

**Blair's
rigged referendum
and
Scotland's right to
self-determination**

Jack Conrad

Introduction by Mary Ward

In this pamphlet, Jack Conrad offers a serious critique of the Scottish Socialist Alliance's decision to support the call for a double 'yes' vote in the referendum.

He makes it clear why the Alliance's leadership, in the form of Scottish Militant Labour, is unable to take up the challenge to lead the working class away from reformism towards revolutionary politics around the national question in Scotland.

Workers of the world, unite!

Dedicated to John Maclean:
revolutionary,
Soviet Russia's consul in Glasgow
and
victim of British state torture

Jack Conrad

Blair's rigged referendum and Scotland's right to self-determination

Introduction Mary Ward

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Introduction

As the long post-war boom becomes a dim and distant memory, so the national question has grown in Scotland. While the mainstream political parties increasingly have nothing to offer but speed-ups, cuts and poverty, hundreds of thousands of people, particularly the young, are looking for new solutions. In the absence of a viable socialist alternative, the ideas of nationalism have been appealing and for some compelling.

It is within this vacuum that the Scottish Socialist Alliance was born. A united front from above, dominated for the moment by Scottish Militant Labour but also containing within it the Scottish Socialist Movement, individual members of the Communist Party of Scotland, the Republican Worker Tendency, disillusioned Labour and SNP lefts and ourselves from the Communist Party of Great Britain. The Alliance has roots within working class communities in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee and has the potential to become a real movement of the working class in Scotland.

The Alliance has brought together socialists and communists fighting for a “sovereign Scottish parliament, controlled by the Scottish people, for the Scottish people, which has the right to decide which powers to retain in Scotland and which to share with other nations”. It is committed to establishing a democratic republic “with a view to negotiating a federal relationship with England, Wales and other nations in Europe”. In other words SSA is committed to abolishing the monarchy and deepening the unity of the working class in Britain through a federal republic.

The Alliance bravely contested the May general election in 16 seats in Scotland and despite the massive move to get the Tories out, polled respectable votes. With the election of a Labour government has come new challenges for the Alliance - the most important being its attitude to the referendum for a Scottish parliament due to take place in the autumn. In this pamphlet, Jack Conrad offers a serious critique of the Alliance’s decision to support the call for a double ‘yes’ vote in the referendum. He makes it clear why the Alliance’s leadership, in the form of Scottish Militant Labour, is unable to take up the challenge to lead the working class away from reformism towards revolutionary politics around the national question in Scotland.

The SSA came together for its second annual conference on June 14. About 90 members, mostly SML, attended and the day was marked by comradely and open debate. The most contentious issue - predictably enough - was the question of a Scottish parliament and what our attitude should be to Blair’s referendum and Scotland Forward, the establishment umbrella group set up to campaign for Blair’s sop parliament.

As reported in the *Weekly Worker*, Bill Bonnar, in presenting the position of the majority of the SSA National Council, argued that the campaign for a Scottish parliament must be central to the SSA's work. Within debate on the nature of that parliament the SSA had to project a vision of a body which is strong, sovereign and democratic. But although Labour's referendum is a "travesty", it is the "only" campaign and therefore the SSA should get involved in it. To call for a boycott is nonsensical and the politics of unreality, he said.

I moved two amendments: firstly, that instead of supporting a 'yes, yes' vote we should organise an active boycott around the slogan, 'Self-determination, nothing less', and further, deploring the action of the majority of the National Council in advocating involvement in the "jingoistic, cross-class collaboration of Scotland Forward". The SSA should not water down its commitment to a sovereign Scottish parliament with full powers and become subsumed by the Labour Party and the Scottish establishment. Joining Scotland Forward will mean that we will be "tarred with the same brush" and line ourselves up with the "worst form of popular frontism".

Alan McCombes, a leading member of SML, put forward the usual argument that the boycott tactic plays into the hands of our opponents. Significant sections of the establishment were against the parliament and Blair himself would like nothing better than to see the referendum defeated. We should not refuse reforms on the basis of their being sops because at the end of the day all reforms are sops - from the right to vote to the NHS. More than that, in McCombes' view any parliament is an extension of democracy, which can only be a good thing.

Eddy Truman of SML and Edinburgh SSA argued that there was a danger of becoming obsessed with the parliament when there were far more important questions, such as poverty and unemployment. Although he was in favour of a 'yes, yes' vote he argued that the SSA should not sign itself up to Scotland Forward - an organisation where Tories are more welcome than socialists.

The opposition of Edinburgh SSA to involvement in Scotland Forward became more apparent with their amendment to the statement on Scottish self-government. Bob Goupillot argued that the Alliance should campaign for an 'independent democratic republic as an option in the referendum' - for the maximum possible rather than the lowest common denominator. Again the debate came down to whether you jump on board the 'only show in town' or whether you fight for an alternative. George Mackin argued that we would simply be called wreckers, just like those who destroyed the opportunity of a parliament in 1979. But, our comrades argued, we were not the wreckers - it was Tony Blair who was pouring cold water on the democratic aspirations of the Scottish people. Instead of addressing the democratic deficit he was out to perpetuate it. The Labour government actively wants a 'yes, yes' in this campaign. In reality Scotland Forward is a government campaign with Tories and Liberal Democrats (and soon the SNP) on board - and unfortunately also large sections of the left.

Although both amendments were defeated, the debate on involvement in the ‘yes, yes’ campaign reached an interesting climax. Alan McCombes introduced the discussion on future work with a clear commitment to building the SSA as a mass working class party. He said we were the only real “political opposition to Labour, especially in Glasgow” and would in time inspire thousands of working class people: “It is those that take risks who make history.” A strange attitude for someone who is proposing the ‘safe’ option of Scotland Forward.

Catriona Grant of SML and Edinburgh SSA argued that she and others had very grave concerns about getting involved in Scotland Forward. She had been present at their founding conference and had seen that this was not some umbrella group but a Labour Party stooge where business and establishment cuddled up to each other. The Tories present on the day were given a standing ovation and SNP members did not even mention independence. While she agreed we should go to their meetings and put our point of view, we should not work within the campaign. An amendment was put forward to delete the sentence from the campaigns resolution committing the SSA to involvement in local and national structures of Scotland Forward. When the vote was taken, the conference was split right down the middle. A recount showed 34 for the amendment and 38 against with 3 abstentions. It was a narrow defeat for those who to one degree or another are recognising the logic of involvement in a ‘yes, yes’ campaign. And such a slim victory for the majority of the National Council shows that this argument must not be dropped.

Clearly many comrades from SML are opening up far more to debate. There are big divisions on Scotland Forward and the strategy of building the SSA. There are undoubtedly those in the ranks of SML who would clearly like to turn their backs on the SSA and follow Peter Taaffe’s line in England and Wales of building a sectarian ‘small mass party’. The majority seems at present for building something more serious and more useful. It is these anti-sectarian forces that we want to encourage in our fight for rapprochement.

To achieve the revolutionary unity of the working class throughout Britain in our struggle to overthrow the British state, we must fight for a federal republic of Scotland, England and Wales and a united Ireland. We cannot do this by voting ‘yes, yes’. We call on the Alliance to be part of the solution to the national question, not part of the problem. Fight for genuine self-determination, nothing less! Boycott Labour’s rigged referendum!

Mary Ward

Committee for Genuine Self-determination
Glasgow July 1997

1. Who's uniting with Tories?

Scotland is being bought and sold once again. A modern parcel of rogues has come together to push through the government's rigged referendum on devolution.

From its bumptious proposer, devolution minister Henry McLeish, to the anodyne Liberal Democrats, from yesterday's red, Jimmy Reid, to Scottish Militant Labour's Tommy Sheridan, from Bill Spiers of the STUC to businessman and Scotland Forward chair Nigel Smith, from Pat Kane to the kirk, they "weave a seamless garment of support" for a 'yes, yes' vote. As one, this popular front urges the electorate to "seize the historic moment". Elements in what remains of the Conservative Party in Scotland pledge bipartisan cooperation - former Edinburgh district council group leader Christine Richard has presented herself. Even amongst hardcore Tory voters in Scotland there exists a significant 18% minority which favours devolution.¹ Certainly Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association president, David McLetchie has been eager to stress his commitment to standing for the Scottish parliament in the event of its being set up.² Moreover there is, of course, a body within the Scottish Tory establishment that has been consistently pro-devolution. Some are making far-reaching plans or proposals for the new parliament. Councillor Brian Meek - Tory leader in Edinburgh - has been saying that there is "no such thing as the UK Tory Party at the moment as there are no Scottish or Welsh MPs. Even in England there are large swathes of the country which have no Conservatives."³ Therefore, argues Meek, there should be a "separate Conservative party in Scotland".

The notion that Blair's government secretly wants its Welsh and Scottish devolution referendums met by apathy could not be more wrong. Llew Smith, the Welsh Labour MP, has after all been vigorously demanding a Speaker's inquiry after allegedly being threatened with expulsion from the Parliamentary Labour Party, if he continues to "campaign" against the "policy this autumn".⁴ He is not feigning it. There is, of course, no Machiavellian conspiracy by the dark forces to kill off devolution: the first piece of legislation introduced by the incoming government. On the contrary, within the Labour establishment there exists a "fear that the lack of a 'no' campaign may limit discussion and produce a poor turnout".⁵ Indeed, so weak and paltry was the perceived 'no, no' camp that Scottish secretary Donald Dewar told the Westminster parliament in May that the government was considering "granting public funds" in order that it could actually mount a token show of resistance and thereby ensure a reasonably high turnout.⁶

Scotland Forward - the 'yes, yes' campaign - it should be noted, is very well endowed financially; half of the money coming from "industrial backers."⁷ Even before the official launch on May 15 it had £130,000 in the kitty and is confident of opening offices in each of Scotland's 72 constituencies for the referendum campaign.

We have no intention of joining Brian Monteith and the Tory rump in a status quo 'no, no' vote - interestingly a *Scotland on Sunday* poll "found that only a minority of local Tory leaders believe the party should continue opposing Labour's devolution plans".⁸ Reportedly, many grandees in Scotland are keen to actively support a 'yes, yes' vote or at least leave it to "individual conscience". Fittingly the Labour Party, the STUC, SWP, SML and the nationalists therefore have the dubious but very revealing *dishonour* of uniting with Tories - as Henry McLeish put it, in the "interests of the nation".⁹

Nor do we intend to join the eccentric Tam Dalyell in a 'no, yes' vote. He, amongst others, opposes devolution on the basis of the so-called West Lothian question, ie Scottish MPs voting on English and Welsh legislation. But if there is to be a Scottish parliament, he says, it must have tax-raising powers. Anything else would be a "talking shop culminating in a frustrated fiasco".¹⁰ Needless to say, all this Erskine May's procedural nit-picking - be it from the 'no, no' or 'no, yes' camp - is in truth a feeble excuse to deny elementary democracy.

2. Self-determination

Scotland's people ought to have, as a matter of principle, the democratic right of self-determination; the right to freely decide their own future, up to and including whether or not to opt for full independence. That is why we demand a Scottish parliament with full powers. The right to self-determination, explained Lenin, "does not imply the solution of the [national] problem by a central parliament, but by a parliament, a diet or a referendum by the *seceding minority*".¹¹ Obviously Blair's referendum and the projected Edinburgh parliament has not a thing to do with self-determination. The parliament's bifurcated voting system is designed to "keep Labour firmly in control".¹² There are to be 73 SMPs elected on the undemocratic first-past-the-post system and an additional 56 SMPs distributed according to a 'party list', ie under the patronage of the leader.¹³ These candidates will secure election merely by appearing on a list of nominations produced by the 'party machine'. They will owe their election not to voters, but to conforming. Scotland certainly deserves better.

Blair - like a latter-day General Wade - notoriously stated during the election campaign, that while powers are to be transferred from the Scottish Office, sovereignty will remain with "me as an English MP ... and that's the way it will stay".¹⁴ Dewar too makes it quite clear that the government's devolution proposals are "based firmly within the United Kingdom ... the idea is to strengthen the union".¹⁵

Suffice to say then that the referendum is actually a cynical attempt to put a stop to the movement for democracy in Scotland ... and thus, in the words of the royal anthem, "rebellious Scots to crush". What is being asked of the Scottish people is their consent to being undemocratically ruled under the United Kingdom's constitutional monarchy system. Jimmy Reid unintentionally lets the cat out of the bag: "If," he writes, "we are able to run our own affairs to our satisfaction while still within the UK framework, then most will probably settle for that."¹⁶ Exactly. Blair wants change to prevent change. People are supposed to vote for their own ball and chain. Insultingly, in return for submission Scotland is to be given the chance of having income tax raised or lowered by 3%.

Blair's contemptible 'gaffs' on sovereignty and parish councils - more likely clever under-promising in order to lower expectations - rightly provoke outrage amongst popular opinion, naturally above all in Scotland. They demand the clearest and most determined political response. Those who call themselves socialists, or simply democrats, must do more than condemn Blair's English chauvinist arrogance and the sham nature of his so-called parliament - which is a travesty even in terms of capitalist democracy.

Opinion poll after opinion poll shows that there exists a large minority, if not a majority, in Scotland which yearns for change far beyond the constitutional tinkering being proposed by the government. Blair, Dewar and co know this perfectly well. That is precisely why they refuse to concede a multi-option referendum, why they insist on 'take it or leave it'. Their method is fear. Supposedly all that is on offer is on the one hand a 'yes, yes' vote and a sop or on the other hand the unwanted status quo. This is akin to the question of a medieval executioner - how do you prefer to die? By sword or flame? Blair's referendum asks no more - how do you want to be oppressed?

3. Opportunist art of the possible

The Committee for Genuine Self-determination - supported by the CPGB - takes an altogether different view. It refuses to choose the lesser evil. There is an alternative, a third way. If we are prepared to fight. An active boycott of the referendum around the demand for self-determination, led by the working class, can directly challenge the undemocratic way we are ruled. Communists want the fullest extension of democracy. As a matter of principle, we do not accept oppression in any form.

Sad to say there are, as is well known, many others on the left - would-be revolutionaries all - who have “unequivocally” pledged themselves to vote ‘yes, yes’ in Blair’s referendum, SML says it will “support any step - no matter how small or inadequate - in the direction of greater autonomy for the Scottish people”.¹⁷ This fallacious line of reasoning actually ends up opting for one form of oppression against another. Such is the politics of the manacled slave, not the militant revolutionary.

Why the surrender? Why the lily white flag? Why have these comrades lined up with Labourites, liberals, nationalists and Tories in Scotland Forward? SML claims that Blair’s Edinburgh parliament somehow represents a step towards the socialist dawn. What nonsense. One might just as well claim the same for the elected mayor and the new ‘strategic’ authority Labour plans for London or any run-of-the-mill tier of regional government (or for that matter chief Buthelezi’s Kwazulu bantustan and Yasser Arafat’s so-called Palestinian homeland).

Faced with the shriven carrot of a Scottish parliament, SML salivates. Once established, or so SML believes, a combination of manoeuvre above and mass pressure below can win full powers. Being committed to a reformist road to national socialism, Tommy Sheridan, Alan McCombes, Phil Stott and the others no doubt dream of themselves voting on some wet Wednesday in this Scottish parliament to usher in socialism.

It goes without saying that whatever SML’s putative SMPs imagine, no parliament can legislate in socialism. Socialism is the self-liberation of the working class. Or, in the poetic words of James Connolly, the great Scots-Irish revolutionary: “Tis labour’s faith that labour’s arm alone can labour free.” Self-liberation by definition cannot come through a socialist majority in a bourgeois parliament; no matter how many industries are nationalised, no matter how many individual capitalists expropriated. The capital-labour relationship remains intact. Dead labour continues to dominate and feed off living labour.

The Scottish Socialist Alliance - a united front sponsored by the CPGB and others but with SML constituting the leading force - was not established to fight for a two cheers independent Scotland nor a parish council parliament. Its aims and objectives, agreed by the founding conference in April 1996, include “the right of the people of Scotland ... to self-determination” and a “sovereign Scottish parliament which has the right to decide which powers to retain in Scotland and to determine its position with Britain and the rest of the world”. This, as the SSA’s National Council made clear in March 1997 means a “democratic republic” and “negotiating a federal relationship with England, Wales and other nations in Europe”.¹⁸ Yet instead of gaining strength by intransigently fighting for this sovereign - ie republican - parliament, SML leaders now urge the SSA to welcome Blair’s sop.¹⁹ This despite the tangible fact that his government’s purpose is to deflect, incorporate and thus undermine the national movement for democracy in Scotland.

SML’s Alan McCombes - editor of its paper *Scottish Socialist Voice* - argues that the one-sop-at-a-time method is “consistent with our general approach towards the national question in Scotland”. This is indeed true. The general approach of SML is to trade principles for short term gains - this is what led Militant to disaster in Liverpool.

When he was prime minister in-waiting, Blair found himself caught as between Scylla and Charybdis. On one side the need to win conservative votes; so-called ‘middle England’. On the other side the democratic demands of the combative Scottish masses; those who took the lead against Thatcher’s poll tax flagship and who had to be maintained for New Labour.

Blair’s solution for his two-sided dilemma was typically two-faced. A sop to both mollify and lessen Scottish aspirations. And so as not to alarm conservative opinion, the clear message that the UK constitution will not be upset and that the new parliament will effectively represent the maintenance of the status quo. Hence the crafty statement on the retention of sovereignty and the second question on tax-raising powers which Blair says Labour will not use. Neither UK unionists nor the rich have anything to fear.

SML is willing to sacrifice the SSA’s founding principles in order to gain a toothless parliament. Those - crucially the Committee for Genuine Self-determination and the CPGB - who denounce this opportunism and say, ‘self-determination - nothing less; boycott Blair’s rigged referendum’, are dishonestly attacked for “supporting the status quo”. With equal dishonesty we are accused of playing into the hands of “those Labour politicians who secretly hope for an excuse to bury the entire project” - SML invents a Millbank plot to justify this charge. Comrade McCombes even tries an appeal to our patriotism - truly a last refuge. “No matter how well intentioned, any political party or individual” who refuses to go along with the ‘yes, yes’ vote, “will be regarded for years and even decades to come as a pro-unionist collaborator” he warns us.²⁰

Like Blair and his spin doctors, for SML there can be only one of two possible outcomes. Either a parish council parliament or the continuation of the existing system circa May 1997. And of course, faced with that non-choice, something, say the powerless, is better than nothing.

To counter the boycott campaign SML makes great play of its commitment to a multi-option referendum, including the SSA's founding aim. It was always a feint. SML is tied to a 'lesser evil' approach; and that means effectively liquidating the SSA during the course of the referendum campaign. Scotland Forward - that is, the establishment - will set the constitutional agenda. SSA will, if SML has its way, merely tag along behind. SML - economistically - says the SSA should concentrate on local issues until Westminster finally decides the matter and delivers an Edinburgh parliament along with PR. In short, SML invests its hopes into gaining royal assent, not its energies into a proletarian-led struggle for self-determination and the "democratic republic".

By signalling well in advance that it will vote 'yes, yes' SML tells Blair that he can safely afford to ignore all their half-hearted demands for a multi-option referendum. Hence SML's opportunist method loses both ways. Not only is the principle of self-determination sacrificed for a toothless sop but that toothless sop is turned into a means whereby Blair will 'modernise' and thus strengthen the monarchical system.

Rosa Luxemburg rightly insisted that the "assumption that one can achieve the greatest number of successes by making concessions rests on a complete error".²¹ Comrade Sheridan might picture himself a canny politician but he is leading SML up a very dangerous path whereby one principle is sacrificed after another. First it was unity with Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party and the principle of 'one state, one party'. Now it is the SSA's principle of self-determination. What next, Tommy?

For revolutionaries it is our intransigent defence of principle wherein lies the source of our strength. It is intransigence that earns the fear of the state and the trust and support of the people. Ironically in his intransigent leadership against the poll tax comrade Sheridan splendidly proved this. Precisely by not yielding one inch from our principled position, we force governments and bourgeois parties to give concessions. But if we trade principles in the name of practicality we soon find ourselves in the sorry position of the hunter who has not only failed to kill the man-eating tiger but has also lost their gun in the process.

During the struggle against the poll tax a 'lesser evil' method would have had the movement 'critically' accepting Thatcher's various concessions ... something being better than nothing. Even in the introductory year the Tories decided to spend £1 billion to keep payments - and protests - down. Concession is exactly what the Labour Party wanted and advised. Thus, in the name of 'new realism' Neil Kinnock and Donald Dewar rounded on those urging non-payment as grossly irresponsible. They were supposedly playing into the hands of the Tories. Comrade Sheridan, convenor of the Scottish Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Unions, was duly expelled from the Labour Party. Labour - and SNP - councils collected the tax, sent in bailiffs and enforced warrant sales. Predictably.

Thatcher's flagship was sunk, not by Labour's promise to get rid of it through parliament, but by the storm of mass defiance and self-activity. Millions across the whole of Britain boycotted the poll tax - unitedly refusing to pay. There is a lesson of utmost importance here, both in the fight for self-determination and in the struggle for socialism itself. Comrades Sheridan, McCombes, Stott and SML itself show no signs yet of having drawn any general conclusions from the success of the anti-poll tax campaign. The comrades might have broken organisationally with New Labour; however, the umbilical cord joining them with Old Labour's reformist ideology is yet to be cut. Their national socialism will come, they believe, through a majority ... in New Parliament House.

4. Boycott: passive and active

As would-be respectable socialist legislators, SML's leaders disapprove, almost as a reflex reaction, of the call for a boycott of Blair's referendum - though, as Lenin once coolly pointed out to the Mensheviks, such a tactic "lies within the bounds of bourgeois democracy".²² Only a year ago, Jim Sillars, former deputy leader of the SNP, was arguing for a boycott of Blair's "fraudulent" devolution referendum. "If I were active, I would be leading an abstention campaign." "If you actually vote in it, then you legitimise the fraud," he said in an interview for BBC2's 'Scottish lobby'.²³ Frankly in terms of tactics today SML stands to the right of Sillars - a man from the Labour left, not revolutionary tradition. To cover himself, and SML's opportunism, comrade McCombes is forced into the most devious, misleading and shameless formulations. Unconsciously he echoes Kinnock. This is what he said in a key - though now somewhat dated - pre-general election SML internal document:

On Labour's proposed double-barrelled referendum, we have already called for the Alliance to adopt a position of unequivocal support for a double 'yes' vote - while continuing to criticise the rigged nature of Labour's referendum which blatantly excludes the independence option.

The Alliance National Council has not yet adopted this position. In a preliminary discussion, members of the Communist Party of Great Britain argued to defer any decision until after the general election - although the real position of the CPGB is to argue for a boycott of the referendum on the grounds that it is rigged.

This position is completely ludicrous. Under capitalism all referenda - and for that matter, all elections - are rigged to one degree or another. In the coming general election, the Alliance and other small parties will be competing at a severe disadvantage for a host of reasons: the nature of the electoral system, the multi-million budgets of the big political parties, the manipulation of public opinion by the media, etc. If the CPGB's attitude towards Labour's referendum was followed through to its logical conclusion, they would also advocate boycotting elections.

A boycott would at best relegate the Alliance to the status of complete irrelevance. Insofar as a boycott had any effect, it would only play into the hands of the Labour leadership and of the Tories - both of which would prefer a low turnout. Of course a low turnout would not be put down to the success of any boycott campaign: it would be attributed to apathy and lack of interest. In fact, it could provide the Labour leadership with the perfect excuse to bury the entire project.²⁴

Neither the Committee for Genuine Self-determination nor the CPGB advocates a boycott merely due to some sense of moral disapproval, because it is "rigged" (a description that originates with SML). Nor does fighting for a boycott of Blair's referendum lead logically or otherwise to "advocating boycotting elections". We leave such silly posturing to anarchists, left communists and assorted eco-radicals.

Comrade McCombes is correct to say that to one degree or another all elections under capitalism - let alone bureaucratic socialism - are rigged against the working class. But as he knows perfectly well, the CPGB considers it obligatory under today's conditions to use parliament and parliamentary elections as a means to spread communist propaganda.²⁵ And, of course, actions speak much louder than any inept accusation. The CPGB's Mary Ward was the SSA's chosen candidate in Dundee West for the May 1 general election.

During a gathering revolutionary situation Marxists could well decide to boycott Westminster elections. If the masses were forming councils of action and defence corps, countenancing participation in a counterrevolutionary election would be to betray the cause of socialism. Naturally, any decision to call a boycott is a tactical one, not a moral one. For Marxists the boycott slogan on the one hand or asking for votes in an election on the other is not a fixed absolute but a concrete question.

Hence it is easy to turn the tables on comrade McCombes. Does his refusal to consider a boycott of Blair's "rigged referendum" logically mean SML would never advocate a boycott of any election? Whatever the answer, only an ignoramus or a charlatan can suggest that our call for a boycott of Blair's referendum results from some universal principle. Equating the demand for a boycott of Blair's referendum with boycotting all elections is an unfounded concoction. For communists, it should be stressed, bourgeois elections are not about choosing between who will misrepresent the working class, choosing the lesser evil. Taking on the enemy class on the terrain of elections is a means of promoting independent working class politics. Moreover, standing in elections might give us MPs who can skilfully exploit parliamentary privilege in order to rain clown attacks on the system and its pampered representatives. However much things are stacked against us in parliamentary elections, our candidates have the opportunity of presenting the politics of socialism and the necessity of a working class-led movement for democracy. Either way we get our material delivered free to every household and every constituent. We also get the chance of using the mass media. And on the day our growing support is measured and announced at the count. So we do not rule out putting up comrades for an Edinburgh parliament. That will be decided according to the circumstances.

Blair's referendum is another matter entirely. It will have two propositions - neither of which have anything to do with consistent democracy. Blair's referendum is in fact a catch 22, a dictatorial device worthy of Hitler, Mussolini or Franco. To vote 'no' is to vote against democracy. To vote 'yes' is to vote against democracy.

Referendums need not be that way. Citizens of Switzerland can table their own referendum by securing a certain level of support - 30,000 signatures.²⁶ There is no such right in the UK. Here the state monopolises the power of initiative. Blair and his Millbank cronies have already carefully honed their questions in such a way that the outcome is almost certain and for the system eminently safe (if the Scottish masses are persuaded to imagine they are exercising some "sovereign right" through the Edinburgh parliament the system will be greatly strengthened).

Stephen Dorrell, it will be recalled, made a draconian pledge to abolish Labour's Edinburgh parliament during the April-May 1997 general election campaign. His fellow Tories advised, and got, a quick climbdown. True, Major desperately tried to scare people with his claim that Labour was bent on destroying a thousand years of uninterrupted history. Yet that only served to draw attention to how profoundly uneducated and blissfully unaware Brixton man is about the fragmentary, uneven and constantly interrupted history or this island. More to the point it did not work. Blair as Bolshevik convinced no one. The Tories found themselves massively rejected - and not only in Scotland - including by sections of the boss class.

Anyway, must a boycott, as comrade McCombes claims, "relegate" the SSA to the "status of complete irrelevance"? Need it "play into the hands" of the Labour leadership and the Tories? Paradoxically SML's determination to impose a 'yes, yes' vote on the SSA is doing just that. Unforgivably. So would a passive boycott. Undeniably. If we sat dumbly at home throughout the referendum campaign, if the Scottish masses thereby subsided into apathy, then Blair could continue whittling away the effective powers of his sop to the point of nothingness. But, comrade McCombes, what the Committee for Genuine Self-determination and the CPGB want is not a gesture, a mere abstention from voting. As emphasised by Mary Ward in *Scotland on Sunday*, we fight for "an active boycott".²⁷

What is an active boycott? In 1905 Lenin and the Bolsheviks gave an excellent and very pertinent answer:

As distinct from passive abstention, an active boycott should imply increasing agitation tenfold, organising meetings everywhere, taking advantage of election meetings, even if we have to force our way into them, holding demonstrations, political strikes, and so on and so forth.²⁸

Fighting for an active boycott of Blair's referendum is to dramatically lift our agitation. An active boycott means calling for political strikes, meetings and demonstrations, occupations and civil disobedience. Instead of fostering constitutional illusions in Blair's sop and meekly queueing up to vote for it, our aim is to win the masses to use the most advanced, most militant, most resolute tactics the objective situation allows. If the Blair government faces a crisis of expectations, it faces one in Scotland. Here - unlike the rest of the country - the masses crave and expect big changes. SML itself admits in *Scottish Socialist Voice* that the struggle in Scotland has been rising. Glasgow is "now a city in revolt", it said in March 1997.²⁹

An active boycott supported by the SSA would raise things far higher. It would put us firmly in the vanguard of the struggle for self-determination. The SNP has reluctantly - but inventively - gone along with the 'yes, yes' vote. A clear sign of fragility. Confronted by a really proletarian-led movement for self-determination, the SNP would discard its socialist pretensions and thereby leave us with the possibility of winning the bulk of its working class following. Far from throwing away a one-off opportunity, as our critics maintain, mass strikes, demonstrations and civil disobedience on referendum day and its run-up will have the government running scared and covering its tracks with all manner of democratic and social concessions.

Would comrade McCombes tell striking workers to gratefully accept a 1% wage rise if they had been fighting for 10% - because "any" wage rise "can only be good". Comrade McCombes needs some elementary lessons in working class politics and principles. A combative working class movement gains strength by winning reforms - the appetite grows with the eating. Evidently not "all reforms are sops", as comrade McCombes maintains. If for example the Chartists had won the vote in the 1840s, Britain would have been well placed for peaceful revolution. The fact that it was the Tories who gave the comotosed working class the vote in the 1870s enabled the capitalist-aristocratic ruling bloc to legitimise itself by getting the masses to vote for the butcher - who would *misrepresent* them - every four or five years. There are, comrade McCombes, sops which dampen down the struggle and reforms which raise the struggle. Blair's referendum and his parliament are sops designed to pacify the masses. Our boycott campaign is designed to fire and raise the class.

5. Militant Marxism or militant nationalism?

What direction things take in Scotland will at the end of the day be decided by what happens in Wales and above all England. If the working class movement in England fails to champion Scotland's right to self-determination separatist ideas will grow in attractiveness (and justification). The abolition of *involuntary* union and a free federal relationship is only possible if the workers of England side in a *revolutionary* manner with Scotland (and Wales). Hence working class unity is bound up with the struggle against the undemocratic UK state and constitution.

SML, however, is committed not to overthrowing the existing monarchical state but weakening it. Comrade Phil Stott elaborated this minimal perspective in a key programmatic article in *Scottish Socialist Voice*.³⁰ Comrade Stott began by detailing the popular backing in Scotland for constitutional change. Though his figures are somewhat confused no one can doubt that "since 1987 support for independence has risen steadily". Nevertheless comrade Stott mechanically extrapolates along that psephological line to the point of an "inevitable" break-up of Britain. The only thing uncertain in comrade Stott's mind is the exact route. Blair could ditch his commitment to a Scottish parliament. The referendum might be deliberately "botched" and thereby fail to deliver a double 'yes' vote. On the other hand a Scottish parliament "could become a major focus of resistance against a right wing Labour government in Westminster." The very "weakness" of Labour's Scottish parliament means conflicts over funding "could trigger off a constitutional crisis".³¹

Comrade Stott appears to have been one of the few who believed the Tories' general election propaganda. Thus Michael Forsyth's 'New Labour, new danger' hyperbolic warning that devolution will "lead to independence" is considered well founded and is approvingly cited by him. The president of the Adam Smith Institute, Madsen Pirie, is also an unlikely source to bolster comrade Stott's independence scenario. Even in the highly unlikely event of a Tory victory, for comrade Stott, "the pro-independence current running throughout Scotland would still turn into a flood-tide". So whatever happened with the 1997 general election, he reckoned, "a big surge towards independence appears inevitable".³²

SML is very excited about the prospect of independence. Too excited. The changed post-general election political climate will leave the forces of "pro-market nationalism" and "democratic socialism" facing each other in an almost Darwinian battle for supremacy. Or so predicted comrade Stott. Against an SNP parliament "completely under the thumb of Brussels" SML advocates "a parliament with wide ranging powers over the economy". Powers that SML seems to equate with introducing "a socialist Scotland".³³

SML's "socialist Scotland" would mean £6 an hour minimum wage, a 35-hour week, the building of 100,000 new homes, the restoration of benefits to 16 and 17 year olds and the "rebuilding of our disintegrating public services" - ie minimum or immediate reforms we should be fighting for now under the existing state and under the existing capitalist system. SML's "socialist Scotland" would also mean "a huge redistribution of wealth" from the rich to poor, from big business to the working class - ie again something we should be fighting for now as a minimum programmatic demand.

Means determine ends and ends determine means. It should never be forgotten that the reason Scotland was promised devolution is not to be found in Blair's love of democracy. The mass movement around council cuts, school closures, devolution, health and above all the poll tax made the country a Tory-free zone and has *forced* Labour to give concessions.

Unfortunately because SML is committed to choosing the lesser evil it has effectively shelved the SSA's founding demand for a republican parliament with full powers. In the privacy of the ballot booth SML comrades will no doubt *critically* write their two crosses in support of Blair's "rigged referendum". But such passive means are *guaranteed* to produce nothing but a royalist sop.

Only in the highly unlikely event of Labour failing to deliver devolution would SML advocate non-constitutional methods. Then withdrawal of Scottish MPs from Westminster, setting up an illegal Scottish parliament, demonstrations, mass civil disobedience and industrial disruption "should be used to force whatever government is in power to recognise the right of Scotland to its own parliament". SML is, it seems, only militant nowadays when squaring up to a chimera.

Quite clearly SML has made a fateful nationalist turn. Having loosened its links with their comrades in England and Wales under the guise of 'financial autonomy', SML now has no more than a *federal* alliance with the Socialist Party (aka Militant Labour, aka Militant Tendency). The fault for this lamentable state of affairs lies primarily with SP general secretary Peter Taaffe.

In order to put off a sharp fight with his comrades in Scotland over nationalism and a possible schism he gambled on conciliation. Furthermore Taaffe unwisely went into print tying the level of "national consciousness" to the "relationship between the Scottish organisation and the British organisation".³⁴ A trap. While he could claim that things have "not reached" the stage "where the overwhelming majority are for independence", what was pregnantly called "a kind of halfway house" for Scotland could be justified. All it remained for comrades Sheridan, McCombes, Stott *et al* to do was to quote a string of opinion polls and the divorce was all but complete. SML thereby won for itself as an *organisation* the nationalist demand for independence. No longer is there any need to even pay lip service to the Leninist principle of 'one state, one party'.

Taaffe staged a fightback at the June 1997 Socialist Party National Committee. But it was a sectarian fightback. He wants, he demands, that SML change its name to Scottish Socialist Party and, in line with his 'small mass party' turn, drop the SSA. In this Taaffe is reportedly supported by Richie Venton, SML industrial organiser and opponent of left unity. At the time of writing it still remains unclear how things will go - despite the fact that Dave Nellist's district moved to form an unofficial anti-Taaffe West Midlands-Scotland axis. Suffice to say, SML should be supported to the extent it resists Taaffe on the basis of anti-sectarianism and real mass politics and criticised to the extent it resists on the basis of narrow nationalism.

6. Importance of programme

Programmatically “right centrist”, Militant has historically behaved in a chameleon-like fashion.³⁵ In the Labour Party, Labourite; out of the Labour Party, too, the comrades take on the coloration of their surroundings. We have already seen Panther UK and the Campaign Against Domestic Violence succumb to separatism. In Scotland the same opportunist adaptation to the “constantly changing political landscape” means the separatism of nationalism.³⁶

Nationalism and Marxism are antithetical. Nationalism considers nations and national cultures positively. National differences between people are viewed as essentially healthy and something to be sustained into the distant future. Left nationalists give this ‘principle’ a socialist gloss. Inevitably. The road to socialism is therefore seen by them through the prism of the nation.

Marxism considers nations and national distinctions negatively. We want to create conditions whereby nationalism, nations, nationality and the nation-state all wither away. Marxists oppose every form of nationalist ideology, whether this be represented by an established state or those forces striving to create a new state through a breakaway.

SML does not defend the Marxist point of view. It positively promotes a Scottish national socialism (which comes via a *bourgeois* parliament and introduces nothing more than minimal social democratic reforms, leaving by its own admission wage labour and hence the capital-labour relationship intact). Its socialism is national, statist and bureaucratic: ie it is objectively anti-working class and thus anti-socialism.

Instead of working class unity against the existing UK state SML now seeks a breakaway Scotland; presumably leaving the workers in England and Wales to overthrow it. SML therefore has a programme to *weaken* not *smash* the UK state. And to achieve that paltry aim it separates itself from Taaffe’s SP. More importantly it must in due course call for an end to the historic unity of the working class in Britain. The TUC and its affiliates are unlikely to survive intact the creation of an independent Scotland. Hence as capital becomes increasingly global SML irresponsibly divides the forces of the working class.

It is essential not to conflate all nationalisms as equally reactionary. The nationalism of an established capitalist state is inherently conservative. Fascism, the most degenerate form of bourgeois nationalism, is counterrevolutionary and thoroughly anti-democratic. But petty bourgeois nationalism may contain a revolutionary democratic *content*. We support that content. Unconditionally. At the same time it is vital not to abandon or water down criticism of petty bourgeois nationalism or advocacy of an independent working class approach to the national question.

The relative decline of British imperialism has laid the basis for a new Scottish nationalism (not the revival of a mythical nationhood going back to Kenneth MacAlpine or Macbeth). From the mid-19th century onwards being Scottish was to share in the “lucrative” booty of the British empire.³⁷ Now it means cuts, insecurity, and a denial of rights. As the ruling class frantically and destructively turns inwards in its drive to increase the rate of exploitation and thus restore some level of world economic competitiveness, the old identification in Scotland with the state has been replaced by an alienation from it.

Given the perceived absence of a viable socialist alternative, bourgeois petty nationalism comes to the fore. In the form of the SNP it promises to secure for Scotland a better position in the world economic pecking order through the formation of a new, independent Scottish state within the European Union.

The masses in Scotland certainly view themselves as nationally disadvantaged within the UK. Not only opinion polls tell us that. Every election, every grievance, every strike is coloured by the national question. And no crude income statistics showing Scotland on a par with East Anglia and only just behind the South East will convince them otherwise. Such philistine arguments - advanced by the SWP - will not make the Scots forget their nationality nor the undemocratic denial of their right to self-determination within the UK.³⁸

We consider ourselves obliged to criticise those such as the SWP, the SLP and the semi-liquidated Revolutionary Communist Party who downplay, avoid or dismiss the national question in Scotland by appealing for the “unity of the Scottish, English and Welsh workers” around routine trade union demands and “true socialism”³⁹ Such organisations are in effect English chauvinists. Their socialist rhetoric is not internationalism: it is nothing else but preaching submission, ie merely the other side of the status quo unionist coin peddled by Monteith, Hague and Forsyth.

7. Self-determination does not equal separation

Wherever a national question exists, Marxists approach it from the principles of democracy and internationalism. We seek at all times to build the maximum unity and ever closer relations between nationalities, especially the working class. The working class has no interest in any delay in solving the national question, and has everything to gain from an immediate settlement of disputes. Communists therefore seek an immediate solution. We denounce any and every delay and procrastination as reactionary.

That is why we must ruthlessly expose Blair's proposed Edinburgh parliament along with his "rigged referendum". As argued above, Blair's parliament is little more than a glorified parish council. It will not be allowed to modify the constitution by one iota - though there might be no 'glass ceiling' clause *specifically denying* the right, at some future date, to move towards full independence. This absence lets the SNP off the hook. Nevertheless when it comes down to it the people of Scotland will not become citizens. They will remain subjects of the crown. What Blair offers is nothing more than a calculated device, a prophylactic designed to strengthen Labourism and preserve the UK constitutional monarchy system.

We support the right of nations to self-determination up to and including forming an independent state. Communists are for peaceful and democratic secession as opposed to any kind of coercive or violent maintenance of unity. The use of force to maintain unity, as for example in Northern Ireland, is an admission that the state's territory has divided into oppressed and oppressor nations. Unlike SML, the CPGB unconditionally defends the right of the oppressed to take up arms to win its democratic rights from the oppressor. That is why we say: for the IRA, against the British army!

Supporting the right of self-determination does not mean that communists desire separation. On the contrary, advocacy of separation is something exceptional. For example, between Ireland and England/Britain there is a whole history of violence and brutal oppression. We therefore demand the immediate withdrawal of British troops and the democratic re-unification of Ireland.⁴⁰ Significantly SML does not: when the British army was sent in by the Labour government on August 14 1969 *Militant* refused to demand its immediate and unconditional withdrawal. Those who called for 'troops out' were denounced as "attorneys of the Provos".⁴¹

Separation only becomes a communist demand if unity is imposed by force. The relationship between England and Scotland has not been primarily characterised by violence. At least since the 1707 Act of Union. It should not be forgotten that 1745 - the heroic last stand of Scotland according to nationalist fable - was more a "Scottish civil war".⁴² The Jacobite rising had nothing to do with re-establishing Scottish independence. The Young Pretender wanted to re-establish the Stewart dynasty over the United Kingdom of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. He rallied a number of catholic clan chiefs in the highlands but was opposed by other sections of Scottish society - most notably the presbyterian clergy, lawyers and large southern burghs.

Our policy is decided on the basis of the actual historical conditions and the circumstances in each case. Communists in general favour voluntary unity and the biggest possible states as providing the best conditions for the coming together and merger of peoples. Under present circumstances there would be nothing remotely progressive about a Scottish army, a customs post at Gretna Green and the splitting of the historically bonded peoples.

Yet the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is constitutionally the unity of hereditary crowns, not the voluntary union of free peoples. Sovereignty formally lies with the monarch, not the people. Therefore self-determination for Scotland and Wales does not and cannot exist under our constitutional system.⁴³ The 1707 Act of Union, which merged the two parliaments of England (and Wales) and Scotland, had no popular mandate. The rich and powerful decided. Democracy was entirely within their fief. It suited their interests for Scotland to help make a centralised British state - massive bribery helped no end too. Not surprisingly there was a *quid pro quo*. For example, in 1712 Scottish MPs in Westminster voted unanimously to repeal the Act of Union. They were swamped by the votes of English MPs. Given the huge disparity between the populations of England on the one side and Scotland and Wales on the other, the UK must be dominated by the English (who have no problem with self-determination in spite of ridiculous whingeing by rightwing Tories, Tam Dalyell, etc). It is the people of Scotland and Wales who cannot freely determine their own future. With or without Blair's Edinburgh parliament and Cardiff's assembly they must go cap in hand to Westminster. Hence there exists within the UK monarchical constitution an inborn democratic deficit.

We want to create the best conditions for the closest unity of the peoples of Britain. The CPGB is for the immediate abolition of the monarchy and the abolition of the acts of union. We communists seek to mobilise the working class of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in a political struggle for a federal republic and a united Ireland.⁴⁴ (As Engels and Lenin argued, a federal republic in the British Isles would represent a democratic step forward from the constitutional monarchy - it is not, I stress, some universal principle.) A democratic and *transitional* aim. The federal republic establishes the voluntary union of the peoples of Great Britain. If this is achieved, as we intend, using proletarian methods, it also means the revolutionary destruction of the constitutional monarchy, ie official Britain. And thus the realisation of our minimum programme. The federal republic is therefore no question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment, but the *first condition* for the social emancipation of the working class.

Pitiably a whole swathe of the left-SWP SP, SML, Democratic Left, Communist Party of Scotland, the *Morning Star*, etc - utterly fail to grasp the necessity for independent working class *politics*. Workers, in their lacklustre schema, are meant to concentrate on mundane matters. Trade union and local issues. Of course that leaves them doing exactly what they do spontaneously. Hence when it comes to the politics of the UK state, workers are supposedly incapable of pursuing their own solutions. Our modernday Mensheviks therefore call upon workers to apply pressure and make demands on the 'lesser evil' wing of the establishment. That explains why the semi-Labour left supports Scotland Forward.

Scotland's constitutional status must not be left only for Scots.⁴⁵ It is a democratic question which must see the whole working class in Britain united around a correct strategy. Only by mastering the gamut of social contradictions can the workers raise themselves from the economic, trade unionist struggles of a slave class to that of a political and potential ruling class. Significantly in introducing his 'perspectives' for 1997 Taaffe failed to even mention Scotland or the UK constitution.⁴⁶ Workers in England and Wales should presumably leave that question to others.

Originating as it does in vulgar evolutionism and economism, the method of the semi-Labourite left - Sheridan and Taaffe included - leads to results that are to all intents and purposes indistinguishable from mainstream Labourism. Something by way of reform, no matter how pathetic, should always be settled for. Because, it is mechanically rationalised, anything and everything is a step towards an inevitable, preordained future. SML's decision to call for a 'critical' double 'yes' vote in Blair's "rigged referendum" is thereby monotonously excused with reference to it being "a step towards greater autonomy" and thus a "step" in the direction of transforming "Scotland into a modern socialist democracy".

Those who set their sights on little more than nothing in the here and now usually end up with nothing. The politics of piecemeal change are therefore the politics of disappointment. That is why the flip side of strikeism, localism and petty reform is posing left. The semi-Labourite left typically oppose the communist minimum demand for a federal republic with abstract and disconnected calls for socialism, ie a *socialist* Britain or a *socialist* Scotland. The same 'leftist' trick is used over Ireland - SP/SML and the 'official communists' being past masters. The semi-Labourite left has no wish nor intention of siding with the IRA against the British army. Against this minimum democratic demand they collapse into what is in this context a pro-imperialist version of 'socialism'.

Absolving themselves of what they dogmatically and wrongly describe as the 'bourgeois' task of ending the monarchy and winning a republic in Britain, they say the only real answer is socialism (why not communism?). Naturally this leftist pose is never applied by the likes of these to wage and other economic demands. When it comes to trade union politics the semi-Labourite left is in its element. It does not turn up its nose with haughty reference to the maximum demand for the abolition of the system of wage slavery - which, like the call for communism, is quite correct in terms of propaganda.

So, in rejecting the communist minimum programme, the semi-Labourite left finds itself at one and the same time making maximalist gestures and tailing Blair. From nothing, through nothing to nothing.

8. Neither reformism nor nationalism

Enormous defeats have been suffered by the working class over the last 20 years, both in Britain and internationally. It is therefore hardly surprising that separatist tendencies and ideas come to the fore. Today in Blairite Britain the extremely low level of working class activity has added to conditions whereby in Scotland nationalism exerts an undeniably powerful influence.

This is to be seen not merely in the standing of the SNP - 22% of the votes cast in Scotland on May 1 1997. The nationalist stance or trajectory of many on the left in Scotland also bears sorry witness to the reactionary nature of the period. Taaffe was definitely wrong when in *Militant* he greeted the new decade as the “red 90s”.

Communists are duty bound to wage an unwavering and unremitting struggle against every manifestation of nationalism or accommodation to it; above all when it comes in the guise of ‘socialism’. That surely describes SML.

A step by step reformist programme for ‘socialism’ leads SML to urge a vote for a toothless parliament in the belief that “this very limited democratic reform” can, once it is achieved, be marked off as a step in the direction of national socialism. Blair’s parish council parliament might or might not satisfy the masses. But for SML there exists a fixed, teleological stairway to the future. One reform, one step inexorably leads to another. And all in one direction. So from a tame Edinburgh parliament there is for SML a fixed inevitability that leads, in due course, directly to Scottish socialism ... and eventually a socialist world.

This is pulp theory. The future is made by people. It is circumscribed by material conditions but is in no way predetermined. Nonetheless despite the self-making of history, whatever people do, capitalism cannot gradually be reformed into its opposite. Objective circumstances set this limit. We communists do not deny the vital role played by the fight for reforms. Yet only by way of revolution can the working class realise socialism. Trade union, democratic and electoral struggles are important because they prepare the working class. That is, they go towards creating the *subjective* factor necessary for socialist revolution.⁴⁷

With communist leadership demands for reform - for example Scottish self-determination and a federal republic - help to form the working class throughout Britain into a class conscious of its historic mission to liberate humanity. Through its own self-activity the working class becomes organised, strong, confident and full of initiative. Through experience it also becomes convinced that it is impossible to transform society without first conquering political power.

Hence for Marxists the demand for a Scottish parliament is primarily about the struggle it can engender. At every stage we stress the cardinal importance of working class self-activity. For example, political strikes and demonstrations, occupations and councils of action, civil disobedience and a mass boycott of Blair's "rigged referendum". So while the CPGB fights for reforms, we always seek to do so using the most revolutionary means the situation allows. Only in this way can the workers be made ready for state power. Achieving this end explains why the CPGB is so insistent on not compromising or shelving the SSA's founding demand: a republican parliament with full, constitutional powers.

Once a Scottish parliament is considered in itself as the means to "transform Scotland into a modern socialist democracy" and not as a demand to prepare the working class for revolution, there exists a slippery slope. The adherents of socialist reformism arrive at what are for them the most unexpected results.

Rosa Luxemburg was spot on when she argued that if the fight for reforms are "made an end in themselves" then such a fight "not only does not lead to the final goal of socialism but moves in a precisely opposite direction". As soon as "immediate results" - be it Blair's parish parliament or the SSA's parliament with full powers - becomes the prime objective, the "clear cut, irreconcilable point of view, which has meaning only insofar as it proposes to win power, will be found more and more inconvenient". The "direct consequences", Luxemburg said, will be a policy of adaptation, a policy of "political trading" and an "attitude of diffident, diplomatic conciliation".⁴⁸

Adaption and diffident diplomacy has already begun in earnest. SML huffs and puffs about a multi-option referendum. However, it promises faithfully *in advance* to vote 'yes, yes' in Blair's "rigged referendum". A republican parliament is thereby traded by SML. For something royal and supposedly more 'realistic'.

SML combines the politics of reformism with the nationalist 'principle' of organisational autonomy from their SP co-thinkers. By so doing SML's leaders have unwittingly placed themselves outside the international revolutionary tradition. A tradition represented by their claimed mentors, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. Unflattering though it is, comrades Sheridan, Stott, McCombes and co surely stand in the same 'socialist-nationalist' camp as Joseph Pilsudski and his Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*).

Joseph Pilsudski was the leading figure of the PSP. Formed in 1892, it adopted his socialist-nationalist programme for the reconstitution of an independent Poland out of the German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires (which had between them all but partitioned it out of existence at the 1815 Congress of Vienna). Luxemburg and Julian Marchlewski split with the PSP in 1893 over this perspective.

Their Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania wanted to join with Lenin, Martov, Plekhanov, Trotsky and others in Russia committed to the overthrow of the tsarist state in *one party* (that came about in 1906). Pilsudski, in contrast, wanted the independence of Poland and the independence of the PSP from the Russian “imperialist” revolutionaries.⁴⁹ Lenin consequentially was loath to regard the PSP as a “genuine socialist party.”⁵⁰ Quite right too.

Yet though they do not acknowledge it, today Pilsudski has many would-be imitators amongst left nationalists in Scotland. SML might well yet discover him as the father of their latest turn.

Marx and Engels throughout their political lives advocated the reconstitution of Poland. Russia, which had taken the lion’s share of Poland in 1815, formed the bulwark of reaction in Europe. Settling scores with tsarist Russia was, wrote Marx, the “primary prerequisite” for the European revolution. However, in the late 19th century “static” Russia began at last to move. Tsarism was disintegrating. New proletarian forces stirred. In the more advanced Poland too there was change. The revolutionary lesser aristocracy no longer existed. The Polish bourgeoisie was cowardly and reconciled to absolutism. The workers were organising and needed to be guarded against succumbing to nationalist tendencies.

It was against this background that Luxemburg - to be followed by Franz Mehring in Germany and Lenin in Russia - came to the view, after exhaustive study, that national independence should no longer be the immediate aim or the Polish working class. She overstated her case. Opposition to Polish separatism became generalised into an opposition to national self-determination. Self-determination was impossible within the parameters of capitalism and unnecessary under socialism, she claimed. Neither being true, Luxemburg deserved the stinging rebukes she received from Lenin. Nevertheless, whatever the theoretical disputes between the two, they were both agreed that objective conditions demanded the unity of workers - Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Letts, Poles, etc - for the overthrow of the tsarist empire.

Suffice to say, there are those socialist-nationalists within the SSA who, knowing the ABC of European history, prefer to be identified with the international revolutionary left rather than Pilsudski (in May 1926 he led a fascistic colonels’ coup). An example of this is the Republican Worker Tendency. It has a factional presence within Edinburgh SSA if nowhere else.

In a polemic against the CPGB the argument is put that Luxemburg and Lenin should have carried out the break-up of the Russian empire programme of the PSP, not Pilsudski. One should note in passing that like SML this sect - despite its nano size - is ‘organised’ on a federalist England-Scotland basis.⁵¹ Even more strangely, along with the Austro-Marxist, Otto Bauer, it positively wants the division of people into nations to characterise communism.

Not surprisingly then according to our socialist-nationalists Luxemburg's and Lenin's "political formulations" "failed (... only too clear in the case of Poland)". It was Luxemburg and Lenin, needless to say, who were responsible for handing the struggle for self-determination "to Pilsudski's 'national-socialists' on a plate".⁵²

By their very nature neither SML nor any of the socialist-nationalist sects seem to grasp the fact that to advocate self-determination does not stand in contradiction to advocating unity. To advocate the revolutionary unity of the workers for the overthrow of the existing state is in fact to take the lead in the struggle against oppression in all its forms.

The CPGB calls upon the working class in Britain to support the right of Scotland and Wales to self-determination up to and including independence. But the fight for a federal republic is in our view the best way to ensure the right for Scotland and Wales to determine their own future and at the same time secure the closest unity of workers. The CPGB therefore makes no apology for not advocating the break-up of Britain. We are perfectly consistent. Supporting a right does not mean we are agnostic about how that right is used.⁵³

For example, communists support the democratic right to form protest groups. But that does not commit us to supporting every protest group. Nor does it prevent us from opposing and campaigning against the formation of a new protest group. We recognise the *right* of even anti-abortionists such as Spuc to freely organise and argue for their reactionary views. However, we will at the same time fight against the influence such bigots have over the working class.

Did the politics of Luxemburg and Lenin fail? I think "the case of Poland" proves the opposite. Luxemburg and Lenin were, by no stretch of the imagination, responsible for handing over the struggle for self-determination to Pilsudski and his 'national socialists'. It was after all hardly possible for them to predict the new geopolitical relations brought about by World War I. And it was this carnage, which saw the collapse of half of Europe, that allowed Pilsudski and his Austrian-financed legions to reconstitute Poland in 1919 - as a *reactionary* bourgeois state.

Luxemburg was right. An independent Poland did nothing for the working class. She was also correct to forewarn that nationalist socialism would lead those workers who followed it to demoralisation.

To begin with the mass of militant workers followed the PSP and Pilsudski. The outbreak of the 1905 Russian revolution changed that. Separatism was swept aside. Workers in Warsaw and Lodz joined workers in St Petersburg and Moscow in the fight to overthrow tsarism. Proletarian supporters of the PSP looked to the SDKPiL for leadership and took up its slogans. SDKPiL grew massively. Pilsudski was marginalised. “The pure nationalists, the ‘social-patriots’,” writes Luxemburg’s outstanding biographer, Paul Frölich, “saw with horror that their hopes of an independent Poland were ebbing away as fast as the Russian revolution was advancing.”⁵⁴

The official leadership thus ended up turning against the revolution. The PSP split in February 1906. The leftwing majority abandoned the programme of national independence. They adopted the substance of the SDKPiL programme. Coming from almost nothing, Luxemburg’s politics had within 12 years captured virtually the whole Polish working class movement. Finally in 1918 the PSP-Left united with SDKPiL to form the Communist Workers’ Party of Poland (as the Communist Party of Poland was known till 1925).

Luxemburg and Lenin only failed in the sense that the Marx and Engels of 1848, who strove for a Greater German republic, including Austria, failed. They only failed in the sense that the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Bolsheviks’ 1905 dress rehearsal failed.

9. SML: from Labour to SNP?

For decades SML - in its various guises and manifestations - happily existed within and loyally supported the Labour Party. Socialism in Britain, the comrades dogmatically insisted, would and could only come through the Labour Party and a Labour government. Taaffe, like a diluted bureaucratic-anarchist, programmatically demanded a TUC “24-hour general strike” in order “to force a general election and bring a Labour government to power on a socialist programme”.⁵⁵ Needless to say, the general strike is for Marxism a tactic. Only for anarchists is the general strike elevated to the level of a strategy. As to the notion of Labour coming to power through a one-day holiday and a general election and then carrying through a socialist programme, that is a bureaucratic dream of which nightmares are made - remember Chile 1973.

As it does, life moves on. Thankfully such illusions have been laid to rest. Now Labour is rightly characterised by SML, and its co-thinkers in Taaffe’s SP, as a party of the establishment, a party committed to capitalism (not something that results from Blair’s success in rewriting clause 4 as the comrades hint, but surely something proved beyond doubt by Labour’s inclusion in Lloyd George’s war cabinet in 1916 and the record of every previous Labour government from 1924 to 1979).

Labour’s history, its organic links with the trade unions and mass base amongst the working class plus its reactionary leadership define it as a bourgeois workers’ party. In my view Blair’s New Labour, for the moment, remains a bourgeois workers’ party. It is on the extreme right of that band in the political spectrum but shows all the signs of moving to a (re)merger with liberalism. The category bourgeois workers’ party must accordingly be grasped not metaphysically but dialectically, ie in its contradictory movement and self-development.

Much of the left - official and unofficial communism included - need to designate the Labour Party a bourgeois workers’ party to provide an orthodox alibi for their automatic ‘vote Labour, but ...’ call at every general election. Such a conclusion is and always was wrong. Critical support for Labour, support like the “rope supports the hanged man”, is a Leninist tactic, not a strategic principle (naturally we reserve the right to use it whenever appropriate).

Nowadays, of course, SML simply designate Labour a bourgeois party - with no proletarian conjunctive. Evidently this has nothing to do with science. The comrades must change the Labour Party in their heads in order to change themselves - above all the decision to field independent parliamentary and council candidates. We, it should be repeated, have no such problem. However, given that Labour is designated by our SML comrades as a party of the enemy class, it was worrying, to say the least, to see *Scottish Socialist Voice* urge a “vote Labour to oust the Tories” before the general election.⁵⁶

Obviously, there exist deep fault lines between SML and some of its SP co-thinkers. Dave Nellist, after some pressing, candidly admitted his position: "I can't put my hand on my heart and with a clear conscience advise people to vote for the Labour Party - they only want to be a more efficient party at running capitalism than the Tories"⁵⁷ He was, and is, undoubtedly correct - and not only about Blair's government, but as written above, he is right about every Labour government from MacDonald to Callaghan. Governments, which presumably SML would retrospectively view positively, ie support. Let us be clear about what is at issue. For the CPGB there could be no support for any candidate standing on Blair's manifesto. To all intents and purposes it was no different from the Tories' and the Liberal Democrats' ie it is thoroughly reactionary and anti-working class. If a Tony Benn or a Dennis Skinner had broken ranks and defiantly presented the electorate with a left reformist programme we would have looked upon such a development very favourably. It would have been perfectly principled to *consider* calling on voters to support such Labourite politicians.

That on the one hand SML designate the Labour Party a bourgeois party, and on the other called upon people to vote for it, shows how theoretically adrift the comrades are. Even in their own terms. They have according to their own analysis violated the elementary principle of working class political independence from the capitalist class. Thereby straying deep into the territory of opportunism, ie bourgeois socialism. SML's break with the Labour Party, it hardly needs adding, is a highly contradictory phenomenon. Effectively SML told voters that one party of the enemy class is to be favoured over another. That the Tories are the biggest evil. Therefore that virtually anything is preferable to them. Such a rotten method took our CPGB - when it was dominated by an opportunist leadership - into the popular fronts of the 1930s and 1940s and thus to the side of Winston Churchill and British imperialism (class collaboration was advocated in the name of anti-fascism).

If New Labour has qualitatively evolved into a standard bourgeois party - and to repeat, in my estimation it has not quite done so yet - SML is on a dangerous course by calling upon people to vote for it. The direction is already apparent. After advising a Labour vote in Tory marginals like Stirling and Ayr, *Scottish Socialist Voice* not at all innocently informed its readers that in "other parts of Scotland, the main opposition to the Tories is the SNP". The message might have been Delphic. But it seems to me that SML was urging an SNP vote. If that is not the case I am still waiting for the comrades to put me straight.

Interestingly, the same edition of *Scottish Socialist Voice* carried an article by Nicky McKerrel which asks whether or not the SNP remains a tartan Tory party. The cross-head noted that as Labour swung to the right, the SNP "has reinvented itself as Scotland's left opposition". Before examining what sort of political formation the SNP represents I must refer again to the nationalist reinvention of SML itself.

Communists fight for Scotland's right to self-determination, but we also fight for that self-determination to be used to facilitate the closest possible voluntary union of the working class throughout Britain in the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the UK state. That is why we boldly raise the demand for a federal republic. As we have seen, in contrast SML advocates the 'break-up of Britain' thesis and an independent class state in Scotland. (SML comrades like to claim a timelessness for their position. It is worthwhile noting therefore that in 1974 Militant's delegates to the Labour Party conference voted against Scottish devolution.)

Comrade McCombes makes the dire consequences of the perspective of weakening, not overthrowing the UK state crystal clear in a recent internal SML document. Faced with a choice between Labour's plans for devolution and the SNP's "independence in Europe", McCombes would prefer the latter. To "line up with Labour and Liberal Democrats against independence" would, in his view, allow the SNP a "completely free hand to influence and lead the most radicalised sections of the working class". Therefore McCombes wants to line up with the SNP.

Apparently the nationalist turn was blessed by SP top Lynn Walsh and SML councillor Tommy Sheridan (the most extreme enthusiast for national socialism). Reportedly there is opposition from other quarters. Colin Fox in Edinburgh has been named. However, at present such comrades find themselves in a minority and without a coherent alternative. So will SML seek an alliance with the SNP?

Strategically it is incumbent upon communists to critically support revolutionary nationalists against our own state. When it was founded in 1920 the CPGB unequivocally stood for a defeat for British imperialism in Ireland and in the few years thereafter rendered direct material aid to Irish republicans. This, as made clear by CPGB leader William Paul, was a "sacred duty" that stemmed directly from our "international policy" of opposing British imperialism.⁵⁸ In Ireland itself communists like Roddy Connolly fought side by side with the IRA in the revolutionary struggle for self-determination. Today the CPGB likewise considers the demand for the unconditional withdrawal of British troops and Irish freedom a matter of duty. As with Marx, Engels and Lenin, we too defend those who have taken up arms to achieve that democratic and progressive end.⁵⁹ Britain's defeat will be our victory.

Sinn Féin says it is committed to a united *socialist* Ireland. Obviously, the "Christian" socialism of *Eire Nua*, the social and economic programme of Sinn Féin, is utopian and in many ways reactionary⁶⁰ Nevertheless communists support the democratic and anti-imperialist content of Sinn Féin's programme. If communists do not take such a stand they objectively join with imperialism and desert socialism. To the extent that nationalists struggle against imperialism, to that extent the CPGB is for them. We are the most determined enemies of oppression. However, to the extent the nationalists stand for bourgeois and narrow national interests we are against them.

What then of the SNP? It is certainly nationalist. But is it revolutionary and anti-imperialist? Can Marxists give it - its programme - critical support?

The SNP, unlike Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Tories, is committed to Scotland's right to self-determination. That is a demand communists champion with the utmost intransigence. We will definitely not trade it for the sake of Blair's sop parliament. By definition and the whole of its history the SNP wants the people of Scotland to exercise that right of self-determination in order to establish an independent class state. So it is quite possible, even likely, that communists will find themselves taking the same side as the SNP in any argument about Scotland's right to self-determination with the pro-UK parties. However we sharply part ways with the SNP about how that right should be exercised. Let me employ an analogy from another area. Marriage. Communists support the right of partners to divorce. But that does not mean we advocate every couple separate. Each individual should be free to decide whether to begin, continue or end a relationship. Communists need make no apology for positively favouring loving, voluntary and mutually beneficial unions.

So what sort of party is the SNP? What class interest does it advocate? It has a wide popular following both rural and urban. A fundamental mistake would of course be to equate its electoral support with the class nature of the party. The Tories after all still have a big following amongst politically backward sections of the working class. It is politics that are crucial.

Social life, needless to say, is highly complex. Class and party rarely neatly coincide. Especially at the outset. When the SNP was formed it had a definite petty bourgeois coloration. But it occupied no clear or distinct place in the political spectrum. The SNP resulted from a merger in 1934 of the 'leftwing' National Party of Scotland, formed in 1928, and the rightwing Scottish Party, formed in 1933. It was an uneasy but real meeting of left nationalists and those whose sympathies lay with Mussolini and Hitler - the fascistic *Siol nan Gaidheal*, the Seed of the Gael, was only "proscribed" in September 1981 by the SNP's National Executive Committee. The brilliant communist-nationalist poet Hugh MacDiarmid (CM Grive), a founder-member, summed up the SNP this way: "I'll ha'e nae hauf-way hoose, but aye be whaur extremes meet."⁶¹ Since those early days the SNP has plied a steadily narrowing, albeit zigzagging, course. Now its real extremes are represented by nothing more than on the one side tartan Toryism and on the other European-type social democracy (the left nationalist faction Liberation recently split away to align itself more with the Scottish Socialist Alliance). Officially the SNP describes itself as a "moderate left of centre party".⁶²

It is within this humdrum context that we must consider the “expulsion” of the left in the early 1980s - Stephen Maxwell and Alec Salmond were suspended for six months in 1982. And then the subsequent victory by the Salmond wing over Margaret Ewing and the traditionalists a short time after in 1990. True, this means that on many issues the SNP is formally to the left of New Labour. Yet that proves more about Blair’s Labour Party than the SNP

Unless we are to fall for the method of choosing the ‘lesser evil’, it must be recognised that the SNP is a mainstream European regional party fully committed to the capitalist system of exploitation. Typically it rails against the consequences of capitalism. Poverty. Inequality. Unemployment. However, as Blair well knows, protest is a luxury only a pro-capitalist party content with opposition can afford. When push comes to shove, in office SNP councils in Scotland have cut jobs and services - just like their Labour, Liberal Democrat and Tory colleagues ... and have thus added to poverty, inequality and unemployment.

As said above, different ends dictate means and vice versa. The SNP wants an independent capitalist Scotland. Its Ian Bayne makes this perfectly clear: “the SNP’s whole *raison d’être*” is, he says, “not the creation of a ‘social democratic’, still less a ‘socialist’ or a ‘Tory’ Scotland, but the creation of a *democratic*, self-governing Scotland”.⁶³ An independent class state, it should be emphasised, for the SNP goes hand in hand with the European Union, Nato membership and Queen Elizabeth of Scotland.

Such pusillanimous goals dictate pusillanimous means. The SNP is decidedly non-revolutionary. It refuses to side with the IRA against the British army. To do otherwise would at the very least stir up the dormant sectarianism inherent within Scottish society. Naturally in the Gulf War the SNP supported the US, Britain and other imperialist powers. In fact all the SNP wants is to constitute Scotland as a minor, or junior, imperialist power like Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium. There is in other words nothing anti-imperialist about the SNP. Hence there should be no choosing it - nor its programme - as against any other bourgeois option.

The working class must fight for working class politics. That means working class organisation. The highest form of working class organisation under capitalism is the Communist Party. That is what we are committed to. A reformed CPGB which is guided by the most advanced revolutionary programme and operates according to the ‘unity of action, freedom of criticism’ principles of democratic centralism. The bourgeoisie has its United Kingdom state. We need a reformed Communist Party to fight and overthrow it.

References

1. *The Herald* June 4 1997.
2. Ironically McLetchie was a member of the 15-strong committee of senior Conservatives brought together by John Major to discuss anti-devolution tactics. Its members were John Major, Michael Heseltine, Brian Mawhinney, shadow leader of the house Alastair Goodlad, Kenneth Clarke, Michael Howard, William Hague, Stephen Dorrell, Lord Cranbourne, and Welsh Tory officials Audrey Wall and Paul Valerio.
3. *Scotland on Sunday* June 1 1997.
4. *The Guardian* June 25 1997.
5. *Scotland on Sunday* May 18 1997.
6. *Financial Times* May 15 1997.
7. *Dundee Courier* April 11 1997.
8. *Scotland on Sunday* May 11 1997.
9. *Scotland on Sunday* May 18 1997.
10. *The Herald* May 17 1997.
11. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 19, Moscow 1977, p542.
12. *Scotland on Sunday* May 18 1997.
13. “The trouble with this system,” argues Vernon Bogdanor, professor of government at Oxford University, “is that it gives far too much power to the party machine.” Power is thus “redistributed, not from the politicians to the people, but from one set of politicians to another” (*Scotland on Sunday* June 1 1997).
14. *The Guardian* April 5 1997.
15. *The Herald* May 17 1997.
16. *The Herald* May 12 1997.
17. A McCombes ‘Referenda statement’ *Weekly Worker* April 10 1997.
18. SSA *Policy papers* ‘97 Glasgow 1997, p4.
19. The SSA’s founding aims and objects are defended by the Committee for Genuine Self-determination. Incidentally, the explicit republicanism of the SSA should surely be drawn to the attention of stubborn individuals who, for one reason or another, claim that it wants nothing more than a “reformed constitutional monarchy”.
20. *Scottish Socialist Voice* May 9 1997.
21. R Luxemburg *Selected political writings* London 1972, p74.
22. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 9, Moscow 1977, p181.
23. *The Herald* July 20 1996.
24. A McCombes ‘Referenda statement’ *Weekly Worker* April 10 1997.
25. See J Conrad *In the enemy camp* London 1993.
26. New Zealand, a country with a similar political system to the UK, recently incorporated referendums into its constitution - they are, however, “nonbinding”. Under the terms of the 1993 Citizens Initiated Referendum Act a “nonbinding” referendum must be held on any matter if demanded by at least 10% of registered electors.

27. *Scotland on Sunday* May 25 1997.
28. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 9, Moscow 1977, p182.
29. *Scottish Socialist Voice* March 21 1997.
30. 'Falling apart' *Scottish Socialist Voice* February 7 1997.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*
34. P Taaffe 'Democratic centralism' *Members bulletin* No 16, p6.
35. J Conrad *Which Road?* London 1991, p231.
36. A McCombes 'Future electoral strategy in Scotland' *Members bulletin* No12, p20.
37. L Colley *Britons* London 1992, p373.
38. The SWP has in fact a completely economic position on Scotland. It tails the Tory-loving Scotland Forward - much to the discomfort of its cadre. *Socialist Worker* muddle-headedly says to "do anything else is to line up with the British nationalists and the Tories" (*Socialist Worker* June 14 1997). Yet at the same time it claims that "Scottish workers want the same things as those south of the border - decent schools and hospitals, union rights, job security." Foolishly and hopelessly, it demands that the campaign for the Scottish parliament must be "linked firmly to a working class fight against the rich and the bosses". Workers thus, according to the SWP, should not concern themselves with the politics of *all* classes and strata in society.
39. C Bamberg *Scotland: the socialist answer* London 1997, p16.
40. That means there should be no privileges for either the catholic or protestant tradition. Protestants in a united Ireland must have their rights protected. This consistent democratic approach, with local autonomy, etc, provides the only conditions to ensure the unity of Ireland's people.
41. *Bulletin* November-December 1979.
42. M Lynch *Scotland* London 1992, p338.
43. Technically, the UK parliament is composed of the sovereign, the House of Lords and the House of Commons, these parts collectively forming the legislature. The crown is subject only to "special limitation" by parliament. Hence, though common prejudice has it otherwise, there is no national anthem nor national flag. There is only the royal hymn and the union flag.
44. In the 1870s Marx favoured a federal solution to the Irish question. Writing to Sigfrid Meyer and August Vogt, he argued it was "necessary" to transform the union of Ireland and Great Britain from "enslavement" to "a free and equal federation" (K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 43, Moscow 1988, p473).
45. Arthur Scargill, SLP acting general secretary, says his party is "committed to devolving government and/or independence for the countries of Scotland and Wales, with the *final decision* on party policy to be determined by our own members in those countries" (*Socialist News* June-July 1997). That is a classic cop-out. Scargill thus demonstrates he has no programme for the national question in Britain. The SLP could end up with one line in Wales and an altogether different line in Scotland. Needless to say Scargill remains silent on what attitude the SLP should adopt on Blair's 'rigged referendum'.
46. *Militant* January 10 1997.

47. The following statement by Gordon Morgan, SSA member and supporter of the Scottish Socialist Movement, is therefore either the result of disinformation or the comrade's desire to manufacture disinformation. "Marxists such as the CPGB, whilst happy to support self-determination in the abstract, a Scottish Workers' Republic, or a sovereign Scottish parliament', nevertheless view support for bourgeois democratic reform as a diversion. They advocate abstention in a referendum" (G Morgan 'Socialists and the Scottish question' *What next?* No4, p15).
48. R Luxemburg *Reform or revolution* New York 1978, p31.
49. JK Pilsudski *Memories of a revolutionary* London 1931, p22.
50. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 6, Moscow 1977, p458.
51. The RWT did have two members in England till 50% of them joined the SLP only to adopt a right centrist position.
52. RWT *Fight for the right to party*, p24.
53. The paper of the Spartacist League says: "The *Weekly Worker* waxes eloquent about the right of self-determination, but they (sic) actually *oppose* (sic) its exercise and call for a *single* 'federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales', neglecting to specify its class character" (*Workers Hammer* May-June 1997). The anonymous writer ignorantly equates self-determination with separation. Nothing could be more wrong. As to the class character of the federal republic, that for us is open-ended. It is a reform we fight for under capitalism but it is also a transitional demand through which a socialist republic can be realised.
54. P Frölich *Rosa Luxemburg* New York 1972, p110.
55. P Taaffe *Militant: what we stand for* London December 1991, p2.
56. *Scottish Socialist Voice* March 21 1997.
57. *Weekly Worker* March 27 1997.
58. W Paul *The Irish crisis* Cork 1986, p11.
59. Marx took a lead in fighting for workers in Britain to actively take the side of the Irish. The reason for this he expounded in a letter to Laura and Paul Lafargue: "You understand at once that I am not only acted upon by feelings of humanity. There is something else besides. To accelerate the social development in Europe, you must push on the catastrophe of official England. To do so, you must attack her in Ireland. That's her weakest point. Ireland lost, the British 'empire' is gone, and the class war in England, till now somnolent and chronic, will assume acute forms" (K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 43, Moscow 1988, p449).
60. *Éire Nua Eanáir* 1971, p3.
61. Quoted in M Lynch *Scotland - a new history* London 1992, p434.
62. I Bayne 'The impact of 1979 on the SNP' Tom Gallagher [ed] *Nationalism in the nineties* Edinburgh 1991, p60.
63. *Ibid* p54.