. Unfortunately Conrad is not in sympathy with the Trotsky of the 1930s. Instead he is still an uncritical supporter of the bureaucratic Bolshevism of early 1918.

The Bolsheviks are held by Conrad to be democratic in their approach to the national question. What Conrad does not recognise is that whilst being harsh with the peasantry, the Bolsheviks were soft on the national bourgeoisie in relation to the national question. National self-determination was unconditionally granted in circumstances that facilitated bourgeois counterrevolution against the proletariat and soviet power. This happened in Finland and the Ukraine. In Finland the granting of national self-determination facilitated the suppression of the proletariat through civil war, and in the Ukraine an alliance was constructed between the national bourgeoisie and German imperialism that was against the proletariat. Eventually in the conditions of civil war the Bolsheviks had to establish a new type of self-determination for the Ukraine in military terms. This was self-determination on the basis of the expansion of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Did this situation represent Greater Russian chauvinism? In the terrible situation of civil war the military expansion of the dictatorship of the proletariat occurred, and many nationalities effectively became part of the Soviet regime. Proletarian revolution as the basis of self-determination was not the problem, but rather that after the civil war the Bolsheviks

did not allow the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries the right to political organisation.

One-party rule in the various republics of the new Soviet Union became increasingly bureaucratic and centralised, and this situation led to a suppression of nationalist aspirations. Hence in Georgia the Bolsheviks became critical of Greater Russian chauvinism, and Lenin was sympathetic about their complaints against centralised government. But whilst Lenin was against Greater Russian chauvinism, he did not advocate the bourgeois democratic plurality of political parties, and he was not for the re-establishment of the Constituent Assembly. Thus to Lenin national self-determination was based upon one-party rule, and so he continued to deny the importance of bourgeois democracy, which is necessary for real and meaningful national self-determination for nations that consist primarily of workers and peasants.

In the 1930s Trotsky called for an independent *Soviet* Ukraine and for the separation of the Ukraine from the bureaucratic centralisation of the Soviet Union. He stressed the need to fight for proletarian revolution as the basis of independence, because bourgeois Ukrainian nationalism could lead to support for German imperialism against the Soviet Union. On the other hand it is necessary to separate from the Soviet Union if the democratic aspirations of the proletariat and peasantry are to be realised. Trotsky shows (following Luxemburg) that the class content of national self-determination is proletarian, and it is necessary to oppose bourgeois nationalism that would deny the democratic aspirations of the proletariat and peasantry.

To Conrad the perspective of a bourgeois republic is the minimum programme of democracy, and this represents the transitional path to the maximum programme of proletarian revolution. In this process the working class becomes a revolutionary class. This is to equate class consciousness with dynamic human activity, or the mobilisation around democratic demands. But how do we get proletarian mobilisation? Conrad does not provide an answer.

In contrast to his activist approach it is necessary to develop a Marxist culture within the proletariat as the basis to establish the political independence of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie. It is not demands either for a bourgeois republic or a workers' republic that initially mobilise the proletariat against the ruling class. Rather establishing political confidence requires developing a relationship between party and class, and this leads the proletariat to the self-belief that an alternative to capitalism is possible. There was support for the Bolshevik Party's demands (land reform, bread, peace, all power to the soviets) that were both bourgeois democratic and proletarian in content, because the proletariat and sections of the peasantry began to believe that an alternative to capitalism was possible and acted under the leadership of the Bolsheviks to realise this aim.

Conrad divides bourgeois democratic demands (bourgeois republic, end to the monarchy, self-determina-

tion) from proletarian demands such as all power to the soviets/workers' councils. The rigid separation of democratic and socialist demands is used to justify the development of a protracted historical stage of bourgeois democracy before proletarian revolution. Conrad essentially denies the relationship of bourgeois democracy to the peasantry, and so he projects bourgeois democratic revolution onto the imperialist countries where there is generally no peasantry. The class content of bourgeois democracy is mainly with the aspirations of the peasantry, but Conrad denies this and instead locates the proletariat as the main class of bourgeois democratic revolution.

Hence Conrad emphasises the mobilisation of the proletariat around democratic demands, and so denies the real necessity and possibility of organising the proletariat around demands that express an alternative to capitalism. This emphasis on democratic demands will not develop revolutionary consciousness, and so the proletariat will not organise around democratic demands that are disconnected from proletarian class demands. Instead the need to complete the remaining aspects of the bourgeois democratic revolution (abolish the House of Lords and the monarchy, establish proportional representation) are linked to realising proletarian revolution.

Conrad uses the comparison of Ireland and Kosovo in order to justify his Leninist self-determination approach. He refers to the reactionary content of 19th century Irish bourgeois nationalism, and argues that this problem does not deny the necessity for self-determination.

Possibly a more explanatory indication of the complex nature of the Irish struggle for independence is provided by the 1916 Easter uprising. The uprising was based upon a political unity between progressive sections of the bourgeoisie with the proletariat, with Connolly the proletarian military leader of the uprising. Hence an anti-imperialist united front was established to struggle for Irish liberation from British imperialism.

Conrad seems to want to re-establish the anti-imperialist united front within oppressed nations such as Ireland, when they are in conflict with imperialism. But historically this unity was essentially formal, and the Irish national bourgeoisie was concerned to ensure the subordination of the proletariat in 1916 and afterwards. Petty bourgeois republicanism vacillated between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and in 1916 petty bourgeois nationalism accepted Connolly's leadership of the uprising. However, with the subordination of the proletariat in the independence struggles of 1918 the petty bourgeois forces accepted the goal of a capitalist united Ireland. Thus in the midst of what seems to be a united anti-imperialist struggle class antagonisms are still present, and are dominant when explaining the political results of the independence conflict: the Irish bourgeoisie establishes its hegemony over the proletariat. This does not mean that the struggle for self-determination should not be supported, but it is necessary to establish proletar-

ian hegemony if capitalist exploitation and imperialist domination is to be overcome.

In relation to Kosovo the KLA is bourgeois nationalist and accommodates to imperialism, and will possibly accept Kosovo becoming a Nato protectorate. This analysis does not deny self-determination for Kosovo, but it is necessary to develop proletarian leadership of the national struggle, which means trying to establish a workers' republic of Kosovo, and this is connected to developing workers' republics in the rest of former Yugoslavia. Is this approach a denial of bourgeois democracy? No, because the bourgeois democratic revolution (establishing the Constituent Assembly, etc) connects to the proletarian revolution, and the realisation of the bourgeois democratic revolution cannot be obtained under the leadership of bourgeois nationalists, who are dominated by imperialism.

Conrad maintains that Lenin decisively defeated the views of the so-called imperialist economists between 1915 and 1916. However, this term justifies a caricature of the position of Luxemburg, Bukharin and other left Bolsheviks. In contrast to Lenin's crude labelling, the left Bolsheviks did not uphold a position of imperialism being progressive and capable of resolving the national question. Instead they maintained that because imperialism was dominant on a world scale the national bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations could not establish national self-determination. The national bourgeoisie could realise political self-determination, but the oppressed nation would still be dominated by imperialism.

A national war for liberation under bourgeois leadership could not overcome imperialist domination, and such struggles were often subordinated to the interests of inter-imperialist rivalry. In general this perspective explains the history of 20th century struggles for national emancipation, but there are exceptions, such as in Vietnam, China and Cuba, where mass peasant armies under bourgeois leadership have carried out bourgeois democratic revolution in a bureaucratic manner. On a world scale the bourgeoisie has been counterrevolutionary and subordinated to imperialism, and proletarian revolution has been needed to realise self-determination.

What is progressive about national self-determination? The proletariat and peasantry in alliance can try to establish their political independence from the national bourgeoisie and emancipate the nation. Trotsky established two types of revolutionary strategy for bringing about national emancipation. Firstly, revolution in the oppressor imperialist nations will give economic and cultural help for the liberation of the oppressed nations. Secondly, revolution in the oppressed nation will facilitate world revolution, that will be the material basis to build socialism.

In contrast Conrad seems to propose the formation of a bourgeois republic, but this will be subordinate to imperialism. Only proletarian revolution can overthrow imperialism and establish progressive self-determination ●

Phil Sharpe



Simon Harvey of the SLP

# National socialist farce

See the press conference to launch Socialist Labour's EU election campaign did not quite get the coverage that Arthur Scargill was hoping for. Not considered 'newsworthy' enough by the bourgeois media, it merited only 20-second reports on BBC radio and nothing at all in the broadsheets.

Until this Tuesday's *Independent* (June 1). The paper gave quite a write-up - but in a way that was not at all pleasing in the general secretary's eyes. In fact a major component of Mary Braid's report is discussion of the intervention at the event by supporters of the 'Weekly Worker' list.

Ms Braid writes: "Trust the hecklers at the back to spoil the party. Members of the Communist Party of Great Britain had been outside the hall before the launch, selling its *Weekly Worker*, advertising its own election launch and generally subverting. Now two of its members were challenging Mr Scargill to denounce Stalin.

"The *Weekly Worker*'s attacks on Mr Scargill, still the leader of the National Union of Mineworkers, have been vitriolic. The SLP, the newest socialist party on the block, is refusing to enter into election pacts with other parties.

"The Socialist Alliance, which proposed a joint socialist list for London, has apparently collapsed partly because Mr Scargill's party has refused to play ball. The Socialist Workers Party has decided not to run for fear of splitting the vote, but the CPGB is still standing. Driven, perhaps, by the awful reality of its own tiny, and dwindling, membership, the CPGB accuses Mr Scargill of 'overwhelming, egotistic ambition'."

She concludes rhetorically: "Is the SLP not just a seed from which Arthur Scargill can grow a new following after the humbling of the once mighty NUM, and his jettisoning of New Labour? And is his refusal to enter pacts not just evidence that Arthur only plays games where Arthur sets the rules?"

Oh dear. It all seems to have come out in the wash. No doubt our general secretary, furious at this adverse coverage, will attempt to blame it all on the CPGB comrades. But the truth is that *The Independent* has painted a broadly accurate picture of Scargill and "his" party. He has contemptuously dismissed each and every suggestion of joint work, even though "To cooperate with all socialist organisations" is one of the SLP's "objects", enshrined in Scargill's own constitution. The few remaining anti-sectarians in the party have been ridiculed for proposing that the SLP actually practises what it claims to uphold. In fact several members in London have told me they have been so disgusted at Scargill's antics, they just cannot bring themselves to vote SLP on June 10 and now intend to back the 'Weekly Worker' list.

The press launch was chaired by NEC member Harpal Brar, the contents of whose secret speech - made a year ago in Brussels - I revealed in last week's *Weekly Worker* (May 27 - see centre pages for extended extracts from the speech).

*The Independent's* headline - "Scargill keeps old Labour flag flying" - served as a stark reminder that, despite the increasing influence of the ultra-Stalinites around comrade Brar, Scargill has not broken with Labourism, but still "maintain[s] illusions in social democracy", to quote Brar's own words.

Of course both Brar and Scargill

share one big illusion - that of national socialism. Both believe that it is possible to build socialism in a single country, the difference being that Scargill's national socialism is reformist, while Brar's is revolutionary. It is none the less reactionary for all that. While both proclaim their internationalism, their socialism is based on the national not the global economy.

Nowhere is this more easily demonstrated than in the SLP's propaganda relating to the EU elections. Last week's SLP election broadcast was a prime example. You could have been excused for mistaking it for that of the UK Independence Party. Scargill rolled out the usual reams of figures to show how "we" had lost out as a result of joining the "Common Market". He was backed up by Brar's Stalinite comrade in arms, Amanda Rose, who bewailed

the fact that membership did not "protect British industry and jobs", as its backers had claimed it would. She might have been following Scargill's script, but she made a good enough effort at putting over the dire little Britain chauvinism.

Scargill seems to be living 20 years in the past with his anti-EU propaganda, bemoaning the loss of "our" steel and coal industries, while comrade Rose also mentioned the effect of the EU on British manufacturing - everything "from textiles to typewriters", she said. Typewriters!

Only the general secretary of the Indian Workers Association, Avtar Jouhl, did not seem to be singing from Scargill's songbook. But his reference to the "exploiting class" could not do much to give the overwhelming nationalism of the broadcast a work-

ing class gloss.

So Scargill has had his five minutes on prime-time TV. No doubt his message will have struck home with some, but it posed a *British*, not a working class, alternative to the capitalist European Union.

It is the same with his election address. I am told that millions have been printed for distribution by Royal Mail, but there is no sign of any mobilisation of the remaining membership. In London election agent John Hayball began ringing around the numbers he had been given by Barnsley from the national membership list, but soon gave up, finding that most of those who answered were *ex-members*. There has been no general circular to the whole membership - presumably because that would also be too much of a hit-and-miss ●

## Rapprochement moves

On April 12 the Communist Party of Great Britain and Revolutionary Democratic Group wrote a joint letter to the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. We asked them if they agreed (or did not disagree) with the Revolutionary Democratic Communist platform based on the four slogans:

- For revolutionary democracy
- For workers' power
- For international socialism
- For world communism

The AWL replied on April 30 officially confirming what we knew about their politics and thus endorsing the platform.

For many years the British communist movement was divided into three main tendencies: Stalinist, Trotskyist, and state capitalist. The reference point for all three was their different analyses of the USSR. Now with the end of the USSR the process of rapprochement points to the beginning of an alternative tendency. The Revolutionary Democratic Communist Tendency exists only as an idea. There is no common programme, publication or organisation. Nevertheless nobody should underestimate the power of the four slogans as a rallying point for communists.

The platform is therefore important because it marks out the political territory for the beginning of a new fourth tendency.

In effect the CPGB, RDG and AWL live in separate houses in the same street. It makes sense for us to recognise that we have common interests. It makes sense for us to find out who else lives in our street and to cooperate together to improve the common environment in which we live.

We know that the Campaign for a Federal Republic supports the four slogans, as does the British section of the International Bolshevik Tendency. The latter group is frightened to talk to their neighbours for fear of getting caught up in something they cannot handle.

At the same time we have seen furious denunciations of the slogans of revolutionary democracy from assorted Trotskyists who claim to live in 'Leon Trotsky Road'. It is worth saying that if Trotsky were alive he would never have lived there!

The AWL inquires as to our further proposals. First, we have planned a meeting on the subject of 'Why

revolutionaries fight for democracy in the struggle for communism' at the AWL left unity school on June 19. This will be held at the University of London Union in Malet Street. The

CPGB and RDG will be discussing what common proposals we can put to the AWL for future unity ●

**Dave Craig**  
Revolutionary Democratic Group

**To: Alliance for Workers' Liberty Executive Committee**  
**April 12 1999**

**Dear comrades**

We sent you the enclosed platform, which was recently published in *Workers' Liberty*. We have been told by a leading comrade of the AWL that in his opinion there is nothing in the platform that the AWL would disagree with. We would request that the AWL formally confirm this. We will then submit further proposals for your consideration.

Yours in comradeship

**CPGB (Provisional Central Committee)**  
**RDG**

**To: CPGB/RDG**

**April 30 1999**

**Dear comrades**

Thanks for your letter/four-point statement (April 12). We agree, at least formally, with your statement, 'Revolutionary democratic communism'. We're not sure, however, how far this takes us. We await your "further proposals"!

Best wishes

**Mark Osborn**  
**For the AWL's EC**

## Revolutionary democratic communism

### 1. For revolutionary democracy

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

### 2. For workers' power

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

### 3. For international socialism

Socialism cannot be built in one or a few countries. It must be developed by the international organisation of the working class. Socialism is the transitional period between world capitalism and communism.

### 4. For world communism

Our aim is to abolish the world market system of capitalism and replace it by world communism. Communist society is a classless worldwide community based on global planning, cooperation and mutual solidarity between the people of the world.

## 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.**

I want to be a **Communist Party Supporter**. Send me details ☐

I wish to subscribe to the **Weekly Worker**. ☐

**WW** subscription £ \_\_\_\_\_ € \_\_\_\_\_

Donation £ \_\_\_\_\_ € \_\_\_\_\_

Cheques and postal orders should be payable to 'Weekly Worker'.

	6 m	1 yr	Inst.
<b>Britain &amp; Ireland</b>	<b>£15 /€21</b>	<b>£30 /€42</b>	<b>£55 /€77</b>
<b>Europe Rest of World</b>	<b>£20 /€28</b>	<b>£40 /€56</b>	<b>£70 /€98</b>
	<b>£28 /€40</b>	<b>£55 /€77</b>	<b>£80 /€112</b>

**Special offer to new subscribers: 3 months for £5/€7**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

TEL \_\_\_\_\_

**Return to: Weekly Worker, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.  
Tel: 0181-459 7146  
Fax: 0181-830 1639  
Email: CPGB1@aol.com**

# Beginning of the end?

**I**s 'peace' about to break out in the Balkans? President Milosevic's reported willingness to accept the G8 'principles' formulated on May 6 needs to be treated with great caution. It is too early to speak of a "breakthrough", let alone a "swift end to the Kosovo war" (*The Times* June 1).

Understandably, the Russian special envoy, Viktor Chernomyrdin, whose frenetic diplomatic efforts have induced Milosevic to accept the G8 agreement "in principle", is talking up the prospects for a settlement, claiming that "a basis has been found for a positive decision on solving the Yugoslav conflict" (*ibid*); Russia's new prime minister, Sergei Stepashin, likewise speaks of "real chances" for an end to the war (*The Daily Telegraph* June 1).

A careful reading of Milosevic's statement, issued through the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug on May 31, makes it clear, however, that a wide gulf still separates the parties to the conflict. The statement says that "Yugoslavia has accepted the G8 principles and thinks a UN Security Council resolution ... should enable the transfer of the resolution of the crisis from the military to the political sphere" (*The Daily Telegraph* June 1). No specific mention is made of any of the imperialist powers' demands agreed in Bonn, acceptance of which, in their present form, would amount to a capitulation by Belgrade. The primary stumbling blocks to a 'compromise' solution remain the same: Nato's demand that the Serbian regime should withdraw its forces from Kosova, and Nato's insistence that it should play the core role in any putative 'peace-keeping' force entering Kosova in the event of an agreement.

So far as the first is concerned, despite Nato's hard-line rhetoric there has been a largely unremarked, if subtle, softening in their position. Whereas the imperialists' original demands called for the removal of *all* Serbian forces from Kosova, in the aftermath of the G8 accord, they categorically stipulate only the withdrawal of the *bulk* of such forces, specifically the military police and special forces. A symbolic Serbian army presence, designed formally to validate the Yugoslav Republic's territorial claims to Kosova, remains an option. Any such 'peace' agreement, would merely serve to confirm what we have been saying from the outset, namely that the imperialists never had any interest in upholding the right of Kosova to anything other than a purely notional 'autonomy' under Nato supervision within the existing state structure of Yugoslavia. Real Kosovar self-determination and independence never formed part of Nato's political strategy. Talk of a "political process aimed at self-government" (*Daily Mail* June 1) is transparent window-dressing.

On the question of the composition of the 'international security presence' that will police Kosova in the event of an end to hostilities, there

seems little room for compromise. Milosevic insists that the Nato powers involved in the air war (specifically the USA, UK, Germany and France) should be excluded from any such 'presence'. Instead, a force under UN auspices and composed of 'neutral' Nato states, together with Russia, should fill the peace-keeping role. This demand is clearly totally unacceptable to the major Nato powers. Furthermore, Milosevic is said currently to favour the Chernomyrdin plan for a settlement, which envisages the partition of Kosova: under the terms of this scheme, the northern sector would be occupied by Russian and other neutral forces, whereas the southern sector would be in the hand of Nato forces, but again excluding the participants in the air offensive.

Since the major western powers have already rejected any question of a partition and obviously could not accept their exclusion from the post-war army of occupation, there appears to be no possibility of an agreement unless Milosevic makes major concessions. This may happen, but, given Milosevic's record, it would be unwise to bet on it. One reading of the current situation, perhaps a more realistic one, is that Milosevic's latest 'peace feelers' are meant to bring pressure to bear on the EU summit due to take place in Cologne as we go to press. By sending the Finnish president, Martti Ahtisaari, to the latest round of talks in Belgrade, the EU has indicated its desire to play a more influential role in bringing about a solution. The EU has even gone so far as to offer the Serbs a juicy bribe in the form of eventual membership, backed up by the promise of immediate financial assistance to the tune of some £3.6 billion a year, of which the UK would be committed to provide £500 million annually.

Despite the Clinton administration's eagerness for any compromise that would avoid the necessity of deploying ground troops in an offensive role - US public support for the Nato air offensive is falling all the time - it seems very unlikely that the imperialists could accept any agreement that fell short of a total implementation of the G8 proposals. To do so would be to face grave political humiliation. Given these circumstances, an eventual ground offensive still seems probable. At a meeting in Bonn on May 27, the UK government reportedly committed itself to providing 50,000 troops (almost half the entire British army of 103,000 men). So eager is bomber Blair to help sweeten the pill for reluctant US imperialism, that, according to some reports, he has undertaken to ensure that Europe will not only provide the bulk of Nato's ground troops, but will also foot the lion's share of the bill (*Financial Times* May 31).

Nato spokesmen have refused to confirm any plans for a ground war, but the truth, whatever it is, must soon emerge. Large-scale deployment of forces - including the call-up of re-

servists - will have to begin by the middle of June if a campaign is to be launched and concluded successfully before the onset of winter.

Predictably, the Kosovars themselves and their own armed forces in the shape of the KLA, have received no attention in recent official statements. Nato's 'humanitarian' commitment applies exclusively to the

question of resettling refugees. A just political solution to the Kosovar demand for self-determination and independence was never and is not now part of Nato's plans for the region. No doubt Nato will seek to make use of the KLA in the event of an opposed entry into Kosova by a Nato army of invasion, but one wonders how long it will be thereafter before the KLA

itself becomes 'the enemy'. It is worth remembering that the G8 principles include the disarming of the KLA.

The imperialists' treachery towards their KLA 'allies' and towards the just demands of the Kosovar population as a whole is the one thing in the current situation about which there can be little doubt ●

Michael Malkin

## Internationalist committee

# Anti-war movement

**A**s the war in the Balkans rolls on, the internationalist left in Britain continues to struggle for a principled stance in the face of Nato's imperialist onslaught and in staunch opposition to the Serbian Socialist Party's pogrom against Kosovar Albanians. With the majority of the 'official' anti-war movement leadership either social-pacifist (*à la* Socialist Workers Party and the Committee for Peace in the Balkans) or 'red-brown' chauvinist Yugoslav defencists (SLP and CPB), it is imperative that organisations supporting the slogans 'Nato out of the Balkans', 'Independence for Kosova' and 'Open the borders to the refugees' galvanise their efforts.

Moves to this end took another small step forward on Tuesday June 1 as the internationalist coordinating committee against the war met to further develop united work around these three slogans. The committee consists of the CPGB, Socialist Outlook, Workers Power, Workers International Press, Socialist Democracy, Workers Action and Workers Fight.

While much of Tuesday's meeting was of a technical nature, differences on approach were also discussed. For instance, the text of the joint leaflet for this Saturday's demonstration in London was criticised by the CPGB for its liberalism and pacifistic hysteria. For this reason, the CPGB withheld its name from this particular joint statement.

Speaking on the issue of political differences at Tuesday's meeting, Alan Thornett of Socialist Outlook said that there was a need for the organisations involved to engage in deeper discussion than is possible at committee meetings, but warned against such debate turning into a "dogfight". The public meeting held on May 4, while criticised by all organisations, was a tentative step forward in airing differences.

Stan Kelsey of the CPGB spoke of the need for engaging all sections of the anti-war movement in discussion. This approach can allow revolutionaries with a principled position to organise in and around the 'official' anti-war movement without liquidat-

ing into it. While we should not be surprised that the Committee for Peace in the Balkans has ignored all our correspondence, this should not prevent us organising in the main movement, particularly at the local level.

Joint activity around the war provides the revolutionary left an opportunity to work through programmatic and methodological differences, not least on the vital issue of the rights of nations to self-determination. While the objective situation makes unity an imperative, years of mistrust, sectarian isolation and auto-Labourism continue to hamper full united action. Organisations must make a concerted effort to honestly and openly discuss differences while fighting for the highest degree of unity possible.

A case in point of what not to do has been the 'us against the world' approach of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. Edging dangerously close to a 'first camp' position, the AWL - while supporting all three slogans - continues to stay away from the joint committee because it believes criticism of Nato is not the main issue; Kosovar self-determination is. This position is merely a mirror image of the SWP and the Committee for Peace in the Balkans.

Most organisations in the internationalist committee maintain that the main enemy is at home - unlike the SWP which believes that the *only* enemy is at home. The AWL seems to think the main enemy is in Belgrade.

In terms of practical work, the meeting decided that the organisations will form a joint contingent on the June 5 demonstration. Security was discussed. Comrade Kelsey indicated that the CPGB will distribute European Union election flyers for the 'Weekly Worker' lists in London and North West England.

Stan Kelsey moved that the committee support the 'Weekly Worker' on June 10 on the basis that this is the only list supporting the demands of the campaign in the European elections. Comrade Alan Thornett argued that the elections had "nothing to do

with this committee" and successfully moved a procedural motion to end discussion. It was carried by six to three with only the CPGB and Workers International Press supporting further discussion. It is an irony that many organisations marching on a principled position on June 5 still seem intent to vote for bomber Blair and the war on June 10.

Towards the end of business a model resolution for trade unions - drafted by Workers Fight - was proposed. After one amendment, it was passed unanimously. It reads: "This branch condemns Nato's bombardment of Serbia and Serbia's war of ethnic cleansing against the Kosovar Albanians. It calls for:

- Stop Nato's bombing, Nato out of the Balkans.
- Support for Kosova's right to independence, and the right to fight for it.
- Open the borders to refugees.

"This branch will support any demonstrations called to promote these policies. We call on our NEC to donate £ ..... to aid the Kosovar refugees, to send a rank and file delegation to deliver the supplies and make direct links with the Kosovar organisations in the camps and to coordinate this solidarity work with sister organisations in the European labour movement."

In the second bullet point, the words "and the right to fight for it" were added by a successful amendment moved by comrade Kelsey (CPGB). Comrade Kelsey again asked why "arm the KLA" was not included. Simon Deville of Socialist Outlook said this slogan had been rejected at the start of the bloc as not being a unifying position. A Workers Action comrade opposed adoption of "arm the KLA" as it might exclude some people, particularly SPEW. Alan Thornett (Socialist Outlook) thought it would "narrow us down". However, a step forward was made with the insertion of "and the right to fight for it" to the slogan on independence. Only the comrade from Socialist Democracy voted against the amendment ●

Marcus Larsen and Stan Kelsey