

Ireland: weak link

Blair's entire strategy at risk -
Sinn Féin stands to gain

The impasse over the implementation of the Good Friday agreement hangs like a sword of Damocles over British and Irish bourgeois politics and threatens Blair's entire strategy for a constitutional revolution from above.

The Tories face defeat at the next general election and perhaps permanent marginalisation as a result of a Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition under proportional representation, together with the wiping out of their 350 in-built majority in the House of Lords. They have broken the traditional bipartisanship over Ireland and sided with the Ulster Unionists in thwarting the setting in motion of the Northern Ireland executive. Hague may well be prepared to take his backing of the unionists to the point of an 'ermine rebellion' and thus provoke a constitutional crisis in a bid to wreck the New Labour strategy.

Northern Ireland is the weak link. Blair's plans to establish a new consensus through the imperialist-sponsored peace process depends on a radical rearticulation of the protestant ascendancy in the Six Counties, through a *balanced* institutionalisation of sectarianism: ie, a power-sharing executive. Demographic trends point to a catholic-nationalist majority by 2015. Moreover every concession to the nationalist-republican population sparks a stubborn reaction from loyalism, threatening to cohere a 'no' majority amongst the unionists.

This September will see not only the start of the review of the British-Irish Agreement under the chairmanship of former US senator George Mitchell, but also the publication of Chris Patten's recommendations for the reform of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. A root-and-branch restructuring of Northern Ireland's police is central to winning the minority to at least a passive acceptance of the continuation of the Six County statelet. Hated by the nationalist-republican community, the RUC is rightly regarded as a tool of unionism whose prime aim is to keep the 'croppies' in their place.

At the same time elements in the RUC, supported by a large section of

"Adams sees himself as Ireland's Nelson Mandela - a world statesman and maybe the first 32-county taoiseach"

loyalism, can be expected to go beyond mere vocal protests against the Patten proposals. Apart from the weaponry at the disposal of the official state in the Six Counties, the loyalist population is of course armed to the teeth - there are 100,000 legally held guns. With the Tory right *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* continuing to egg on the unionists, there could also be rumblings in the army.

It is therefore hardly surprising that the undefeated IRA refuses to decommission its weapons. *An Phoblacht*, Sinn Féin's weekly paper, is packed full of reports of daily loyalist assassination attempts, death threats and intimidation of catholics. Some of these have managed to find their way into the British press recently. *The Guardian* quoted a north Belfast community worker as saying: "If Sinn Féin tried to persuade people here the IRA should give up arms, they'd be hounded out." In response to numerous provocations an SF representative in South Antrim issued an

appeal to "nationalist residents to be calm and not respond to this vicious hatred" (*An Phoblacht* July 22).

On the facing page the paper carries the long-awaited IRA statement, which led to such mixed reactions in the bourgeois press: "Those who demand the decommissioning of IRA weapons lend themselves, in the current political context, inadvertently or otherwise, to the failed agenda which seeks the defeat of the IRA," the statement read. While the *Irish Independent* interpreted the statement with a front page which read, "Provos: we're still on board for peace", the *Telegraph's* reply was a headline which screamed, "IRA threat to end ceasefire" (July 22). Two *Guardian* writers - apparently in all seriousness - speculated that the IRA might return to the offensive with a Canary Wharf-type bomb (July 23).

The Democratic Unionist Party pretended to believe this too: "The statement indicates very clearly that the IRA is prepared to go back to bombing just as they did in the past when people in the past didn't meet their demands," said the DUP's deputy leader, Peter Robinson.

The truth is that SF is likely to be the main beneficiary of the present impasse. Relying on continuing unionist intransigence, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness are prepared to show sweetness and light, and to tolerate a great deal, so long as they see a long-term advantage for the republican movement. Earlier this month SF representatives in Newry informed supporters that one of the organisation's main objectives in the Stormont talks was to "create confusion and disunity among their political enemies" (*The Daily Telegraph* July 5). Blair virtually rewrote the Good Friday deal by rushing through legal powers to eject SF from the Northern Ireland executive if the IRA did not decommission. In another sop to the unionists, Downing Street even suggested that the release of IRA prisoners might be halted. Yet SF continued to engage. Adams sees himself as Ireland's Nelson Mandela - a world statesman and maybe the first 32-county taoiseach.

The SF leaders have played a canny game, usually employing conciliatory language with occasional controlled outbursts of frustrated anger. Sinn Féin could well soon overhaul the SDLP as the main catholic-nationalist



Paisley and Adams: thunder and sweet reason

party in the Six Counties, and it is winning steady support in the south.

Far from advocating a return to armed struggle, SF unceasingly calls upon Blair to force through the provisions of the agreement, steamrolling the unionists where necessary. It points out that the executive should have been up and running a year ago, the all-Ireland ministerial council should have been conducting its business and London should have published its 'overall strategy' on demilitarisation. *An Phoblacht* called on the British government to "end its capitulation to unionist wrecking tactics", and to "acknowledge its overriding responsibility and assert its authority" (July 22). The review of the agreement's implementation must be "focused and time-limited", Adams insisted last week, while Mitchell's return to oversee it was to be "warmly welcomed".

When the SF leader writes that he is "totally committed to doing everything in my power to maintain the peace process and to removing the guns forever from the politics of our country" (*The Guardian* July 14), there can be little doubt that this ex-

presses a genuine desire to transform the republican movement from a revolutionary anti-imperialist formation into a respectable mainstream political force. No doubt McGuinness is right when he says that there is not "a snowball's chance in hell" of IRA decommissioning by May 2000, as laid down by the agreement. But that does not mean that this weaponry will be brought back into use.

Nevertheless, the failure of the state to defeat the IRA's heroic resistance has left hardline unionists and the Conservative right in a fury. If Adams and co were to be allowed to enter the Northern Ireland executive without IRA decommissioning, fumed *The Daily Telegraph*, "the power of terror will, for the first time in our history as a free country, be given official sanction" (July 3). Its editorial demanded to know, "How could unionists accept such a thing? Come to that, how could Conservatives?"

Such language is a warning: the threat to Blair's strategy comes not from an end to the IRA ceasefire, but from loyalism, and its opportunist ally, William Hague ●

Jim Blackstock

Party notes

CU'99

We print below the full timetable for this year's Communist University. Of course, this may still be subject to changes. If comrades plan to attend particular sessions, up to date information on the sessions can be had on 07930 129909 during the week.

This year's school reflects some of the main areas of Party work and intervention over the past period - the politics of the Balkan war, the fight against nationalism, the USSR and the struggle for genuinely communist method, for example. If previous years are anything to go by however, a dominating theme will emerge during the course of the week.

Last year, we continually returned to the pivotal question of the USSR with sharp disagreements between a Party majority and a minority. Assessing the school last year, I commented that further study and thought on the question by both sides might lead to convergence or a further divergence. However, in contrast to the characteristic fears expressed by a Trotskyist guest, this process did *not* signify some 'pre-split' scenario. The debate on this thorny question - sharp and discourteous as it was on occasion - actually helped to bond our ranks. Whatever side comrades took, they are aware that there is only one organisation on the British left that could conduct such a fundamental discussion openly, in front of friend and opponent alike.

In other words, the open expression of this sharp difference was a living manifestation of the spirit of *Partysm*. No comrade left the school with the view that our organisation should be cleaved apart along theoretical lines.

Our school's programme is thus organised to highlight differences, to allow for controversy and the sharp clash of opinion. This is not to satisfy some mindless belligerence on the part of the organisers. We know that this is the best way for all comrades to *learn*.

More details of this year's school are on the Party website. We look forward to meeting and debating with comrades ●

Mark Fischer
national organiser

Saturday July 31

4.30pm-4.35pm **Aims and methods of CU'99** - Stan Kelsey
4.35pm-7pm **The fight for democracy and socialism in Iran** - Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran

Sunday August 1

10am-12.30pm **Scargillism** - Dave Osler
Lunch - 12.30pm-2pm
2pm-4.15pm **The left and Labour** - Bob Pitt
Teabreak - 4.15pm-4.45pm
4.45pm-7pm **The left and the Balkans war** - International Bolshevik Tendency

Monday August 2

10am-12.30pm **The Welsh road to socialism** - Cymru Goch
Lunch - 12.30pm-2pm
2pm-4.15pm **The break-up of Yugoslavia** - Mark Fischer
Teabreak - 4.15pm-4.45pm
4.45pm-7pm **The politics of the Northern Ireland peace process** - Jack Conrad

Tuesday August 2

10am-12.30pm **Gay liberation and single-issue campaigns** - Peter Tatchell and Royston Bull
Lunch - 12.30pm-2pm
2pm-4.15pm **The USSR: what class ruled?** - Alliance for Workers' Liberty
Teabreak - 4.15pm-4.45pm

4.45pm-7pm **Marxism, prediction and science** - Phil Sharpe

Wednesday August 4

10am-12.30pm **Can green politics save the world?** - Green Party
Lunch - 12.30pm-2pm
2pm-4.15pm **GMOs** - Marion Haldane
Teabreak - 4.15pm-4.45pm
4.45pm-7pm **The bourgeois revolution** - Revolutionary Democratic Group

Thursday August 5

10am-12.30pm **The decline of capitalism** - Hillel Ticktin
Lunch - 12.30pm-2pm
2pm-4.15pm **Institutional racism** - Peter Manson
Teabreak - 4.15pm-4.45pm
4.45pm-7pm **Why the collapse of the USSR was not foreseen** - Hillel Ticktin

Friday August 6

10am-12.30pm **Left unity in Europe** - Bård Sanstad, editorial board *Venstre Om* (Norway)
Lunch - 12.30pm-2pm
2pm-4.15pm **The left and Europe** - Anne Murphy and Alan Thornett (*Socialist Outlook*)
Teabreak - 4.15pm-4.45pm
4.45pm-7pm **Is communism a utopia?** - István Mészáros

Saturday August 7

10am-12.30pm **Livingstone and the left** - Michael Malkin
Lunch - 12.30pm-1.30pm
1.30pm-3.30pm **Building a new broad left party** - Nick Long
Evaluation of school - finish by 4pm

Brunel University, Cleveland Road, Uxbridge, west London - 15 minutes walk from Uxbridge tube. Limited residential spaces available. Full cost of week: £85, including self-catering accommodation. Non-residential - £40 for the week or £5 per session on door.

Episodic

In the *Weekly Worker* (July 15) comrade Phil Sharpe raised the question of the relationship between Trotsky's revolutionary politics and bourgeois democracy. One of his points was that Trotsky did not simply defend bourgeois democracy or the democratic republic. In his writings on the struggle against fascism in Germany, Trotsky asked the question, what does the Communist Party defend? He answered that it should not defend the Weimar constitution.

This was because he believed the profound crisis of capitalism in the inter-war years in Germany was undermining parliamentary institutions or becoming incompatible with bourgeois democracy. One form of Bonapartism succeeded another, as the bourgeois republic degenerated into fascism. The parliament became a screen for counterrevolution.

What Trotsky defended was not the bourgeois democratic framework of the Weimar republic, but workers' democracy built up within it, so that the workers could go on from defence of their gains to the socialist offensive. In Trotsky's own words: "The Communist Party must call for the defence of those material and moral positions which the working class has managed to win in the German state. This most directly concerns the fate of the workers' political organisations - trade unions, newspapers, printing plants, clubs, etc" (L Trotsky *The struggle against fascism in Germany* New York 1987, p72).

Trotsky's call for a united front was based on preventing the physical destruction of the of the above workers' organisations and workers' democracy within the Weimar republic. Trotsky ridiculed the combination programme of Hilferding. Since Hilferding had beaten up his brain in 1918 to find ways of combining soviets with the Weimar constitution without damaging the republic, Trotsky now imagined Hilferding working his brain to find ways of combining fascist barracks with the Weimar constitution.

Trotsky's metaphor for fascism and bourgeois democracy was that the electricity wires of bourgeois democracy could not take the voltage of the tensions of capitalist crisis and decay. He had argued the same point against Kautsky in *Terrorism and communism* to justify the dissolution of the constituent assembly: "In reality only two forces existed: the revolutionary proletariat, led by communists, and counterrevolutionary democracy, headed by generals and admirals" (L Trotsky *Terrorism and communism* London 1975, p64). For Trotsky, parliamentarianism, however radical or democratic, had lost its capacity to follow the course of revolutionary consciousness.

Trotsky was clear that Marx did not put the principle of democracy above the dynamics of class struggle: "Kautsky's ship was built for lakes and quiet harbours, not at all for the open sea, and not for periods of storms" (*ibid* p104). In the fight against fascism in Germany, Trotsky said the workers would only succeed if they did *not* settle for a democratic republic, because "the formulas of democracy, freedom of the press, the right to unionise mean for us only incidental or episodic slogans in the independent movement of the proletariat, and not a democratic noose fastened to the neck of the proletariat" (L Trotsky *The transitional programme* New York 1983, p141).

Barry Biddulph
South London

Ridiculous

Anne Murphy's letter and Peter Manson's rant against the AWL/myself in the *Weekly Worker* (July 22) suggest that they haven't quite got their heads round the question of how revolutionaries use reform demands and the concept of transitional demands.

1. Would Tony Blair's government tax the rich to make a massive cash injection into the NHS - to use an example that seems to

upset Peter particularly - because: a) Tony's a nice bloke; b) for a laugh; or c) because the working class made them do it?

2. Would the movement that forced this concession be: a) "slightly more radical than the Liberal Democrats" (to quote Peter), and have persuaded New Labour to put people before profit by being very polite; b) have sneaked funding the welfare state in as part of the whole 70s revival thing, perhaps disguising it in an Afro wig; or c) a working class movement that had moved from the defensive to the offensive on principles - people before profit, an equal right to life and so on - that are basic building blocks of socialism, and advanced as a political, ideological and industrial force?

Revolutionaries raising reform demands and reformism are clearly not the same thing. As the 3rd Congress of the Communist International (1921) put it, "The alternative offered by the Communist International in place of the minimum programme of the reformists and centrists is: the struggle for the concrete needs of the proletariat, for demands which in their application undermine the power of the bourgeoisies, which organise the proletariat, and which form the transition to the proletarian dictatorship, even if certain groups of the masses have not yet grasped the meaning of such proletarian dictatorship."

Enter, in Britain in 1999, transitional demands such as defending and extending the welfare state and the fight for free trade unions. Or, in Russia in 1917, bread, peace and land. Or, in 30s America, the sliding scale of wages and hours.

Clearly, the reform demands we seek to organise the working class around need a political perspective, summed up now in the fight for a workers' government (another transitional demand) - but the idea that an obsession with Britain's constitution is the only "political" approach and all else is "economism" is ridiculous. The democratic demands Anne and Peter list are all very reasonable, but they are hardly the cutting edge of reviving the British working class.

Peter says I "did not dispute [his] remark that any Labour politician, left or right," would have agreed with the demands raised on AWL election material in the recent Churchdown by-election "20 years ago". I didn't "dispute" it as it misses the point somewhat. Bread, peace and land wouldn't be exactly revolutionary demands in 1990s Britain: in 1917 Russia, however, I'm sure you'll agree, they were pretty sharp. You can't just transpose a set of demands made in one set of circumstances to a totally different set of circumstances.

The idea that advocating a Labour vote in Britain would "logically" "oblige" one to have advocated voting for the Falangists in Franco's Spain would be insulting if weren't so absurd.

The answer to both the above questions is c), by the way.

Alan McArthur
Alliance for Workers' Liberty

Bamboozled Lenin

In his otherwise good critique of Labourism (*Weekly Worker* July 15) Jack Conrad makes the mistake of saying that Lenin was right to define the Labour Party as a bourgeois workers' party. I have raised the reasons why this was a mistake before with Jack, but he must have forgotten, so this is a reminder.

Lenin was misled by a member of the British Socialist Party who visited the Soviet Union and falsely told Lenin that the British Labour Party permitted organised tendencies and factions within its ranks. On the strength of this Lenin - who had no first-hand experience of the Labour Party - assumed that such an internally democratic organisation must have a revolutionary element within it, even if the politics of its leadership and most of its membership were bourgeois. There is no question that Lenin would not have given the epithet 'bourgeois workers' party' to the Labour Party if he had not

Letters

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

been misled in this way.

Lenin had been badly advised, and Sylvia Pankhurst of the Communist Party admonished those who took Lenin's line (and who in many cases had no excuse) that a policy of entry into the Labour Party would result in British workers being diverted from revolutionary politics and being hegemonised by bureaucratic trade union reformism. This is what happened in the period up to 1926.

Thus the position of orthodox Trotskyists such as Workers Power, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty is a now archaic continuation of a line that fails to recognise the fundamentally undemocratic nature of the Labour Party's internal regime, something that was also wrongly ignored by Trotsky himself (with more excuse, since Labour had not been in power umpteen times). The orthodox Trotskyists are still convinced that it is possible to split off a portion of the Labour Party and win it to revolutionary politics. But their understanding of their beloved label for the Labour Party - 'bourgeois workers' party' - is purely sociological, with an appeal made that we should note the trade union and worker base of the party. This ignores the key philosophico-political points that need to be grasped, such as, following Lenin, the idea that you assess the class nature of a party by looking at its policies and its leadership, not by conducting a sociological analysis of its base.

On these lines Lenin would have concluded, if he had not been misled, that the Labour Party was a straight bourgeois party and indeed always had been since its inception. Jack does a disservice to the rest of his argument by endorsing the view of a bamboozled Lenin and ignoring the view of the most dedicated fighters for the fledgling CPGB.

Phil Walden
Oxford

On the ball

With regards to the article, 'Learning from the fascists' (*Weekly Worker* July 1), in an otherwise accurate review of Anti-Fascist Action's *Fighting Talk* Mark Fischer makes one important error of judgement. Mark states that Afa's journal "lacks an understanding that rightwing populism-fascism need not come in a specifically racist form" and may adopt "anti-racist robes".

As a reader of *Fighting Talk* for some years now, I can only conclude that Afa have been well aware that British fascism could adopt this particular 'respectable' path, converting from the 'bootboy' image to the 'Euro-nationalism' of the French and Austrian varieties, where the issue of race has been put on the back burner.

In addition the fact that Afa have picked up on the BNP's support around the Countryside Alliance, lorry drivers and cleaning up churchyards in the West Midlands suggests that they are on the ball regarding the danger of the growth of 'non-racial' fascism.

Ivan Doyle
London

Crazy

Some of the new thinking exposed in the controversy at the CPGB aggregate over visions of a revolutionary Ireland have some scary implications as well as false perceptions (*Weekly Worker* July 15).

Firstly Jack Conrad seems to have stumbled on the old English misunderstanding of the Irish war. 'The protestants' in Ireland do *not* constitute a nation - they are a religious choice. There are almost as many protestants in the 26 Counties as the occupied Six, so, if we are to talk about "self-government autonomy up to and

including the right of separation", then logically it must include the protestants of the 26 Counties. Suddenly this starts to take on tragic divisions of Pakistan *vis-à-vis* India, then Bangladesh, now Kashmir.

It strikes me Jack Conrad is being a bit coy - "the right of separation"? Surely, if you are going to make such a demand, it is the "right to self-determination" - which includes unity with the British imperialist state: ie, loyalism. So in effect you are now arguing for the 'right' of some protestants to support imperialism and oppose republican anti-imperialism. Did not Zionism start as a political viewpoint that 'the Jews' not only constituted a 'nation', but that the nation had a land (originally any old piece of land, but then Palestine because it was god's gift to the chosen people), which, despite its occupation by others, would now be taken over as theirs.

If we are now to call for self-determination for the protestants, then we have to support the same for the Jews - ie, their 'right' to seize Palestine. This is an ill worked out and utterly reactionary formulation.

However, religions do not constitute a nationality: these are choices within a single nationality. The protestants of the Six Counties are *not* "British-Irish": they are Celtic people of *identical* ethnic origins to the rest of Ireland. Certainly they came as planters via Scotland, but the Scots, as all but the most ignorant will know, are from Ireland. The founders of the modern Irish republican movement were protestants from Ulster. The divisions on the island of Ireland are *political* differences in relation to the British state's occupation - loyalist versus anti-imperialist; they are not ethnic or national.

But the idea is even worse, looked at closer: if you are to support the right to self-determination up to and including separation from the rest of Ireland, won't you then have to support those who fight for it, like you did with the KLA in Kosovo? *This means support for the UFF and UDA!* The last group to come to this crazy conclusion was the British and Irish Communist Organisation, who became the promoters of the two-nation theory and the 'left', 'Marxist' wing of the loyalist military.

Where the hell are you going?
Dave Douglass
Doncaster

EPSR trouble

What "reading between the lines" was forced on Steve Edwards by the articles in the *Economic and Philosophic Science Review* which show there is a "spot of bother in EPSR land" (*Weekly Worker* July 15)?

My article polemicised against "former EPSR supporters" and Roy Bull's articles on SLP degeneracy have said: "A fully conscious stab-in-the-back hostility to EPSR theoretical pummelling emerged almost painlessly from the entire SLP coalition of Trots, Scargillites, museum-Stalinists, and the single-issue fanatics of every description - plus, sadly, a few EPSR supporters as well" (*EPSR* June 23).

"How long-standing EPSR supporters can supportively watch the SLP's Scargillist backwardness stage a Mickey Mouse repeat of laughably discredited Stalinist censorship, and expulsion of ideas and theoretical analysis, is a slightly surprising phenomenon, to say the least" (*EPSR* June 30).

Which should be clear enough that no one has had to "read between the lines" to know that there is a dispute within EPSR circles. Indeed, articles have been invited from the few comrades who stand by the SLP as a worthwhile socialist vehicle *as it is*, but not a word has been submitted for publication.

Names have not been mentioned only for two reasons: personal secu-

rity, for whatever that is worth, and because in polemics it is the ideas that are being tackled, not the person necessarily. The EPSR has no problem with internal conflict - just the opposite. The EPSR has a 20-year record of relishing conflict as the highest level of the struggle for Marxism-Leninism. Arguments are never hushed up; instead, all comrades are encouraged to give their opinions on all matters at any time.

This struggle for the best possible objective understanding of all political developments is the life-blood of Leninism - and its primacy in the battle to end monopoly capitalism's rule is, of course, the very issue at the heart of the internal EPSR dispute over relations with the SLP. Or to put it another way, the question is: is the SLP now a degenerating lash-up of museum-Stalinism and class-collaborating 'left' trade unionism which the working class need warning off, because it will utterly *stifle* the fight for theory? - or is the SLP still a useful vehicle for developing socialist ideas in the working class capable of taking the working class forwards?

Reading the latest issues of the *Weekly Worker*, it is striking that every 'left' group is rife with disillusionment and disaffection over the way the membership are treated by their 'leaders'; people are fed up with the contempt for proper inner-party discussion at a time when the members are more puzzled by political developments than ever (due to imperialist warmongering, Ireland's peace deal, the wretchedness of the SLP, but most of all the liquidation of the USSR by the fag-end of revisionism).

The only starting point for getting any of this right - and to keep the fight permanently going for the anti-imperialist interests of the working class, all the way to fully rational communist society - is to struggle for objective truth, and draw people into that struggle by honest and open discussion.

Disputes are bound to arise with practically every major political development, but a bureaucratic stifling of debate (as opposed to the sometimes unfortunate necessity of curbing aggressive factionalism) is what killed the CPSU, and will always kill off the fight for Leninist science.

Chris Barratt
London

Rise and fall of Roy

My letter of July 15 was concerned with questioning the EPSR's inference that the SLP has undergone qualitative degeneration as a result of Scargill's ultimatum to Roy Bull, in conjunction with the SLP's social chauvinistic Euro election campaign. (Letters July 22).

In the EPSR of July 7, Chris Barratt stated that the SLP campaign should be seen as "a *deliberate* break with any previous inclination to take on capitalist crisis", and is thus a retreat from the SLP's founding aim of the "abolition of capitalism". Aside from the fact that the SLP leaders would no doubt still express this intention, is the EPSR suggesting that the Euro broadcast and leaflet was significantly different from that of its general election campaign?

I am not saying that the political evolution of the SLP was preordained, but surely its 'little Englander' socialism was implicit early on, and certainly well before the rise and fall of Roy Bull's involvement. Furthermore, the method of effectively 'voiding' Bull's membership was hardly a new development for the SLP, as countless examples elsewhere reveal - including the Stockport branch, which I believe Roy was involved in. I do not wish to seem cruel to animals or gurus, but sometimes the sound of cages being rattled is quite amusing.

Steve Edwards
Ludlow

Watson's the matter

Phil Watson took nine months to reply to me (*Weekly Worker* July 22). The original dispute has thereby rather faded. Nevertheless there remains what comrade Watson calls "modest differences". Apparently my insistence that "matter is primary in the last analysis" means I am "theoretically incapable of grasping" the "conundrum" whereby workers thought of the Soviet Union "as something other than a giant prison camp".

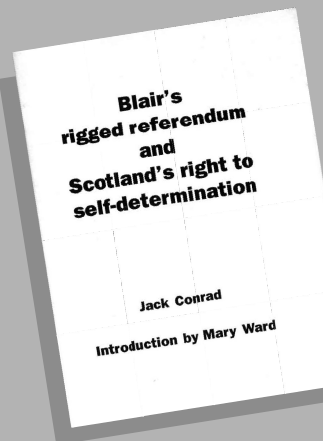
Prison camp hyperbole aside, there is no automatic correspondence between the object (in this case the So-

viet Union) and consciousness. Neither myself nor anyone else to my knowledge seriously proposes such an absurdity. On the contrary Marxists seek to accurately reflect - ie, grasp - objective reality in the mind through painstaking work on theory. The Soviet Union was, and still is, largely untheorised. The result - illusions of one sort or another. Comrade Watson's "conundrum" vanishes into a philosophical fog.

Finally am I right to infer that comrade Watson believes that consciousness is primary in the last analysis? If so our differences are far from "modest".

Jack Conrad
North West London

Lessons of Blair's first referendum



In this pamphlet Jack Conrad offers a serious critique of the Scottish Socialist Alliance (now Scottish Socialist Party) decision to support the call for a double 'yes' vote in the 1997 referendum.

He makes it clear why the SSA's leadership was unable to take up the challenge to lead the working class away from reformism towards revolutionary politics around the national question in Scotland.

£1, pp42, from the CPGB address

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Fighting fund

Good as any

With just two days to go to reach our £400 monthly target, we are still £57 short. This week's fund, including JR's quarterly standing order of £25, amounted to £95, leaving our total at £343. To ensure we receive the full £400, please ensure you put your donation in the post immediately.

A reminder: the last two months have seen a deficit which we urgently need to make up. In addition, we are now in the peak of the holiday period and the *Weekly Worker* itself will not be published

for the next two weeks. Might I suggest to those comrades who honour us with an occasional, but large, gift, now might be as good a time as any? Let's hope I can report a bumper post in three weeks time.

Special thanks this week go also to SK (£20) and to TD, AS and BB (£10 each) ●

Robbie Rix

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

Website

Our website carries a comprehensive archive section including articles on the Kosova war, Socialist Alliances and the SLP's degeneration.
www.duntone.demon.co.uk/CPGB/

Weekly Worker

There will be no *Weekly Worker* on August 5 or 12. The next edition will be Thursday August 19

action

■ CPGB seminars

London: Sunday August 15, 5pm - 'Lenin on the dictatorship of the proletariat', using Lenin's *Two tactics of social democracy* and Hal Draper's *The dictatorship of the proletariat from Marx to Lenin* as study guides.
Call 0181-459 7146 for details.

Manchester: Monday August 23, 7.30pm - 'Imperialism'. 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.

■ 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.

■ Glasgow Marxist Forum

Public meeting and discussion: Trotskyist deputies in the European parliament. What lessons for the British left? Speaker from Lutte Ouvrière. Thursday August 12, 7.30pm, Partick Burgh Hall (near Partick tube and rail station). All welcome.

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Thunder in a cloud

The nationwide protests and demonstrations by students in the Islamic Republic of Iran were not just a flash in the pan. They signalled a turning point in the mass struggle against the Islamic regime. For the first time the students and their supporters voiced slogans that targeted the Islamic Republic in its totality, and not one or other of its factions.

"Guns, tanks, basijis don't scare us anymore!" (referring to the basij security forces), they shouted. "Khamenei, Khamenei, shame on you. Pack up and leave your throne"; "Freedom or death!"; "People join us: 20 years of silence is over"; "Free political prisoners" - and many more slogans that directly targeted the religious ruler, Ali Khamenei, or the despotic rule in its totality. It was this, as much as the burning down of banks and shops, that brought all the regime's factions together - reformist and ultra-conservative.

Over the next six days the slogans became increasingly more radical. The regime, seeing its very roots threatened, united. President Khatami left his smiles at home: "These people have evil aims. They intend to foster violence in society and we shall stand in their way," he said. All those who had nailed their flag to his strategy of 'legally' and peacefully transforming the Islamic regime joined in the chorus condemning the 'excesses'. These "unruly elements" were not students. They were "deviants" directed from abroad. They had to be crushed. Death is the only punishment for the *mohareb* (fighting against god) and *mofsed* (corrupt). If we had not prevented them, "our brave revolutionary muslim youth would have cut these rabble into little pieces," screamed the cleric, Hassan Rowhani. The most serious threat to the regime's existence since 1981 was crushed in blood.

At least 15 students died in Tehran on the first day alone. Five died in the attack on Tabriz University. The real toll is not known, as bodies were removed by the security forces. Whether or not this is the start of a revolutionary movement to topple the regime is too soon to tell. What is clear is that the movement which began with the election of Khatami to the presidency in May 1997 on a platform of reforms within the system has turned a corner. There will be no going back.

It was the students, the young and women who spearheaded the campaign to get Khatami elected in opposition to the candidate of the religious ruler, Khamenei, on the slogan of the rule of law and the creation of the organs of civil society. Khatami's landslide victory was notable not just for the rout of the ultra-conservative candidates, but for the fact that almost 10 million voters, who had stayed away for almost two decades, went to the polls. Some of us understood this as their way of using the opening provided by the increasing factional squabbles to say *no* to the entire system, symbolised by the absolute power of the religious ruler. The May coalition comprised a very broad section of society, united by their desire to open up the political atmosphere. It included the so-called left 'Imam line', their student organisation, the Office for Securing Unity, and their paper *Salam*, various religious nationalist groups and the technocrats surrounding ex-president Rafsanjani and his party, Executives of Construction.

Mehdi Kia looks at the Iranian students' revolt



The end of 20 years of silence - but Khatami's image is cracking

It is important to understand that the differences between the two main factions - those around the religious ruler Khamenei and the May coalition around the president - are not so much over economic policy as politics. For example within both factions there are those who subscribe to the IMF structural adjustment programme, and those who propose some form of state capitalism.

This has been a Bonapartist regime, crawling out of the cobwebs of history, trying to manage a capitalist economy, but unable to rescue it from its deep economic and social malaise. The root of the factional squabbles is the fundamental structural fault line in the political structure of the Islamic Republic: that between the 'caliphate' - that is, the absolute rule of the religious jurisprudence (*velayate faghih*), which gives a religious ruler (Khamenei) almost divine rights over the whole of society - and the 'republic' - that is, the right of the citizen to make laws. In simple terms it is the duality between the sovereignty of god, embodied in his representative on earth, and the sovereignty of the popular vote. The counterrevolution that rode astride a popular anti-dictatorial and egalitarian revolution in 1979 could only give birth to this twin monster. The one represented the right of the clergy to rule in perpetuity, and the other an echo of the revolution the mullahs had ridden and destroyed. Like a pair of macabre Siamese twins the two have been inseparably stuck together.

The twin pyramid of the caliphate and the republic extends right through society from top to toe, creating a totally unworkable dual structure. Throughout its 20 years the faction-ridden regime has been prevented from making a single consistent policy because of this structure pulling it in two directions. And throughout its 20 years it has been desperately trying to escape this by repeatedly purging one or other faction, only to find itself split as soon as it had to make the next decision.

In order to paper over these cracks it concentrated more and more power

in the hands of the religious ruler. A united voice had to be imposed by diktat. This concentration of power started with ayatollah Khomeini himself, when it became apparent that even his authority could not paper over the factional squabbles, and became more urgent with his successor, Khamenei - a lightweight lacking Khomeini's religious and political clout. The leadership therefore became the focus of every crisis the regime went through in the last 18 years.

The coalition that centred around president Khatami two years ago was no exception. That was, in one respect, the old battle between the caliphate and the republic. The coalition formed under one banner: no to Khamenei's despotic rule. Yet it was also the first salvo in a new battle, one that looks beyond the Islamic Republic.

The recent student riots were not the first. Riots had broken out in Mashad, Arak, Ghazvin, Kermanshah, and Shiraz in 1995, and more recently in Eslam Abad, a poor suburb of Tehran. Anti-government slogans had been shouted, banks and shops had been burnt and troops and helicopter gunships had been sent to quell them. Last year saw an unprecedented escalation of labour strikes, mostly in response to workers not being paid for months. They took to the streets and blocked roads. Many strikes were suppressed by force. Then there was the nationwide protest by the oilworkers, unique in its organisation. For the first time on May Day, large number of workers organised their own marches - without permit. In Sanandaj, Kurdistan, the whole town erupted in riots and was placed under martial law.

Smarting from the staggering defeat at the presidential elections, the Khamenei faction turned the screw. It was well placed through its control of the judiciary, all the organs of repression and the state-owned radio-television. Khamenei used the victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the murder of a number of Iranian diplomats to fan war hysteria. His faction unleashed an unprecedented cam-

paign against the writers - the first group who had declared their resolve to create an association independent of the state. At least six died under mysterious circumstances. One reformist newspaper after another was closed.

It was in such a climate that the elections to the Assembly of Experts, which chooses the religious ruler, was held last year. The caliphate used its control of the organ that vets candidates to exclude virtually all the candidates of the May coalition. It then launched a desperate campaign to draw the people to the polls. It was to be an endorsement of the regime as a whole. It even roped in Khatami, whose candidates had been barred, to plea for the electorate to vote. They stayed away in their millions. Khatami had weakened under pressure when the system as a whole was under question. He was to repeat this again last month.

By ignoring the president's call the people showed their political maturity. It was clear that a year before they had not voted for the person of Khatami. They had only voted for his slogans of more freedom and a government of law. The boycott showed that the people were looking beyond the Islamic Republic, though most observers abroad chose to ignore this. Khamenei did not. His allies did everything to stop the first municipal council elections from taking place and, when thwarted by pressure from below, to stop 'reformists' from getting in. In the event they failed in that too and the Khatami faction won an overwhelming majority.

But in Tehran Khatami's compromises over the candidates caused the people to stay away in large numbers. Only 40% voted in the capital. While Khamenei's men did not win a single seat in Tehran, the president's faction got in on a minority vote. Again the people had made it clear that it was not the singer they were interested in, but his song. For Khamenei the municipal election results were catastrophic. In the capital the number of votes cast for his candidates were even less than the number of revolutionary guards stationed in Tehran. With the parliamentary elections due next spring there was no time to lose.

He used the tool he had an abundance of - terror. A wave of political killings of dissident politicians and activists of the writers' union took place last winter - Dariush Foruhar and his wife Parvaneh Eskandari, the writers Mohammad Mokhtari, Mohammad-Jafar Pouyandeh and Majid Sharif were murdered. Student meetings were disrupted by knife- and club-wielding thugs under the sympathetic eyes of the security organs. Reformist politicians were beaten up and their papers closed down. Rumours of a coup circulated.

However, the people were not cowed. The Foruhars' funeral was attended by tens of thousands. Slogans of "Taliban, have some shame, stop your rule" clearly pointed the finger at Khamenei. The Khamenei faction wavered. Some saw the writing on the wall and the wave of murders was stopped. Many more were on the list of those to be liquidated. People demanded to know who had ordered the killings. Allegations were getting too

close to the person of the supreme religious ruler.

A tactical retreat was called for. A conspiracy by rogue elements from the ministry of information was 'uncovered' and an unspecified number of people arrested. Student organisations asked for the resignation of the minister of information. They got it after a fight. They went on to insist that the committee set up by the president to investigate the murders report its findings. It dragged its feet. The rulers hoped that time would blunt memories and demands for the truth. Then suddenly in June the regime announced that the chief suspect in the killings, Said Emami, had committed suicide in prison - or, as one opposition commentator put it, "was suicided". Clearly he knew too much. And he could point to those who gave the orders - ayatollah Khamenei, the caliph himself.

This episode, followed soon by the passage of a law designed to strangle the relatively free press, was the trigger for the student demonstrations. Prior to this the authorities shut a number of pro-presidential papers. The closure of *Salam*, which immediately followed the new press law, was the final straw. Several hundreds staged a sit-in at the university student quarters. They were savagely attacked by armed thugs supported by the police. At least 14 were killed, some thrown out of windows, hundreds injured and many arrested. Eight hundred dorms were burnt. Despite a ban on demonstrations the students took to the streets in a nationwide movement. Armed thugs attacked Tabriz university, killing at least five.

Students were joined by bystanders sympathetic to their cause. In the capital at least two other, separate, demonstrations took place: one in the square housing the old parliament building, the scene of many previous battles over the last century; and the other by the railway station, where a crowd of tens of thousands marched from the poorer quarters of south Tehran. It was not just student demonstrations. It was a popular uprising.

The revolution that toppled the monarchy to a great extent began in the universities. In the two previous decades the universities had been the centre of opposition to the monarchy and supplied many of the cadres that erected the new revolutionary movement on the ashes of the old. During the revolution they provided the organising force for the mass street demonstrations and public gatherings. They also formed an important link between the popular revolution and the working class - whose general strike finally broke the back of the shah's regime.

After the revolution the universities remained the centre of opposition to the new established clerical rule until their forcible closure in 1980, with many casualties. It was students who bore the main brunt of the counter-revolution's wrath in the massacres of 1981 and again 1988. On the side of the regime, it was the universities which formed the main arena where it was legitimised ideologically. Not for nothing did the mullahs endlessly praise the university-seminary axis and unity.

But what is special about the current student movement is that the majority are the children of this revolution. Over 60% of the population

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are under 25; more than half below 20. This is the frustrated generation, with little to do in the stifling atmosphere of the Islamic Republic. The abysmal state of the Iranian economy and the high unemployment means that the future too is bleak. No leisure, no work and no prospects. As for the women, who now outnumber men in higher education, there are the added strictures of sexual apartheid. This is an explosive mix.

There are at present over 2.6 million students in higher education. Some undoubtedly are children of the elite. But increasingly the students come from lower class families. This development was helped by places being reserved for the family of 'martyrs', and by new universities springing up all over the place. The Open University alone has branches in 70 cities and over 600,000 students. For this reason the student movement is not only significant in itself, but is potentially tied in with the working class movement, the neighbourhood associations and the uprisings in the poor quarters. This, in addition to the radical demands of the students, places the student movement, alongside the women's movement, at the centre of democratic developments in Iran.

Currently there are four official student organisations in the country. The largest, the Office for Securing Unity, is close to the so-called left faction within the May (president's) coalition. Some student organisations have ties with the various religious-nationalist groupings - such as the National Association of Students. Some have called for the supreme religious ruler to be elected. An increasing number are voicing the need to separate religion and state. Some have used words such as 'social democracy' - anathema in the Islamic Republic. They elected a council which directed the sit-ins and demonstrations.

The Khamenei faction used the radicalisation of the demonstrations to browbeat Khatami into joining it in a call for law and order. The repressive machinery was set in motion. A counter-demonstration of Khamenei supporters was organised, mostly by state employees and security personnel. Martial law prevailed in the streets of the capital and many major cities. In Tehran alone, over 1,400 students were arrested. According to the Council of Student Protesters, the arrested students, many wounded, were forced to name other student protesters. Before being released they had to sign a prepared statement that they had acted at the instigation of foreign forces.

In time-honoured fashion a number of leaders have been brought before television cameras to read out confessions. Manuchehr Mohammadi and Malus Radnia (Maryam Shansi), belonging to the National Association of Students, have admitted meeting opposition organisations during their (perfectly open and legal) trip abroad last year and "regularly giving false news to foreign media". Their lives, as well as those of many others - such as student leaders Ali-Reza Mohajeri-Nejad and Heshmatollah Tabarzadi, who was arrested before the protests and his paper *Self-Identity* closed - are in danger. Many leaders of the Party of the Iranian Nation have also been arrested. Arrests continue as I write. Former political prisoners have been called for questioning. Some have been detained. Thousands remain in custody. And despite

Khatami's 'good behaviour' another paper supporting him was shut down last week.

Can we do anything abroad? Despite the gloom of some commentators there is no doubt that a properly organised broad campaign of support abroad can secure the release of prisoners and reduce the pressure on detainees: a campaign calling for the immediate release of detainees and pressure on western governments to suspend trade with the country pending the unconditional release of those arrested, alongside a campaign to send representatives from Amnesty International, the Red Cross or any independent committee into Iran to oversee the treatment of detainees. On a broader canvas there is an urgent need for an international campaign to support the struggles of the Iranian people for their democratic rights, including the right to independent association, trade unions, equality of men and women, and the rights of nationalities.

The revolutionary movement in Iran cannot succeed without the working class being organised as a class. An opening of the political atmosphere is the oxygen this movement needs. The fact that the establishment of a writers' union has been imposed on the regime, after the death of so many writers, is a valuable first step. This is the first independent association, outside the state, since the clampdown of 1981. Last year we saw the nationwide move by the oilworkers - again unique in its organisational sophistication before it was ferociously suppressed.

International support is also vital in the campaign to bring the perpetrators of the crimes against the people of Iran before an international tribunal: a global movement from below, in the spirit of Russell's Vietnam tribunal of the 60s (see *Iran Bulletin* winter 1998 and spring/summer 1999).

The left in Iran remains fragmented and weak. To the general global reasons for the weakening of the left must be added the specific mistakes the Iranian left made during and after the 1979 revolution. Perhaps the most important was that the left ignored democracy. Take away the democratic core, and the egalitarian slogans of the left overlapped with those of the demagogic mullahs. Now the regime is discredited, some of those slogans also appear to be discredited in the minds of the public. The left has much work to do in order to make clear the difference between its slogans and those of the mullahs. They need to emphasise a democratic core.

Once the religious ogre is toppled, the left may well face a new-found nationalism. It needs to prepare for this. More than anything it needs to organise the class to which it belongs. The future of Iran, and of the whole Middle East region, is closely tied to the fortunes of this class.

For this to happen the success of the student and the women's movement are crucial. And for these young shoots to grow we need international support ●

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Imprisonment without trial

Riding on the back of recent high profile cases of ferocious attacks by deranged individuals, two weeks ago home secretary Jack Straw introduced 'solutions' to yet another perceived threat to the good order of Blair's New Britain: the danger (note: not 'potential danger') posed by those with severe personality disorder. Many are to be arbitrarily labelled 'dangerous' - and thus a new bugbear of 'dangerous severely personality-disordered' (DSPD) persons spring forth ready-made amongst us - a putative, immediate threat which accordingly must be quickly dealt with.

Stripped of all decoration, Straw's solutions mean imprisonment without trial or benefit of review, otherwise known as internment. Crystallising current Blairite thinking on this question, Straw launched a joint publication of the home office and the department of health, *Managing dangerous people with severe personality disorder: proposals for policy development*. This document states: "... for the relatively small number of severely personality-disordered people who represent an unacceptable degree of danger to the public, detention on the basis of the risk they present, and for as long as that risk remains, can be justified" (p6). Of course, asserting that those targeted are an immediate 'danger', and not merely a potential one, means this proposal has more chance of public acceptance.

At present, although the Mental Health Act 1983 ensures that many with severe personality disorder are compulsorily admitted to hospitals, this applies only to those who are assessed as likely to benefit from treatment. Thus, especially since clinicians are not always agreed on likely outcomes, there are many who fall outside the provisions of this act, since they are considered untreatable. The premise suggested by *Managing dangerous people*, however, is that a significant proportion of these 'untreatable', severely personality-disordered persons pose a present, distinct danger to the public and must be dealt with in emergency fashion. This, it asserts, must be tackled by changes in the law to allow executive incarceration and provide containment facilities for these individuals.

Straw's proposals include two options, both of which supposedly "rely on the development of new, more rigorous, procedures for assessing risk ... [and] aim ... to ensure that the arrangements for detention and management focus on reducing such risks" (p3). Option one would change the law to prevent the release of DSPD people from prison or hospital while they continued to present a risk to the public; those receiving a custodial sentence after being convicted of a criminal offence would continue to be held in prison while anyone else (including those presently in no institution) would be held in a health service facility. Option two would operate under a new legal framework to provide indeterminate de-

"The premise suggested by *Managing dangerous people* is that a significant proportion of these 'untreatable', severely personality-disordered persons pose a present, distinct danger to the public"

tention of all DSPD people (whether presently in prison, in hospital, or in no institution) in facilities run separately from prisons and the health service, as a new branch of the state.

Yet it is widely admitted, including within *Managing dangerous people*, that there is insufficient research evidence on the incidence of anti-social personality disorder, its prevalence in populations, the factors protecting against the disorder, effective interventions, or even the natural history of the disorder. Despite these crucial gaps of knowledge, and without any concrete foundation for these assumptions about the 'danger' posed by an unquantified number of individuals concerned, the Blairites intend to jump in with both feet and lock up individuals willy-nilly, merely on the say-so of a panel of experts determining risk under present hazy parameters, without benefit of legal safeguards or review procedures.

Clearly, if Straw is perceived as tackling recidivism and preventing violent crime in this way, then the Blairites can garner plaudits. However, these proposals are dangerous, anti-democratic sops to an engendered panic. In fact, if recidivism were a concern, resources would flow in to rehabilitate offenders. But, as anyone who has recently spent time in prison can tell you, there are few skill or educational facilities, medical and psychiatric provision is very poor, and the over-stretched probation service can hardly cope.

In reality, *Managing dangerous people* proposes to misuse diagnosis of personality disorder to claim risk to the public, so that people who have committed no violent offence or may have served out their sentence may be kept behind bars. In-

cidentally, a good many of those who ought to be seeking psychiatric help will then fail to do so through fear of permanent imprisonment. In fact, in this cash-starved area of psychiatry, it has yet to be established whether certain types of disorder are indeed treatable or untreatable. This is a far from settled question.

The leading mental health charity, Mind, stated when these proposals were made public that the "central plank of the government's proposal is the potential risk posed by a small number of people. In order to provide all of the right safeguards, to ensure that people are not locked up inappropriately or for longer periods than necessary, the way that risk is currently assessed needs significant improvements." It seems clear that the current risk assessment procedures have severe limitations, so to base loss of liberty upon them is likely to produce serious injustices within the anti-democratic set-up that is proposed.

Straw and the Blairites have received brickbats from the conservative to the liberal bourgeois press over these policy proposals: "Think what a revolution we unleash once we accept *potential* wrongdoing as a basis for incarceration. Almost every one of us *might*, in some circumstances, commit a violent crime. For most of us the likelihood is tiny. But how large does it have to become to justify our arrest?" (editorial *The Daily Telegraph* July 20). And the Blairite-inclined *The Guardian* was also appalled at the proposals: "... a new indeterminate sentence ... would allow people deemed dangerous to be locked up, even if they had not committed any violent act. This must be resisted. Risk assessment is still far too imprecise a science" (editorial, July 20). Where might it end? After all, if the potential for wrongdoing is the measure for taking precautionary action in the draconian manner suggested by Straw's ministry, then "almost every one of us" (the *Telegraph's* words) could be under suspicion by our rulers. That is the enormity of what is being proposed in *Managing dangerous people*.

The government is not, after all, proposing urgently to provide clinical resources to deal directly with personality disorders to help sufferers integrate into society. On the contrary, it is setting up a punitive regime to clear the streets of potential miscreants and wrongdoers, as beggars and the homeless have been targeted in the recent past. And although government has helped establish the Institute for Severe Personality Disorder, this multidisciplinary body is a long way from producing study results, by which time so-called DSPD persons may well be suffering the effects of incarceration without benefit of either judicial process or the present Mental Health Act. Whatever their inadequacies, they do at least have in-built limits and review procedures.

Managing dangerous people is a paradigm for the way the state wishes it could manage us all ●

Jim Gilbert

Continue to victory

Dave Craig explains his theory of the 'dual power republic'

Capitalism can no more solve the question of democracy than it can solve the problem of poverty and low pay. Democracy is a permanently unresolved issue in which the different social classes have different interests. The battle over democracy is the political manifestation of the class struggle, just as the struggles over wages and working conditions is its most obvious economic aspect. Whatever the level of democratic rights, power and influence achieved by past struggles, the working class must defend this and extend it as far as possible.

Revolutionary democratic communism takes as its starting point the class struggle and in particular the struggle of the working class for democracy - that is, for its own conscious democratic power as a class. In recent articles in the *Weekly Worker* (May 13 and July 1) I put forward three basic propositions of revolutionary democratic communism.

- Revolutionary mass struggle is the best means to extend democracy.
- The democratic revolution is the highest form of that struggle.
- The revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat is the highest form of democratic revolution.

I have explained these propositions fully in those articles and provided concrete examples. So I will not repeat them. Any serious assault on revolutionary democratic communism must show how and why these political ideas do not represent the revolutionary interests of the working class.

Significantly all my opponents (Tom Delargy, Phil Sharpe and Barry Biddulph) have avoided any discussion on where they stand on the basic propositions of revolutionary democracy. They have kept silent on the three propositions. Not a comment. Not a word. Not once have any of them told us whether they agree with any of these ideas or how they differ from them. They will argue all day and all night about whether Lenin was a Trotskyist or Trotsky was a Leninist and about who was ignoring the peasantry. But on the basic propositions, they have simply avoided battle.

Worse than this, they have invented statements that I have never made, in order to try to prove that I am a Kautskyist who opposes workers' power and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Any serious and honest Marxist acquainted with my views, or who reads the *Weekly Worker*, knows that this is simply untrue. These comrades cannot deal with the message, so they are trying to shoot the messenger.

I have shown that the three basic propositions are consistent with the theory and practice of Lenin and Trotsky. They were revolutionary democratic communists who put these politics into practice. I have shown that this was not peculiar to Russia and that Trotsky continued with this revolutionary method in relation to the Chinese revolution 1926-30. His political line was, in his own words, "revolutionary and consistent (100%) democracy". He applied the same method to Spain in 1930-31. In the *Weekly Worker* (July 22) I provided the evidence of Trotsky's approach to the democratic demand for

"... the petty bourgeoisie are horrified by the thought of a dual power republic. This will mean civil war and violence. There would be a danger that the working class led by the communists may come to power"

a constituent assembly and his view of building dual power in the Chinese republic. Trotsky's views on China happen to coincide with mine: with one exception, and that concerns the character of the democratic revolution (I will deal with this later).

Tom Delargy has become more conciliatory. He now asks whether he might be able to play a role in investigating the differences between revolutionary democrats and left Trotskyists. Indeed he can. If he is serious about this, he needs to start by telling us which of the three basic propositions of revolutionary democracy he agrees with. If he could stop his hate campaign against me and concentrate on what he actually thinks about the three basic propositions, we might actually start to get somewhere.

It is tempting to describe all my opponents as left Trotskyists or ultra-lefts. But, if we look at Phil Sharpe's apparently shifting position, such a characterisation is too crude. Phil might be a revolutionary democrat, in which case his argument about the closure of the Constituent Assembly can be accepted as a debate amongst our tendency. Revolutionary democrats want to replace bourgeois democracy with soviet democracy. But we understand that the development of working class consciousness may mean that these different forms of class democracy can coexist temporarily. In Russia they coexisted even

after October 1917. It is not a matter of principle, but one of timing. I think that Lenin was right and Phil was wrong about the timing of the closure of the Constituent Assembly. But Phil's argument can be considered on its merits. It is no bad thing to question the received wisdom of the past and force us to reconsider how the relationship between the two forms of democracy works out in real situations.

On the other hand Phil seemed to reject the basic ideas of revolutionary democracy and adopt the posture of an ultra-left in which workers' democracy must be opposed to bourgeois democratic demands. This posturing as a leftist would be gross hypocrisy. Indeed he would be a charlatan of the worst kind. He would be calling us Kautskyists because we dare to suggest that radical bourgeois democratic demands were legitimate in Russia, China, France, Spain and now in royalist UK. Meanwhile he is attacking the Bolsheviks for closing the Constituent Assembly, as Kautsky had done. Make up your mind time, Phil - revolutionary democrat or Kautskyite hypocrite and leftist charlatan?

Phil's answer is made easier by the fact that he now accepts that Trotsky was a revolutionary democrat in relation to China and France. Phil acknowledges that for France, Trotsky was in favour of extending bourgeois democracy along the lines of "a radical bourgeois democracy that is based on the radical traditions of 1793" (*Weekly Worker* July 15). Trotsky was not simply in favour of defending French bourgeois democracy against fascism. Neither did he crudely argue that the dictatorship of the proletariat was the only option. Instead he proposed revolutionary action to extend French republican democracy.

Trotsky was also in favour of promoting and building soviets immediately. He was therefore in favour of '1793 plus soviets'. Barry Biddulph will tell us that this equals a dual power, transitional or civil war republic. Every class conscious worker knows that '1793 plus soviets' is more radical than '1793 without soviets'. You would have to be a complete ignoramus if you did not understand which was closer to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Phil has now paddled up the revolutionary democratic river. But he seems to have only one paddle left. He invents a difference between Trotsky and myself. He accepts that Trotsky and Craig want a '1793 republic with soviets'. Therefore he says: "However, contrary to Dave Craig, Trotsky is not content with this form of bourgeois republic." This is pathetic. There is no evidence that I would be "content" with a radical '1793 republic with soviets'. On the contrary I have specifically rejected this time after time after time. Phil's tactic of inventing differences where none exist means that he is up the creek without any paddles. How could any Marxist or indeed any worker be "content" to live in a civil war republic threatened directly with fascism? The so-called 'theory of contentment with dual power' is the last bastion of someone who is arguing like a scoundrel and not like a Marxist.

Let us turn to Barry Biddulph. He also fails to say where he stands on the three basic propositions of revolutionary democracy and which, if any, he agrees with and how he differs from them. For the record China

in the 1920s is not the same as Britain in the 1920s or in the 1990s. The differences would take too long to number. But we are applying the same revolutionary democratic methods of class struggle to both distinct societies.

Barry wants to apply different political methods to so-called 'advanced' and 'backward' societies. He therefore concentrates on the nature of revolution and the question of dual power. Trotsky says that the fact that "the Chinese revolution at this stage is national-democratic - ie, bourgeois - is elementary to us all" (*Trotsky on China* New York 1974, p156). The problem is that this 'elementary' standard formulation, accepted and agreed by all, is ambiguous and wrong. My argument, not necessarily accepted by other revolutionary democrats, is that the Chinese revolution in the 1920s was national-democratic, but not bourgeois. I need to repeat the words "not bourgeois" because my opponents will completely ignore this. Their brains cannot believe it, cannot compute it, cannot understand it and therefore they block it out.

By "not bourgeois" I mean a democratic revolution that is not led by the counterrevolutionary bourgeoisie and not limited to establishing bourgeois democratic institutions or a bourgeois republic. It can and should be 'crowned' by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Trotsky has a problem with his own formulation. He says: "Comrade Martynov proceeds very clearly and explicitly from the old Menshevik conception that since the revolution is bourgeois, but anti-imperialist, the section of the Chinese bourgeoisie whose interest is to overthrow imperialism cannot step aside from this revolution. Chiang Kai-shek answered Martynov on this score by making a deal with the imperialists and crushing the Shanghai proletariat. This is precisely where comrade Stalin goes astray, since his general definition of the revolution as non-proletarian and bourgeois leads to the conclusion that, therefore, soviets are not necessary. He wants to replace the actual course of the class struggle with a timetable for the classes. But this timetable is derived from formalistically defining the revolution as bourgeois. This totally incorrect position contradicts everything Lenin taught" (*ibid* p156). Both Stalin and Trotsky agree that the revolution is bourgeois, but disagree as to what this means.

The second question raised by Barry is the dual power republic. I described the situation in Russia from February 1917 to October 1917 as a dual power republic. This is a very significant period because it shows the transition period between the old regime and the workers' state. Barry says, "Dual power is not a republic." Of course I accept, as Trotsky says, you can have *elements* of dual power even under a constitutional monarchy or tsarism. But a dual power republic is more than elements of dual power. It is what develops in the power vacuum after the overthrow of an existing regime. It is the dual power or civil war republic.

Barry is desperate to oppose this idea. So he invents his own theory of anarcho-dual power. Under anarcho-dual power, there is no republic, no state, no government. Therefore there is no class dictatorship. Rival classes simply contend for power in civil society. This has never happened. If it

did it would surely be an example of the notorious Kautskyist "pure democracy" in which democracy existed without any class in power. This is the nonsense that Barry is led towards in his opposition to the civil war republic.

The point about the civil war republic of February-October 1917 is that it was a bourgeois republic, albeit a special type of bourgeois republic. There was a state and a government, which represented the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. There can be no messing about with anarchist concepts. The dual power republic is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie constrained by powerful soviets.

The centrists and ultra-lefts will do everything possible to hide the class nature of the dual power republic. The centrists will paint it in very radical colours. They will call it a red republic, a socialist republic and even a workers' republic. We on the other hand will be telling the truth. It is a bourgeois republic. Barry's theory of anarcho-dual power has the same result as the centrists. It denies that dual power is a bourgeois republic. It is the class dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or, in French terms, '1793 plus soviets'. We will continue to call a spade a spade, and therefore make clear that a dual power republic is a bourgeois republic and not anarchy without class rule.

The next mystery is why Barry is so extremely hostile to the dual power republic. We have to consider this from a class point of view. Revolutionary workers are not frightened of a civil war republic. After all a low-intensity civil war is taking place now under the constitutional monarchy. Under a dual power republic, the civil war between the classes will be out in the open and much more intense. However, the working class will be in a much stronger position, organised into soviets with the possibility of taking power.

By contrast the petty bourgeoisie are horrified by the thought of a dual power republic. This will mean civil war and violence. There would be a danger that the working class led by the communists may come to power. This might destroy the petty privileges that the middle classes enjoy. It is no surprise that the petty bourgeoisie are therefore totally opposed to a dual power republic. A normal bourgeois republic without civil war, introduced from above by the bourgeoisie, might be acceptable to them. The working class would be kept firmly in their place.

No wonder that the theorists of the petty bourgeoisie express in theoretical terms the absolute class horror, fear and trepidation of a civil war republic. Down with the dual power republic! It doesn't exist! It cannot exist! We don't want it! If it does exist, we oppose it absolutely!

Either some lawyers or managers are paying Barry to oppose the dual power republic or his own ultra-left ideas (which are rejected by Trotsky) have accidentally made him the theoretical spokesperson for the horrified and frightened petty bourgeoisie. Eventually everybody will see what class interests are behind Barry's continuous refrain: 'Don't listen to Craig - he only wants a civil war republic and nothing more.'

I agree with James Connolly's sentiment for permanent revolution: when we achieve our republic, we will need to hang on to our weapons and continue to victory ●

Lukács, Brecht and bureaucratic socialism

Fraught relationships

Various authors Aesthetics and politics Verso 1999, pp220, £13

This book is the perfect starting point for those who wish to comprehend the awesome contribution that 20th century Marxism has made to the exegesis of modern culture. What we have here is a set of debates between Ernst Bloch, Georg Lukács, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno (alongside an endpiece by Fredric Jameson) that should dispel forever the contemporary notion that Marxism is only a refuge for the dogmatist and the fool.

There are many rich seams to be mined here. This review will consider one of the most fascinating. How was it that Georg Lukács and Bertolt Brecht owed a considerable formal loyalty to a Stalinised international communist movement? Adorno is particularly scathing of Lukács, claiming that the Hungarian writer adapted "his obviously unimpaired talents to the unrelieved sterility of Soviet clap-trap" (p151).

Similarly we are confronted with Brecht's reaction to the 1953 workers' rising in the GDR where, "bewildered and unnerved", he "reacted to this revolt of the masses with a mixture of truculent bluff and sentimental pathos" (p142). Adorno's barbed critique of Lukács makes it quite clear that we are not dealing with cases of impaired intellect. Both Lukács and Brecht were deeply cultured individuals whose relationship with the various bureaucratic leaderships was noticeably fraught.

In Brecht's case we can contrast his unwillingness to break from Stalin with conversations that Walter Benjamin recorded in diary form between 1934 and 1938 (pp86-99). Here we see an author who appears to be genuinely perturbed about events inside the USSR. In August 1938, Benjamin quotes Brecht as saying: "In Russia there is a dictatorship over the proletariat. We should avoid dissociating ourselves from this dictatorship for as long as it still does useful work for the proletariat - ie, so long as it contributes towards a reconciliation between the proletariat and the peasantry ..." (original emphasis, p99). This essentially confused statement exhibits perfectly Brecht's contradictory self-doubt in relation to Stalin's rule.

It is this side of Brecht that writers often turn over into judgements on his aesthetic practice. Terry Eagleton contrasts Lukács, whose writings "rejoined at crucial points the counterrevolutionary betrayals of Stalinism", with Brecht, whose "critical, concrete, agnostic interrogating, ran counter to the whole weight of Stalinist orthodoxy, but which, in its associated prudence, could find a certain nervous accommodation within it" (T Eagleton *Walter Benjamin* London 1981, p86). Whilst Eagleton's emphasis on "nervous accommodation" is undoubtedly correct, such a compromise was aided, and not impeded, by Brecht's artistic theory and practice.

The radical shift that marked both has made Brecht generally more acceptable figure on the revolutionary left than the much maligned Lukács. Certainly on the surface his contribution may appear as if it is at odds with Stalinism or any sort of dogmatism. However, this is nothing but an illusion.

Stalinist art, as manifested in 'socialist realism', exhibited a similar disrespect for the 'autonomy' of the artistic sphere, whose formal laws became violated by the incursion of an immediate political need. In both Brechtian and Soviet art theories there is a difficulty in appreciating art as a sensuous object - both blur the lines between distinct social practices. Eagleton's dictum that Brecht's vision ran counter to that of Stalinism is little more than a conflict of appearance. Looked at in this light, Lukács's preservation of reason as the property of the formal artistic object (erroneously criticised by Eagleton in *op cit* pp85-86) becomes a more effective counterpoint to Stalinism, in that artistic integrity is not seen as dependent on political correctness. However, as Terry Eagleton has perceptively observed, "Realism [as represented by Lukács's literary theory] and modernism [related here to Brecht's practice], like signifier and signified, are the binary terms of an imaginary opposition ..." (T Eagleton *op cit* p89). Brechtian practice is an important facet of any critical-dialectical complex, but in the context of Stalinism's voluntaristic abstraction, Lukács was the more dangerous theorist.

In the light of Brecht's theoretical practice, his accommodation to Stalinism becomes relatively easy to understand. But what of Lukács, someone we have identified as a potentially more effective critic. In reality, Lukács's relationship to the ruling bureaucracies of the Soviet Union and Hungary was similarly fraught, veering between relative acceptance, humiliating self-criticism and ideological banishment. Yet, as Lukács himself observed, the practical outcome of such periods of potential excommunication was that the party leaders could not swallow him or spit him out: he had stuck in their collective throat (I Eörsi [ed] *Georg Lukács: record of a life* p10). The Hungarian Socialist Workers Party even lacked the courage to formally expel Lukács after his involvement in the Hungarian uprising of 1956 (*ibid*).

Such a bond can only be explained by the particular ideological juncture in which Stalinism functioned. The control of the bureaucracy inside the Soviet Union and countries such as Hungary was premised on the practical negation of the workers' revolution, hence the elaboration of a hybrid 'Marxism-Leninism' to complement such practice. However, in terms of legitimacy it was more helpful for this ideology to be erected on the basis of Marxism itself, even if this half of the ideological contradiction became dysfunctional in an everyday sense and made its bureaucratic carriers distinctly uncomfortable.

Lukács gives us an example of how this ideological constellation worked in his autobiography. He recalls how Stalin launched an attack on Plekhanov in 1930: "If you only consider Stalin's chief purpose in this argument [bureaucratic control], then obviously you have a Stalinist way of thinking, but for me it still had one extremely important consequence: Stalin's criticism of Plekhanov gave me the idea of making a similar critique of Mehring ... [who] introduced Kantian aesthetics into Marx ... Plekhanov introduced what was es-

entially a positivistic aesthetics. The way I interpreted Stalin's critique of the Plekhanov orthodoxy was to see it as a view which rejected the idea that Marxism was just one socio-economic theory among others. Instead Stalin saw it as a totalising world view. This implied that it must also contain a Marxist aesthetics which did not have to be borrowed from Kant or anyone else" *ibid* p86).

Lukács is here drawing attention to the manner in which he exploited a specific juncture where Stalin was attempting to establish theoretical control over various ideological spheres, something couched within the "totalising world view" of Marxism. Thus Lukács was able to utilise this space to develop his own idea of a specifically Marxist aesthetic.

By accepting the doctrine of 'socialism in one country' and the leadership of Stalin in the mid-1920s, Lukács effectively provided himself with a social and economic justification for his accommodation to the realities of bureaucratic deformation. However, the suspicion remains that Lukács identified himself more closely with the ideological realities we have sketched above. He referred to party discipline as a "higher, abstract level of loyalty. A public figure's loyalty involves a deep and ideological relationship to one or other historically given tendency - and it remains loyalty even if, on a particular issue, there is not complete harmony" (*ibid* p13). Such reasoning is entirely comprehensible within the structure of Stalinism, a historical phenomenon that chose to practically negate the revolution while simultaneously - if begrudgingly - affirming it.

Eagleton states that under Stalinism, Lukács became "the Idea that entered upon real, alienated existence - the heart of a heartless world, the soul of soulless conditions, and indeed, at base, the opium of the people" (T Eagleton *op cit* p84). What was true for Lukács was true for the liberatory essence of Marxism inside the Stalinist ideological system. Lukács turned out to be one of the major personifications of this contradiction. Here we have a Marxist philosopher who incurred widespread enmity and displeasure, yet his services could not entirely be dispensed with.

It is Theodor Adorno who perhaps launches the most scathing attack on Lukácsian doctrine in the pages of *Aesthetics and politics* (pp151-176). In particular, Adorno criticises Lukács's adherence to 'reflection' theory, claiming that such a category cannot conceptualise the specificity of aesthetic practice in relation to the "consciousness of the actual world" (p159). As we have seen from Adorno's reply to Benjamin, he was concerned to preserve the 'autonomy' of the artistic object.

In fact a defence of 'reflectionist' doctrine is in no way dependent on a dogmatic, undialectical reading of this concept. In a discussion of this topic, Lukács asserted that the "objectivity of the external world is no inert, rigid objectivity fatalistically determining human activity; because of its very independence of consciousness it stands in the most intimate indissoluble interaction with practice" (G Lukács *Writer and critic, and other essays* London 1970, p29). There is thus the dialectical space for the artist to work out the concretisation of reality on the basis of particular aesthetic laws. Lukács is simply uninterested in exaggerating surface appearance (ie, an unmediated reflec-

tion) at the expense of abstraction.

Adorno is just one of many writers unable to comprehend the manner in which Lukács, rather than simply subordinating himself to the crass narratives of 'Marxism-Leninism', exploited the ideological dynamic of Stalinism in a positive direction. Michael Löwy, in a problematical discussion, considers Lukács's development of a 'realist' trajectory in his essays of the mid-1920s, linking this with Lukács's apparent support for Stalin and 'socialism in one country'. By thus standing on the ground of a materially and spiritually impoverished 'socialism', Lukács tore the social base away from a fully rounded critique of bureaucratic rule. Nevertheless, Löwy makes the nonsensical claim that Lukács's development of realism (in essays such as 'Moses Hess and the problems of idealist dialectics') provided the basis for his support for Stalin. In particular, Löwy argues that such writings lack "the dialectical revolutionary harmony of *History and class consciousness*", the implication being that this earlier standpoint would be the more effective in saving Lukács's revolutionary blushes (M Löwy *Georg Lukács - from romanticism to Bolshevism* London 1979, p196).

Löwy's reasoning is highly dubious. Lukács's espousal of the proletariat as the 'identical subject-object' in *History and class consciousness* is in reality a Hegelian device that borders very closely on the psychological structure of Stalinism. The voluntarism practised by the bureaucracy in the 'planned' economy could not know real, sensuous, objective practice, precisely because objectivity was filtered and understood through subjectivity. For all intents and purposes, objectivity was annulled in favour of appearance.

Through a discussion of Marx's *Economic and philosophical manuscripts* Lukács opposed this annulment of objectivity in Hegel's *Phenomenology* (and hence the concept of the 'identical subject-object'), counterposing instead an historical approach that sought to overcome alienation in its particular capitalist form, rather than the externalisation of all human activity (G Lukács *The young Hegel* London 1975, p540). Hegel's proposed 'annulment' of objectivity was the root of his spiritualism, and the subsequent deformation of his system into a history of appearances. Lukács therefore retained an objective emphasis in his philosophical system (albeit one dialectically transcended and preserved), well placed for a critique of puerile Stalinist subjectivism. If Lukács had retained the idealist substrate of *History and class consciousness*, he would, in all probability, have become a mere apologist for the bureaucracy. The fact that Lukács developed his critical standpoint after seeming to fall in behind Stalin is utterly mystifying for the likes of Adorno and Löwy.

Aesthetics and politics, as its title implies, has the immense value of linking in Marxist theories of art with the key political problems of the 20th century. Aesthetic theory needs to be understood within its own problematic. However, this increases our need for an understanding of its historical context. Never has this been more true than in the careers of Brecht and Lukács. In this sense we can quote the Brechtian maxim, "Don't start from the good old things, but the bad new ones" (p99), with a very heavy heart indeed ●

Phil Watson

What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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The struggle for democracy

Here we are at the close of a century where life itself has shown us that the only path to proletarian socialism is through democratic revolution. A century scarred by various socialisms from above - Labourite state socialism, Mao's voluntaristic-peasant communism, Enver Hoxha's xenophobic communism, JV Stalin's socialism in one country, Pol Pot's genocidal barrack-room communism, North Korea's dynastic communism, etc. The only successful workers' revolution was carried out by a mass-based party (ie, the Bolsheviks) which emphasised above everything else the necessity for internationalism and the struggle for revolutionary or consistent democracy. A perspective VI Lenin had struggled for since at least 1902, when he penned *What is to be done?*

Despite that, recent correspondents to the *Weekly Worker* allege that we communists make "a cult of formal structures" under capitalism - ie, the revolutionary democratic demand for a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales. Some will never learn. For example, an examination of Tom Delargy's recent letters (*Weekly Worker* July 8, July 15) reveals a rigid mind-set which downplays or dismisses the necessity for the working class taking the lead in the battle for democracy. The workers need to know only one thing - socialism. That seems to be Tom's motto.

It should be painfully obvious really. History presents us with a choice between revolutionary democratic communism from below and state socialism from above. It is sad, therefore, that comrades like Delargy crudely counterpose democracy under capitalism and socialism. Communists recognise that socialism is an historical break, or leap. But we also emphasise that without the struggle for the fullest possible democracy, proletarian revolution will be nothing but a lifeless abstraction. But not for Tom. In his jumbled-up account democracy becomes a danger to be guarded against. Revolutionary democracy equals Kautskyism, intone our left Trotskyists. A democratic republic is and must be a counterrevolutionary demand. If necessary, phantom 'revolutionary democrats' will be invented - so that pre-1917 Bolshevism can then be knocked down like a straw man in the name of their pseudo-Trotsky orthodoxy. This

"It is incorrect to counterpose maximalist demands (ie, for a socialist/workers' republic) to minimum or immediate demands. Employing such a methodology is not to scale the heights of revolution"

presumably explains why comrade Delargy's theoretical colleague, Barry Biddulph, throws the baby out with the bathwater when he rightly disparages the Communist Party of China of the 1920s which engaged in the "utopian struggle for revolutionary democracy" in alliance with the national bourgeoisie, and the Spanish Stalinists of the 1930s who "limited themselves to democracy and republicanism" (*Weekly Worker* July 15). Democracy and republicanism must therefore be Very Bad Things, if we concur with Barry Biddulph's method.

Tom's 'anti-Kautskyism' means he is doomed to oscillate wildly between anti-political anarchism on the one hand, and routine trade union politics on the other. So, comrade Dave Craig writes a defence of revolutionary democracy contra Kautsky (*Weekly Worker* July 1). This of course is a red rag for our comrade Delargy. All he can see is an article "plunging the depths of Kautskyite apologetics". It is hard not to conclude that comrade Craig must be some sort of class traitor for even daring to write the piece, which

showed that Trotsky advocated a democratic republic under capitalism (as did Marx, Engels and Lenin before him). Tom would rather we ignored this and retreated with him into the crude certainties of left economism, where 'Leninism' is compressed into the time-frame between the *April thesis* and *The proletarian revolution and the renegade Kautsky*, and robbed of its revolutionary democratic content.

The supreme irony is that in the shape of comrade Delargy these condemnations of "Kautskyism" come from someone who cheerfully confesses that he does not know the difference between "democracy in general" and "bourgeois democracy in particular" - which should really be ABC. It almost goes without saying that by implication the comrade rejects the politics of *What is to be done?* This leads to a situation rich in comic innuendo. All available evidence suggests that comrade Craig takes seriously Lenin's warning about "why all worship of the spontaneity of the mass movement and any degrading of [communist] politics to trade unionist politics [by the Russian economists of *Rabocheye Dyelo*] mean precisely preparing the ground for converting the workers' movement into an instrument of bourgeois democracy" (VI Lenin *What is to be done?* Peking 1976, p118). Tom Delargy, unlike comrade Craig, cannot see what Lenin is making a fuss about. Yet it is comrade Craig, not Delargy, who is denounced for "blurring" the lines between bourgeois democracy and proletarian democracy ... and for being a "Kautskyist".

Topsy-turvy politics or what? To compound this political dyslexia, which needs urgent treatment, comrade Delargy suggests that in my last letter I was making overtures to the left Trotskyism camp. Dream on, comrade. My feet are firmly planted in democratic communism, not the cold barren steppes of ultra-leftism. Where does comrade Delargy get the evidence? From the following statement of mine: "The Huttonites want a controlled removal from above of the constitutional-monarchical system, which (they hope) will usher in a bourgeois-presidential-type system. The CPGB wants the revolutionary democratic removal from below of the constitutional-monarchical system and its replacement by organs of

workers' power" (Letters, July 8). Tom somehow thinks that by declaring this I am "endorsing the struggle for the workers' republic that all Trotskyists support" (July 15).

This is not a fertile approach to politics. In actual fact the truth is more complex. News though it may be to Tom, people do not join the CPGB because they are inspired by a vision of a bourgeois republic with Richard Branson or Lord Archer as president. Nor are bourgeois modernisers banging at the door of the CPGB, desperate for membership. Why join the CPGB if you do not want communism?

Wishing or yearning for something is one thing - making it happen is another. To get from where we are now to where we want to be requires the art of politics.

It is incorrect to counterpose maximalist demands (ie, for a socialist/workers' republic) to minimum or immediate demands. Employing such a methodology is not to scale the heights of revolution. Leftist slogans will not make the socialist dawn edge a few days closer. They never have. And they never will.

We live under a (thoroughly bourgeoisified) constitutional monarchy. There is a living national question in Scotland, Wales and Ireland (and in England with Hague's fanning of the nationalist flames). The workers exist as a slave class. In these circumstances, how do we advance, not stay still? The CPGB's slogan of a 'federal republic' is not some static, isolated demand - nor is it part of some 'left' Huttonite reform package. Less still is the federal republic viewed as the fulfilment of Britain's supposed unfinished bourgeois revolution. It is a demand that the mass of workers must be won to support in order for them to become a political class. Here is the real political answer to comrade Delargy's morbid obsession with defining the federal republic "in class terms". Class struggle itself will determine the outcome, not the ritualistic formulas of left economism.

The comrade admonishes me for not realising that "workers there [in the US or Germany] have long since been liberated from a constitutional-monarchical system, but wage slaves they remain" (July 15). This is such a pure expression of the economic credo, it deserves to be framed and then prominently displayed in the home of every communist. The obvi-

ous inference is that communists should not take the lead in overthrowing the constitutional monarchy. It is no business of the workers how they are ruled. If you just hate 'the bosses', that is enough. And the more you hate 'the bosses', the more revolutionary you are.

Communists have a fundamentally different approach. In countries like the USA, Germany, Australia, etc, our revolutionary democratic demands would be different. Is that so hard to understand, comrade Delargy? In such countries the immediate slogan ought to be 'For a centralised republic'. The federal-type structures in these countries actually impede the struggle for the extension of democracy - by giving (reactionary) minorities the legal-constitutional right to frustrate the democratic will of the majority.

As for the UK, the monarchy provides modern British capitalism with its constitutional mainstay. Hereditary privilege is the very antithesis of democracy. Communists think we should exploit this for everything it is worth. Economist-communists think we should ignore or belittle it.

The struggle for revolutionary democracy - and a totally different type of republic - is just as relevant for the USA as it is for the UK, or Indonesia and Iran ... if you reject the Menshevik-Stalinist theory of the bourgeois democratic revolution as a necessary stage in history.

In other words, the role of communists is to "conquer democracy", not to wait for the "thousand times more democratic socialism". Fatal consequences follow otherwise.

As a good Marxist, comrade Delargy thinks that Britain, Germany, Australia, etc have already had their 'bourgeois revolution'. Democracy is deemed superfluous. In which case we might as well stick with the constitutional monarchy until the red dawn comes along.

Now we are left with the archetypal - and reductionist - left Trotskyist scenario. In the blue corner there is high bourgeois politics. In the red corner there is low 'prole' politics. All that is left now is the 'pure' struggle between workers and bosses. The final countdown unencumbered by the need for real stages - as opposed to artificial theory - or a Communist Party ●

Danny Hamill