

Kosova deal

Imperialist peace opens up new phase

Time is running out for Slobodan Milosevic. Despite some characteristic attempts at prevarication and diplomatic chicanery, and a show of truculence by his generals, a UN security council resolution enshrining the G8 principles should effectively remove all grounds for delaying the withdrawal of Serbian forces from the territory of Kosova.

The reasons for Serbia's abject capitulation in the face of Nato's 10-week bombing offensive are evident: the industrial infrastructure of Yugoslavia has sustained massive damage, to the point where talk of economic catastrophe is no exaggeration; thousands of Serbian troops have been killed or seriously injured; perhaps most important, however, was the treachery of Russia, Serbia's ally against the western powers. For Yeltsin's regime, access to IMF dollars and the desire to be a big player in a post-war settlement were more important than its rhetorical commitment to Slav brotherhood or even its real concerns about Nato's aggressive geopolitical goals in the region.

In the bourgeois media attention George Robertson, Labour's defence secretary, focused on the military-technical aspects of the peace settlement, but what matters is the politics. This paper has consistently championed the cause of Kosovar self-determination and independence, something for which we have been castigated as 'objective supporters' of imperialism. But as we have said all along, the imperialists never had any intention of allowing Kosova to attain its freedom. The text of the G8 principles proves this point beyond any doubt.

Paragraph 8 talks in the vaguest terms of "a political process towards the establishment of an interim political framework agreement providing for a substantial self-government for Kosovo, taking full account of the Rambouillet accords and the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other countries of the region, and the demilitarisation of the UCK [KLA] ..."

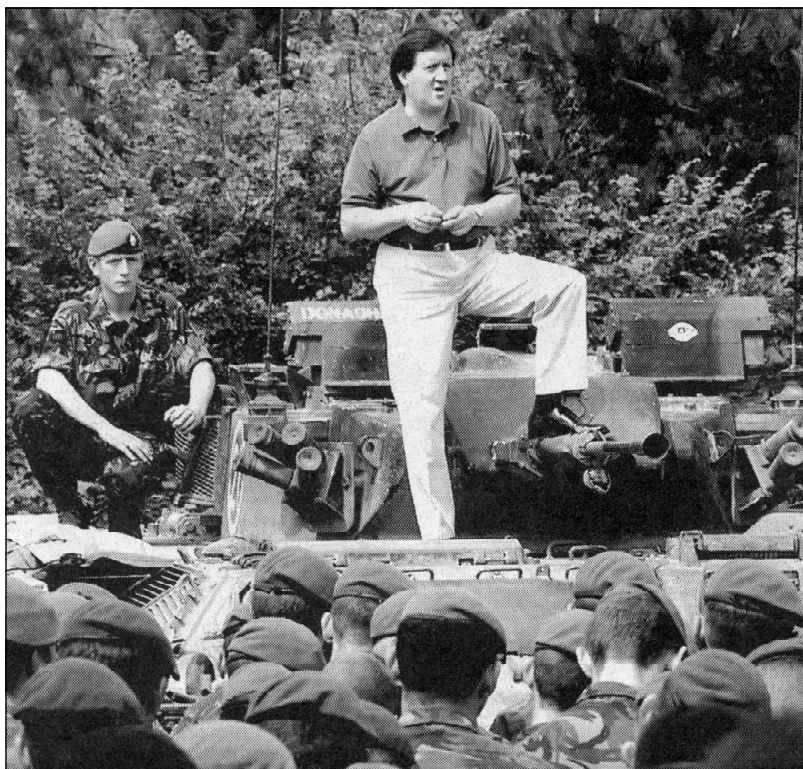
The paragraph is a masterpiece of equivocation and mealy-mouthed qualification. At its heart there is also a blatant contradiction. "Taking full account of the Rambouillet accords" would mean granting the Kosovar people a referendum on independence within three years. Such a referendum would almost certainly lead to independence. Yet the G8 countries' avowed commitment to "the principles

of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" essentially means preserving the *status quo*. It effectively pre-empts any democratic test of the Kosovars' demands - Kosova must remain a part of Yugoslavia. So much for the claims by some of our comrades on the left (the 'Yugoslav defencists') who would have us believe that the imperialists embarked on this war with the aim of dismembering their beloved 'former workers' state'. In fact, their friends in Belgrade are in a better position now than had they signed the Rambouillet agreement.

Britain's foreign secretary, Robin Cook, made the imperialists' attitude to Kosova abundantly clear, when he stated that: "The accord agreed in Belgrade does not specifically refer to a referendum on independence from Serbia within three years, as did the agreement set out at Rambouillet in February. There is no commitment in the accord to a referendum, but there is recognition that the interim administration would have at some stage to take account of the people of Kosovo. That is the democratic reality. It does not necessarily mean that it will be settled by a referendum. There will be international mediation, but that is a long way down the track ... just to build up the basic tool of democracy, an electoral register, will take nine months. Once we have had free and fair elections, in a year or so we have the basis of a dialogue for the long-term status of Kosovo" (*The Observer* June 6).

This is exactly the sort of hypocritical nonsense we are accustomed to hearing from our 'ethical' foreign secretary: mere sound without substance. The "democratic reality" is that the people of Kosova, having been subjected to terror by Milosevic's equivalent of Hitler's SS, will never willingly agree to remain a part of Yugoslavia. Independence is not merely their desire: it is their right - a right which the UK and the other imperialist powers have no intention of conceding.

The imperialists' decision to defer any consideration of democratic elections for "a year or so" is driven not only by their strategic plan for preserving the "territorial integrity" of Yugoslavia, but by their need to resolve a more pressing problem - what to do about the KLA? This is what lies behind Nato's determination to avoid what they refer to as a "vacuum" in Kosova: ie, the 20,000 or so KLA guerrillas, whose ranks are likely to be swelled significantly in the imme-



George Robertson: Labour imperialist

diated future, must not be allowed to become a *de facto* Kosovar army and launch an offensive against the retreating Serbs.

Commenting on the G8 demand that the KLA must disarm, Cook tells us that "If you have seen your villages wiped out and your friends shot, demilitarisation is not the first thing on your mind." Quite so, Mr Cook. People also remember what happened at Srebrenica, when the Bosnians put their faith in Nato protection. Having seen their aspirations to independence written off by their Nato 'allies', and witnessing the anxiety of Nato to protect the Serbian army, the KLA are hardly in a mood to place any trust in Nato's supposed good faith. Nonetheless, Cook goes on to say that "We expect to see that attitude transformed when they no longer have Serb forces to fight and they see there are Nato forces able to offer far better protection to Albanian civilians. We will be holding them [the KLA] to demilitarisation" (*ibid*).

Initial assessments suggest that the KLA leadership under Hashim Thaci will reluctantly agree to formal demilitarisation. The possibility of splits within the organisation - perhaps even involving some form of partisan activity directed against the Nato occupation force - cannot, however, be excluded, especially in the event of Nato troops adopting a heavy hand in attempting to enforce demilitarisation. In our view, the Kosovar people have every reason and every right to reject imperialism's peace and look to their own armed forces.

Turning to the post-war political situation in Serbia, our first conclu-

sion must be that the position of Milosevic has been seriously, perhaps fatally damaged by the Kosova debacle. He is vulnerable from every angle. Not only is he now an indicted war criminal - effectively an outlaw in every country that is a member of the United Nations - he is also a pariah in terms of political relations with Nato. Tony Blair, while not calling directly for the overthrow of Milosevic, has made it clear that "There really isn't a place for Serbia in the family of nations while they have Milosevic at their head as an indicted war criminal" (*ibid*). Leaving aside the guff about "the family of nations" and Blair's bogus fastidiousness about dealing with "war criminals", his statement amounts to fairly crude blackmail. So long as Milosevic remains in charge of the Yugoslav regime, then Serbia will not receive any money from the west to help rebuild its devastated infrastructure. This consideration must surely be a powerful weapon in the hands of Milosevic's opponents. They can offer the masses a programme for reconstruction and renewal. Milosevic can offer them nothing but isolation and penalty.

So far as the political opposition to Milosevic is concerned, none of the likely contenders is untainted by Serbian national chauvinism. Vuk Draskovic, the mercurial leader of the Serbian Renewal movement, would probably be Nato's preferred successor and apparently has growing support among the population. Considerable influence might also be exercised by the leader of the Radical Party, Vojislav Seselj, a rabid ultra-nationalist and anti-communist who is

reported to enjoy strong backing from the commanders of the Yugoslav 3rd army, which bore the brunt of Nato's air attacks in the south of Kosova.

The majority of his party's 87 deputies in the Serbian parliament voted against accepting the G8 principles, and Seselj has announced that he will stand down as deputy prime minister on the day when Nato forces enter Kosova. If he carries out this threat and withdraws the Radical Party's support from Milosevic, then the Socialist Party bloc will lose its majority and elections will have to be held - elections which Milosevic would probably lose. In order to stave off the threat of electoral defeat, Milosevic might well introduce martial law and foment a confrontation with Montenegro, where secessionist sentiment is running high under the impact of the war.

However, the manoeuvrings of bourgeois nationalist politicians are not the primary focus of our interest, as communists, in what the political future of Yugoslavia might be. The question that interests us is the extent to which Serbian workers begin to act as a class. With Milosevic's Greater Serbia project in tatters, there will at least be the space for a working class alternative. In the next days and weeks tens of thousands of reservists will return from Kosova. To the humiliation of defeat will be added the fact that many will find that their factories and workplaces have been destroyed and their jobs lost. For them, as for the war-weary Serb civilian population, prospects look grim. In this situation, wide-scale unrest must be on the cards. Economic discontent will surely interweave with issues of democracy and accountability.

In such circumstances, the key subjective factor is the emergence of a genuinely socialist movement among the Serb working class. Much will depend on whether the Milosevic regime can remain in power. Revolution begins above. If the Milosevic regime is unable to cling to power, or is unwilling or unable to hand over to a stable alternative, those below will have their opportunity. However, it cannot be emphasised too strongly that the working class will get nowhere without becoming the first and foremost champion of democracy.

A litmus test of any new mass movement among the Serbian working class will be its attitude to the question of Kosova. Despite Nato's efforts to push it onto the sidelines with vacuous talk of "dialogue" about the long-term status of this "province" of Yugoslavia, the national question still exists. The principled Leninist approach retains all its strength and vitality: the Kosovar people must be allowed to exercise self-determination as a right - up to and including independence ●

Michael Malkin

Party notes

Assessing Euro '99

On behalf of the leadership of the Party - the Provisional Central Committee - I would like to congratulate all cells, members and supporters of our organisation who have contributed to our European election campaign. Under very difficult circumstances, we fought to win a space. Our organisation will shortly begin a thorough examination of our intervention at a members' aggregate. I think that, overall, we should be proud of the battle we have conducted.

First, we were united that our organisation had to stand. There was no question that after the abject collapse of our Socialist Alliance bloc partners in the North West and London, that we were not going to fight. In Scotland, the Scottish Socialist Party could be critically supported as could be Socialist Alliance in West Midlands and the Alternative Labour List in East Midlands. Elsewhere the SLP could be given *extremely* critical support. Nevertheless, the main thing was to publicise the communist message: opposition to bomber Blair, opposition to the red-brown politics of Scargill and the need for a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales.

Second, the campaign itself has been an effective one. We have been featured on national and regional television and radio reports of the election and in numerous local newspapers as well as *The Guardian*, *Financial Times*, *The Independent* and other national media. Our revamped website has been linked by the BBC's own site after we launched our manifesto on it on May 21. It quadrupled its rate of 'hits' with over 1,000 in nine days. This dramatic acceleration of the rate of visits to our site - soon to be greatly expanded with archive and other material - is very gratifying and a tribute to the work of the comrades who have managed it. We must continue to develop the website as an active means of bringing people closer to the Party.

Pleasingly, in media reports we have featured as the fourth 'fringe' party - the Greens, the British National Party, Scargill's SLP and us. Tellingly, in a 'Week in Westminster' the shared anti-Europe stance of the Socialist Labour Party and the BNP was highlighted. "The communists" were singled out for their opposition to Scargillism.

It has also been useful that the media have consistently reported the anti-democratic ban on our Party that forced us to stand under the 'Weekly Worker' banner. This publicity is useful as we plan to campaign vigorously against this exclusion in the coming months. Thousands of leaflets and stickers have been distributed and we are getting a steady stream of enquiries and new subscriptions.

For all these reasons, we should judge the campaign a success. From a standing start, our organisation has mounted a politically credible fight, solidly based on principle. It has underlined the political importance the CPGB accords to elections as relative high points of political interest and activity, given the state of contemporary politics.

There are, however, very important practical and political criticisms to be raised of our campaign. Politically and organisationally, we are clearly still amateurs. Quite dedicated and single-minded amateurs, but nevertheless woefully clumsy in our work. With more foresight and planning, we could have made more effective use of the opportunities afforded to us by the election to get our message across.

Thus, the fact that we had to begin from a standing start is actually a serious criticism of our campaign. The pathetic timidity of the rest of the Socialist Alliance bloc in London and North West England came as a real surprise. We have learned that hard lesson. Whatever unity initiatives we are subsequently involved in - such as the projected left slate for the London mayoral and assembly elections - we will have a far more detailed 'plan B', premised on what we now know about the others and their lack of guts.

Our 'war aims' going into this election were, first, a militant and democratic alternative to Scargillism. This is a continuation of a fight we have been waging against his ugly regime in the SLP for three years. Secondly, to give a political expression to the possible development of organised mass opposition to the war. This second aim has certainly been more problematic, as the movement failed to mobilise new layers. Again we were dealing with the old familiar forces who are not yet receptive to our revolutionary democratic politics.

These forces - the left as presently constituted - resemble frightened rabbits. The evolution of the Labour Party to the right has thrown auto-Labourism into crisis.

Faced with these watershed elections - the first all-UK contest using a form of PR - groups that assure us that the general population seethe with barely contained rage against the Blair regime have frozen. They have either been reduced to silence or - grotesquely - collapsed before Scargill. Remember, we are not talking about how *individual* leftists voted on June 10: as *sects* they present themselves as the leadership of the working class.

The increasingly beleaguered Socialist Party in England and Wales has called for a vote for the SSP in Scotland and the Socialist Alliance in the West Midlands. But what about the rest of the country?

Most groups seem to have been reduced to making fragmented, locally dictated responses that actually *contradict* their stated national perspectives. The SWP for example - while assuring us that it "would like to see a united electoral front of all socialist parties" (despite having undermined the concrete efforts to bring such a front about) - is calling for a vote for the Socialist Alliance in West Midlands, the Socialist Labour Party in London, the Scottish Socialist Party north of the border, and the Alternative Labour List in East Midlands.

What the method is here is anyone's guess. And what voters in the rest of the UK - the overwhelming majority of the electorate in fact - were supposed to do on June 10 is equally a mystery.

In effect, practically the whole left is advocating a form of passive abstentionism, a graphic illustration of their irrelevance, political cowardice and programmatic incoherence. From serial abstainers like the SL/B through to left Labourites like Bob Pitt of *What next?*, the left has practically nothing to say. It is perhaps the premature silence of the grave.

In these dire circumstances for working class politics, the 'Weekly Worker' campaign has been a courageous stand. Despite the many criticisms that can be made of it, and the understandable frustrations with its limited nature, it represents the politics of the future ●

Mark Fischer
national organiser

"Trot" Lenin

Royston Bull (Letters, June 3), in his inimitable Stalinist manner, claims to be able to 'quote' me saying that the Nato war against Serbia is "progressive". Yet, when you examine the article concerned, one discovers that the remarks Bull makes so much of were not made by me, but rather by a source I quoted, the "Trot scribbler", one Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (*Weekly Worker* May 13).

I simply quoted Lenin to back up the view that classical revolutionary communism did not regard every struggle that claims to be 'against imperialism' as progressive. And I suggested that the drive of Milosevic to expel from Kosova the overwhelming majority of its population, in pursuit of the reactionary nationalist aim of establishing undisputed Serbian control, was unworthy of support.

Comrade Bull claims that by making this point I am advocating support for imperialism. Why then does he not quote the clear statement in my article that the Nato forces should be defeated, and should be relieved of their weapons as they leave by the forces fighting for the liberation of the Kosovar Albanians?

Why does Bull lie, quoting little fragments of writers out of context? Of course this is par for the course for Stalinism, whose techniques have even included touching up photographs to remove 'inconvenient' people from the historical record. In any case, it is revealing that Bull considers it "ludicrously inappropriate" that Milosevic's war aims in Kosova can be deemed as reactionary anti-imperialism.

Let us remind ourselves of the facts. Serb nationalists claim the 'right' to rule Kosova, irrespective of the fact that the population of Kosova is more than 90% non-Serb. Their stated reasons for this claim are that a series of battles took place in the 14th century and the 'sacred' sites of these battles are allegedly central to the Serbian national identity. This is the banner under which outright fascists like Vojislav Seselj, a deputy premier in Milosevic's government, not to mention of course Milosevic himself, have whipped up Serbian chauvinism against the Albanian population of Kosova.

My article was actually a polemic against those rather stupid dogmatic Trotskyists who have jumped to the defence of the Serbian nationalists' 'right' to occupy Kosova, irrespective of the views of the bulk of the population, because of the latter's entirely understandable, desperate appeals for help to the imperialists.

Ian Donovan
London

No objection

I obviously don't agree with the CPGB on the slogan for an independent Kosova or on arming the KLA. It is true that the KLA will get arms from where they can, but I am opposed to the left calling for Nato to arm them.

Of course everyone has the right to defend themselves from attack by ethnic cleansers, but we should not endorse the struggle of the KLA for a greater Albania. However, if the slogan of self-determination for Kosova can be posed without seeming to give support to this project I have no objection in principle. In Serbia it might be useful, but only in the context of arguing for a socialist federation. In Kosova it would be seen simply as an endorsement of the KLA and a greater Albania.

As to building a mass anti-war movement in the Nato countries, I think we agree the main demands are

'Stop the bombing - Nato out'. I do not support defencism within Yugoslavia. The main enemy is at home in Belgrade too. However, Serbia is obviously not imperialist in the Leninist sense. Yugoslav socialists must fight imperialism but workers should give no support to the government or call for a united front with them against Nato.

I have no objection to pointing out the anti-working class nature of Milosevic or to crimes against the Kosovar Albanians. Indeed this is a necessary part of building a mass anti-war movement. But all the nationalist movements are guilty - not only the Serbs.

Imperialism is a more powerful enemy of the world's proletariat than a tinpot dictator like Milosevic. Nato is a danger worldwide; Milosevic only in the Balkans - along with the other nationalists, including the KLA.

My central point is that we must make propaganda for socialism and not endorse nationalist illusions in independence, even where these illusions arise from oppression. If we don't argue for workers' power, who will?

Sandy McBurney
Glasgow

Nato allies

Apparently what Phil Kent has in mind (*Weekly Worker* May 27) is a "campaign for the working class to champion the right of the Kosovars to fight to defend their homes ..."

People *take* the right to defend their homes, so Kent is really calling on us to campaign for Nato to *further* arm the KLA, its military ally and voluntary director of Nato bombing.

He correctly notes that Nato has very different agendas which are "shaped by the pressure of public opinion", so he can imagine the government being ready to abolish Nato, in favour of an alliance that is more united and dangerous. The implication in this speculative future is that Kent would prefer Nato to remain, and in its present condition, so that it can be shaped by the pressure of public opinion to 'Arm the KLA'.

Dave Norman
London

Subordinated?

Like many other comrades, I attended the June 5 demonstration in London against the Balkans war.

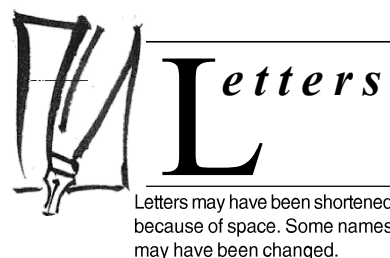
In the course of discussions during the day with a variety of leftists, a recurring theme emerged as an argument against Kosova's independence. I was told by comrades from the Socialist Workers Party, the Spartacist League, as well mainstream Labourites, that the right to self-determination is not "an absolute". Under certain circumstances, it had to be "subordinated". But subordinated to *what*, comrades?

It is clear from Lenin's writings that he was talking about the subordination of this democratic demand to the *revolutionary struggle of the working class*. In effect, what our comrades on the left are advocating is the subordination of Kosova's democratic right to secede to the reactionary war aims of the Milosevic regime! What a wretched position.

Ian Mahoney
London

Dogmatic

Peter Manson (Letters *Weekly Worker* June 3) questions my combination of bourgeois democracy with soviet democracy in the context of the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This perspective is not my invention, but is instead inte-



gral to Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. The class content of democratic demands is bourgeois democratic, but historically the bourgeoisie have not carried them out. It is up to the proletariat in alliance with the peasantry to realise bourgeois democratic demands.

Consequently I would beg to differ that I uphold Menshevik stageism. The Mensheviks ignored the peasantry and made the liberal bourgeoisie hegemonic in the bourgeois revolution. To the Bolsheviks, in the period before the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, the peasantry were considered to represent the democratic content of the bourgeois revolution. They did not want socialist relations of production, but it was possible for the Bolsheviks to develop economic and political relations with the peasantry on the basis of implementing the Socialist Revolutionary Party's land reform programme and establishing the Constituent Assembly.

The bourgeois democratic content of the SRs' land reform programme was implemented on the basis of soviet power. The Soviet government nationalised the land to distribute it equally. This process did not represent socialisation, and instead class differentiation occurred. Thus capitalist farming was the result of land reform, and collectivisation represented only a very small amount of agricultural production.

Initially Lenin considered the establishment of the Constituent Assembly as central to the proletariat and peasant alliance. He maintained that even if the SRs got a majority of seats the soviets would still accept this result because they wanted to ensure the continuation of the proletariat and peasant alliance: "And even if the peasants continue to follow the Socialist Revolutionaries, even if they give this party a majority in the Constituent Assembly, we shall still say - what of it? Experience is the best teacher and it will show who is right. Let the peasants solve this problem from one end and we shall solve it from the other. Experience will oblige us to draw together in the general stream of revolutionary creative work, in the elaboration of new state forms. We must allow complete freedom to the creative faculties of the masses" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 26, p261).

When Lenin's attitude changed and he began to agitate for the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly he only mentions the need to oppose the counterrevolutionary role of the SRs, and this means he is silent about the promise made to realise the aspirations of the peasantry. In this context Lenin's emphasis upon the split in the SRs between Left and Right, which occurred after the elections, is a pretext to dissolve the Constituent Assembly. Lenin does not call for new elections to the Constituent Assembly in order to show the significance of the SR split, and instead it was dissolved because it was now considered an agency of counterrevolution.

The Bolsheviks' dogmatic betrayal of the peasantry could have changed the balance of class forces against soviet power. Only the ultra-rightwing nature of the reactionary forces in the civil war meant the majority of the peasants were on the side of the soviets.

Phil Sharpe
Nottingham

South African elections Triumph for new order

As expected, the African National Congress won an overwhelming majority in last week's South African elections, just failing to reach the two-thirds figure necessary to be able to change the country's constitution.

Nevertheless, from the point of view of international capital it was a highly satisfactory result. Despite the burgeoning crime rate, mass unemployment, homelessness and poverty, the transition from apartheid to stable bourgeois democracy has been remarkably successful. Within a few short years the revolutionary situation which gripped South Africa for over a decade has been completely defused and capitalism is enjoying a situation it dared not hope for at the start of the peace process. There is a government totally committed to profitability, as witnessed by its adoption of the Thatcherite 'growth, employment and redistribution programme' soon after its first victory in 1994; yet despite this its vote increased amongst the working class and dispossessed.

Of course most of the ANC's support came from the black majority, but it has also gained ground amongst a small section of liberal whites. Both the *Johannesburg Star* and the *Mail and Guardian* backed Mandela's party - now under the leadership of Thabo Mbeki. The United Democratic Party of ex-ANC dissident Bantu Holomisa and former National Party minister Roelf Meyer was supported as a rival, cross-race opposition alliance by the *Financial Mail*, but the UDM, founded in 1997 in the hope that it could eventually replace the discredited NP, gained only three percent of the vote.

With the failure of the UDM the main opposition still comes from two parties which receive the vast major-

.....
 "It is no exaggeration to say that the SACP has played *the* key role in the transition to a stable, bourgeois South Africa"

ity of their votes from the white population, the NP (now with the suffix 'New') and the Democratic Party. The New National Party has made great efforts to distance itself from its apartheid past and adopt a multiracial face, but that could not prevent a huge swing of white voters to the 'safer' DP - the voice of conscience of white liberalism during the apartheid era. Paradoxically however, while the NNP was moving left, the DP was swinging in the opposite direction. In condemning affirmative action as a new form of apartheid, it was laying down a marker in order to win over disgruntled whites who like to see themselves as an oppressed minority. The DP won almost 10%, while NNP support slumped to around seven percent.

This shift in white support cost the NNP its control of the provincial government in the Western Cape, where the ANC is now the largest party. The NNP still managed 34% in the province, thanks to the continuing support from the large 'coloured' (mixed race) and Indian population, most of whom see the ANC as an organisation for the promotion of blacks at their expense.

The ANC is now the largest party in KwaZulu-Natal, the only other province where it does not control the administration. It gained from the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party, having assiduously wooed IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi, and all but ended the political/tribal violence that had previously left KZN the most volatile and unstable part of South Africa.

The extremes of Afrikaner and black nationalism are now on the margins. The neo-Nazi AEB (Afrikaner Resistance Movement) of Eugene Terreblanche picked up only 0.3% of the vote, while the rightwing Freedom Front and Federal Alliance also received less than one percent. The Pan Africanist Congress won 0.7%, while the Azanian Peoples Organisation (Azapo) gained only 0.2%.

And what of the left? Incredible as it may seem in view of the popularity of all things socialist and communist during the anti-apartheid liberation struggle which reached its peak during the revolutionary upsurge of the mid-80s, it is nowhere to be seen. The only group claiming to be leftwing that contested the elections was the Socialist Party of Azania. However, Sopa is in fact a left nationalist split from Azapo, standing for a black South Africa "in opposition to the

IMF". It finished bottom of all the 15 groups contesting with 0.06%, just behind the Abolition of Income Tax and Usury Party.

This time, in contrast to 1994, there was no attempt to put forward a working class alternative. The Workers Organisation for Socialist Action, previously held up by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty as the seeds of the future, was nowhere to be seen in 1999. The sister organisations of both SPEW and the SWP have folded.

The only left group which still publishes regularly, the International Socialist Movement, whose leaders were expelled from the Socialist Workers Organisation in South Africa in 1994, called for a boycott of the poll. It stated that elections and parliament "can be used", but this "is only useful when there is a mass movement which could be aided by such trumpeting and which would ensure that the trumpeters were elected. Such conditions do not exist" (*Revolutionary Socialist* March-April).

It continued: "Revolutionary socialists are few and their organisations are fragmented. The majority of workers who consider themselves socialist have either become disillusioned with, or remain in, the South African Communist Party or even the ANC or PAC."

The ISM admitted that "to boycott is a wholly negative act" and added that it was essential "that an alternative be built". Clearly this begs the question: *how* can it be built? In my view, elections can be used for proclaiming that alternative, whether or not there is a mass movement. True, the ISM is a small group, but I believe that revolutionary organisations must fight to make their voice heard.

As it is, the SACP remains unchallenged. It has played a wholly despicable role in disarming the working class, tying it to the ANC and therefore the new establishment. It continues to imply, despite the evidence of last week's elections, that apartheid could yet make a comeback and that it is necessary to "deepen and consolidate the national democratic revolution" and to strengthen the alliance with the ANC. Meanwhile its leaders are rewarded with government posts and other top jobs.

It is no exaggeration to say that the SACP has played *the* key role in the transition to a stable, bourgeois South Africa. Using its deserved reputation as the leading force in the anti-apartheid struggle, and retaining its pseudo-Marxist rhetoric, it has delivered the masses on a plate to the ruling class ●

Peter Manson

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action

■ CPGB seminars

London: 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.
Sunday June 20, 5pm - 'Trotsky, anarchists, social democrats and the dictatorship of the proletariat', using Hal Draper's *The dictatorship of the proletariat from Marx to Lenin* as a study guide.
Call 0181-459 7146 details.

Manchester: Monday June 21, 7.30pm - Theories of crisis in overview.
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.

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).

■ 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, Natfhe 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.

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Defence of international socialist revolution

On April 5 1999 agreement was reached in Edinburgh to convene a founding conference of a republican communist network. A date has been set for Saturday July 3. Individuals and organisations are invited to participate if they agree with the following slogans:

- republicanism
- revolutionary democracy and culture
- workers' power
- (no agreement on international socialism or alternative)
- world communism

The proposed fourth slogan, 'international socialism', was not agreed. Some, including the Revolutionary Democratic Group and the Campaign for a Federal Republic, supported the slogan. The Communist Tendency was strongly opposed. It was agreed that the platform should have the four agreed slogans plus an addendum which says: "The network is in the process of debating international socialism as a slogan."

One option was to drop any reference to socialism at all. That would be a serious error. Simply liquidating the socialist slogan would reflect the anti-socialist and liquidationist politics of the bourgeoisie. This is exactly what Blair, the Labour Party and Thatcher before them are trying to do - write socialism out of history. We must have a socialist slogan and defend it against all the enemies of the working class. The debate over international socialism is an old debate just beginning again.

The *Weekly Worker* (November 26 1998) claimed that "the Communist Tendency is opposed to international socialism". Allan Armstrong accepted that this was correct. He says that "the Communist Tendency has expressed its specifically communist opposition to the notion of international socialism" (*Proposals for a republican communist pole of attraction* p4). As an international socialist, I find this statement a contradiction in terms. It would be like speaking of a "specifically communist opposition" to the working class!

The only alternative formulation supported by the CT was separating 'socialism' and 'internationalism'. Logically this means national socialism or 'socialism in one country'. But the CT says it is opposed "to a perspective of building socialism in one country" (*Proposals* p3). This is somewhat confusing, unless it is the concept of "building" they oppose. But that has not been made clear. So we are left with the idea that we are facing some new version of national socialism.

What reasons were given for the CT opposition to the slogan of international socialism? First Allan's weakest argument is: "The term 'international socialism' was used as the name of the journal of both the CWI-Scotland and the SWP." Allan suggests that dropping the slogan "should at least give us a cutting edge against the CWI. This means that our platform points should distinguish us from the CWI, not overlap with them." This argument is fundamentally false.

This is a sectarian, not a principled argument. We do not adopt or drop slogans in order to be different from some arbitrarily chosen Marxist group. We do not gain a cutting edge simply by trying to be different. If the slogan is scientifically correct, it will

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Simply liquidating the socialist slogan would reflect the anti-socialist and liquidationist politics of the bourgeoisie

.....

give us a cutting edge, even against those who misuse it. If we drop it, then our rivals will use the "cutting edge" against us. We must concentrate on what is scientifically correct. When the CWI asks why we have abandoned international socialism, will we say, 'In order to be different from you'?

The second argument is equally dubious. Allan points out that the left nationalist Scottish Republican Socialist Party had objected to 'international socialism' (*Proposals* p3). He says: "There had been a long tradition of 'Brit left' organisations which has used 'international socialism' to disparage any attempts at independent activity in Scotland, Wales and Ireland - a position which could be best summed up as 'Neither Washington nor Moscow - but London!'"

No concrete examples of who, when and where this happened. But we can guess it is an oblique reference to the SWP. Allan points out that "The socialist republican tradition in Scotland [ie, left nationalists - DC] has long expressed its opposition to big nation chauvinism masquerading under the guise of 'international socialism'." Allan goes on to say: "The CT was also sympathetic to the socialist republican argument."

But if the SWP is big nation chauvinism using 'international socialism', is Scottish Militant Labour (now called CWI-Scotland) an example of little nation chauvinism masquerading with the slogan of 'international socialism'? Perhaps it is 'Neither Washington nor Moscow, but Edinburgh or Glasgow'! Again this does not take us very far.

Genuine communists must oppose big nation and little nation chauvinism. But this is not an argument to abandon international socialism. Neither does it show whether international socialism is scientifically correct. The fact that words like 'revolutionary democracy', 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' and 'communism' have been abused and misused for reactionary ends is not in itself an argument to ditch them. It could equally mean that we contest them and redefine them scientifically.

Instead of challenging his nationalist friends, Allan seems to accept that 'international socialism' is an English slogan. Is he is on a guilt trip about his past use of this slogan? Is he is trying to make amends? Whatever the reason, the CT lines up with the left nationalists who oppose the slogan as 'chauvinist' and against the internationalist communists who defend it.

Neither the sectarian nor the nationalist arguments hold water. The only real argument lies in the scientific understanding of socialism. Unfortunately Allan fails to give us even a shortened version in this six page document. The CT's 'principled' opposition to international socialism is noted, but the principles are not actually explained even in brief summary. References are made to previous documents and Campaign for a Federal Republic comrades are criticised for having not understood these, "despite CT sending CFR comrades all the documents".

So what is socialism? Popular socialism is part of the culture of the left. Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill, Tony Cliff and more or less everybody else to their left uses the term. Even the most obvious enemies of socialism like bomber Blair very occasionally use it. In popular usage, 'socialism' can be used in an ideological, political or economic context.

It can, for example, be seen as a set of ideas, values, ideals, principles and aims. Insofar as Tony Blair admits to being a socialist, it is usually in such idealistic and moralistic terms. It can be used as a political term to describe a type of state, government or party. Thus we have socialist governments and socialist republics. We have a multitude of socialist parties such as the Scottish Socialist Party, the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Labour Party.

Finally it can be understood as an economic term like capitalism. The most widely understood concept on the British left is that socialism is a type of socio-economic system based on state ownership of the means of production. The state employs the working class and pays their wages. We call this 'state capitalism'. But this kind of 'socialism' is seen in national terms. National ownership of the means of production is deeply embedded in socialist culture. It is expressed in Stalinism, Eurocommunism and left Labourism. These theories see national socialism established by a political process of parliamentary reform or socialist political revolution. The socialist revolution is seen here as a political process for establishing a socialist society. Socialist revolution is the process and socialism the end result.

Scientific socialism should take its starting point as the concept put forward by Marx and quoted by Lenin in *State and revolution*. Marx says: "Between capitalism and communism lies the period of the revolutionary transition of the one into the other" (quoted in VI Lenin *SW* Vol 2, p300). This "period of revolutionary transition" is socialism or the socialist revolution. Lenin says that "historically, there must undoubtedly be a special stage, or special phase, of transition from capitalism to communism" (*ibid*). He defends this idea against "the present-day opportunists, who are afraid of the socialist revolution".

The special stage or phase of transition could be called 'socialism'. But the term 'socialist revolution' fits more accurately since it emphasises the idea of movement and motion. It is the stage of unceasing revolutionary change between one type of society and its opposite. 'Socialism' and 'socialist revolution' are therefore interchangeable terms. The latter is superior.

In Lenin's debate with the 'imperialist economists' he sets out to clarify the relationship between economics and politics. Democracy is identified as a political concept. Capitalism, imperialism and socialism are understood as economic concepts. Lenin says: "Capitalism in general, and imperialism in particular, turn democracy into an illusion - though at the same time capitalism engenders democratic aspirations in the masses, creates democratic institutions, aggravates the antagonism between imperialism's denial of democracy and the mass striving for democracy. Capitalism and imperialism can be overthrown only by economic revolution. They cannot be overthrown by democratic transformations, even the most 'ideal'. But a proletariat not schooled in the struggle for democracy is incapable of performing an economic revolution" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 23, p25).

Lenin quite rightly draws a sharp distinction between democratic transformation and economic revolution in order to understand scientifically the interrelationship between them. One important characteristic of economism is its confusion of economics and politics. Socialism is and must be an economic revolution. The movement from capitalism to its opposite of communism is fundamentally about transforming the economic and technological foundations of global society. The socialist revolution means the process of radically transforming the way we produce, distribute, exchange and consume the products of society. The process is and must be an economic and technological revolution.

What is the substance of the economic revolution? Under imperialism or international capitalism, the power of productive labour to produce socially useful goods and services is held back by the law of value. The socialist economic revolution can be seen as the liberation of the production of use value from the constraints of value. In social terms this means the liberation of the international working class from domination and exploitation by the profit-hungry global capitalist class. Production will be governed by social needs and direct labour time, not value. The socialist economic revolution is the process of abolishing value: that is, money, prices and profits. Communist soci-

ety is the result of this economic revolution.

So far I have deliberately avoided the question of the national and international dimensions of socialism. I will offer the following definition of socialism. Socialism is an international economic revolution carried out by the international working class which brings about a world communist society. The term 'international socialist revolution' best expresses this. The RDG uses the terms 'international socialism' and 'international socialist revolution' interchangeably. However, when push comes to shove and we are seeking to be scientifically accurate, the 'international socialist revolution' is the superior term and should be used instead. This brings us to Trotsky.

Trotsky used the term 'international socialist revolution' in his theory of permanent revolution (L Trotsky *Results and prospects* New York 1974, p280). He explains that "The international character of the socialist revolution, which constitutes the third aspect of the theory of permanent revolution, flows from the present state of economy and the social structure of humanity" (p133). He explains that "internationalism is no abstract principle, but a theoretical and political reflection of the character of the world economy, of world development of the productive forces and the world scale of the class struggle" (p133).

So I have ended up clarifying, at least for myself, my own position. Whilst I would defend the slogan of 'international socialism' against all forms of national socialism, I agree with Trotsky that 'international socialist revolution' is better. I would want to propose that amendment to the Republican Communist Network. I would want to find out whether the CT would oppose this.

The very idea of international socialism (or any kind of socialism) is under attack from the bourgeoisie, who are trying to eradicate it from popular and working class consciousness. Our response must not be to drop it in order to pull a fast one on Scottish Militant Labour or the SWP. We must use the lessons of the past to explain international socialism for the new generation of workers in the new century ●

Dave Craig

Fighting fund

Good start

After the small shortfall in last month's total, we need to make up the lost ground in June. More than that, we need to break through the £400 monthly target before the holiday season - which usually sees a drop in donations.

Fortunately this has been recognised by comrade TF, who remembered the *Weekly Worker* before her departure on a vacation course of study. Enclosing a cheque for

£20, she writes: "Your coverage of Kosova is brilliant. Keep up the good work!"

Thanks to CM too, who also sends £20, together with IH, RJ and ST (£10 each). The June fund gets off to a good start with £75 ●

Robbie Rix

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

Balkans war

Left must think again

Whatever the outcome of the peace negotiations on the Macedonia-Kosovo border this week, the Balkans will remain a tinderbox of unresolved national grievances, a strategic nightmare for the western powers.

Nevertheless the imperialists have their answers: limited self-determination for the national-state fragments under a Nato-dominated police force, parliamentary democracy, economic aid and the promise - maybe the eventual reality - of European Union membership. What Kosovo has revealed is not the bankruptcy of imperialism. Rather it has been the bankruptcy of a left whose 'anti-imperialism' is so reactionary and trapped in the past that it sided with the red-brown Milosevic and led to the anti-Kosovar pogrom being ignored or even excused.

Since bombs started raining down on rump Yugoslavia on March 24, the Committee for Peace in the Balkans (CFPB) has been the main organisational focus for opposition to the war. Aided by the loyal foot soldiers of the Socialist Workers Party, the 'official' anti-war coterie has centred around Labour left members of parliament such as Alice Mahon. As well as the 'usual suspects', Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn, luminaries including Jeremy Hardy, Germaine Greer and Tariq Ali. Despite such a cast, the peace movement failed to pick up any real steam; it failed to enrol and ignite the imagination of new layers in society. None of the national demonstrations attracted more than 5,000. And each mobilisation was a repetition. Different route, same people. The bulk - up to half - came from the SWP, which supported the pacifist and/or effectively pro-Serb leaders of the official peace movement. Other forces included CNDers and Christians, along with Serb nationalists. The various left groupings constituted a small, though often not at all critical, minority.

While opinion polls during the war have put opposition at around a third of British society, this failed to materialise as a movement - either against the war itself or against the New Labour government which has so enthusiastically pursued the clinical butchery.

If, according to some on the left, 'ordinary people' seethe with anger at Tony Blair and so much of society opposes the war against Serbia, why are they not out on the streets saying so?

There are two central reasons. First, the current political climate. This is not the last year of the "red 90s" that Peter Taaffe once talked of. Neither is it the "best time to be a socialist", as the SWP's Candy Udwin proclaimed this year - before the SWP retreated from the Euro elections in London. On the other hand, with the collapse of the Soviet Union neither did we reach the 'end of history' and the irreversible victory of liberal capitalism. Yet the working class - as an idea and a political force - has been dealt a series of severe blows. We live in a period of reaction, albeit of a special type.

Associated with this has been the failure of the revolutionary left. In the 1970s and 80s, national demonstrations over 10,000 were unremarkable. As the left has declined organisationally - the spectacular implosion of the Workers Revolutionary Party, the continuing splintering of the Socialist Party/Militant and the demise of official communism - its relationship



By their friends shall ye know them

with society has qualitatively diminished. With the partial exception of Scotland - where petty nationalism has been embraced - the left no longer packs a punch. No organisation commands a social base. The most that can be boasted of is a few trade union officials and the occasional prominent militant.

This atomisation of resistance to Blair and capitalism and the shrinking of the left are not the only reasons for the inability of the anti-war movement to mobilise new layers. Perhaps they are not even the main problems. Apart from a tiny minority, the movement against Nato's war has had no answers to the central lie being peddled by Blair, Ashdown, Clinton and Shea. The official movement has had no convincing response to the government's sickening claim that Nato's war is 'humanitarian'. Moreover, the pro-Serbian and anti-Kosovar responses to this lie - whether from the SWP, the CFPB or the so-called Communist Party of Britain (*Morning Star*) - have further undermined opposition to the war.

To be blunt, the leadership of the peace movement appeared less humane than Nato. Everyone on the left knows that Nato imperialism has no particular concern for the suffering of the Kosovar Albanians. Yet for all that the war was fought under that guise. A material fact, because it convinced the majority and paralysed the minority. Exemplified by the Ken Livingstones and Mark Seddons of this world, the 'something must be done' brigade embraced a social-chau-

vinist and pro-war position, revealing their true colours (interestingly a swathe of the left denounced the CPGB for standing against Livingstone in past elections). However, this reflects a mass which does exist in society - those who thought that 'we' must help out the Kosovars. Despite misgivings, many believed that Nato was doing just that.

The peace movement has tried to ignore the reality of the conflict between the Kosova Liberation Army and Serbian forces. After having their rights denied for decades the oppressed rebelled and took up arms. Milosevic put into operation his 'final solution'. Thousands have been killed by marauding Serb soldiers and paramilitaries. Over a million have been driven from their homes.

Criminally the peace movement kept silent. Worse, many openly took a Serb defencist position, not just against Nato, but against the Kosovar 'terrorists'. On demonstrations the sight of drunk chetniks proudly carrying Yugoslav flags has been common. The names of Serbs killed by Nato were displayed on officially sponsored Christian crosses while the massacre of Kosovars either went unmentioned or was celebrated. Falling back on international legalese, it was said that the Kosova issue is an internal matter for Yugoslavia or subordinate to 'anti-imperialism'.

Nato conspicuously declined to arm the KLA in any real way, insists it must demilitarise and is now making hasty preparations to 'fill the vacuum' in Kosova after a Serb with-

drawal. Yet almost the whole array of Trotskyites, Stalinites and Scargillites actually argue that the KLA is merely the 'cat's paw' of imperialism. When Ho Chi Minh accepted arms and training during World War II from the OSS - the forerunner of the CIA - was he a cat's paw of imperialism? Were Tito's partisans in the pocket of British imperialism when they took arms and training from the Churchill-Attlee government? Was Stalin a dupe of the west when taking military rations and arms and coordinating military action with Britain and the US? Certainly when Scargill argues, as he did at his European election rally in London earlier this week, that the KLA is the same as the contras in Nicaragua or the mujahadeen in Afghanistan, all he is doing is exposing his red-brown solidarity with the brutal chauvinism of Milosevic.

While such positions could have been expected from the likes of the CPB, the walking dead of the New Communist Party or the rump Socialist Labour Party, the SWP is another matter. For it to adopt an explicitly social-pacifist position, while equating the violence of the oppressed Kosovars with their Serb oppressors, marked a new stage in its growing disorientation. Such is the programmatic confusion of the SWP. Having taken the difficult step to dump auto-Labourism, its tailist instinct led it straight to the backside of the pacifists and Serb defencists of the CFPB.

The official line of the SWP throughout this conflict has been 'war is bad' - full stop. At the same time it

has sickeningly argued that, as Nato is the enemy of the British working class, the left must keep quiet on the brutality of Nato's enemy, the Serbian regime. That, argues the SWP, is a question for the Serbian working class.

The social pacifism of the SWP has at times all but smothered its routine espousal of revolution. At a recent Lambeth Against the War debate between *Tribune's* Mark Seddon and the SWP's John Rees, a leading local SWP activist actually said, "War never freed anyone"!

Speaking at the rally after the June 5 national demonstration against the war, the general secretary of Natfhe, the tertiary education union, pointed out that Kosovars had been forced to speak Serbian. An SWPer stupidly heckled: "What about Blair forcing asylum seekers to speak English?" Hardly the point - we as communists support voluntary assimilation and demand the *right* to learn English. Anyway by turning the internationalist maxim, 'The main enemy is at home', into 'The *only* enemy is at home', the SWP has effectively joined the Milosevic defencist camp. No wonder they called for a vote for Scargill in the June 10 European election in London.

The 'social' aspect of the SWP's pacifism has been summed up by their 'Welfare, not warfare' slogan. This demand reduces a political issue that the working class must grasp and solve into an economic nostrum fully within the sphere of everyday trade unionism.

The painting of the two dozen or so operational errors of the Nato war campaign as purposely inhumane or random bombings has further isolated the peace movement. To present the bombing of the Chinese embassy as deliberate or to argue that Nato has targeted Serb children is to enter the world of fantasy. Yet such allegations have been made not only by the SWP and the rest of the peace movement, but even by some holding a principled internationalist position on the war.

It is obvious to all but the wilfully stupid that Nato has attempted to minimise civilian casualties. It has spent billions on developing weapons to be as accurate as possible. If Nato wanted to conduct a deliberately brutal war, it could carpet-bomb Belgrade. It could turn it into another Dresden. It is not only a cash-strapped Russia holding back Nato; it is concern for public opinion back home. Tony Blair, Bill Clinton, Robin Cook and Clare Short may actually believe they are fighting a humanitarian war - as well as a war for European stability and security. They desperately want the public to believe it too.

Other hare-brained theories are that the war is all about securing the oil of the Caspian Sea, or, as *Socialist Worker* argued (June 5), that the war is a \$400 billion debt enforcement reminder call to impoverished Balkan states. Even weirder has been the suggestion that the war is about the winning of Kosova so as to subject it to capitalist exploitation - the "glittering prize" of Kosova, as *Spark*, the youth journal of the SLP, ludicrously put it. Capitalism could exploit the two million inhabitants of Kosova for a hundred years and still not recoup financially what it has spent in the last few weeks on the war.

Surely it is time for thinking people on the left to think again ●

Marcus Larsen

Jack Conrad invents a Lenin who was able to see, before 1914, the future Russian Revolution as an expression of permanent revolution (*Weekly Worker* May 13).

The political truth is rather different. Prior to the theoretical betrayal of the orthodoxy of the Second International in 1914, and even up to 1917, Lenin's perspective and strategy for the Russian Revolution was flawed. Lenin was deferential to the authority of Kautsky. Following the leader of German Social Democracy, he thought a phase of advanced bourgeois democracy would precede, and prepare the proletariat for, socialism in Russia and elsewhere.

As Lenin once remarked, thinking of Marx in 1848, even the greatest revolutionaries learn from revolution. Marx had initially adopted a position on the extreme left of bourgeois democracy, given the undeveloped nature of capitalism and the proletariat in Germany. He finished up stressing the independent role of the proletarian party, and issued the battle cry of the revolution in permanence. This lesson of 1848 was not much more than a phrase in Russia until the development of the soviets in 1905. But the meaning was clear: "Make the revolution permanent until the propertied classes have been driven from their ruling positions, until the proletariat have conquered power" (K Marx *The revolutions of 1848* Harmondsworth 1972, p323).

In 1907, at the congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, Luxemburg told the Mensheviks not to start at Marx's beginning in 1848, putting pressure on the bourgeoisie, but to start where Marx ended. This was a point about developing Marxism as a living product of class struggle. The Bolsheviks applauded this comment. But the facts are that even Lenin's theoretical creativity was constrained by the powerful influence of Kautsky and the orthodoxy of German social democracy during this period. In his polemic with the Menshevik, Martynov, in 1905, Lenin dismissed talk of the conquest of power in a socialist revolution as semi-anarchist. Ironically, this was the charge levelled against Lenin in 1917 by all the other leaders of the Bolshevik Party, clinging to Lenin's old Bolshevism.

In 1905, when Martynov had the temerity to suggest the Bolsheviks could not hold state power in the coming Russian Revolution without putting into effect the maximum programme or the socialist revolution, Lenin retorted that Martynov "confounded the democratic revolution with the socialist revolution, the struggle for the republic with the struggle for socialism" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 8, Moscow 1977, p297). Lenin went on: "Social democracy has constantly stressed the bourgeois nature of the impending revolution in Russia and insisted on the clear line of demarcation between the democratic minimum and socialist maximum programme." Moreover, Lenin declared, "If the march of events compels the social democratic party in such a position to set about achieving the socialist revolution despite itself, our programme would be incorrect" (*ibid* p294). This unintended prediction turned out to true in 1917.

Lenin's political perspective in 1905 was coloured by Kautsky's dogma that extending bourgeois democracy was the inevitable historical gateway to socialism in Russia. In 'Two tactics of social democracy in the democratic revolution', Lenin's strategy was to establish a bourgeois democratic republic with plebeian methods: to push the bourgeois republic to its outer historical limits. But for Lenin, "Only the most ignorant people can close their eyes to the bourgeois nature of the democratic revolution" ('Two tactics', VI Lenin *CW* Vol 9, Moscow 1977, p28). And again: "The democratic revolution will not immediately overstep the

Lenin, Kautsky and the Communist Party

Barry Biddulph accuses the CPGB of following the road of bourgeois modernisers

bounds of bourgeois social and economic relationships" (*ibid* p85). Very clear and, with hindsight, very wrong.

Lenin's polemical point was he expected the revolution to transform Russia along inescapable capitalist lines. This was why Lenin envisaged the agrarian revolution taking a capitalist form. But Jack puts a gloss of permanent revolution on Lenin's 'Two tactics'. He avoids direct quotes, but one line goes like this: "In the actual circumstances the elements of the past become interwoven with those of the future (bourgeois and socialist). The two paths cross" (*ibid* p85). This follows a discussion of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry (the democratic revolution) as having a past in the struggle against autocracy and a future in the struggle against private property.

This is the real Lenin, exclaims Jack Conrad: "The revolution could, given the right internal and external conditions, proceed uninterrupted from democratic to socialist tasks, through the proletariat fighting, not only from below, but from above (from the salient of state power). The revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat thereby peacefully grows over into the dictatorship of the proletariat, assuming internal proletarian hegemony, and external proletarian aid from socialist Europe." This is not the real historical Lenin, but a view which conflates the Lenin of 1917 - who had shed his illusions in Kautsky, returned to Marx and more importantly learned from revolution to creatively develop Marxism - with the Lenin of 1905, who regarded any talk of socialist revolution and communes in the context of the Russian Revolution as anarchistic.

When Lenin uses words like 'uninterrupted' and 'interwoven' in 1905, this is not a perspective of permanent revolution. He is making the point that theory is grey and life is green. In life, there will be no clear, neat separation of historical stages, as in a theoretical schema. Although Lenin's tactics and strategy were obviously far more revolutionary and more concrete than Kautsky, he had not entirely broken from Second International orthodoxy. In discussing how the two paths cross, in 'Two tactics', he states clearly his boundary or base line: "We all counterpose the bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolution; we all insist on the absolute necessity of strictly distinguishing between them" (*ibid* p85).

Martynov and Plekhanov were wrong when they pedantically and lifelessly expected the Russian Revolution to be a bourgeois revolution led by the bourgeoisie. But they surely had a point when they argued that Lenin's strategy of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry was not rooted in the lessons drawn by Marx in Germany in 1848.

For Marx, petty bourgeois democrats would betray the revolution the first hour after the democratic victory. As Marx put it, "Our concern cannot be to modify private property, but to abolish it; not to hush up class antagonisms, but to abolish classes;

not to improve the existing society, but to found a new one" (K Marx *The revolutions of 1848* p232). The slogan 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' does suggest an above-class democracy, in the manner of Kautsky. It also implies a process of the Bolshevik Party doling out democratic increments to socialism from above. Martynov described the slogan as Millerandism or reformism - something he knew a lot about.

The sharpest and most accurate criticism of the strategy came from Trotsky, in *Our differences*. This was his polemic with old Bolshevism, free from the later cult of Lenin, when criticisms became blunted. The snag with the strategy was that it dissolved the workers' revolution into a democratic coalition. The struggle for socialism would reappear only after the establishment of the democratic republic. Before the direct struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Bolshevik Party would subject itself to a bourgeois democratic limitation (Kamenev and Stalin 1917). This would be a betrayal of working class interests and sever the Bolsheviks' organic links with workers.

For Trotsky, the strategy defined the state structure as democratic, not socialist. It left open the question of which class would lead or predominate in the democratic coalition. But surely the slogan of the democratic dictatorship also blurred class democracy, as if democracy was neutral, or above classes, as in Kautsky's concept, which Lenin later denounced. Trotsky predicted that in the Russian Revolution the workers would make inroads into capitalist rights and property. In turn the capitalists would respond with lockouts. The workers would attempt to control and seize the factories. And so it turned out.

The historical facts are that prior to 1917 it was Trotsky who more accurately analysed the general character of the coming Russian Revolution. The class dynamics of the revolution would bring the proletariat to power, and without the dictatorship of the proletariat the fundamental tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution could not be carried out. This was Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. It was a bold and at the time unique concept for Russian social democracy, which Trotsky learned in the school of the revolutionary audacity of the Russian workers in 1905. There were many polemical exaggerations between the two leaders, but there still remained a vital difference. Trotsky had seen the road to socialism not through taking the workers through the school of advanced capitalist democracy, but through the self-activity of workers' power.

The core of the old Bolshevik notion of the democratic revolution was the expropriation of the landlords and the nationalisation of the land. These measures were carried out after the October revolution. Lenin made this point in 1917: "Private land ownership in Russia cannot be abolished except by carrying through a gigantic economic revolution by bringing the banks under popular control, by nationalising the syndicates and adopt-

ing the most ruthless revolutionary methods against capital" (VI Lenin *Between the Russian revolutions* London 1978, p328). So much for advanced bourgeois democracy.

Jack Conrad attempts to downplay Trotsky's contribution with the concept of permanent revolution. But in doing so he merely underestimates Lenin's contribution to the further development of Marxist theory in the heat of revolution and war. It was Lenin who returned to Marx's revolutionary conception of the proletarian semi- or commune state. After 1917 Kautsky accused Lenin of betraying the democratic programme of old Bolshevism, but Lenin had a crushing reply: to remain within the limits of bourgeois democracy (the democratic revolution) would betray the proletariat.

But Jack attempts to show that Lenin did not junk the strategy of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry in 1917. This is a serious misunderstanding. Trotsky once said that there had been no democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry in his lifetime. Certainly there has not been an historical example since. Stalinist attempts to make it a reality have resulted in tragic defeats for the workers' movement.

Lenin did not have a detailed map of permanent revolution in his pocket in 1917. He did not know the revolutionary route in all its details. His political greatness was in his ability as a revolutionary socialist general to improvise tactics in the midst of battle. There were contradictions, hesitations and ambiguities. In the crucible of 1917 Lenin theoretically reared himself and the Bolshevik Party. But Lenin and the party had been educated in the minimum programme and the democratic revolution. It was not easy to unravel old Bolshevism.

It is not true that Lenin argued that the February revolution represented the completed bourgeois revolution. This is a myth. What Lenin wrote in the *April thesis* was: "State power in Russia has passed into the hands of a new class: namely the bourgeois, and landowners who have become bourgeois. *To this extent* the bourgeois revolution is completed" (*ibid* p80). "To this extent" was an important qualification. How could the alliance of workers and peasants in the soviets - the organisational form of the workers' or commune state - and the dictatorship of the proletariat represent some kind of democratic, non-socialist state?

After all, in the *April thesis*, Lenin said that the old tsarist power had not been destroyed, the monarchy had not been formally abolished and the landed estates had not been confiscated. Kamenev made the obvious point that the Constituent Assembly had not been convened. And dual power had not passed definitely to the bourgeoisie. The thrust of the *April thesis* was that democratic revolution would be a step backwards compared with the socialist potential of the soviets.

The February revolution in 1917 was an aborted socialist revolution. The reason power was not seized by

the workers was, in the words of Lenin, "because of insufficient class consciousness and organisation of the proletariat and peasantry" (*ibid* p78). The political essence of dual power for Lenin was the unstable interlocking of two dictatorships: the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat. There was no middle way of democratic dictatorship. In his article, 'The tasks of the proletariat in our revolution', Lenin believed the term 'democracy' had put blinkers on the eyes of the workers, preventing them building up the new soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies as the sole power in the state. His message in 1917 for the Party members who wanted to hang on to the slogans of old Bolshevism was simple: put the slogan of the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry in a museum; it is dead.

However, as Trotsky pointed out, "Lenin's approach to this question [in 1917], at different times, was not one and the same. Lenin's thought must not be taken dogmatically, but historically" (L Trotsky *Permanent revolution* London 1982, p67). Lenin's polemic with Kautsky was a more rounded and finished evaluation of the events of 1917. Lenin did not produce his own comprehensive lessons of October. Nor did Lenin adopt a fully fledged version of Trotsky's permanent revolution. But the debate with Kautsky was the nearest Lenin came to a summing up of the Marxism of October.

In the debate over soviet power, Lenin denounced Kautsky as a lifeless pedant for droning on about the virtues of bourgeois democracy over absolutism and medievalism, irrespective of the barbaric and ruinous circumstances of imperialism and war. Kautsky was a liberal stressing the advantages of democracy in general. Lenin hammered the point over and over. There was no intermediate democratic regime: it was either the dictatorship of the proletariat or the dictatorship of capital.

Lenin demolished the orthodoxy of the Second International. Bourgeois democracy was a democracy for the rich: it was a machine for the suppression of the proletariat. It was a fake and hypocritical regime designed to deceive the workers. Contrary to the certainties of Kautsky, Lenin's key point against his old slogan of the democratic dictatorship, was this: "The more highly developed a democracy is, the more imminent are pogroms and civil war in connection with any profound divergence which is dangerous to the bourgeoisie" (VI Lenin *The Renegade Kautsky* Peking, p23).

Jack follows Dave Craig of the RDG, and unhistorically misapplies Lenin's 'Two tactics' to the lessons of 1917 and even the modern bourgeois state in Britain. The CPGB have taken up the bourgeois modernisers' slogan of a bourgeois federal republic, in the Kautsky manner, of the road to socialism through an extreme democratisation of the capitalist state. But even as early as Lenin's 'Letter from afar' in 1917 on the proletarian militia he wrote: "We need a state. But not the kind of state the bourgeois has created everywhere - from monarchies to the most democratic republics."

It is Jack Conrad who has the big political problem, due to his uncritical acceptance of the Kautskyite schemas of the RDG ●

Prince of fools

Biotechnology is expected to be the leading science of the 21st century. But in Britain the introduction of genetically modified (GM) food for human consumption continues to be strongly opposed by consumers, influenced by green pressure groups, left reformists and conservative newspapers, especially the *Daily Mail*. Opponents of GM food hope this public opposition may persuade the government to change its line: "Several Labour MPs have warned party whips that they are receiving a stream of complaints from the public about the government's strong support for the industry" (*The Independent* June 7). As a result the government appears to be giving ground.

This week a farm-size trial of the environmental impact of GM crops was aborted when transgenic oilseed rape plants covering 25 acres on a mixed farm in Wiltshire were destroyed under pressure from the Soil Association, a lobbying group which promotes organic farming. Citing the danger of cross-pollination with the genetically modified plants, they had threatened to withdraw recognition from 250 acres of organically certified crops being grown on the same farm, which would have cost the farm owners at least £50,000 in lost sales because of the higher prices consumers are willing to pay for organically certified produce.

On June 1 the *Daily Mail*, which has been campaigning against GM food for several months, published "an all-out challenge to the government claims that genetically modified food is safe" by the Prince of Wales, a keen amateur organic farmer with links with the Soil Association. The following day *The Independent* reported that the prince had five weeks earlier had a "stand-up row" with prime minister Tony Blair over the issue.

Blair reacts with anger to opposition to GM technology from Prince Charles or anyone else. His view, voiced in an interview on the BBC's 'Breakfast with Frost' TV programme on June 6, is that GM technology should be welcomed, because if it is not developed by British companies it will be developed elsewhere, and British industry will lose out. "Mr Blair insisted that banning GM foods would risk throwing away Britain's lead over other countries in biotechnology, at a time when Germany was spending hundreds of millions of pounds on catching up" (*The Independent* June 7). Blair and his government see their role as defending British capitalism, including, in the case of the biotech industry, by helping it to persuade the public to drop their opposition to its products.

All this neatly illustrates the formal nature of bourgeois democracy. People have power as electors. Every five years they choose who will misrepresent them. But people are atomised. They have no positive control over society. Ironically that applies above as well as below. Capitalist politicians insist that 'there is no alternative' other than obeying the iron law of the market. Mainstream politicians therefore vie with one another in terms of what serves the interests of capital. However, with Labour now openly outside, the Conservatives are in crisis. The Tories are retreating from being the party of big capital and are rearticulating themselves - almost by default - as a party of insular and medium capital, an English nationalist party, and a party which promotes and appeals to irrationality on everything from the European Union to GM food.

.....
“ ... genetic engineering has the potential either to provide great benefits to humanity or to do much harm, depending on how it is used and who controls it
.....

This is obviously the approach of the *Daily Mail*, which on the subject of GM food not only appears to have the agreement of Prince Charles, but also of much the population. "In June 1998, a MORI poll in the UK revealed that 58% of the people surveyed were opposed to the genetic engineering of food - seven per cent more than in an identical poll two years before. Support for genetic engineering had fallen from 31% to 22%. Sixty-one percent said they did not want to eat GE food, 73% were concerned that GE crops could interbreed with wild plants and cause genetic pollution, and 77% wanted a ban on growing until the impacts of GE crops had been more fully assessed" (quoted by L Anderson *Genetic engineering, food, and our environment, a brief guide* p88).

New technologies often initially provoke fear, hostility and *super*-profits. It seems unlikely therefore that the advance of the science of genetic engineering or its commercial exploitation can be stopped, either by Prince Charles, or by Greenpeace and the Soil Association, or even by consumer resistance to buying GM food, which resistance the biotech companies and their advertising advisors will work hard to overcome. Nevertheless, opinion polls consistently show that people want products containing genetically modified ingredients to be clearly labelled as such, so as consumers they can choose to avoid all GM products.

As communists we obviously support this democratic right to choose. The biotech industry itself does not. One of the largest companies is the US giant, Monsanto, which exports GM soyabeans from the US to Europe. In 1994 Monsanto successfully applied to the regulatory authorities for permission to treat the GM soya as "substantially equivalent" to the unmodified variety, and mixed the GM product with the rest of the crop for export. The company has always refused to segregate the GM product, and as protein and lecithin derived from soya is a widely used additive in the food processing industry, most convenience food can be assumed to contain genetically modified elements.

Such is the public opposition to GM food - irrational or otherwise - that despite this pervasive presence of GM soya, supermarket chains are going to great lengths to eliminate GM ingredients from their products

and are keen to advertise their GM-free status. Waitrose, for example, distributed in its stores a leaflet reassuring customers that; "We do not sell any genetically modified foods as such (for example, tomatoes or tomato puree). Waitrose own-label foods do not contain any modified ingredients." The company also maintains that: "Having replaced soya and maize with alternatives or obtained it from suppliers who can be confident of their sources, no Waitrose own-label products (including pet foods) now contain GM ingredients."

Retrospectively "Waitrose regrets that the introduction of GM products into the UK took place without more consultation, especially of the views of retailers and our customers" (Waitrose customer information leaflet, March 1999). In other words, appealing to irrationality has its rationale - the bottom line is profit.

Many consumers seeking to avoid GM food regard it as an ethical question, and wish to shun GM food in the same way that some may wish to buy free-range eggs or organic vegetables. Again, we fully support that democratic right, even if it turns out that after all GM food is completely safe. For others it is a more pragmatic question. Especially in the light of the BSE scandal, they do not trust the assurances of either the biotech companies or the government. There are some grounds for suspecting risks with GM food, but rather than investigate them fully and with absolute openness Monsanto and its like are concerned above all to increase their sales and thus returns.

During the process of genetic modification, the gene for the desired characteristic is extracted from the DNA of the source organism and spliced into plasmid vectors which are then introduced into the cells of the recipient organism (usually a plant), either by bacterial infection or bombardment with tiny metal pellets coated with the DNA to be transferred. As the rate of successful incorporation of the foreign genetic material into the host DNA is so low, a gene for resistance to an antibiotic - for example, streptomycin - is also incorporated onto the plasmid, and the cells which have been subjected to the engineering process are incubated in a growth medium containing the antibiotic. Therefore only those cells containing the desired gene can survive, but when they are grown into mature plants they contain the gene for resistance to the antibiotic. This resistance gene may be transferred by natural processes to bacteria, including the gut bacteria of people eating the GM crops. The problem of bacterial resistance to antibiotics would thus be made worse.

Many people are already concerned about pesticide residues in food. Most genetic modification of crop plants involves incorporating a gene for resistance to a specific herbicide. For example, the GM oilseed rape destroyed this week in Wiltshire had been engineered to tolerate high levels of the herbicide, glufosinate, manufactured by the German agribusiness company, AgrEvo, which also produced the GM seeds. Similarly, Monsanto sells farmers in the USA and elsewhere GM oilseed rape and soya engineered to withstand its own glyphosate-based herbicide, Roundup. Because GM crops can survive spraying with high levels of herbicides, they might contain higher levels of residues than unmodified plants. Monsanto successfully ap-

plied to the regulatory authorities for the permitted level of herbicide residue in GM soya to be increased from six parts per million to 20 parts per million.

The case against GM food seems strong. Many will agree with Charles Windsor that it is not needed. Even some research scientists working in the field and employed by the biotech companies have risked their jobs by going public with their fears about the speed with which the new technology is being introduced - an interesting parallel with the reservations expressed by scientists developing nuclear technology 40 to 50 years ago.

However, unlike the Greens we do not call for GM food to be banned. Genetic modification is not a bad thing in itself. Like most technological advances, genetic engineering has the potential either to provide great benefits to humanity or to do much harm, depending on how it is used and who controls it.

It is not the science of genetic engineering which the public should oppose, but the lack of democracy and a capitalist system which misuses this and other technologies, perverting everything into a search for profits. The biotech industry claims that GM crops could be made with higher yields or drought or frost resistance, helping to feed the world. Yet today it is capitalism, especially its wars, not food shortages as such, which lead to famines. But the process of genetic modification does indeed have the potential to produce crops with higher yields and better nutritional value.

However, companies like Monsanto do not develop such crops: they find herbicide-resistant crops, sold in conjunction with the herbicide, more profitable. Their attitude to farmers is shown by the contracts the latter are obliged to sign when purchasing GM seeds, banning them from saving seeds produced by the crop for planting the following year. In 'third world' countries, where such a legal sanction would be harder to police and enforce, biotech companies are now starting to sell farmers seeds genetically modified to produce no viable offspring, so the farmer is forced to buy fresh seeds every year. This benefits no one but the biotech company, and ensures the complete dependence of the farmers.

This hold of biotech companies over farmers, including in the 'third world', is a natural continuation of the so-called green revolution of the 1960s and 70s. Yields and food production were increased by the replacement of traditional methods and crop varieties by a few high yielding, but fertiliser-dependent varieties. Both seeds and fertiliser were sold to the farmers by agrochemical companies. This represented nothing less than the spread of capitalism into all aspects of agriculture throughout the world.

Despite what Prince Charles and other enthusiasts for organic farming may wish, the world cannot go back to pre-capitalist farming methods. Firstly, such attempts could not compete in the world market with capitalist food production, and secondly, even if they could, traditional methods could no longer provide enough food for the world's population.

The answer lies in bringing GM technology under social control, so that the advances of science and technology, and the whole of the process of production, are genuinely used for the satisfaction of human needs, rather than for profits ●

Mary Godwin

What we fight for

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

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

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SLP rejects Kosovar rights

Leading Socialist Labour Party member Harpal Brar stooped to a new low earlier this week when he dubbed the Communist Party of Great Britain and the *Weekly Worker* "agents of the CIA".

Comrade Brar, effectively number two in Arthur Scargill's organisation, was badly shaken at a London SLP election rally by a question from the floor. Marcus Larsen, a candidate on the 'Weekly Worker' London list for the EU elections, was the cause of his embarrassment. He quoted the following passage from Brar's secret Brussels speech in May 1998: "For comrade Scargill to break with Labour and yet maintain illusions in social democracy ... was to persist in errors which, if uncorrected, could not but do irreparable damage to the cause of the working class."

Comrade Larsen invited Brar to say what he thought Scargill's "errors" were and whether he thought Scargill had now 'corrected' them. Looking grey in the face, comrade Brar, who was chairing the rally, did not answer the question directly. He stated: "From time to time we will have our differences - and we are quite capable of sorting them out without the intervention of agents of the CIA." Unable to bring himself to utter the words "*Weekly Worker*", he referred to the CPGB's paper as "a scandal sheet funded by the intelligence services".

This was indeed ironic, for in the very issue of the *Weekly Worker* containing comrade Brar's speech - the issue comrade Larsen was holding up at the rally - Brar is quoted as saying: "Ken Livingstone, ... being unable to deal with the political and ideological side of the [formation of the SLP], stooped to this disgusting smear against Scargill" - Brar then reproduced Livingstone's statement which implied that Scargill had been 'helped' by MI5. But of course this was not the first time the Labour MP had made such an allegation. During the 1992 general election campaign he resorted to exactly the same gutter tactics when he was opposed by the CPGB in his Brent East constituency.

A further irony came with Scargill's earlier assertion to the rally that the more you are insulted and misrepresented, the more you know you are on the right track. But Scargill himself also tried to deflect attention away from the substance of comrade Larsen's question, stating it was "tainted" by the questioner's own past actions. He did not adopt comrade Brar's "disgusting smear" tactic, but instead asked the "young man" to confirm that he was the same Marcus Larsen who had "falsified" his SLP membership application form in order to become a member of two organisations "in contravention of the constitution". Comrade Larsen replied that he had never been given the opportunity to vote on Scargill's constitution, which, as Scargill himself admitted to the rally, was ratified only in December 1997. Turning the tables on the SLP general secretary, comrade Larsen asked what he thought of Brar's own 'dual membership'.

Brar stated that "we" (presumably he meant the Association of Communist Workers) had waited a whole year before joining the SLP after its foundation: "When we joined, we disbanded our organisation." I assume the ACW is "disbanded" in the same

.....
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way as members of the Fourth International Supporters Caucus and the *Economic and Philosophic Science Review* allegedly dissolved themselves - both, like the ACW today, were once embraced by Scargill as a result of their grovelling sycophancy before they were dumped.

Comrade Brar's main political activity consists in writing, editing and promoting his bimonthly publication *Lalkar* - officially the journal of the Indian Workers Association. He is never seen selling the SLP's *Socialist News*. Even a cursory glance at the contents of *Lalkar* confirms that it carries its "own programme, principles and policies, distinctive and separate propaganda" - to quote from the SLP constitution.

Comrade Brar contended that the ACW's entryism had been totally different from that of the CPGB. He had supported the SLP from the start.

In fact back in 1996 Brar had written: "Communists cannot join the SLP, for clause II, paras 4 and 5 of the SLP's constitution bans this course of action ... Communists cannot adopt this dishonest, entryist position, but must continue to give the SLP critical support from outside, while redoubling their efforts to build a genuine Marxist-Leninist party" (*Lalkar* July-August 1996). Actually it was only after

behind-the-scenes negotiations with Scargill that comrade Brar changed his tune.

Continuing his tirade against the CPGB and the *Weekly Worker*, he declared that his Brussels speech was not "secret" at all. It was made before representatives of around 70 organisations, and not all were Stalinists: "Some of them were of your persuasion," he told comrade Larsen - ie, they fell under Brar's rather broad 'Trotskyist' categorisation. Of course Nikita Khrushchev's 'Trotskyist' speech denouncing Stalin to the CPSU congress in 1956 was heard by several thousand delegates. It was secret nevertheless.

Comrade Larsen was allowed to ask a second question, this time relating to Kosovo. Scargill had earlier slammed "people who support the KLA". To enthusiastic applause from the majority of the 40-strong audience the SLP general secretary added: "We all know they are financed by the CIA." Comrade Larsen wondered whether Scargill thought that Ho Chi Minh had been wrong to accept funding and training from the American OSS - the forerunner of the CIA - when he led the Vietnamese struggle against Japanese imperialism. Another question that went unanswered.

Scargill retorted that the SLP was "against independence for Kosovo completely". Incredibly he described this anti-democratic and therefore anti-socialist attitude as an "internationalist approach", explaining that the break-up of former Yugoslavia had divided a formerly united people. What is more, until recently more than 60% of Kosovo's population had been Serb. "We are for the right of the people of Yugoslavia as a whole to self-determination," he said. "Kosovo is an integral part of Yugoslavia." He added: "Ironically the United Nations also says that." More ironic than comrade Scargill thinks: the SLP shares imperialism's view that a settlement must be imposed without regard to the Kosovars' wishes.

Perversely Brar accused the CPGB of being "socialist colonialists" because of our support for Kosovar self-determination. In response to a question from a comrade from the US, who stated the all too evident truth that Kosovar rights had been suppressed, Scargill retorted: "We have never said we are against Kosovar rights" - so long as they do not try to put them into practice obviously.

The meeting had begun with comrade Brar. The SLP, he said, was for withdrawal from the European Union - "not because we are little Englanders: far from it". Turning to the EU elections, he asked rhetori-

cally, "Why does the *Morning Star* say 'vote Labour'?" Because it does not want to lose funding from the trade union bureaucrats, came his own answer. As for *The New Worker*, "They haven't got the bloody guts to say, 'Vote Labour'." According to comrade Brar, the New Communist Party declined to make any recommendation in its weekly paper, preferring instead to send out a private letter to members, advising them ... to vote Labour.

The left should "follow the lead of a Marxist party - one that bases itself on the philosophy of Marxism," he concluded. Apparently he was referring to the SLP.

Comrade Brar introduced the first speaker - none other than his daughter, Joti, who, like himself, was a London candidate in the EU elections. The speech she read out had a familiar ring for comrades who had bought the first issue of the SLP's women's journal *Women for Socialism* (May). It consisted almost entirely of her article published in that issue, including the remarkable claim that the rapidly shrinking SLP "is growing exponentially". The speech also included the section of her article which read: "Several other outfits calling themselves socialist have decided to stand in this election where previously they only acted as campaigners for the Labour Party. There is only one reason for this - the very serious threat that the SLP poses to social democracy."

It is very likely that comrade Joti Brar naively believes this to be true. As if the CPGB - the only other "outfit" standing in London - has ever campaigned for Labour. The comrade seemed to think that the SWP was also contesting in the capital. None of this prevented Scargill from remarking that her speech was "one of the best contributions I've heard for a very long time".

Next to speak was Bob Crow, assistant general secretary of the RMT rail union. Perfectly encapsulating his *British road*, national socialist politics was his statement to the effect that the EU "prevents nationalisation from happening". His immediate concern, however, appeared to be the EU's agreed policy of abolishing duty-free allowances, which "will cost my members two and a half thousand jobs". Comrade Crow is probably aware that if VAT were abolished, it would cost unions representing inland revenue workers many jobs. Perhaps in view of this we should campaign for the retention of such iniquitous indirect taxes. Certainly that would be the logic of comrade Crow's sectional outlook.

Like Harpal Brar, comrade Crow taunted members of his former organisation, the Communist Party of Britain, in the audience with the *Morning Star*'s call for a Labour vote, especially given Blair's onslaught on Yugoslavia.

This theme was also taken up by Scargill. He reported that two CPBers had approached him the previous week, saying, "Arthur, we've had enough." Their decision to join Socialist Labour was an example that others should follow, he said. I must confess that my attention began to wander as Scargill reeled off for the umpteenth time all his figures proving how "we" had lost out through membership of the "Common Market".

Yes, Arthur, the EU is a "capitalist club". But "voting us in to get us out" is as logical as calling for workers to "withdraw" from Britain.

His dire national socialist diatribe continued with the claim that the EU was responsible for the importation of millions of tonnes of coal, "all of it inferior to British coal", at least in the world of Arthur Scargill.

Apart from the intervention by comrade Larsen and the US comrade, only one other person - a visitor from Kurdistan - asked to speak. Scargill assured her that the SLP backed the Kurdish struggle wholeheartedly. He did not announce that his party was 'against independence for Kurdistan completely', or that it was for 'the right of the people of Turkey as a whole to self-determination'.

Apart from the dozen or so Scargill loyalists and London SLP members, the rest of the audience consisted mainly of assorted 'official communists' and Stalinists. None felt confident enough to make any kind of contribution and many of them applauded Scargill. Members of the CPB did not rise to the anti-*Morning Star* bait.

In view of the lack of questions, Scargill rambled on interminably, treating his audience to a sad display of second-rate theatrics, peppering his anecdotes with a variety of badly impersonated foreign accents.

The rally was finally ended with Harpal Brar's concluding remarks. He noted that there were no representatives of the bourgeois press in the hall. Nevertheless he expected coverage of the rally to be featured in an unnamed weekly paper with a report that Scargill had been "rattled" by an intervention from the floor. "Does he look rattled?" he asked. It was true: comrade Larsen's questions had not worried Scargill at all. But the same cannot be said for comrade Brar. His "agents of the CIA" smear spoke for itself ●

Alan Fox