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Remaking Europe

Introduction

Some may fear it, some may relish it, but there is no doubting that European unity is one of the biggest, most complex and bitterly contested political issues of the day. Whatever we might be told there are no easy ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers. Europe is an enigma. Various a nascent military threat and a guarantor against war, a wide field of struggle and a remote bureaucratic machine, a black hole of patronage, subsidy and corruption and a global haven of stability, enlightenment and rationality.

Certainly the ruling class and political establishment in Britain has long been at loggerheads over the European Union. One camp includes the largest and most statist sections of industry, represented by the Confederation of British Industry, the European Roundtable, and is nowadays led by the Labour government and supported by its Liberal Democrat outriders. This camp quietly, almost shamefacedly, wants Britain to place itself at the “heart of Europe”.

The other capitalist camp - fronted by Michael Howard’s Tory Party - is either woefully uncompetitive, determinedly monolingual or, as with Rupert Murdoch’s media empire, is linked with and oriented towards the US and the Asia-Pacific. Further integration with Europe is denounced under the cloak of patriotism. At most, all that is wanted is a semi-detached relationship. Anything else is akin to treachery. Hence, alongside the successful launch of the euro, the EU’s triumphant eastward enlargement and constitutional agreement, there runs an ever-increasing plutocratic hostility, dogging it like a shadow and growing with its growth. Beethoven’s wonderful, but misappropriated, *Ode to joy* is constantly interrupted by shrill notes of well-financed Europhobic dissent.

Meanwhile, and not without justification, because the EU is seen as a runaway juggernaut pursuing its own agenda and being under only negligible democratic supervision and control, there is an expanding reservoir of petty bourgeois and plebeian opinion which is downright antagonistic (not least towards the Brussels commissioners and their endless and seemingly pettifogging rules and regulations). Combine all that with a rich dose of jingoism, recruit a few B-list celebrities and you have the United Kingdom Independence Party. In Holland, Transparent Europe; in Poland, the League of Polish Families; in Belgium, the Vlaams Blok; in the Czech Republic, the Civic Democrats, etc.

The EU has divided the left too. Nationalism runs deep. Talk of sovereignty and setting interest rates has in some quarters replaced the language of working class solidarity and international socialism. This collapse into, pandering to, or opportunist flirtation with nationalism, directly stems from tailist politics. So sadly, when it comes to Tony Blair’s forthcoming, promised referendum on the EU constitution most sections of the left would willingly play second fiddle to the Tories in the name of saving Britain and building the “widest possible” opposition.¹

The prime focus of this book is neither on the banal ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Though I shall discuss in detail immediate issues such as the EU’s constitution, my overriding aim is to

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open up wider vistas. The working class can, and must, establish a 'third', fully articulated, camp, with a view to winning our own, social, Europe. A Europe stamped by the working class, which is ready for its domination and rapid emancipatory extension. In short whereas the 25 heads of government propose enshrining the virtues of neo-liberal capitalism, the EU's quasi-democratic institutions and reformist palliatives, we require *our* inspiring, and thoroughly practical, alternative.

What follows is a contribution to debate and, despite my insistence that Europe is a complex issue, will hopefully help to bring about the hard lines of clarity. Readers of my *Europe: meeting the challenge of continental unity* (London 2002) will doubtless recognise some of the material, in particular what now constitutes the four appendixes which all deal with history. However, I have not only reworked all the old chapters to a greater or lesser extent, but also added several new ones. Hence the new title.

October 2004

1. Imagining Europe

Let us begin by asking a simple question: what is Europe?

In late 2003 George W Bush staged a lavish White House banquet for Romano Prodi, the outgoing president of the European Commission. Keen to impress his blood-splattered host, Prodi reportedly boasted about Europe's imminent expansion and how the EU was destined to become a key world player in its own right. "Sounds like the Roman empire, Romano," remarked Bush.² Presumably a barbed put-down. Opponents of "ever closer" European unity - whether American neocons, left reformists or little British populists - like to equate the EU with the Roman empire. A jaundiced comparison which implies artificial unity, fragility and hubris.

Of course, the Roman empire was based on the Mediterranean - Romans called it *mare nostrum*, 'our sea' - and the glittering cities strung around its rim. The Roman empire included modern-day Turkey, Syria, Israel, Lebanon, Egypt and the whole of the north African coastal strip. Despite the empire surviving in Constantinople and a constricted eastern zone well into the middle ages as a redoubt of Greek speaking christianity, it was Rome's 500 years of power and glory which inspired one imperial project after another.

Conquering barbarian chiefs quickly, greedily, elevated themselves. They separated themselves off from their warrior kith and kin by becoming Roman emperors. They reached for an off-the-peg imperial purple and adopted all the old Roman ostentation and vices. Hence their kingdoms also became officially christian. A conversion hardened into a carapace by the meteoric rise of islam and its leaping series of conquests over the rotting Byzantine and Sassanid empires and the brittle Vandal kingdom in northern Africa - which finally saw Gebal al-Tariq strike out from today's Mauritania to take most of Spain. In defence memories of the Roman empire fused with the idea of christianity in the feudal mind.

Charlemagne, king of the Franks, famously established his Roman empire from the Pyrenees in the west to the Adriatic in the east and from the Elbe in the north to middle Italy in the south. Obviously a feudal conglomeration - each subordinate baron, duke and count possessed his own well fortified castles and commanded large bands of knights and mercenary troops. Crowned *Romanorum gubernans imperium* by pope Leo III in December 800 AD, Charlemagne was formally recognised by the Byzantine emperor Michael I as an equal. Not surprisingly, despite that, his empire quickly disintegrated following his death. Nevertheless the *imperium Romanum* continued to exert a powerful material influence.

In Charlemagne's footsteps there followed the Ottonian and Salian kings of 10th and the 11th centuries, Spain in the 16th and 17th centuries, Napoleonic France and Hitler Germany. Succeeding generations donned the trappings of the past. Eg, 'German' kings would call themselves *Imperator Augustus* or *Imperator Romanorum Augustus*.

To reward loyal minions, in 1802 Napoleon founded the Légion d'Honneur on the model of the Roman Legio Honoratorum, and he too invoked Charlemagne during his 1804 coronation. Nazis gave the Roman stiff-arm salute and cried "heil Hitler!" - a copy of "hail Caesar!" And when a new SS division for French volunteers was formed it was named the Charlemagne.

However, in actual fact, the foremost historic model informing and inspiring European federalists is not the Roman empire nor its epigones - Charlemagne, Habsburg Spain, Napoleon and Hitler (Nicholas Ridley, a minister in Margaret Thatcher's cabinet, bizarrely warned that the EU was in danger of becoming a "Fourth Reich"). Ironically it is the idea that Europe can emulate America. In terms of method, scale, ambition and possible consequences surely the only parallel to the EU under capitalism is the formation of the USA in 1787 out of the loose confederation of 13 states which emerged victorious from the revolutionary war against the British crown (the US itself heavily borrowed Roman forms, symbols and styles - look at its mixed constitution, imperial eagles and the classic architecture of Washington's Capitol Hill and other famous state buildings). Valéry Giscard d'Estaing - chair of the convention on the future of Europe - grandeloquently compared his own work to that of the founding fathers of the US.³ Painfully longwinded though it is, his constitution is designed to inspire supranational European loyalty. The preamble is drawn in part from the French Revolution's 'Rights of man' and the US declaration of independence. Presumably Giscard d'Estaing imagined himself embodying the best qualities of Thomas Jefferson and Georges-Jacques Danton.

So what is Europe? The name is, of course, Greek in origin. Europe, or Europa, being the mythological daughter of Agenor and Telephassa. Kidnapped by Zeus, in the shape of an eagle, she gave birth to three sons - Minos, Rhadamanthys and Sarpedon. Robert Graves speculates that the rape of Europe records either the "Hellenic occupation of Crete" or a raid by Hellenes from Crete on Phoenicia.⁴ During the Renaissance, and in later British and German attempts to claim prestigious antecedents, Rome, but more particularly Greece itself, was recast as the fountainhead of European civilisation. Needless to say, the ancient Greeks, or Hellenes, did not think of themselves as Europeans. Theirs was a politically fractured, highly variegated and constantly warring culture centred on the Aegean Sea and therefore included the coastline of Asia Minor (as well as a series of city-state colonies in Sicily and southern Italy). Greece was a distant, and economically poor, outpost, or offshoot, of the great riverine civilisations of the ancient near east - Egypt and Mesopotamia. As for their stunning intellectual attainments in astronomy, drama, poetry, history, philosophy, medicine, mathematics and geometry they were reshaped and filtered back to Europe by way of Arab learned men and sources. Between the 8th and 13th century the Abbassid rulers of Baghdad oversaw the work of thousands of state-scholars who translated, interpreted and developed Greek learning.

Europe as an ideological vehicle, it should be stressed, is a comparatively recent concept. The historian Norman Davies explains that it "gradually replaced the earlier concept of 'christendom' in a complex intellectual process lasting from the 14th to the 18th centuries".⁵ Only in the early years of the 18th century did notions of a common European identity finally supersede those of christendom. The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 provides perhaps the last major diplomatic reference to the 'christian commonwealth'.

Europe is a continent of the mind. Europe certainly owes more to ideology and history than geography. Geographically it is merely a part, and an extension, of the great Asian landmass, akin in that sense to India. Over time the exact borders of Europe have waxed and waned. William Blake illustrates his 1794 poem 'Europa' with a cartoon depicting god reaching down from the heavens holding a pair of compasses. Yet despite such divine intervention the matter has never been fixed. Europe is "tidal"; the main gravitational factor being Russian state power.⁶

Russia, and Russian otherness, stretches far into the east and Asia but is also vast to the west. Sometimes the perceived borders of Europe have included Russia (as now they potentially include secular-muslim Turkey). At other times Russia - along with its occidental possessions and satellites - have been excluded. But whether Europe stops at the Elbe, the Wista, the Don, the Urals or the Caucasus mountains there have been repeated proposals to overcome Europe's chronic and often bloody divisions. The so-called religious wars of the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries - which pitted the pope and the catholic kings, princes and bishops against protestant heretics - and the emergence of orthodox Russia as a great power certainly necessitated radical rethinking. Notions of a European commonality steadily gained prominence.

The quaker leader, William Penn (1644-1718), the founder of Pennsylvania, advocated religious toleration and should be credited with being perhaps the first to call for a European parliament. Charles Castel de St Pierre (1658-1743), a dissident French abbot, explicitly called for a confederation of European powers in order to secure peace. Voltaire, writing in 1751, described Europe as a "kind of great republic", some of it monarchical, "others mixed" ... "but all corresponding with one another". He cites not only common religious foundations but also common "principles of public law and politics unknown in other parts of the world".⁷ Twenty years later Rousseau was saying that there were no longer French, German, Spanish, "or even English", but "only Europeans".⁸

Europe came to represent an ideal goal, the embodiment of peace and harmony that was so lacking in reality. Invoked by revolutionary democrats and reactionaries alike, Europe has served many causes. Napoleon Bonaparte sought to unite Europe in the image of France. In turn the main counterrevolutionary powers joined in concert against the French revolution in the hallowed name of European civilisation. The 1815 Congress of Vienna put in place an interlocking system of semi-despotic European states. Later, imperialism was justified with reference to Europe's moral superiority and world-wide mission: eg, Rudyard Kipling's "white man's burden". Meanwhile another Europe gestated. Proletarian Europe. Karl Kautsky desperately wanted to prevent the outbreak of a horrendous inter-European slaughter - socialism would be thrown back a generation or more. So in 1912 he proposed that the working class should settle accounts with autocratic Germany, Austria and Russia and boldly take the lead in bringing about a republican United States of Europe.

World War I bled Europe white. The European autocracies collapsed or were overthrown - but socialism was isolated in the suffocating backwardness of Russia. A precocious United States took over as the main powerhouse of world productive activity. Yet Europe remained of paramount political importance. Both revolutionaries and reformists sought to rescue Europe from decay and fragmentation - the former for

socialism, the later for capital. Trotsky won Comintern to call for a United Socialist States of Europe in 1923. In his turn Aristide Briand, a right socialist French politician, attempted to bamboozle the working class with his plan Europe. It envisioned federalism, peace and economic cooperation under a reformed, slightly pink capitalist sky. Constitutionally, he sketched out a European union of 27 sovereign states and a permanent executive.

The coming to power first of Joseph Stalin in 1924, and then Adolf Hitler in 1933, practically scuppered both projects; especially when Germany embarked on its second attempt to dominate Europe by means of conquest and terror. By 1941 half of the continent had been united ... in Nazi fetters. Hitler madly dreamed of a Europe purged of all *Untermenschen* - jews, Roma, homosexuals, Bolsheviks - and a Germany gigantically expanded with endless agricultural lands to the east. Those semi-Asiatic Slavs who were permitted to survive would be reduced to serfs; their lot in life, to serve under a colonial master class of Aryan farmers.⁹ Hitler drew an analogy with British rule and exploitation of India - "The Russian space is our India".¹⁰

During the darkest days of World War II, there was a clinging convergence of social democratic and liberal thought. Nazism threatened to wreak universal catastrophe. Capitalism had to be saved and put on new, far firmer, more acceptable foundations. Leon Blum, Conrad Adenauer, Alterio Spinelli, Ernest Rossi, etc, all came forward with seductive and seemingly democratic blueprints for curbing the appetites of the old nation-state with an over-due European integration. Even in Britain Clement Attlee had offered the slogan: "Europe must federate or perish".¹¹ Nazi Europe produced its opposite. This Europe recoiled from *internal* genocide, warmongering and territorial expansionism. The ousted political elite - exiled, underground or imprisoned - sought redemption by rejecting the unfettered nation-state and fled mentally to an old, irenic, ideal. The nation-state was criticised as being not only inherently aggressive but economically far too narrow. Divided, Europe would either fall prey to Germany, or failing that, the US, or worse, the dreaded Soviet Union. Clipping the talons of sovereignty and constructing a "free and unified" Europe was held up as a prerequisite for saving the continent from totalitarianism and founding a "modern civilisation".¹²

Because of World War II, Europe once again found itself devastated, exhausted and diminished. Under the terms of the Yalta agreement, the eastern half of the continent was surgically sliced off, incorporated into the Soviet Union's sphere of influence and, through bureaucratic revolution, 'sovietised'. As to western Europe, it was robbed of imperial glories - and the booty of empire. Humiliatingly it agreed to rely on the US nuclear umbrella to ward off the much exaggerated threat from beyond the iron curtain. And these circumstances, plus the overriding determination to avoid another internecine conflict, plus re-establishing the internal security of the nation-states, plus creating a bulwark against bureaucratic socialism, combined to drive the states of western Europe, in particular Federal Germany and France, towards an historic compromise. It was a deal hatched between, much reduced, rival gangs of global robbers, but it all added up to overcoming the division of Europe into numerous antagonistic powers.

Capitalist integration in Europe has advanced qualitatively since the Treaty of Rome was signed between Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in 1957. The untested, tentative customs union has become a huge economic-political

zone embracing 450 million people. And what was advancing tortuously - through endless compromises and half-measures - speeded-up markedly following the collapse of bureaucratic socialism in the USSR and eastern Europe over 1989-91. With the Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice treaties the tempo of integration raced forward. A common currency and plans for new members to the east. Sacrificing his beloved deutschmark for the euro was purportedly the price chancellor Helmut Kohl paid for French acquiescence to German reunification.

Undoubtedly 2004 was a watershed year. Not only did the European Union gain ten new members on May 1, but on June 18 the 25 heads of government finally agreed their constitution which systemises and to some extent enhances the EU's treaties and fundamental laws. Yalta's ghosts were finally exorcised. That is for certain. Eight of the EU's ten new members were either once an integral part of the USSR or constituted its defensive shield against Nato and the capitalist west. Now Europe laps at Russia's flanks and borders Ukraine and Belarus. Russia's front door, St Petersburg, its second city, is just a short hop away. Moreover, with the inclusion of Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the EU now constitutes the world's largest economic bloc. And though the EU still appears to be a jerry-built Tower of Babel, leading French and German federalists still hanker after streamlining this precarious construction and bringing nearer the day when the EU becomes the dominant imperialist power and can thereby reshape the world so that it accords to its needs and wants. Even Silvio Berlusconi has spoken in such belligerent terms. On the eve of taking over the EU presidency in July 2003 he declared that "Europe will only be able to look at the United States as something other than a subordinate if it becomes a great Europe".¹³

The EU has nowhere near China's 1.2 billion, or India's 1 billion people. However, in terms of productivity and living standards it is in a completely different, higher, league. The EU's GDP is marginally bigger than that of the United States (though the US has a much smaller population - 290 million). True, according to a recent World Economic Forum survey, the US remains "significantly more competitive"; nevertheless the EU is committed to becoming the "most competitive and dynamic, knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010" (*Financial Times* April 27 2004). Whether or not that particular target is met is a moot point, but mere common sense tells us that the EU constitutes the only serious *potential* challenger to US global hegemony. And though May 1 2004 boosted the EU's GDP by a meagre five percent - most of the accession countries being relatively poor, with rates of productivity between a half and a fifth less than the EU 15's average - there is no doubting the political and strategic importance of expansion and growing European unity.

The European bourgeoisie have had to pursue the aim of integration through the market, without recourse to war and in a quasi-democratic fashion. There are two main reasons for this: US hegemony and the working class. We shall deal with the US below. What then of the working class? Despite the working class lacking anything like a viable alternative programme, its power after World War II was instantly revived (a process of recomposition that is constantly reinforced by proletarianisation - but is also constantly undermined by bourgeois ideology, recruitment to the petty bourgeois managerial class

and the replacement of labour by machines. That is, *decomposition*). Nonetheless, our rulers were left with little choice: preserving peace and the rule of law became an overriding objective. That is surely why in establishment Europe the hard-edged philosophy of Georg Hegel has been eclipsed by the fuzzy universal ethics of Emmanuel Kant.

All in all, though, it is certainly either dishonest or profoundly mistaken to equate the EU with the inherently unstable multinational Roman prison house or the subsequent empires of Charlemagne, Habsburg Spain, Napoleon and Hitler. The EU is not, except in terms of pre-history, the result of dynastic marriage bed deals or military campaigns. Nor, despite the chauvinist, near hysterical, outbursts by various ‘official communists’, is it based on the domination of a particular nationality - as was the case with the Russians in the Soviet Union and the Germans in Austria-Hungary. The EU is a confederation of states in which the smaller countries have not been suppressed; they have voluntarily integrated and continue to exert some real influence. Not that we wish to glorify capitalist Europe and its dominant German, French, British, Italian power brokers. On the contrary, we are out to greatly enhance working class organisation throughout Europe and thereby overcome the lethargy, ineffectiveness and debilitating nationalist squabbling and intrigues that today characterises the EU. In place of today’s flabby capitalist Europe, we communists shall put in place the most thoroughgoing democratic centralisation.

European unity since 1957 has relied in part on the existence and increasingly widespread, albeit somewhat vague, perception of a common identity. EU sponsored statisticians have sought to measure the extent to which people see themselves as Europeans - as well being national citizens and inhabitants of a particular region. In 1996 a Eurobarometer survey reported that 55% of the EU’s citizens prominently ranked themselves as Europeans. Interestingly, within this figure there exists a swathe of people who actually consider themselves “primarily” European: from the highs in Italy, 30%, and Luxemburg, 21%, to the middling UK, 14%, to the lows of Sweden, 5.5%, and Finland, 3.8%.¹⁴ Obviously, these crude statistics come mediated through the prism of historical experience, cultural mores, class consciousness and national fears and hopes. But what they show beyond doubt is that the EU has so far not succeeded in constructing a European ‘ethnicity’ or ‘nationalism’.

Identity is a much debated, and hotly contested, concept. Suffice to say, a person’s identity is never singular but always multilayered - an ideological Russian doll. I, for example, consider myself at the same time British, a Londoner, European, but most importantly, in my heart of hearts, a communist. Of course, Europe is not a nation-state in waiting. There might be a common territory, a common currency and a common legal system, but there is certainly no common language. Nevertheless, most countries with a United Nations seat are multinational states, not nation-states. Nigeria and Switzerland, South Africa and Iran are all made up of a variety of distinct, and in proportionate terms numerically significant, peoples, each with their own language, established territory and culture. Eg, Ibo, Swiss Deutsch, Zulu and Kurd. That does not mean there is no *state consciousness*. Evidently there is. To a greater or lesser degree the above mentioned people *feel* themselves to be Nigerian, Swiss, South African, Iranian, too. State identity is internalised alongside national identity. Undoubtedly the same went for the various

nationalities in the former Soviet Union - there was, despite the horrors of Stalinism, a definite Soviet consciousness based in part on the common ideals of preserving peace and even achieving some kind of communism.

However, it should be emphasised, whether it be a nation-state or a multinational state, any associated identity, shared and used by people in their social interactions, is not an individual, but a “collective attribute”, and as such is historically constructed.¹⁵ Individual consciousness “is not the architect of the ideological superstructure, but only a tenant lodging in the social edifice of ideological signs”.¹⁶ Put simply, a person’s identification with a state, or a nation, arises through an external process whereby *imagined* - ie, thought, but not necessarily false - common interests have been claimed, successfully propagated and are to some extent lived.

For purposes of comparative illustration let us discuss India, which is both a modern state and a broad geographical expression. Its name comes from the river Indus - which is now in Pakistan - and throughout most of recorded history India simply referred to the great land mass south of the Himalayas. There were any number of thin and constantly shifting empires established in the sub-continent, eg, the Mauryan 321-185 BC and during the so-called classical age of 300-650. But in general India remained a mosaic of petty kingdoms, theocratic republics and semi-autonomous trading ports. India was also subject to one after another invasion: Macedonian Greeks, Parthians, Scythians, etc. And it was under the Moguls - Persian speaking muslims led by descendants of Genghis Khan - that India arrived at what was till then its most extensive political unity. By the mid-17th century the Moguls had not only fully consolidated direct rule over the greater part of the wide, riverine, northwest centred on the Indus, and the northeast centred on the Ganges-Brahmaputra, but had extended their hegemony down to the Deccan sultanates of southern central India.

That did not mean that the Moguls, nor their subjects, thought of themselves as Indians. The Moguls were not Indian kings, but muslims and kings of whatever they happened to rule at any one moment in time. As to their subjects, India remained a land of many peoples each with their own language or dialect. There are still perhaps some 100 distinct languages. Admittedly the 12 core language groups are closely aligned internally, so that, for example, speakers of the nine main languages in the north - like Slavic, Germanic and Latinate in Europe - can without too much effort make themselves mutually intelligible one to another. Nevertheless India is also divided across language groups by a wide array of rival religions - jains, buddhists, muslims, sikhs, zoroastrians and christians. And despite the fact that today the majority of the population, around 80%, are hindu, they too, like Europe’s protestants, are split into various sects and traditions - Pashupata, Lingayat, Mahdvas, etc. Furthermore, perhaps a third of hindus are Dalits, or tribal people, who eat beef and reject many other hindu taboos and beliefs.

It was British colonialism in the 19th century which created India as a single political entity - the 565 princely micro-states were nothing but pliant stooges. The nationalist movement and an all-Indian consciousness were the products of this imperial reality, not the rebirth, or rediscovery, of some primordial India. In other words pan-Indian consciousness is a modern phenomenon; and in no small measure its path was cleared by the destructive effects on the native, Asiatic, mode of production and its parochialism,

wrought by British militarism, commerce and ruthless plundering. Other factors facilitating pan-Indian consciousness undoubtedly included the export of the English language and the resulting all-Indian press, the English legal system and notions of formal equality, and not least the railways and telegraph network built under British supervision.

The nationalist movement - primarily in the form of the secular Indian National Congress - manifestly arose in pained, resentful and direct opposition to British colonialism. However, Congress also pitted itself against both hindu and muslim nationalists. The idea that minorities, crucially the muslims, were either a separate nation or a foreign cancer, was passionately rejected. The goal of Congress was to liberate, or take over, the whole of British India. And its leaders, such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nerhru, drew inspiration not just from a largely invented Indian past. They also looked to British liberalism, examples of 19th century European nation making, such as France, Germany and Italy, and Stalin's five year plans - which were widely admired for lifting the Soviet Union from rural backwardness to industrialised modernity.

When India gained independence from Britain in August 1947 it was not only lacking the Indus river. Pakistan (the eastern half which is now Bangladesh), Nepal, Sri Lanka and Burma were hived off. Nevertheless what remained of British India has survived as a multinational state. Not that there has been any mechanical or unproblematic convergence. Since the 1970s there has been a notable rise in regional or national parties, eg, Kashmir and Tamil Nadu. And not surprisingly there is still heated conflict over which language should serve as the *lingua franca*. English has the virtue of being of worldwide reach and within India neutral because it is a second language for all. On the other hand, though it is widely spoken, Hindi greatly advantages those who learnt it as their mother tongue and therefore discriminates against other Indians, especially those in the south.

Then there is the poison of hindu nationalism, which over the last 20 years has gone from the outer limits of Indian political life to the mainstream. Between 1996 and 2004 the leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Atal Behari Vajpayee, served as prime minister. Although there never was an organically united, let alone a primordial India, these hindu nationalists created one ideologically, and during his period in office ensured that their construct was taught and promoted in the country's schools as verity. According to the BJP's ahistorical, peculiar, but pernicious nonsense, the Aryans were said to be not incomers who arrived in the subcontinent some time around 1,500 BC. Rather they were the "indigenous children of the soil".¹⁷ As to Indian unity, it becomes a hindu ideal cherished over countless centuries. Within Sanskrit literature they find notions of a universal sovereign. There is also a story in the *Mahabharata* of the battle of Kurukshetra, which brought together the Indian nations, and implied a belief that Indian people, including those in the south, were united by common bonds and interests. Of course, the BJP advocates a hindu, religious or confessional, nationalism, a sacralised India deeply antithetical to christians, atheists and other such minorities. But the special target of their venom and hatred are, of course, India's 150 million muslims. They are the enemy within and supposedly covertly aligned with their co-religionists in a nuclear armed Pakistan.

This divisive hindutva ideology originates not back in the beginnings of time. Instead it takes first form in the later years of the 19th century and is fully articulated in the 1920s

by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. That was when the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was founded. The RSS is a cadre organisation which considered the 200 years of British rule to be far less harmful and insidious than the 600 previous years of muslim rule. Most energy was expended attacking muslims, not strengthening the anti-British struggle. They organised along paramilitary lines and demanded jobs not for muslims, but hindus. In the 1930s the RSS incorporated European 'scientific' racist and fascist ideas. Hindus are therefore said to constitute both a nation and a race to whom India is holy.

It was in the 1970s that RSS made its breakthrough. Indira Gandhi's emergency and the subsequent slump in Congress electoral support allowed it to move from the wings and towards centre stage. RSS formed a religious-front, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and then in 1979 the BJP party-front. It was this reconfiguration that spearheaded the RSS's tumescent growth and ability to reach down and organise wide sections of the most oppressed, poorest and desperate sections of the population. Dalits, the untouchables, slum dwellers, were given dignity, a sense of belonging and a common enemy - the muslims. Today the paramilitary RSS has around two million members, and, of course, that includes Vajpayee and others who served as his key ministers.

Unlike India there is neither all-Europe state nor any real all-Europe political parties; only confederal unity and loose parliamentary groupings. Also on the negative side, this time like India, there are dozens of separate nations, each with their own distinct culture. Hence the EU has to work with 11 official languages (there are at least 40 autochthonous languages). And, needless to say, even that severe limitation necessitates a small army of translators, produces mountains of paper and causes all manner of different tensions - in the autumn of 1999, for example, Germany boycotted all EU meetings under the Finnish presidency, because no translation was provided in to and out of German. And much to the barely concealed fury of France it seems that English is emerging as the EU's *lingua franca*. New Europe certainly comes speaking English, not French.

Despite the continued hold of national prejudice and the ever-present possibility of xenophobic outbreaks, there are the growing bounds of multinational commonality. This corresponds in part to the objective frame - EU institutions, laws, the euro, etc. But there are other aspects. There has been no sweep of external conquest and therefore no accumulated ideological unity against an easily identified oppressor. Europe has experienced only spasms of limited expansionism by Spain, France, Germany and Russia and then a cultural, economic and political overlaying of American hegemony. Nonetheless, all this taken together has forged the EU and a definite consciousness, albeit nothing as intense as in India.

True, the close kinship ties that once joined the ruling houses and high aristocracies of Europe are now either gone, are in terminal decline or are irrelevant. The fall of the Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian dynasties, loss of monarchical political power and the growth of democracy has seen to that. Nowadays top royals, like the odious Charles Windsor, are nationalised and tend to marry either minor aristocrats or commoners from within their native country. It is also true that old patterns of wage-labour migration within Europe have altered. Britain once received large influxes of people from Ireland, Germany and Italy. Masses of Italians went to live in France and Switzerland too, while later successive waves of Spanish, Portuguese and Greek workers moved to Britain,

Germany, etc. Since the 1980s living standards have to a considerable degree evened out and such movements have largely evaporated.

Despite all this, both short-term and longer term migration within the EU has tended upwards - recently from eastern Europe, of course, but also from elsewhere. Migrants do not consist exclusively of unskilled worst-paid labour. Not only do skilled and professional workers move from Britain to Berlin, Paris and Brussels and from Germany to London, Prague and Warsaw; millions of retired people have gone to live in southern Europe. There are something like 500,000 Britons in Spain. Moreover, through school exchanges and holidaying, most Europeans now know, albeit superficially, other European countries. Until the 1960s that experience of living abroad was confined to diplomats, business people, artists, intellectuals, seamen, and in time of war, soldiers, refugees and prisoners. Again on the negative side, the European religious, political and scientific elite is no longer united by a common ability to converse in Latin and Greek. That said, with mass secondary and university education, those who can hold a conversation in a foreign language have dramatically increased - something like 90% of young people in Germany speak some English.¹⁸

There are other common cultural aspects to Europe. The centres of Europe's cities and towns are in general different from those in the Americas, Africa and Asia - more pedestrian friendly, relatively efficient public transport, big parks, many gardens, etc - which go together to form a distinct urban lifestyle. There is also what might be called European housing, cars, drinks, food and even furniture. Over many years there has, of course, been much talk of Americanisation. That is not without foundation. McDonalds and Starbucks are now ubiquitous throughout Europe. However, much of what is American is also European. Eg, the English language, cinema, radio, TV and even fast food. That said, there is no doubt about the cultural differences between Europe and America.

Take religion. US bible belt rightwingers indignantly complain of the Europeans that they are unchristian and atheists to boot. Unfortunately, that is not quite the case. Nonetheless, Gallop estimates that 48% of western Europeans hardly ever go to church during their lives. The figure in eastern Europe is virtually the same - 44%. Holland, Britain, Germany, Sweden and Denmark are particularly ungodly. Fewer than one in ten attend church more than once a month - a sharp decline compared with the 1960s. Only in 'catholic' Italy and Ireland do more than a third of the population attend church more than once a month. Another recent survey reported that 49% of Danes, 55% of Norwegians and 55% of Swedes said that god did not matter to them at all. In contrast 82% of Americans say that god is "very important" to them, and we all know that far too many Americans not only believe in a god but take the bible literally. With a fervent irrationalism, they refuse to accept Darwinism and the theory of evolution.¹⁹

Europe led the way when it came to capitalism - along with its antipode; the working class, and its socialist, communist and trade union organisations and traditions and ideas of solidarity. The organised working class has had a noticeable, indeed to a degree a defining, effect. Compared with the US, in Europe one finds shorter average working hours, more holidays, and higher welfare spending in proportion to GDP. In that sense there are two Europes: a bourgeois Europe and a proletarian Europe. There is on the one

hand the Europe of Napoleon Bonaparte, Adolf Hitler, Charles de Gaulle, Margaret Thatcher and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. On the other hand, there is the Europe of Thomas Paine, August Blanqui, Ernst Jones, Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky and Antonio Gramsci.

Neither Euronationalism nor any kind of EU regional chauvinism holds out the prospect of working class liberation, only the playing out of George Orwell's *1984* for real. Marxists therefore have neither wish nor reason to celebrate, champion, or enhance, what European workers have in common with European capitalists. Of course, that does not mean we refuse to make propaganda against our 'own' capitalists using a common language. That goes without saying. However, our overriding task is to unite the workers of all countries and deepen the spirit of internationalism.

We are concerned with building a genuinely *world* culture - to begin with no matter how embryonic and rudimentary in form - through taking hold of, developing and generalising that which is progressive, democratic and socialist in the culture of each and every country. We do this in irreconcilable opposition to all bourgeois nationalisms and multinationalisms. However, our political starting point must be the widest launch pad objective circumstances permit. Concretely that means the EU.

2. Globalisation and theories of imperialism

Any worthwhile discussion of Europe and European unity must ground itself on a correct understanding of today's changing world and the process now commonly called 'globalisation'. Over the last two or three decades there have certainly been profound shifts in the circumstances of reproduction which mark an intensification, further integration and spread of the global system of capital. The post-World War II order continues, but has reached a new stage. I shall sketch out four interrelated areas.

One, class struggle. In the late 1960s and early 1970s Keynesian methods of managing the national economies of the major capitalist countries hit the buffers. The needs of capital clashed with the needs of the working class. Full employment and the provisions of the social democratic state boosted working class self-confidence. Falling profit rates necessitated a ruling class offensive. Hence Monetarism, Thatcherism, Reaganomics, neo-liberalism.

It took many battles. Ideological, legal and physical. But with a venal and incorporated top leadership and lacking any clear-sighted vision of a communist society, the organised working class suffered defeat after defeat. In Britain steel, cars, mines, docks and print. Unemployment everywhere soared. Strikebreaking and anti-trade union legislation cowed. Solidarity crumbled. From this politically constructed vantage point capital could be gallantly rescued from the reviled clutches of taxation - which siphons off surplus labour to provide social housing, health, earnings linked pensions and other such useless and irresponsible frivolities. The social democratic consensus is slain. As is right and proper, capital is kept for capital in order to produce yet more capital.

Unprofitable concerns, including nationalised industries, are either elevated into predatory transnationals in their own right or are snuffed out in the gale of international competition. Regulations over capital are relaxed. There is a take-over boom and an orgy of speculation. Control and the ownership of giant corporations become more and more divorced. Managerial rewards grow and grow. Profit rates appear to skyrocket and the Enron-stage of capitalism arrives. Social inequality steadily widens. The mega-rich have certainly done well. In Britain whereas in the 1970s the top one percent of households owned 20% of national wealth, now it is close to 40%. According to the UN the three richest billionaires have assets worth more than the combined GDP's of the world's poorest countries, the inhabitants of which number 600 million people.

Two, spread. The irresistible dynamic of global capital erodes and prevails over even the immovable might of the most despotic 'socialist' state. Universal money subverts the anti-cosmopolitan nomenclature. The cornucopia of commodities lures every stratum into support for democratic counterrevolution. Neither KGB nor Berlin Wall can save

the national socialist distopia.

To preserve its power the bureaucratic elite must become bourgeois. Seclusion and self-sufficiency implodes before the capitalist mode of reproduction. Over two years, 1989 to 1991, the 'second' world vanished. State industries limp on in hopeless obsolescence or have fallen into the tight fist of bureaucratic thieves and asset strippers, the oligarchs. That, or they have been cherry-picked by calculating western capitalists.

China remains officially a people's democracy. However, the heirs of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping actively encourage wage slavery and the untrammelled accumulation of capital. The bureaucracy merges with bourgeois capitalism to form a single alloy. Vietnam wants to emulate the Guangdong model. Starving North Korea worships Kim Jong-il as a beneficent and all-powerful god but relies on South Korean and US handouts. Even in Fidel Castro's Cuba the dollar functions as a parallel currency. Capitalism stares in on these 'socialist' states from every window. In short, all countries now lie within, or are subject to, the capitalist metabolism. There is no outside. In parallel, old institutions are given new roles: eg, the World Bank and the IMF rule Africa, and much of southern and eastern Asia and Latin America with a callousness comparable with colonial times. Structural adjustment means destitution, disease and death for millions.

Three, increased interlinkage and velocity. Since 1970 the export of commodities has risen enormously, by something like 200%. Everyday items are produced by single companies across different countries and continents. Designed in Italy, owned in the US, assembled in Taiwan, sold everywhere. During the same 1970-1997 period the export of capital has, in comparison with the export of commodities, shot through the roof, increasing by nearly 1,400%. In 1980 cross-border trade in bonds and equities were equivalent to 8% of Japanese GDP. In 1998 that figure was 91%. For the US the increase has been even greater; from 9% to 230%. And for Germany the rise was from 7% of GDP to 334%. International bank lending has shown a similar expansion. Gross international bank claims went from \$315 billion in 1993 to \$1.2 trillion in 1997. Overall bank lending in 1998 reached a record \$11 trillion. Meanwhile daily currency trading reached \$2.0 trillion in 1998, or an annual turnover of over \$600 trillion.²⁰ Central banks can easily find themselves overwhelmed. Money flies around the planet nowadays at the speed of light and this engenders chronic financial instability which can bring whole economies crashing down - eg, the once famed east Asian 'tigers' in 1997. However, massive speculative profits accrue and accumulate.

Both phenomena - interlinkage and velocity - are in part facilitated by staggering *decreases* in the value and prices commanded by the means of communication: sea freight, air transport, telephone calls and computers. IMF statisticians estimate that between 1920 and 1990 the real cost of sea freight went down from an index of 100 to 30. Figures for air, telephones and computers are in comparison breath-taking. From a 100 index in 1930 air transport stood at just under 20 in 1990; over the same period telephone calls dropped to almost zero. The same feat has been performed by computers - but from a 1960 base line.²¹

Four, structure. In part as a result of all the above, the internal architecture of the world economy no longer neatly consists of oppressed and oppressor nations; ie, a handful of great imperialist powers who produce and sell finished commodities and an

underdeveloped periphery, often colonies, which supply raw materials. The picture is considerably more complicated and multilayered.

Capital as a system of reproduction always was universal and social. Now it is more so. Headed by the US the metropolitan countries remain economically, politically, militarily dominant but account proportionally for less and less finished commodities. Jobs in manufacture have not disappeared. They have been exported. Increasingly the metropolises are characterised by banking, insurance, transport, research and development, advertising and what might be called immaterial commodities, frequently called knowledge and information. The typical worker in Britain is no longer in heavy industry and male, but female and in administration or services.

While commodities freely circulate and transnationals routinely export jobs abroad - so as to reduce labour costs - overseas workers are prevented from moving where they wish. Europe buys internal stability through increasingly turning itself into a fortress against poor outsiders. A phenomenon either mistakenly or cynically equated with racism: hence the sloppy and politically *incorrect* slogan 'abolish *racist* immigration controls'. Those who manage to sneak inside are often illegal and doomed to live as unprotected, unorganised, worst-paid labour. By contrast, transnational corporations demand access to every market, and, backed by IMF and World Bank adjustment programmes, invariably get it, no matter what the dire consequences for local producers. Small and middling national capitalists and the peasantry face ruin.

In tandem, US industries and agriculture are granted special protection or heavy subsidy. And despite the demise of the Bretton Woods system, the dollar is still king (albeit now within a dual monarchy alongside the euro). Hence the US can parasitically offload its massive debts onto others, primarily through the simple device of devaluation. Others stump up. This is akin to fleecing its creditors. Meanwhile, thanks to the World Bank, the IMF, etc, on the one hand, and kleptocrats on the other, the so-called 'third world' suffers under an impossible debt burden that amounts to usury.

There is no scramble for Africa. On the contrary, apart from South Africa the countries south of the Sahara are left to rot. Aids, petty wars, famine as well as draining debts. Russia is a huge exporter of oil and gas but still haemorrhages wealth on a chilling scale. Average life expectancy has fallen by 10 years. Ukraine, Kazakhstan, etc, have fared even worse. Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, Columbia, Iraq and most of former Yugoslavia lie wrecked - failed states. As a concomitant, impoverished parts of Asia, Latin America, Africa and eastern Europe are reproduced in the great cities of the metropolises - Los Angeles, Houston, New York, London, Rotterdam, Berlin, Paris, Marseilles.

On the other hand, Ireland, Spain, Greece and Portugal have not only joined the EU but have adopted the euro. They can hardly be regarded as backward semi-colonies. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary are surely set to follow. China, India and Mexico are no longer mere exporters of raw materials, but of finished commodities too. And at a significant level. Something like 80% of the world's footwear comes from China. Places such as Turkey, Singapore, Chile and South Korea have also undergone a qualitative shift. These medium developed capitalist countries have their own monopolies, export capital as well as finished commodities, and face large, often very militant, working classes.

These features of globalisation we have just listed are responsible for a great deal of confusion, and in some cases, consternation. There is a strange amalgam of paleoconservatives, greens, liberals and national socialists: the party of backward looking hopelessness. Alike they have a visceral fear of what they see as stateless capital - ie, the subordination of the nation-state to the power of giant corporations, faceless currency dealers and institutions such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation. The United Kingdom Independence Party and the British National Party; the new Labour left and rheumy-eyed 'official communists' huddled around John Haylett's *Morning Star*; the Green Party and Arthur Scargill; George Monbiot and other modern-day Proudonists; the 'awkward squad' of trade union leaders - Bob Crow, Billy Hayes and Derek Simpson; Peter Taaffe's Socialist Party in England and Wales and Alan McCombes in Scotland; would, if only they could, turn back the wheel of history.

Suffice to say it cannot be done. National economic autonomy and self-sufficiency, so treasured and venerated by conservatives, greens and national socialists alike, was always a much exaggerated myth. Every country is dependent. Europe's nation-states must join together or admit impotence. The mighty US relies on Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Venezuela to ensure oil for its gas-guzzling businesses and citizenry. Latin America supplies an endless flow of cheap, often illegal, labour. The Clinton boom could be sustained only through a huge influx of foreign capital - mainly German and Japanese. Under George W Bush the US state budget runs on a parasitic black hole of indebtedness. A kind of neo-Keynesian parasitism. Even the most populous state on earth, China with its 1.2 billion inhabitants, can only satisfy its needs by ensuring all manner of economic and political relations with other countries. China has its special zones, Hong Kong and is now a full member of the WTO with all that means in terms of subordination to the capitalist metabolism.

Then there are those who welcome globalisation, or at least claim to be reconciled with the decline, and what they believe is the virtual powerlessness, of the nation-state before the global market. The party of cynical acceptance. New Labour, Michael Howard's Tories, Romano Prodi, Mikhail Gorbachev, South Africa's ANC are all latter-day converts to the rigid, unforgiving, doctrines of Milton Friedman and the Chicago school: an over generous welfare state and conceding excessive pay demands will inevitably be punished by inflation, a jobs exodus and rising unemployment. Resistance is useless. Bow to the new god. Francis Fukuyama even announced the "end of history" - meaning that capitalism was at the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution".²² Donald Sassoon - Issac Deutscher Memorial Prize winner in 1997 - mournfully admits that European socialism has successively retreated from the "aim of abolishing capitalism", or even attempting to "countervail the negative tendencies of the private sector".²³ A common diagnosis. After the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 there has been a total surrender to globalisation and neo-liberalism. Social democrats now privatise where conservatives once feared to tread. Sassoon's own advice is though hardly inspiring ... he urges socialists to be "modest".²⁴

Under these circumstances it is hardly surprising that sections of the 'thinking' far left too have been overawed, seduced, bedazzled, hypnotised by a 'moribund' capitalism that stubbornly refuses to roll over and die, but instead vigorously leaps to new

unprecedented heights, only, hardly pausing for breath, to go on to achieve yet new conquests. This paradox has produced a whole literature ... unfortunately at best it amounts to misdirected optimism and putting a communist spin on capitalist triumphalism, at worst it is capitulation. Three samples:

Nigel Harris - former editor of the SWP's *International Socialism* - now holds to a thoroughly opportunist world outlook. Effectively he is a bourgeois socialist. In a series of well researched books he charts what he believes is the rise and continued rise of capitalism. He pictures capitalism as still being ascendant as a system. Quite frankly, despite all his nights of hard work and voluminous statistics, his conclusion amounts to little more than a vulgar apologia. His basic thesis is that world history, since around 1500, has been characterised by an ongoing struggle between a "cosmopolitan bourgeoisie" - company merchants, commodity traders and multinational corporations - and those who control territorial states. Kings, princes, generals, politicians and bureaucrats exploit the productive classes through the state and they have also succeeded in subordinating the positive features of capitalist development to the unproductive and terribly wasteful business of waging war. Globalisation, thankfully, is once again forcing the malign state into retreat and heralds a "new bourgeois revolution" and the domination of world markets and business people over states - this will benefit the mass of humanity, end poverty and make the "conditions of all consistent with the best".²⁵

Martin Thomas and his comrades in the Alliance for Workers' Liberty such as Cathy Nugent and Paul Hampton exhibit all the tell-tale signs of a right moving centrism. They maintain that while the nation-state is far from dead, capitalism now operates a system of cartelled free trade which is merely policed by a US "globocop".²⁶ Market, or "para-market forces", are seen as primary, and, despite some unpleasant social consequences, the continued spread of capitalism is deemed as progressive. A one-sided assessment which leads the AWL to an inexcusable, not to say treacherous, softness when it comes to US wars and military interventions. They come with Abrams tanks and stealth bombers... but are supposed to be followed by full scale capitalist development. Consequently, the AWL cannot bring itself to call for the immediate, or unconditional, withdraw of US forces from Iraq. In point of fact, the AWL welcomed the US-UK victory over the forces of Saddam Hussein. It was, for them, the least worst outcome.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri are associated with anarcho-sindicalism and the autonomist left. The supposed end of imperialism and the emergence of what they call "empire", "broke and buried" the nation-state.²⁷ Various left communists likewise argue that the days of the nation-state as an effective site of struggle are long gone. Capital now exists unmediated, in pure form, and freed from the constraints once imposed by governments. Or so they say.

Their empire is not US imperialism, it has no territorial centre of power. There is neither a Rome nor an emperor. The world has become "smooth" - empire is "everywhere and nowhere".²⁸ Capital was pushed, by working class struggles in the 20th century, towards integrating everything into a global system of control. Capital, the state, civil society, production and life itself merge into each other. Communication and control of the means of communication assume "a central position".²⁹ Parliament and national legislation

thereby become obsolete or irrelevant. Traditional working class organisations also lose power and new forms of resistance come to the fore. The working class dissolves into the “multitude” (a term seemingly resurrected from Spinoza).

Hardt and Negri emphatically, and in many ways well-foundedly, reject all strategies based on the local because they negate or obscure the real alternatives. They mention the Palestinian intifada, the 1989 Chinese democracy movement, the Los Angeles riots in May 1992, the Zapatistas and the French and Korean strike waves. Though these struggles failed to communicate or find common language, they contradictorily insist that any revolt or protest by the “multitude”, no matter how isolated or parochial, immediately touches the global level. A case of having your cake and eating it too. They pose as international communists. In reality they are leftwing cheerleaders. Giving answers as to how we might *practically* join together the countless, disconnected, national and workplace struggles into international answers, is studiously avoided. Blowing away the philosophical fog we find little more than a condescending, ivory tower, glorification of the most desperate, often counter-productive and blind acts.

Hardt and Negri are admirably, if sentimentally, optimistic, and unlike Nigel Harris, espouse militant struggle. However, their undimmed hope for a bright future rests on the nomadism, suffering and refusal of the “poor”. A near theological approach which has far more in common with St Francis of Assisi than Karl Marx of Kentish Town. The disjointed, nebulous and surely deliberately opaque philosophical meanderings of Hardt and Negri find fitting political expression in headlining but totally ephemeral semi-anarchist groupings.

Such woefully inadequate, lopsided, exaggerated accounts are useful only to the extent that they facilitate a corrective discussion. Act as a springboard. In order to go forward, however, we must first go back.

No matter how many heads, no matter how many personifications, capital has always existed as a single metabolism. Average profit and abstract labour see to that. Globalisation, doubtless an ongoing process, begins with capital itself. In the *Communist manifesto* of 1848 Marx and Engels describe the capitalist mode of reproduction as joining the most diverse countries into a single “world market”.³⁰ And precisely because of its global reach, its restless outward strivings, capital needs the state. Armies, police forces, laws, prisons, courts, customs posts, international treaties are vital if capital is not to be robbed, cheated or destroyed - either by rival capitals or the working class. Capital as capital is rarely armed. Without the state, capital would find it impossible to exercise its dictatorship in the workplace. They are billionaires, we are billions. The state also provides capital - which is internally fractured by its very nature of being many capitals - an overall cohesion it must otherwise lack. So from the first, capital interweaves with the state. The enclosure acts and the bloody expropriation of England’s peasant farmers, the colonial plunder of India and the mass transportation of African slaves, these were the chief moments of primitive capitalist accumulation. And upon these “idyllic foundations” Britain became the workshop of the world. Under the protection of the royal navy the commodities of British machine industry invaded every market. Cheap prices were heavy artillery in their own right and no country, no person was left unaffected.

Undisputed British industrial supremacy was perfectly complemented by the

ideology of *laissez-faire* and Adam Smith's small state. Free trade meant in practice British sales and British profits. The Manchester school dismissed the whole colonial system as an expensive relic, urged a profitable peace instead of the waste of national wars, had no wish for a large standing army and even toyed with ending the monarchy and the House of Lords. Their motto was simple: 'Produce as cheaply as you can and do away with all fripperies'. But that hardly amounted to a clarion call for the abolition of the state. In the background there always stood the law and well-drilled regiments of redcoats.

Capitalism is uneven development. One firm falls behind, another speeds ahead. And what goes for individual capitals goes for countries too. Inevitably Britain was overtaken competitively ... by first the US, then Germany. They produced cheaper and better. The turning point was in the 1880s. Indeed other leading powers were compelled to introduce capitalism from above, through state sponsorship: that or face economic burial and consequent draining of military prowess. So Italy, Austria, Russia and Japan rushed to join the capitalist club. Tariffs were erected to guarantee accumulation. Favoured capitals were from birth typically guided by a visible parental state hand and had instant monopolistic proportions. Markets closed, or became increasingly difficult, for Britain. The epoch of competitive capitalism closes. And though the US produced and exported gold, silver, grain, beef, coal, oil, etc - and on an enormous scale - there came into being a characteristic two-tone global pattern. The rival European and American metropolises were responsible for the great bulk of finished manufactured goods, while the rest of the world provided raw materials and markets.

Objectively socialism is possible and increasingly necessary. However, as the ideology of *laissez-faire* ceases to be expedient, becomes a self-inflicted burden, an open goal, it is not only challenged by the agitators of the Social Democratic Federation. Establishment grandees like Benjamin Disraeli, Joseph Chamberlain and Cecil Rhodes clamoured for an end to free trade and lobbied for new colonies as an alternative to socialism and civil war. Through imperialism the surplus population could be usefully offloaded and British factories kept in business - not least through the sale of expensive, second-rate, goods to what were captive, or walled off, markets.

Britain remained immensely strong. The number one power. Through well entrenched industrial capacity, navel might and huge financial reserves, a web of royal marriages, inter-state alliances and understandings, Britain could smoothly, almost effortlessly, manage the transition from free trade capitalism to monopoly by constructing a much expanded empire - dominions, colonies and semi-colonies. Furthermore, in place of simply marketing finished commodities, its big capitalists augmented profits through overseas lending, running infrastructural projects and establishing mines and factories in other countries. Hence the global market condenses, ripens and eventually hatches out into the global economy. Globalisation is therefore hardly a novel phenomenon: it began with capital and reaches a higher stage when capital turns to imperialism.

Militarism, bureaucracy and the big state were inevitable concomitants of imperialism. Capitalism thereby continued; but only through growing state intervention, or organisation. British capital thereby appears more European. At a deeper, more theoretical level, the laws of value and socialism interpenetrate and produce a social hybrid. Imperialism is capitalism, but it is a capitalism pregnant with socialism.

In turn Europe once again follows in the footsteps of Britain. By around 1900 most of the world had been all but divided - alongside Britain's empire there stood those of France, Holland, Germany, Portugal and Belgium. Russia, Austria-Hungary and the US were, or had, what might be called internal empires (a term most problematic when it comes to the US because of the low density of the native population and its ability to turn successive waves of European migrants into American farmers - nor should the US expansion into Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Philippines or Cuba be forgotten). There remained a definite pecking order with Britain still at the top and hence as well as formal empires there were relations of dependence, or informal empires. Eg, through banking capital France established a grip over tsarist Russia (Leon Trotsky called it a colonising semi-colony) while Britain propped up Portugal, to a lesser extent Holland, and exercised a determining influence throughout most of South America. Likewise China, Persia and Ottoman Turkey could maintain a notional independence only.

Marxists were quick to recognise that capitalism has entered a new, higher, stage of development. Debate was triggered in no small part by the setback suffered by the German Social Democratic Party in the elections of January 1907 - they were reduced by half, from 81 to 43 Reichstag seats. The yellow press had been barking and baying against the "unpatriotic" speeches made by SDP deputies protesting against the inhuman treatment meted out to the native peoples of South West Africa by the German colonial authorities. It amounted to genocide. Things came to a head at the Stuttgart congress of the Second, Socialist, International, August 18-24 1907. The rightwing of the SDP, in particular, but also the Dutch and Belgians, came out with suggestions that far from opposing the colonial policy of the European powers outright - as had the 1900 congress in Paris - a more 'nuanced' attitude should be adopted (shades of the AWL, Nigel Harris, *et al*). The intellectual leader of this right revisionist trend was, of course, Eduard Bernstein.

Colonialism had a good side, it was rapidly spreading development and replacing primitive, pre-capitalist, modes of production. This "civilising mission" was being carried out brutally, with exploitation and violence by the capitalists, and should therefore be roundly condemned. But socialists could not abandon those in the colonies. Indeed "Europe needs colonies", said the SPD's main rapporteur and leading trade unionist, Eduard David.³¹ When its time finally comes, the SDP should carry through a "socialist colonial policy": not to do so was to doom Germany to ruination. Due to the international division of labour Europe had become dependent on the colonies for food and industrial raw materials. Other rightists resorted to the crudest racist stereotypes and joked about naked savages and cannibalism.

All this was fiercely denounced by Karl Kautsky and others on the left and centre left of the Second International. It was a duty to bring civilisation to technologically backward peoples, they should not be "abandoned"; however, that meant "giving them freedom", not further military conquests.³² The right lost the vote on colonial policy by 127 votes to 108 in 1907. But as August 1914 tragically showed, it was a practical majority.

During this period the left produced a barrage of books and pamphlets which attempted to theoretically explain capitalism's latest phase and equip the working class with the correct politics. Those by Karl Kautsky, Rudolf Hilferding, Rosa Luxemburg,

Nikolai Bukharin and Vladimir Lenin being particularly noteworthy.

Outraged by the rightwing's abject prostration before German colonialism at the Stuttgart congress, Kautsky wrote his *Socialism and colonial policy* in the three weeks before the SDP's Essen congress. In the event the right chose not to fight and the resolution of the Stuttgart congress was endorsed. Kautsky distinguished between "work colonies" and "exploitation colonies": eg, the USA on the one hand and Belgium Congo on the other.³³ Kautsky insisted that the settlement of "work colonies" - such as Australia, Canada, Argentina and the United States - by European workers and peasants was on balance progressive. Such colonies could not be rejected "in principle", especially given their vast geographical expanse and paucity of aboriginal inhabitants. The productive forces were revolutionised by colonisation and a new, very big, working class had been created. Nor could these colonisations be reversed. Nevertheless, socialists were obliged to pay close and sympathetic attention to, and strive to safeguard, the interests of the native populations. As to the "exploitation colonies", they involved imposing forced labour upon the natives and undisguised plunder. The effect was impoverishment. Oppression of these "exploitation colonies" should be immediately ended and self-determination conceded.

Kautsky goes on to elaborate how the limitation of workers' consumption puts a curb on the development of capital and how the capitalist class found a series of "expedients" which allowed it to continue to expand: monopolies, monopoly prices and generating an "arms race on land and sea". The forces of production are increasingly orientated towards producing the means of destruction. A horrendous world war was beckoning and for the sake of humanity had to be stopped. Another expedient which allowed for continued expansion was exports, especially loans and arms, to agrarian countries, hopelessly indebted and therefore cruelly exploiting them. Once again the effect is impoverishment. This had occurred in the case of Britain and Egypt, and constituted another, third form, of colonialism, and once again, said Kautsky, socialists were obliged to oppose foreign domination.

In 1910 Hilferding published his *Finance capital*, in 1913 Luxemburg's *Accumulation of capital* came out and in 1914 Kautsky produced *Ultra imperialism* and a series of closely related articles in *Neue Zeit*. Despite important differences in terms of analytical tools - eg, disproportionality between departments one and two in the case of Luxemburg and Hilferding's emphasis on the rising organic composition and overproduction of capital - there are unmistakable common themes and certain common conclusions. Historically, capitalism had led to monopolies, a merger of banking and industrial capital and hence finance capital, the growth of the bureaucratic-military state and the effective division of the world by the great powers.

However, whereas Luxemburg described imperialism in terms of capitalist *development* - associated in her account, one in part shared by Kautsky, with the final seizure of agrarian regions of the world by the big powers, regions which are "indispensable"³⁴ for continued capital expansion - Hilferding and Kautsky insisted that imperialism was "a particular kind of policy", not an "economic 'phase'".³⁵ In fact imperialism caused positive harm to sections of industrial capital and could by implication be sloughed off if the will was there. Moreover, Kautsky speculated that capitalism need

not engender war. Economically the export of capital and the growth of cartels was leading inexorably to a situation where all the leading countries were becoming so “dependent” and so bound up one with another that the “stronger nations” could quite *possibly* put an end to the “arms race” and conclude between themselves a “Holy Alliance of the imperialists”.³⁶

This contemptible volte-face excused social democracy from the necessity of defeatism and was, of course, written just prior to the outbreak of World War I and published on September 11 1914; that is during the opening stanza of a mass slaughter which eventually cost some 20 million lives. (Martin Thomas revealingly claims that all Kautsky got wrong was the timing - he argues that since the 1989-91 collapse of bureaucratic socialism “ultra-imperialism” has finally come into existence, along with the system of give-and-take negotiations and agreements between powers who are “more-or-less equals”, as once envisaged by Kautsky). The fact of the matter is that in August 1914 Kautsky finally collapsed as a revolutionary before a war he had predicted and fought to prevent. Like a drowning man, he desperately clung to unity with what was now the social chauvinist right majority in the SDP and urged class peace for the duration of the war. Miserably, pathetically, he even pledged to suspend the weapons of criticism.

By 1915 Bukharin had completed his *Imperialism and the world economy*. It is a detailed analysis and describes how the super (extra) profits derived from imperialist exploitation of the colonies had helped provide the wherewithal to subvert, or bribe, the metropolitan working class - the horrors of war were, though, rapidly changing around this situation. Bukharin also stresses that the nation-state is becoming outmoded due to global capitalist development. Nevertheless, militarism and war necessitated state control of capital. Hence, capital was contradictorily being both nationalised in the form of the state capitalist war machine and was yet still international and driven to expand globally by its innate laws.

His manuscript was, however, seized by the tsarist police and not published till November 1917 when it appeared under the imprimatur of *Kommunist* - the ‘left’ Bolshevik paper. Nevertheless, Lenin had read it and there can be no doubting that despite their heated factional disputes, Bukharin’s *Imperialism and the world economy* influenced to a considerable extent his own *Imperialism: the highest stage of capitalism*. Lenin’s introduction to the book (written in December 1915 but lost until 1927) stresses that the facts relating to imperialism need to be closely studied and that the “scientific significance” of Bukharin’s work consists of precisely this. He “studies the facts of world economy relating to imperialism as a whole”. Above all, Bukharin locates imperialism as a “definite stage” of capitalism; ie, it was no mere policy. Incidentally, Lenin admits that Kautsky’s “ultra-imperialism” was *abstractly* conceivable and this is where capitalist economic development was pointing. “But”, he added, such were the mounting stresses, contradictions and conflicts, that well before such “a single world trust will be reached”, imperialism will “inevitably explode” and capitalism “will turn into its opposite”.³⁷

Written in early 1916, but, due to the disorganisation of the Bolshevik party, not published till September 1917, Lenin’s *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism* was designed to get through the eye of tsarist censorship (*Imperialism and the split in*

socialism constituted the overtly political broadside).

Except for the power-driving logic of presentation and razor sharp theoretical categories, there is nothing particularly original in Lenin's account. Modestly, Lenin subtitles it a "popular outline". His prime object is propaganda against Kautsky and the centre and the job of political annihilation. Hence the accumulating weight of description is combined with sudden moments of lacerating polemic.

For Lenin the essence of imperialism is monopoly. He highlights other basic features and trends. In each case Lenin provides a wealth of supporting argument. He recounts the social significance of capitalism's growing parasitism: obviously a socio-economic not a moral category. While for Lenin the export of capital speeds development where it is exported to, it impedes and distorts development in the region where it is exported from. A class of useless bourgeois slackers and pleasure-seekers is spawned which lives off the spoils of imperialism. Moreover, like Bukharin, he too locates the collapse of the Second International in the growth of a labour aristocracy: basically better paid skilled workers in the imperialist countries, who because of *material* interests derived from the super (extra) profits from the exploitation of colonies, betray the interests of the whole class. (It was, though, the much maligned Gregori Zinoviev who in my opinion provided the most convincing analysis of this issue at the time, he discusses the labour aristocracy - which he rightly uses as a *political*, not simply an economic, category - but crucially, he highlights the institutional role of the labour bureaucracy - see his *Social roots of opportunism*.)³⁸ Lenin also agrees with Bukharin that imperialism is a stage, the last, in the development of capitalism. It is not a policy.

Without theoretical elaboration, simply relying on bald empirical facts, Lenin refutes both Luxemburg and Kautsky and their claims that capitalism relies on the annexation of agrarian territories for self-expansion. He cites Germany's takeover of Belgium and the coveting of Alsace-Lorraine by France. Following Hilferding he builds his account on the merger of industrial and banking capital and the subsequent emergence of finance capital. As proven by World War I, competition, and political liberty, had been superseded, or overlaid, by monopoly, and police oppression, and hence capitalism as a system had become a break on progress and was in Marxist terms moribund or in decline.

However, there is no attempt to integrate the laws and growing contradictions of capitalism into a fully rounded, ie, dynamic, analysis. A general theory. That was not his intention. Working quickly, and primarily for polemical purposes, Lenin took hold of and synthesised the latest and best theory of 1900-1916. He had read, studied, absorbed and generously quotes amongst many others the British social-liberal JA Hobson (JA Hobson *Imperialism; a study* London 1902). Where necessary, Lenin corrected or modified. But his basic conclusion is clear: monopoly had lead to imperialism and the division of the world and this in turn had led to war of redivision. On that basis, Lenin could easily extrapolate into the future: capitalism meant big power conflicts and war. Periods of peace were nothing but periods of preparation for war.

Of course, his *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism* should not be treated as holy writ. Yet unfortunately that is exactly what much of the left has done. There were, even in 1916, minor or secondary limitations to Lenin's account: eg, the labour aristocracy and the "possible" generalisation of the pleasure-seeking class from the Rivera,

Switzerland and the Surrey hills to the whole of western Europe. That mattered little in the early 1920s when the Third, Communist, International, began the work of creating a systematic Leninism. And quite frankly, Lenin's *Imperialism* could still serve as a useful signpost up to and even during World War II: despite the complicating factor of the Soviet Union's bureaucratic socialism and the occupation of advanced European capitalist countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Holland, France and Norway by Nazi Germany and the political dilemmas that entailed: eg, national liberation versus revolutionary defeatism.

That said, the post-1945 world presents a radically different picture to the one described by Lenin in 1916. While it would doubtless be stupid in the extreme to simply dismiss or abandon Lenin's *Imperialism*, quite clearly Marxists are obliged to think anew, to critically build from its essential foundations if they are not to become mired in dogmatism: ie, the very antithesis of Marxism.

3. America organises Europe

World War II was fought out between two great predatory blocs. On the one side, the axis of Germany, Italy and Japan and, on the other, the alliance of Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union. Yet within these bitterly opposed camps, not least that of the ultimate victors, there were underlying rivalries and deep contradictions. Britain, the US and the USSR each wanted to win out over the others. In that sense, the war conducted against the axis powers was simultaneously a hidden conflict between Britain, the US and the USSR; a conflict which continued and intensified after VE and VJ day.

Britain beat Germany. And yet, in 1945, the country lay exhausted and massively in debt to the US. Britain's Yankee child moved to exact its two pounds of flesh - controlled decolonisation and subordination of sterling to the dollar. Leon Trotsky's prediction of an Anglo-American war proved accurate - except that it was carried out using other, peaceful, means. For a few years Britain stuck to the conceit that it could play a global role comparable with both the US and the Soviet Union. Ernest Bevin, Labour foreign minister, spoke regretfully, but rather nonchalantly, of the world being divided into *three* spheres. The US seemed interested in the western hemisphere plus Japan and China, Stalin was consolidating his hold over eastern Europe, and that left "a socialist Britain" with its empire plus what it thought of as leadership over western Europe.

Foreign office mandarins urged the government to build Britain as "*the* great European power".³⁹ Plans for an Anglo-French dominated western Europe had been broached during World War II but did not get very far due to the hostility of Charles de Gaulle and Winston Churchill's indifference. Nevertheless, in 1947 a joint military agreement was signed between Britain and France guaranteeing French security against a resurgent Germany and any threat from the Soviet Union. Bevin wanted to move beyond military cooperation and mooted the idea of a western European customs union headed by Britain.

There were, in 1947, hasty British withdrawals from India, Greece, Turkey and Palestine. However, the empire in Africa, the Middle East and Far East was maintained, and the expectation was that, when feasible, it should once again be considerably expanded. John Kent, an historian of the 'close of empire', writes that the "overriding aim" was the "re-establishment of Britain as a world power equal to and independent of both the US and the Soviet Union". British weakness was viewed by Whitehall as "a temporary rather than a permanent phenomenon".⁴⁰

The US was, though, not content with a merely hemispheric role. In June 1947 the Marshall plan was announced along with the Truman doctrine. The much delayed American century had begun at last. British strategy underwent a swift adjustment. The US now occupied the top position in the imperialist pecking order. With enthusiastic backing from Whitehall the US reached out to assume a hegemonic role globally. Naturally that included domination over western Europe; achieved through Nato and pumping in surplus dollars. Britain was thereby relieved of the costly burden of being the foremost

defender and promoter of western Europe. A welcome relief. Moreover Britain eagerly looked to the benefits that would accrue from playing Greece to the new Rome. Britain put on offer its still potent military and intelligence capacity and historically accumulated experience of running a huge, variegated, empire. Possession of a common language eased and facilitated cooperation, reducing the size of the Atlantic from an ocean to a pond. Winston Churchill and other establishment ideologues subsequently invented and popularised a common history celebrating the “English speaking peoples”.

British interest in a western European union faded. Instead of attempting to maintain itself as an independent, third, superpower, the principal feature of British foreign policy shifted to the ‘special relationship’. Britain was not quite a “warrior satellite of the US” - it remained a sovereign state seemingly free to make war or peace - but it was now politically and economically increasingly serving itself by serving America.⁴¹ Not that the US abandoned the goal of demolishing the sterling area and Britain’s trading bloc - it relentlessly pressed ahead. Washington envisaged integrating the whole of western Europe, Britain included, into a US-dominated world economy. Britain was seen as the “potential leader of a tariff free United States of Europe”.⁴²

European unity was regarded as creating a bulwark against communism externally and internally. Besides an extended Soviet Union there were strong ‘official communist’ parties in Italy and France. And not surprisingly, both dutifully serving Stalin’s foreign policy dictates and pursuing their very own nationalist roads to socialism, ‘official communists’ steadfastly turned their backs on European unity and sought salvation instead within the narrow limits of the nation-state. Philip Bolsover spoke for the lot of them. “This European Union”, he explained - heroically ignoring the lack of democracy and national self-determination in eastern Europe - was not an “international federation of equal peoples”. Rather he claimed it was the merger of US “satellite states” and would soon have Federal Germany as the “general manager and chief executive.” An exaggeration - but obviously with more than a grain of truth. If the sinister designs of the US and the prospect of German revanchism were not bad enough, he indignantly complained that a united Europe was bound to pose a “threat to British exports”.⁴³

Amongst British ruling class circles there were few objections to a European Union as such. However, there was no longer any wish to join. Continued illusions of grandeur and a conviction that national decline would soon be put in reverse meant that Britain would not willingly accept such a *lowly* position in the international pecking order. Bevin protested that Britain was no Luxembourg. After some stubborn digging in of heels and not a little acrimony another *modus vivendi* was agreed which seemed to offer something more fitting. Britain was exempted from US plans for an integrated western Europe. Leadership of the project passed to France. Much reduced though it was, Britain still had a GDP equalling Germany and France combined, an extensive empire and henceforth was allowed to pursue “a semi-independent international role”, albeit as a junior partner of the US.⁴⁴ The Anglophone alliance, together with the post-World War II economic boom, provided British imperialism with a sheltered position, a strategic harbour from where it could safely weather the transition from a formal, and increasingly hollow, empire to the sham equality of the Commonwealth. The “special crisis of Britain”, keenly awaited by ‘official communist’ theorists, failed to materialise.⁴⁵

Ideologically the residues of empire arrogance continued to cloud the brain. Nevertheless, the limits of British power, and its *subordinate* - special - relationship with the US, were dramatically highlighted by the 1956 Suez fiasco. Basically the US refused to sanction the British-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt and attempted overthrow of Gamal Abdul Nasser and his military-nationalist regime. Nasser had the effrontery to nationalise the Suez canal - with compensation. Hysterically, British ministers accused Nasser of having ambitions to establish himself as a new Mussolini ruling a vast Arab empire which would stretch all the way from the Gulf to the Atlantic. The US allowed the pound sterling to slide in the money markets and only agreed to intervene on one condition - an immediate cease-fire and a speedy British-French-Israeli withdrawal. That, and mass popular opposition at home, forced the Eden government into a humiliating climbdown.

In the decade that followed, the conceit of Britain continuing as a major power in its own right evaporated. The much vaunted independent nuclear deterrent could not be maintained - US-supplied Polaris submarines and missiles kept Britain in the nuclear club. With the crumbling of the sterling area the Commonwealth carried on, but now as a sub-branch of US imperialism - decolonisation was more or less complete by the mid-1960s. Western Europe formed itself into the European Economic Community in 1957 under Franco-German leadership without British help or participation. Barred from the Common Market in 1963 by De Gaulle's veto of the Atlantacist Trojan horse, the British ruling class tried to keep a stake in Europe through the much less weighty European Free Trade Area - established in 1960 and uniting Britain and the minor economies of Ireland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Portugal. Neither the Commonwealth nor Efta added up to a viable strategy.

Behind the imperial shrinkage lay Britain's precipitous relative economic decline. Between 1950 and 1970 its share of world industrial exports plummeted from 25% to 10%. Henceforth, Britain could not but look to finding a belated role within Europe. With US encouragement Britain eventually entered the EEC in 1973 under Heath's Tory government (along with its Danish and Irish Efta allies).

Apart from its extreme rightwing around Roy Jenkins, the Labour Party presented itself as highly critical of the terms and conditions. Nonetheless in 1975 - after some minor renegotiations - Harold Wilson's government successfully fought a referendum on the issue of continued membership. The main opposition came from a Tony Benn-Enoch Powell popular front in which the 'official' Communist Party, the *Tribune* left and associated trade union bureaucrats formed the tail (the revolutionary left being the tail of the tail). Labour remained programmatically uneasy with European integration till the leadership of John Smith and then the government of Tony Blair. A parallel shift occurred in the TUC with the appointment of John Monks. Nowadays New Labour and its coterie of middle class career politicians loyally and openly serve the interests of the most competitive, most internationalised, most statist sections of British capital.

The only serious global rival faced by the US was the Soviet Union. Over 1944-45 Stalin's armed forces, at enormous cost, battered their way from the gates of Leningrad, Stalingrad and Moscow all the way to Berlin and Vienna. And there was always the possibility of the Soviet army going further: to Rome, Paris, Brussels and even Madrid.

Like tsar Alexander I in 1814, Stalin found he was able to make claim and bargain over eastern and central Europe. Faced with a choice between the Russian rapist and the American seducer most Europeans would have probably chosen the latter. Nevertheless, Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt agreed that the Soviet Union would be allotted its fair share of the booty. After much haggling an utterly cynical mathematical formulae was agreed. Stalin was given his percentage of ‘influence’: Romania 90%, in Bulgaria and Hungary 80%, Yugoslavia 50% and Greece 10%. Stalin’s external empire was ready for its caesarean birth. There was, of course, a *quid pro quo*.

Stalin abandoned Greek communists to their counterrevolutionary fate. He told communists in France and Italy to hold back from carrying through the partisan-bureaucratic revolution that was perhaps within their grasp: in Italy the PCI loyally toned down its traditional republicanism to the point where general secretary, Palmiro Togliatti, actually supported the temporary continuation of the monarchy, that despite the partisan overthrow of Mussolini fascism.

Despite the fact that, unlike Churchill, the US initially showed no particular interest in who would dominate either Poland or Greece, relations between the Soviet Union and the US had become overtly antagonistic by 1946. Indeed, it has to be said that even before the Japanese surrender, the US was preparing to unleash a new war upon the Soviet Union. Once the new US president, Harry S Truman, received the long-awaited news that the US - and the US alone - had acquired the atomic bomb, his attitude towards Stalin went from tolerant understanding to downright hostility.

Official minutes show that in the summer of 1945 the US Joint Chiefs of Staff adopted a policy of “striking the first blow” in a nuclear war.⁴⁶ The ‘Strategic Vulnerability’ war plan envisaged a surprise, “preventative” strike. According to this plan of attack, high-flying B29 bombers would penetrate deep into Soviet airspace. Twenty cities were to be obliterated. Within an instant millions would perish. Conventional invasion was due to follow by sea and land. Moscow and other key centres would be easily taken. So the Pentagon calculated. Having lost 10% of its population and something like a quarter of its industrial capacity in the titanic battle with Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union was believed to be in no fit position to fight a World War III. Hence after the fall, or removal, of the ‘totalitarian’ regime, the plan was to dismember the Soviet Union and bring about a return of capitalism to the national parts. Truman went into raptures about the atomic bomb being “the greatest thing in history”.⁴⁷ Needless to say, through a combination of external spying and internal efforts, the Soviet Union developed its own atomic bomb and from 1946-47 there ensued a drawn out, albeit profoundly unequal, stalemate between the two superpowers. The cold war.

As a social system the Soviet Union represents an extreme paradox. Through expropriating the landlord and capitalist classes, crucially in 1918, and then from 1928 onwards, with the counterrevolution within the revolution, re-enslaving the peasantry, and politically expropriating the working class and launching the state-sponsored terrorism of the first five-year plan, the Stalin monarchy subordinated profit to state need and hauled the Soviet Union into the position of being a great *military* power. One that withstood the German Wehrmacht and could then, following in the tracks of its T-34 tanks, structurally extend bureaucratic socialism right into middle Europe. Yet in terms

of productivity and technique the Soviet Union remained woefully and surreally backward. Nor, crucially due to innate social laws, could bureaucratic socialism carry through more than one round of productive accumulation. It was not a mode of *extended* reproduction. Higher labour productivity proved to be a chimera. Herein lie the seeds of inevitable demise. The Soviet Union was an unviable, ectopic, social formation, not the future.

Europe was the main theatre of conflict in the cold war between the US and the Soviet Union. A divided Germany symbolised the whole continent. No longer did Europe consist of *the* great powers. The colonial empires were being dismantled and the poles of effective military power shifted east and west. But the cold war involved more than a bipolar stalemate. The cold war froze, or at the very least attenuated, or stopped short, the class struggle.

In the east, anti-capitalism and defending bureaucratic socialism excused the all-pervasive secret police. Workers were prevented from organising as a class and were kept atomised through naked force. Resistance was continuous and pervasive but was individualised and took the form of negative control. When finally freed to ignite into collective expression it was limited to either factoryism or nationalism. Result: the working class continues as an oppressed, slave, class, which is quite incapable of bidding for state power. Ditto in its different way the working class in the west. In no small measure due to the appalling reality of ‘actual living socialism’ the working class was thoroughly disarmed. Nowhere more so than in a booming, prosperous, consumerist USA. And although the social democratic state in western Europe represented a strategic advance, it cut another way too. By negatively anticipating communism it puts off communism. The cold war thereby forms, in its opposed halves, a total counterrevolutionary system. Communism is historically necessary but politically impossible.

As we have said, capitalism is uneven development and from the individual firm to the state internally fractured. Hence, there is a ceaseless conflict between haves and have-nots. That is why established international relations and pecking orders can only but be *temporary arrangements*. Through economic competition, diplomatic pressure and eventually warfare winners become losers and *visa versa*.

The US emerged from the carnage of World War II easily the strongest power. Statisticians reckon that alone it accounted for around 50% of world gross industrial output. A position far exceeding that of Britain in 1815 following the final defeat of Napoleon’s forces at Waterloo. However, Federal Germany and Japan were quick to recover and soon re-established themselves as serious economic players. It should be stressed though, that this fully accorded with US global strategy: it provided a nuclear umbrella and economic stimulation. The US had no wish to acquire an empire along the lines of Britain, France, Spain or Holland. Rather it sought *total* domination: power is exerted through a full spectrum of means: possession of unequalled military might, giant transnational corporations, the dollar and institutionally by way of formal and informal supra-national bodies such as the United Nations, the Trilateral Commission, the IMF, the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (later World Trade Organisation). These institutions are together designed to open up subordinate markets, promote capital accumulation and regulate the cooperation and competition between

legally sovereign states.

Because of the novel nature of post-1945 imperialism, various terms have been coined: “economic empire”, “liberal empire”, “new imperialism”, “imperialism of free trade”, etc. Parallels have also been drawn between the US post-1945 and Victorian Britain’s use of naval and financial power to open up markets outside the immediate ambit of empire. As we have seen above, Martin Thomas and the AWL have even claimed that Kautsky’s speculation - about the *possibility* of “ultra-imperialism”, an end of the arms race and a peaceful deal between “more-or-less” equal big powers - has actually materialised.

Undoubtedly, the old territorial empires were dissolved by national liberation movements from below ... but also by US diplomatic pressure from above. As a result, the world is no longer divided between a handful of rival great powers. Politically independent, often arbitrarily drawn states mushroomed into existence after 1945 and have relentlessly grown in number. There are some 200 as I write these lines. Consequently, the world is increasingly Balkanised. The age of capitalist colonialism described by Kautsky, Hilferding, Lenin, Luxemburg and Bukharin has melted, gone, vanished. But palpably it has been replaced by US domination. The world is not “smooth”. It is highly uneven.

Paradoxically, with US hegemony, as capital once more becomes internationalised, flows outside national borders and leaves behind protected national economic zones, the nation-state and its role is not neutered, or swept away, as assumed by anti-capitalist common sense. On the contrary, it is generalised and more necessary. Having no proper armies or police forces of their own, capitals operating abroad - whether they be transnationals or traders buying and selling currency and shares - rely on the host state and its broad adherence to laws and treaties to ensure protection. Something framed and underpinned by the post-World War II complex of international institutions and guaranteed in the final analysis by global US military power.

This arrangement admirably served the US throughout the duration of the long boom. Outside the closed economies of the Soviet Union, eastern Europe, China, etc, US-based transnationals were free to export themselves to western Europe and aggressively invade overseas markets. However, by the 1970s the US was exhibiting signs of decay and relative decline. Vietnam was a watershed. Despite possessing immense technological superiority, US generals could not overcome the peasant-based guerrilla armies founded by Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap. And after Vietnam came Laos, Cambodia, Angola, Ethiopia, Grenada and Nicaragua. The Soviet sphere of influence seemed destined to expand. The US sphere to contract.

The influential American historian, Paul Kennedy, wrote in the mid-1980s of US industry being outcompeted by Japan and Federal Germany. In one sphere after another - cars, electronics, steel, computers, etc - the US had lost its previous undisputed lead. Moreover the US state was now running on huge budget deficits and as a country had gone from being the world’s biggest creditor to its biggest debtor. Under increasingly squeezed circumstances the link between the dollar and gold could no longer be sustained. As for the burden of surrounding the Soviet Union with a ring of military bases, patrolling the oceans with supercarriers and awesome battle fleets, and keeping ahead in the constantly escalating nuclear arms race, it was all proving too much. In sum

the US was suffering from “imperial overstretch”.⁴⁸

The US was bound to remain a great power for many decades to come, Kennedy argued. It was not set for third rate obscurity like a Spain or a Netherlands. However, by 2020, or some such date, it would merely be a great power amongst other great powers: ie, there was going to be a multipolar world. Japan, the Soviet Union, China and Europe were specifically mentioned. Administrations should therefore concentrate, not on resisting the inevitable, but delaying and managing decline “slowly and smoothly” so as to avoid cataclysmic and socially dislocating crises.⁴⁹

Of course, we now possess that wonderful luxury hindsight. Kennedy recognised that the Soviet Union faced all manner of difficulties. Yet he specifically discounted suggestions that it was “close to collapse”.⁵⁰ Others were equally myopic - not only bourgeois Sovietologists but orthodox Trotskyites too. Suffice to say, the US beat the “evil empire” without firing a single shot. And as a result of the 1989-1991 collapse, the US suddenly found itself the sole superpower. A bipolar world became unipolar. US super-imperialism was given a new lease of life and now exercises a greater influence and potential to dominate than ever before - all previous powers are put into the shade. Neither Alexander the Great, ancient Rome, Genghis Khan, nor late 19th century Britain remotely compare.

The end of the Soviet Union came about primarily due to its mounting complex of internal contradictions. Nevertheless, increased US military competition surely encouraged the Soviet bureaucracy’s decision to collapse the system - a collapse which Gorbachev proved incapable of “slowly and smoothly” managing, not least because of the State Emergency Committee’s *Soviet* coup and Boris Yeltsin’s *Russian* counter-coup (the latter triggered the final national fragmentation of the USSR into its 15 constituent republics). During the presidencies of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, the US set about a new round of the arms race. Cruise missiles, B1 bombers, stealth aircraft, MX missiles, Pershing IIs, Trident submarines and star wars were designed to raise the US from ‘Mutually Assured Destruction’ to a position where it could conceivably fight and win a World War III. The Reagan administration hiked US spending to new absolute heights. Gorbachev turned to disarmament and the irenic politics of surrender. Writing at the time, Jeff McMahan, a British based US academic, perceptively argued that accelerating the arms drive was designed to “cripple the less robust Soviet economy, ultimately bringing about the collapse of the Soviet system from within”.⁵¹

Ratcheting up the cold war ran in parallel to ratcheting up the US domestic rate of exploitation. Profit rates were falling and had to be restored. For the mass of the US population, patriotically accepting the state’s ideology of anti-communism meant accepting stagnant living standards - they have remained immobile for the last 20 years. Amongst the poorest quartile, in particular for blacks and Latinos, living standards have actually been driven *downwards*. Having to do two menial jobs is now the lot of many.

Since the end of World War II the US has been undergoing a more or less continuous relative economic decline, yet it must be emphasised that this was from an *artificial* high. The US accounted for around 40% or 50% of world GDP in 1945 not because of the size of its population or special gifts bestowed by nature. Rather it was because Japan, China and most of Europe had been reduced to rubble. By 1960 the US was down to

around 25% of world GDP. Seen in that light, all that has happened from 1950 onwards was the US gently settling back into a more natural, more proportionate, economic superiority *vis-à-vis* other leading states. But that would be a short-sighted, superficial observation. Between 1945 and the late 1960s the US stimulated world economic activity. Now it holds economic activity back by exporting its decline onto others, something it can achieve not least because of its continued structural domination. Put another way, although the US is in decline, it still occupies pole position over what is a declining capitalism.

US relative decline did not halt with 1991. It continued and perhaps gathered pace. The federal deficit ballooned under George W Bush, the share of world production and trade further shrunk; imports are growing and staggering sums of foreign capital sucked in - effectively tribute exacted from Germany, Japan, China, etc. However, the more the US declines economically the more it turns to extra-economic ways and means (Britain did the same from the 1880s).

As a *military* imperialism the US has never been stronger. Not only does it no longer confront a serious military rival, but the military-strategic architecture built during the cold war has proven sufficiently flexible and robust to organise and control the post-1991 world. Nato was expanded into the east - now it includes former Warsaw Pact states such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The G7 became the G8 through incorporating Russia in 1998 and Gatt has been replaced by the WTO which has a much expanded membership, including China. The US has also pursued a grand plan of completing its “primacy” on the European continent by encouraging the expansion of the EU - the entry of the new European countries, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, etc, was also seen as a way of slowing down, or sabotaging, Franco-German plans for an “ever closer” union.

4. America versus Europe

During the close of George Bush senior's presidency, in 1992, Paul Wolfowitz, who became Bush junior's deputy defence secretary, produced a document, *Defence planning guidance*, which argued for a dramatic hike in arms spending. The US should deter all other countries, he argued, from "even aspiring to a larger regional or global role." China, Russia, Germany, and Japan were to be intimidated from seeking more power. Effectively the US should use its military capability to shape the whole world - being "at once a European power, an Asian power, a Middle Eastern power, and of course a western hemisphere power" and to "act as if instability in important regions of the world ... affect[s] us with almost the same immediacy as if [it] was occurring on our own doorstep".⁵²

After the Wolfowitz draft leaked to the *New York Times*, there was widespread outrage. US diplomats rushed to reassure allies that Wolfowitz's views did not reflect administration foreign policy. No longer. A year after the September 11 2001 terrorist horrors the administration of George Walker Bush officially committed itself to unilateralism with the publication of the *National security strategy* - otherwise known as the Bush doctrine. It claims the right to act "alone" and "pre-emptively" at any time, anywhere, without regard to existing international bodies and treaties. The importance of the UN, Nato, the EU, etc, is therefore correspondingly downgraded. While the administration "would constantly strive to enlist" the "international community" as willing accomplices, failing that they could safely be ignored, bullied or treated with contempt.

Initially, Bush junior's administration was generally seen as essentially a continuation of his father's; some key personnel were the same. True and not true. The Bush doctrine marked the ascendancy of the neoconservatives within the US foreign policy elite; but this reflects a broad trend towards a greater and greater reliance on military, or naked, forms of domination which can be clearly seen in the Clinton administration and even before.

As an aside, this shows that Joseph Schumpeter could not have been more wrong. Against Marxism, he maintained, in his famous apologia *Capitalism, socialism and democracy*, that imperialism and militarism were essentially pre-capitalist or semi-feudal features - alien to the capitalist business ethos. (Schumpeter's book, first published in 1943, as Ernest Mandel points out with damning praise, is "one of the few bourgeois historical studies ... worth mentioning, and vastly superior to Popper's critique of Marx, let alone Hayek's anti-socialist rantings.")⁵³

Schumpeter tried to prove his thesis by claiming that in normal times the US, the quintessential nation of capitalism, possessed no army or military bureaucracy to speak of. Vast 'empty' lands in the west, an unthreatening and sparsely populated northern neighbour and weak client states to the south did indeed allow the US to ply a very different course from European capitalism. Between 1870 and 1913 the US spent on average less than one percent of net national income on its military. Nor did World War

I significantly alter that pattern. After peaking at 13% of GNP in 1919, arms spending fell rapidly to below one percent for most of the 1920s. World War II changed that. Today US spending on armaments outstrips that of Russia, China, Germany, France, Britain and Japan put together.

Unlike the US, western European arms spending tumbled after 1945. From a post-World War II peak of 38% of the government's total budget in 1954, British arms spending fell there after. France followed the same course. In 1968 the figure for both countries was around 20% of total government spending. The Thatcher years in Britain did little more than slow the rate of decrease. By 1986 the military machine accounted for 11.8% of spending. In 1997-98 Gordon Brown allocated less than 7% of his budget to the military. "This is a figure lower than at any time in British history since the War of the Roses".⁵⁴ Comparable figures for other western European countries are even lower. Germany allocated only 3.3% of government spending to defence in 1997. The working class has effectively been rewarded by capital for not making revolution. The welfare state has for the moment replaced the warfare state.

The rise of the neocons is a symptom, or sign, of US decline. The likes of Paul Wolfowitz and vice president Dick Cheney were once rather lonely, isolated figures in the administrations of Ford, Reagan and Bush senior. In George W Bush's administration they and their cabal of co-thinkers form the intellectual core and effectively set its foreign policy agenda. There has even been dinner table talk in Washington of establishing a formal empire and appointing a colonial secretary. Given the ongoing chaos of Iraq, this could be nothing but hubris. Certainly, dreams of fighting two, three, four or five such wars simultaneously now appear as nothing but empty boasting. Nonetheless, the fact of the matter is that it was committed multilateralists such as Colin Powell, secretary of state, who found themselves reduced to an isolated minority. Incidentally, the neocons should be distinguished from the religious right, southern baptists like John Ashcroft, the attorney general, who undoubtedly influenced Bush when it came to his moralistic crusades. The neocons are not interested in attacking abortion rights, banning gay marriage nor promoting school prayers.

It has been suggested by, amongst others, Michael Lind (author of *Made in Texas: George W Bush and the southern takeover of American politics*), that the origins of the neocons lie in the 1930s and 40s and a loose grouping of mainly Jewish-American intellectuals centred on James Burnham, David Horowitz, Irving Kristol, Frank Mayer, Norman Podhoretz and Willi Schlamm. They and their various successors certainly evolved, stage by stage, from Trotskyism to Shachtmanism and then in the 1950s and 60s from Shachtmanism to anti-communist liberalism, and then finally into Republican warmongers and advocates of an American empire. Such accounts have naturally caused much controversy along with morbid accusations of anti-semitism. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that some of those who now call themselves neoconservatives have ideological roots not only in the US establishment but a left which from 1948 onwards sided with Israel and was propelled sharply to the right, not least by Stalinism's increasingly hysterical campaigns against what it cryptically called Zionism. Talk of another threat to Jewish survival was not unfounded.

A number of commentators - both left and right - attribute the wide, not to say

sweeping, strategic vision of the neocons to intellectual groundings in Trotskyism and Shachtmanism. Supposedly, where Trotskyism and Shachtmanism sought to “export revolution” the neocons now want to export the US version of plutocratic democracy. A hopelessly garbled account of two utterly counterposed programmes. Nevertheless the neocons possess definite insights into the present needs and requirements of US imperialism. They neither represent nor understand history, but they are able to both flatter and inform with a *haute* journalism which goes far beyond the pinched banalities trotted out by rightwing think tanks and the ‘quality’ press in Britain.

There are, however, other, surely more direct and relevant, influences on the neocons. We can begin by citing Leo Strauss (1899-1973). Highly learned and charismatic, the Chicago philosophy professor rejected the enlightenment and stood in the sceptical tradition of Socrates - crucially his disdain for the Athenian demos. Revealingly, Strauss also admired Alexis de Tocqueville. A refugee from Germany, he blamed Weimar democracy for the rise of Nazism. Though an atheist, Strauss was militantly Jewish and militantly adopted Americanism. In Chicago Strauss quietly preached an esoteric, but thoroughgoing, elitism to a few chosen students. Practically, he recommended following in the footsteps of Niccolo Machiavelli: force had to be combined with fraud in order to keep the benighted American masses loyal and in line. What Strauss called the ‘good’ American state, was best defended against ‘evil’ by ensuring that the population was pumped up on religion and manipulated by stoking a nationalist fear of the outside enemy. If such an enemy cannot be found to divert and befuddle minds, then, he said, one would have to be invented. And, of course, it was the modern-day Straussites who immediately after September 11 2001 tried to blame Iraq and then concocted Bush’s ‘axis of evil’ nonsense.

Another strong influence on the present generation of neocons is the mathematician and nuclear strategist Albert Wohlstetter (also of Chicago university). He rejected detente as immoral and instead of mutually assured destruction advocated a grand strategy designed to defeat the Soviet Union with a system of “staggered deterrence” and new tactical nuclear weapons and smart bombs. Amongst his proteges were Richard Pearle and Paul Wolfowitz.

The neocons are associated with a wide range of rightwing, mainly Republican, tax-exempt charitable foundations: eg, Hudson Institute, Empower America, Heritage Foundation, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. Their best known vehicle is, though, the Project for the New American Century, established in June 1997 by William Kristol (briefly a Shachtmanite in his youth) who still serves as its chair. Besides Paul Wolfowitz and Dick Cheney, other PNAC luminaries include defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, the president’s younger brother Jeb Bush, former vice president Dan Quayle, the academic Francis Fukuyama and a number of other hawks such as Cheney’s chief of staff, Lewis Libby, Elliot Abrams, Garry Bauer, Robert Kegan, Vin Weber and George Weigel.

PNAC rejects outright the isolationism traditionally associated with the extreme US right and populist diehards like Pat Buchanan. Rudely, they dismiss them as paleoconservatives. Instead, donning tweed jackets and brogues, the neocons idealise the British empire and Winston Churchill - who is reportedly “more popular” amongst

them than Franklin Roosevelt or Woodrow Wilson. The PNAC publicly complains about “a policy drift” under Bill Clinton and a perceived failure to take full advantage of America’s victory in the cold war. Both the “pseudo-sophisticated” realism of Bush senior and Clinton’s policy of “multilateralism” are condemned. The post-cold war cuts in nuclear missiles, army divisions and fleets should be ended, they argue, and US “leadership” asserted globally.

The project’s mission statement makes neocon intentions quite clear. The US should “build upon the achievements of past decades” and “shape a new century” in a way that would be “favourable to American principles and interests”. Basically that required steeply increased arms spending and what was called the promotion of “political and economic freedom” around the world. In other words penetration by US transnational capital backed by unbeatable armed might.

PNAC’s “blueprint” for the Bush doctrine was *Rebuilding America’s defences*, written back in September 2000, ie, before Bush’s inauguration. Drawn up for Dick Cheney, it shows beyond doubt that plans existed even then for a “pre-emptive” attack on Iraq. Suffice to say, the overall aim was a global ‘Pax Americana’. Yet though the goal might be perpetual peace the means to achieve that end is perpetual war.

Rebuilding America’s defences provides a frightening glimpse of the thinking that exists in the highest echelons of the US. Arms spending should, says the PNAC, be increased so that the US can “fight and decisively win multiple, simultaneous major theatre wars”. Hence though PNAC luminaries welcomed Bush’s post September 2001 hike in military expenditure, Kristol *et al* continue to urge *sustained* increases. Their target is upping arms spending to between 3.8% to 4% of GDP. In monetary terms that means something like \$70 or \$100 billion extra annually.

There are also calls for the creation of “US space forces”, to dominate near space. In January 2004 Bush duly announced his mission Mars - a thinly veiled attempt to develop and deploy nuclear-powered space battle stations and establish an unassailable US technological lead. PNAC also demanded efforts to ensure the total control of cyberspace to prevent “enemies” using the internet against the US. PNAC hints that the US should consider developing yet more fiendish weapons of mass destruction, including biological weapons. *Rebuilding America’s defences* says: “New methods of attack - electronic, ‘non-lethal’, biological - will be more widely available ... combat likely will take place in new dimensions, in space, cyberspace, and perhaps the world of microbes ... advanced forms of biological warfare that can ‘target’ specific genotypes may transform biological warfare from the realm of terror to a politically useful tool.”

An invasion of Iraq was always on the cards - it was already outlined by the PNAC. All that was needed was a credible excuse. Bin Laden and 9/11 served brilliantly. The ‘war on terrorism’ could be presented as a noble cause that would - because of the shadowy nature of the jihadist’s cells and their smoke and mirrors state sponsors - have to last into perpetuity. In order to legitimise the ousting of Saddam Hussein, the war on terrorism was almost imperceptibly metamorphosed first into a war against WMDs and, with the failure to discover them, a war on tyranny.

PNAC candidly admits that “for decades” the US has “sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security.” Hence the “unresolved conflict with Iraq

provided the immediate justification” not only for “a substantial American force presence in the Gulf” but for the wider goal of “maintaining global US pre-eminence”. Put another way, the “grand strategy” was designed to preclude “the rise of a great power rival” and “shaping the international security order in line with American principles and interests.” This must, argues PNAC “be advanced as far into the future as possible.” The military are the “cavalry” of this “new American frontier”.

So Iraq must be seen in this context. Obviously the invasion had nothing to do with links between Saddam Hussein’s regime and bin Laden or any threat posed by Iraqi’s non-existent WMDs. Lies, nothing more than useful lies. Nor is the conquest of Iraq and the attempt to impose a pro-US government directly connected with, and subordinate to, an unquenchable US thirst for oil. A crude leftwing obsession and over-simplification (some have even stupidly argued that the Bush administration represented the seizure of state power by the oilocracy - in reality he and most of his cabinet consist of professional politicians who between elected posts temporarily dipped into corporate managerial jobs - including oil). So-called ‘rogue’ states such as Iraq, North Korea, Iran and Cuba constitute no “real or present danger” to the US. Economically and militarily, they are pathetically weak but have managed by one means or another to gain varying degrees of political independence from imperialism. They are certainly not semi-colonies in any meaningful sense of the term. Pitted against the US military machine in a conventional war though, their defeat is inevitable. Exactly. ‘Rogue’ states therefore make convenient targets and justify war and the creation of a “worldwide command-and-control system.” Either they can be peacefully bludgeoned into submission or subjected to “pre-emptive” regime change with minimal losses of US service men and women.

In the case of Iraq, the privatisation of the petrochemical industry and the return of US transnational companies is an additional bonus. Garry Schmidt of the PNAC has openly expressed a desire to reduce “Saudi leverage” over the US. The house of Saud is considered inherently unstable and an untrustworthy ally. Oil is, though, by no means the prime target. Behind the US drive to tame the rogue states lie three main factors: one, promoting arms spending and the industrial-military complex in the US; two, inventing a replacement for anti-communism in order to discipline the US working class; three, fear of long term military-economic competition from potential rivals - China, France, Germany, India, Russia and Japan - and the drive to maintain undisputed US global domination for at least the next 50 years.

The Bush administration does not have immediate concerns about Russia, India or Japan. China is another matter. Speaking on behalf of PNAC in February 2002, Kristol said he considers “the only unresolved great power issue is that of China.” China has 1.2 billion people and has notched up rapid development. Since 1978 GDP has quadrupled with real growth averaging around 9% per year. Today, its GDP stands at more than \$1.1 trillion. China’s foreign trade grew at about 13% per year over the 1978-1995 period, making it the world’s fourth-largest trading nation. In the 1990s, China became the world’s second-largest destination for foreign direct investment.

Its military spending is also growing by double-digits. China is “acquiring unprecedented new capabilities”, notes Richard N Haass, director of the Bush

administration's policy planning staff. The Pentagon in its turn provides what is meant to be damning evidence of everything from sophisticated "theatre-based weapons management" to "state-of-the-art intercept direction finding and jamming". Using technology imported from the US, Europe and even Taiwan, the Chinese military has also developed "new concept" laser and radio frequency weapons as well as satellite guidance systems.

If anything like these current trends continue, many predict that China is due to become the world's second-largest economy by 2030 and its military power and political reach will increase commensurately. This prospect worries US hawks. China threatens US interests not only in Taiwan but "the entire Asia-Pacific region from Japan to the South China Sea." In this context PNAC depicts China as ripe for "regime change". The US should encourage the development of what is called "civil society" and further capitalist relations. This is to be achieved by a twin track strategy of trade and economic integration on the one side and military containment on the other. PNAC says that "it is time to increase the presence of American forces in Southeast Asia". This, it says, may lead to "American and allied power providing the spur to the process of democratisation in China."

By "democratisation" they mean, of course, pluralism. Real democratisation can only come about from below and today China's ruling elite faces a huge working class – and discontent and militant outbreaks grow day-by-day. A fourth, this time a proletarian, Chinese revolution is not hard to predict within the next twenty to thirty years.

What of Europe? Relations are both of partnership and potential rivalry. The EU is viewed by the US as essentially an extension, or arm, of Nato. Cooperation, however, takes place against the backdrop of increasing tensions as EU interests and cherished aims come into conflict with US unilateralism, bullying and imperial arrogance. To be more specific - trade barriers against steel imports, the imposition of chronic US indebtedness upon the rest of the world, shunning the Kyoto accord, abrogation of the ABM treaty, National Missile Defence and now Iraq.

The EU was thrown into turmoil by Gulf War II. 'Old Europe' objected to US warmongering, unilateralism and contempt for the UN - dismissed as an antiquated hindrance to "American political leadership" by PNAC. Britain and Italy have for their part lined up behind the US, along with new Europe. The US revelled in the divisions and has sought to add fuel to the fire by demonising France in particular. Donald Rumsfeld seethed and spluttered about Gallic "treachery".

More still unites the ruling classes of the US and EU than divides. Nevertheless, it is correct to say that the EU-US relationship is evolving into an *antagonistic* partnership. In his book *Of paradise and power: America versus Europe in the new world order*, PNAC deputy chair Robert Kegan claims that there has been a strategic decoupling. He describes Europe as being committed to a "Kantian" world view of "self contained law and rules of transnational negotiation and cooperation". A pacific outlook, based not on learning the "awful" lessons of World War I and II, as claimed. Rather it is Europe's profound military weakness. Hence, the EU is incapable of "counterbalancing" the US in military terms. It therefore turns to empty legalistic rhetoric in order to substitute for the loss of real power.

In contrast, the Americans are guided by a much more sober and realistic “Hobbesian” outlook. The world is an unforgiving and hostile place and power always decides. As a Behemoth “with a conscience” the US is romantically likened to Gary Cooper’s character in ‘High Noon’, marshal Will Kane. The world’s townfolk have no stomach for standing up to the bad guys when they come looking for revenge. But they are wrong and cowardly. The brave US gets brick-bats, but it is right.

Over the recent period there have been a number of attempts to smooth out relations between the US and the EU. They mainly serve, however, to underline US determination to guard its national turf. Eg, through the transatlantic business dialogue the US proposed that EU trade regulations be subject to bilateral agreement. In other words, the US wants to water down or veto EU legislation. The message is clear. US transnationals should be allowed to operate without let or hindrance. At the same time the Bush administration arbitrarily breaks World Trade Organisation statutes.

The EU has not limited itself to outraged protests and appeals to the WTO. There is plenty of evidence of EU-US divergence. The EU helps finance the Palestinian Authority; the US backs Ariel Sharon’s ‘war on terrorism’ and refusal to deal with Yasser Arafat. The EU seeks constructive engagement with the Iranian regime; Bush branded it part of the “axis of evil”. Another important area of rivalry is space. Against fierce US lobbying, the March 2002 Barcelona summit agreed to launch the \$2 billion Galileo satellite positioning system, which - unlike the US system - is dedicated to civilian use. Galileo allows users - aircraft, ships, hill walkers, etc - to locate themselves within the metre without any danger that signals may be suspended because of overriding military requirements. Before the project was given the go-ahead, Jacques Chirac gravely warned that US domination of space “would inevitably lead to our countries becoming first scientific and technological vassals, then industrial and economic vassals of the US”.⁵⁵

The EU bureaucracy has high ambitions. Ambitions that can be gleaned from the EU’s constitutional convention and its chair, the former centre-right president of France, Giscard d’Estaing. Opening the convention on February 28 2002, Giscard d’Estaing peered magisterially towards the far horizon: “If we succeed,” he said, “in 25 or 50 years time Europe will have changed its role in the world. It will be respected and listened to, not only as the economic power that it already is, but as a political power that will speak as an equal with the biggest existing and future powers on the planet”.⁵⁶

Introduction of the euro and its growing role as an international reserve currency alongside the dollar is part of an agenda whereby the EU can *politically* challenge US hegemony. That is no fantasy. As alluded to by Giscard d’Estaing, in economic terms there exists already a rough economic parity. Will Hutton, an enthusiast for EU liberal imperialism, writes that because of the euro, for the first time since World War II, the US “confronts an economic grouping approaching it in size and cohesion”.⁵⁷ He rather chillingly describes the euro as a “weapon with which to fight back” against the US.⁵⁸

The EU accounts for a higher proportion of world trade than the US. EU exports amount to \$850 billion annually compared with \$780 billion. Furthermore, the US runs a huge trade deficit. That has been financed by foreign purchases of US government bonds and stocks and shares. EU capital has snapped up a whole tranche of US-based corporations. Given all this and Enron, WorldCom and Xerox, EU capitalism may one

day soon become the new model others are supposed to copy. Certainly, under the terms of the Bretton Woods agreement, the EU stands well positioned to ease itself into pole position over institutions such as the IMF. The US has 17.78% of the vote. But if the EU decided to vote as a bloc it has around 28% of the vote (some 23% for the eurozone plus Britain's 4.98%).

Moreover, though the US has on average a much higher per capita income, productivity (ie, intensity of exploitation) in the *most advanced* countries of the EU is greater. Output per hour in France, Holland, Belgium and the former West Germany has risen over the last 20 years so that they have now overtaken the US. Ireland, Austria and Denmark are not far behind. Higher US incomes rely mainly on the fact that people work more hours and have fewer holidays. Americans work on average 50 hours a week. Emasculated and politically compromised trade unions help ensure that. Furthermore, it should be stressed that average income does not mean the income of the average person - the supposedly *classless* US society is actually the most *unequal* amongst the advanced countries with the bottom 20% officially living in poverty, while the richest one percent hold 38% of personal wealth.

The euro puts the EU in a strong position. Twelve countries now use the same currency for daily purposes - the biggest conversion in history. Transaction costs of converting one currency into another are now abolished within the eurozone. Capital thereby gains an instant profits boost. And it is not hard to predict that Denmark will reconsider and Britain, Sweden and new Europe will all find themselves in the eurozone in the medium term.

Economically, the US and the EU are broadly comparable. However, when it comes to the realm of arms, the situation is radically different. Annually, the US spends around \$350 billion, compared to the EU's \$180 billion. Crude budget figures do not tell even half the story. Not that the US is omnipotent. But, whichever way you look at it, the US is in a position to forcibly impose its will in virtually every area where it believes it has vital interests at stake: Afghanistan, Iraq, the Taiwan Straits, Panama, Colombia (the EU even had to rely on US air power in order to deal with Slobodan Milosevic's tinpot Serbia). Let us highlight US superiority under six headings:

Firstly, the US has a single army, navy, air force, etc, and a straight line of command from the White House downwards. The EU's Rapid Reaction Force is in comparative terms a puny affair. More to the point, there are 25 separate armed forces in the EU, each with their own priorities and political masters.

Secondly, the Americans have the great advantage of being able to easily speak one to another. In the EU there is a cacophony of different languages.

Thirdly, the bulk of the EU's strategic capabilities are integrated into Nato structures, which are still dominated by US military top brass and civilian bureaucrats.

Fourthly, the fragmentation of the EU's armed forces results in numerous different sources of supply. Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain each have their own defence industries. Often they produce systems which are incompatible - spare parts, refuelling facilities, weaponry, communications, etc.

Fifthly, the US is a global military power. It alone can exercise "full spectrum dominance". The EU's armed forces are essentially regional. The US has a network of

geo-stationary satellites, bases in many different countries - Cuba's Guantanamo Bay, Greenland, Okinawa - and awesome fleets of aircraft carriers, submarines and cruise missile ships routinely patrolling the Pacific, the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, etc.

Sixthly, the US has a huge nuclear arsenal. In the EU, only France and Britain are nuclear powers - and in terms of warheads, sophistication, accuracy and reach, hardly compare. Then there is son of Star Wars, mission Mars, space force and the chemical and biological capability, which the US possesses in abundance.

Whether or not EU competition with the US takes on a military dimension is an open question. But to dismiss the possibility is to turn one's back on the blood-drenched lessons of the 20th century. Capitalism engenders competition by its very nature. One capitalist is pitted against another in the market. Equally, one coalition of capitalist states eventually resorts to military means when peaceful methods fail. Hence the mounting EU challenge to US supremacy carries profound dangers. Trade war, proxy war, cold war, accidental war, world war.

Ideological lines of combat are being drawn. Liberals and social democrats claim that Europe has attained a higher, more humane, civilisation. That the US represents a brutal, not a caring capitalism. The welfare state, public spending on health and transport are cited as evidence. So is the paucity of social provision in the US and the widening gulf separating the mega-rich and the poor. Ironically, the Tory right thereby can become 'enemies within'. Their unrestrained admiration of 1990s US "turbo-capitalism" is branded anti-European. Tony Blair and New Labour too must shed pernicious illusions in the US model and wholeheartedly embrace the up-and-coming European project.

Will Hutton champions EU imperialist unity on the basis of caricaturing both the US and the EU. Europe's capitalism is based on "reciprocal obligations" which go back to "early christianity". The US, on the other hand, "is in thrall to an extreme brand of conservatism" and prone to use the "iron fist".⁵⁹ Not to be outdone, the Republican right in the US depicts Europe as woefully undynamic, inflexible, statist and easily swayed by demagogic racists.

Capitalism does not come in ready-made models to be swapped one for the other according to intellectual whim or fashion. Eg, the Japanese, Singaporean, Swedish or American. Social relations are a totality, are in constant flux and assume a particular equilibrium due to the momentary balance of contending and opposite interests. In the last analysis dead labour and living labour.

On neither side of the Atlantic can capital's paid persuaders admit the existence of another nation within each nation - powerful trade unions, traditions of solidarity, Marxism and the impulse of working class self-liberation. Nor the vital role of the class struggle in constantly shaping and reshaping constitutional politics. Europe's post-World War II social democratic settlement owes everything to the clash of class against class. Nothing to early christianity and the establishment's supposedly benign desire to see fair play and equality of opportunity. More useful lies. The ruling class in Europe put off socialism by organising far-reaching concessions. The same goes for the US. Roosevelt's New Deal originated in the economics of the working class, not the high bourgeoisie. And class struggle alone can reverse the rightwing tide that has polluted

and suffocated US society since the days of Joseph McCarthy and Dwight Eisenhower. Capital has no interest other than the continuous expansion of exchange value. Hope for humanity uniquely lies with the working class and its ability and willingness to struggle for a better world.

Siding with either the EU or the US is no option. Both are reactionary. Nevertheless the tried and tested way to fight for socialism is in unity; beginning in our case on the continental-wide terrain represented by the EU. Communists and revolutionary socialists legitimately also base their strategic evaluations on the probability that the working class in the EU will move on to the offensive quicker than workers in the US. To borrow a phrase - there is combined but uneven development in the class struggle too. That is why it is correct to call for “workers’ and socialist unity across Europe”. Instead of the Europe of the bosses and unelected bureaucrats,, call for a “democratic and federal Europe based on solidarity and cooperation”.⁶⁰ Such an internationalist perspective directly points to the necessity of organising across the EU - today the European Social Forum, tomorrow the Communist Party of the EU.

The idea that our side would be collectively strengthened if one or two of our national battalions aligned themselves with the ultra-right and forced upon the government of a Britain, a Denmark or a Spain withdrawal from the EU displays as much a lack of internationalism as it does a lack of seriousness. Socialism in a breakaway country is the socialism of fools. Any reformist or revolutionary government that might arise amidst the national chaos would suffer instant retaliation. Fascist counterrevolution or, that failing, isolation through asphyxiating trade embargoes and perhaps a EU-US military ‘peacemaking’ force.

Our strategy is resolutely opposed to any further ‘Balkanisation’ of Europe. The Socialist Workers Party’s Chris Bambery, the Scottish Socialist Party’s Alan McCombes and Alan Thornett of the International Socialist Group might irresponsibly campaign for, or indifferently excuse such a scenario. But, whether it comes from right or left, fragmentation can do the working class nothing but harm. Ethnic cleansing, cleaving apart historically established organisations, national hatreds are not the stuff that socialism is made of.

Communists strive for working class unity within, but against, the existing EU. Winning the battle for democracy in the EU and securing working class rule in this small onomically powerful corner of the world would give us a revolutionary fortress from where the counterrevolutionary threat could be confidently rebutted. The revolutionary conflagration would then rapidly spread. That is the best service we in the EU can perform for our comrades in the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australia.

5. Class politics, the euro and money

Obviously the euro is central to the whole European Union project and that therefore necessitates clarity from Marxists. Towards that end we shall discuss money and naturally as a student of Marxism I shall begin with Karl Marx himself.

Following in the trail-blazing footsteps of the classical bourgeois economists - William Petty, Adam Smith and David Ricardo - Marx defined money not only as a universal equivalent but also an embodiment, or store, of social wealth - or value (value being the average socially necessary labour expended on the production of a commodity).

Money, Marx went on to explain, emerged *historically* along with the development of commodity production - and its contradictions. By degree, as a greater and greater quantity and range of products flow onto the market, barter and other primitive forms of exchange become impractical and come to stand as barriers to expansion. The spontaneous answer emerged with the gradual putting aside of a certain part of society's wealth to serve as money. Iron bars, rare shells and common sea salt were all tried. But whatever the particular form, commodities bifurcate into commodities and money.

The typical form that money took from ancient times onwards was, though, some kind of precious metal - silver, and after that, in early modern times, gold. Such metals have the advantage of being uniform in quality and easily divisible. A definite weight of metal can function as a standard monetary unit. As the reader will know today's pound and penny derive from the Roman pound and denier. The pound was till recently a legal measure of weight in the United Kingdom. And much to my surprise the penny still serves as a measure of weight in the "grading of nails".⁶¹

The disadvantage of non-precious metals serving as money is easily illustrated. In Sweden - which for its own parochial reasons adopted a copper standard in 1625 - the huge weight of coins meant that lumbering wagons pulled by teams of heavy horses had to be employed in order to facilitate everyday transactions. Petty thieves did not dream of stealing large denomination coins - they could weigh as much as forty-three pounds a piece (the price of copper being one-hundredth that of silver). Silver and gold, in contrast, were far more practical. Small amounts, especially of gold, were easy to stow away and move from place to place.

Gold coins were used by the Romans. Gold florins circulated in mercantile Florence and gold sequins or ducats in Venice. Louis IX introduced gold coinage for the feudal kingdom of France in 1255. This metal suited larger transactions. But in most cases for day-to-day purposes silver was the dominant form of money. Hence throughout the medieval and early modern period a bimetal system operated. Payments could be made in silver or gold. However, maintaining a bimetallic system proved difficult. "Gold and silver were in competition".⁶² The value of silver and gold tended to alter. Gold would increase in value compared to silver or vice versa. There could be wild oscillations and 'bad' money driving out 'good'.

Britain accidentally adopted a *de facto* gold standard in 1717, when Isaac Newton, master of the mint, set “too low a gold price for silver”, inadvertently causing all but “very worn and clipped silver coins to disappear from circulation”.⁶³ Token coins were introduced and used for small transactions but under an overall gold standard. When, in the early 19th century, new minting techniques allowed the easy detection of forgeries, silver was formally abolished as legal tender.

Gold was both sufficiently common and sufficiently rare. Found in unevenly dotted outcrops throughout the world, it does, however, require a large expenditure of labour to produce even a few grains compared with almost any other commodity. New mining or smelting techniques which made extraction easier, or the discovery of cheaper sources (the conquest of the Inca empire by Spain in the 16th century, the discovery of the Californian goldfields in 1848-49, Australia’s in 1851 and those in South Africa at the end of the 19th century, etc) might lower the value of gold. But only marginally.

Money is therefore a uniform measurement based on a precious metal that in its developed form can be almost infinitely multiplied or divided. Through being given a money name - a price - one commodity is compared with another no matter how different its qualitative properties and the nature of the labour needed for its production. Beer, boots and books are that way equated and easily exchanged - not as of old directly, ie, ten pints of beer for one pair of boots, but indirectly - by a second order mediation - for money.

By functioning as a universal means of exchange the concrete labour expended in mining gold was translated into an ideal expression of the social labour expended on the production of the whole universe of other commodities. That ideal relationship between the price name of a commodity and its exchange value is, of course, only confirmed by a sale - the exchange of the commodity in return for money.

Equivalent exchange, it must be stressed, is only a tendency, albeit a dominant one. There are innumerable market variations. Once price exists there exists also the possibility of a difference between the value of a commodity and the money for which it changes hands. Shortage or glut, fad or fashion ensure that one commodity exchanges for a money equivalent above its value. Another will exchange below its value. Price then, is the money name for the *imaginary* value of a commodity. As Marx said, the exchange-ratio may express “either the real magnitude of that commodity’s value or the quantity of gold deviating from that value, for which according to circumstances, it may be parted with”.⁶⁴

Self evidently this possibility of a deviation between value and money is characteristic of the price-form itself, as is the tagging of a price label to less tangible non-values (ie, the sale the Blair government’s ‘impartiality and honesty’ in return for generous donations to Labour Party funds).

Nevertheless over time and countless billions of sales and purchases, value and price are drawn together. And in the normal course of events after a sale money continues to circulate and is again used to purchase some other commodity. It is not extinguished as in barter. Money is constantly being converted into commodities but always remains money. Money does not vanish. It merely changes hands.

Commodity production takes its highest form under bourgeois or capitalist society.

Money ceases to be simply a means of exchange, a means of obtaining one use-value for another, ie beer for books. Instead money is the prime object of production. Production comes to be for its own sake. Beer, boots or books are not produced for any intrinsic value they may have. They are produced solely with the aim of realising a profit. After the point of sale there must be more money than was initially advanced to purchase raw materials, etc, at the beginning of the cycle.

Marx brilliantly showed that this trick of apparently conjuring something out of nothing could be performed throughout capitalist society not by anything as prosaic as cheating; that must by definition leave losers along with winners and thereby in the end cancel itself out. On the contrary, the uncanny ability of capitalism to get money to beget money lay in *social relations* - namely the fact that labour power had been turned into a commodity. Where once that relationship existed only on the margins of society, buying and selling labour power is generalised by capitalist society (to begin with as the unintended by-product of the separation of the mass of labourers from the land and the emergence of a middling class of tenant farmers in England).

The worker sells their ability to labour, the commodity labour power, to the capitalist for a wage, which is on average equal to its value (what is required for the physical and cultural reproduction of labour power). However unlike electricity, steel, leather, computer chips, paper, etc, labour power is a special commodity, a commodity that is inextricably bound up with the worker, who is a living, sentient and creative human being. That is why labour power is uniquely capable of producing a surplus. In expenditure labour power renews and actually develops itself.

Capitalist society is, of course, riven with innate contradictions. The very existence of money qualitatively separates - not just in time and space - the acts of production and consumption. With money comes the possibility of crisis born out of a delay, or even an inability to make a sale, and thus the realisation of surplus value (profit, interest or rent). But what was potential becomes under capitalism a social determinate, with huge consequences, through the generalisation of commodity production and the transition of money into capital (self-expanding money or self-expanding value).

Whether the crisis manifests itself primarily in a disproportion between supply and demand and general overproduction, the underconsumption of the masses or a crash in profit rates, the basic underlying contradiction, from which there can be no escape, is capital itself and subordinating the production of things to the production of value. Production is no longer directly related to human need.

By making money (capital) the overriding objective of production, the exchange relation inadvertently comes to stand over the capitalist individually and collectively as a *compulsive* external power which forces them forward. Without a sale, in the final analysis to another capitalist, disaster threatens. Expansion is a necessity. Costs must therefore be reduced below those of competitors. Rest is an impossibility. Overaccumulation inevitable.

What was inchoate or stopped short in ancient Athens, medieval Nuremberg or Renaissance Venice - mercantile cities all - has under capitalism metamorphosed into a global system which must constantly, compulsively search out new sources of surplus-value. Moreover, its permanent technological revolution goes hand in hand with periodic

bouts of destruction, the overthrow of old social bargains and the clash of class against class.

With Britain's emergence as the world's dominant industrial, commercial and financial power in the 19th century its gold-based money became an increasingly attractive and logical alternative to silver-based money. Countries seeking trade with the United Kingdom or wanting to borrow from it adopted the British system. Portugal did so in 1854. Sweden, Argentina and Holland followed suit. And with the shock waves produced by the Franco-Prussian war and the spread of industrial capitalism the days of the bimetallic system were numbered. Germany led the way in 1871 and abandoned silver for gold; by the 1880s virtually the entire civilised world had gone over to gold. Silver remained the standard only in China and a few Central American countries. Out of these spontaneous decisions the international gold standard was born.

Withdrawal of silver as legal tender triggered a whole period of deflation. Price levels plummeted by 18% in Britain between 1873 and 1879 and by an additional 19% by 1886 "as less money chased more goods".⁶⁵ One price was that of wages. Social unrest inevitably resulted; especially in the United States, where small farmers found themselves trapped between fixed mortgage payments and falling prices for their products. Nevertheless attempts to reintroduce bimetallicism failed. Germany, but above all Britain, blocked moves to restore the monetary role of silver.

So the rise and triumph of capitalism was inextricably associated with gold and the functioning of gold as *world* money; though only four countries - Britain, Germany, France and the US - maintained what might be called a *pure* gold standard whereby internal money circulation took place in the form of gold, or paper notes which could be exchanged for gold. Weaker powers - Japan and Russia - made do with token coinage and paper money - a percentage of which was backed up by gold or overseas bonds that were convertible for gold.

The gold standard imposed upon capitalism a self-discipline welcomed and promoted by its grim ideologues. Not only were relations between various countries regulated - debtors and creditors - but so too were relations between classes. Obviously value is closely linked with the degree to which the working class is exploited and therefore the degree to which the working class can force concessions. By lessening absolute exploitation (the length of the working day) or relative exploitation (the intensity of labour) the working class erodes value and thus the value of money in one country compared to another. Central banks could though hit back by increasing interest rates, lowering demand and thus triggering rises in unemployment levels; working class bargaining power is in that way diminished and the value of money restored. The hand of the market might have been invisible but the working class was pummelled with fists of gold.

As Barry Eichengreen remarks, the ability of the central banks in the 19th century to guard the national currency in such a brutal manner was in part ensured by the fact that the working class "were ill positioned to make their objections felt".⁶⁶ In most countries the franchise was tightly limited by property and sex (workers and women were excluded). Workers could not punish the government in the ballot box. Moreover working class organisations were in most cases weak or in their infancy.

The fact that in the US those below had achieved something resembling universal

male suffrage put pressure on those above and meant that its commitment to the gold standard was equivocal until the dawn of the 20th century. Populist and Democrat politicians urged electors not to sacrifice American farmers and workers on a “cross of gold”.⁶⁷ The demand was for unlimited silver coinage in order to depreciate the value of gold and make money cheaper. The election of the Democrat S Grover Cleveland as president in 1892 prompted a flight of capital to Europe. However, here was a poacher turned gamekeeper - he quickly changed sides. The dollar’s link with gold was, though, finally saved by discoveries of new reserves in South Africa, Alaska and Australia. The development of the cyanide process of extracting gold from impure ore also stimulated the growth of money supply. The association of the gold standard with deflation and the class struggle temporarily receded. The US safely passed the Gold Standard Act in 1900.

World War I showed beyond doubt that capitalism as a system had entered its declining phase. What this means for Marxists, of course, is not a drop in annual GNP statistics or the even the stagnation of the productive forces. Both might happen. On the other hand a declining capitalism can push forward economic growth and even rapidly accelerate technical progress. No, what Marxists are referring to is essential laws. They remain but are overlaid again and again by new determinates. The epoch is, Lenin rightly concluded in his *Imperialism*, one of “transition from the capitalist system to a higher socio-economic order”.⁶⁸ For example, in the transitional epoch we have seen free competition and money give way to monopoly, militarism and organisation. In a perverted, negative, way capitalism anticipates the invading socialist future. An immensely complex and constantly overlapping and shifting process which necessitates continuous, careful and profound study ... and constantly updated theoretical categories. Not a retreat into the philosophical fog, an oxymoronic ‘market socialism’ or the mere repetition of old, trite, formulas. In other words, the epoch calls for a complex and contemporary Marxism.

The total war of 1914-18 necessitated massive state intervention and the subordination of short term profits to the requirements of the military machine. International capital is conscripted by the iron hand of the strong state. Prices and returns were fixed by bureaucratic decree. Gold reserves were freely used to import strategically vital supplies. Exports of gold by individuals prohibited. The link between gold and the currency had to be abandoned. Hard money became soft money or even token money. As each power turned to autarchy, exchange rates between currencies floated. Money and value cleaved apart. Corruption, need and state power filled the vacuum.

The most hard pressed countries paid soldiers and purchased supplies at home in *fiat* money (token money unbacked by gold). In conditions of endemic shortage inflation pushed prices skyward. At the same time class peace at home was bought in return for allowing the growth of trade unions and giving basic living standard guarantees. Rationing and subsidies kept people alive. As the war dragged on and bled Europe white, social antagonisms inexorably reached the point where they could no longer be contained, however.

The 1917 October Revolution in Russia proved that there was an alternative to capitalism and the murderous barbarism it had unleashed upon the world’s population. The party of Lenin, Trotsky and Zinoviev inspired millions of class conscious workers.

Bolshevism entered the collective consciousness of a global generation. Within the space of five years virtually every country had planted within it an influential Communist Party. In Italy, France and Germany the mass parties of social democracy cleaved down the middle. Communism was an idea and an ubiquitous material presence. Capitalism, for its part, emerged from World War I riven with yet more contradictions and face-to-face with its nemesis.

Britain's industrial and banking supremacy collapsed with World War I and would never return. Foreign assets had to be sold off to pay for the carnage. Sterling could no longer operate as the hub of the world economy. Germany was reduced from a creditor to a chronic debtor country. The Austro-Hungarian empire disintegrated. France, which had been the world's lender, lost a staggering fortune with the overthrow of tsarism and the removal of Russia from the capitalist global system. Only the US managed to hang on to the gold standard.

But the ruling classes still possessed immense collective reserves of strength. The Soviet Union was, through joint efforts, successfully isolated and began its terrible metamorphosis into a counterrevolution within the revolution. Revolution elsewhere was desperately crushed or expensively diverted. Nevertheless, despite these stupendous feats, capitalism could only save itself by further organising its own decay. Everywhere the working class was objectively on the rise. Controlling labour could no longer be achieved primarily through the market and the threat of unemployment.

Overcoming inflation and re-establishing the gold standard was premised upon curbing, or compromising with, working class aspirations. Among the first countries to put their currency back onto the gold standard were those that had experienced revolutionary upheavals and hyperinflation: Germany, Austria, Hungary and Poland. The monetary economy had all but disappeared and without money capitalist accumulation becomes to all intents and purposes untenable. John Maynard Keynes, a partisan of the bourgeois status quo, writes, in 1919, that as inflation proceeds "all permanent relations between debtors and creditors, which form the ultimate foundation of capitalism, become so utterly disordered as to be almost meaningless ... There is no subtler, no surer means of overturning the existing basis of society".⁶⁹

The debts of the state and industrial capitalists are wiped out. But so too are middle class savings and workers' wages. Muscular organisation can buttress the working class. Fear of "communist insurrection" represented a "credible threat" in Italy, France and Germany.⁷⁰ But normal social relations are turned up-side-down by the erosion of money. We all know the apocryphal story from Germany. A thief snatches a poor woman's shopping bag; but contemptuously discards the wads of paper notes she was carrying. The bag has far more value. Between 1914 and 1923 wholesale prices in Germany rose by a factor of around "1.3 trillion".⁷¹

Austria stabilised its exchange rate in 1923, Germany and Poland in 1924 and Hungary in 1925. Currencies were backed by gold, albeit often in the form of loans obtained from the US or the League of Nations. However, in most cases re-establishing money required both counterrevolution and an internal agent. Social democracy willingly acted on behalf of capital but could do so only in return for expensive concessions. The Weimar Republic and an SDP government; Joseph Pilsudski, sweeping land reform and generous civil

and political liberties; Austria's 'third way' and Red Vienna ... fascism began to appeal to nervous bourgeois minds.

Other countries which had experienced moderate inflation stabilised their currencies by re-establishing the link with gold too. Belgium in 1925, France in 1926, Italy in 1927. Showing the ravages of even 'moderate' inflation the French franc was stabilised at a level which meant it purchased only one-fifth as many dollars as before World War I. Britain could, though, just about restore pre-war parity with the dollar. It returned to the gold standard in 1925 and with the core countries back on the gold standard most others quickly followed suit - Canada, Australia, South Africa, Switzerland, Chile, Finland, etc. As the gold standard was restored, inflation gave way to deflation. Soft money hardened.

But the return to the old could not hold. Money and value could not be united. With the economic crash of 1929 the gold standard system disintegrated, beginning at the periphery. Class struggle - no matter how deflected - determined. Argentina and Uruguay limited gold convertibility. Canada put a hold on gold exports, while Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela and New Zealand ensured that gold was difficult to obtain, thereby allowing their currencies to slip below their official exchange rates. In 1931 Austria and Germany suffered banking crises as they drained gold. Exchange controls were introduced and convertibility suspended. The crunch came when Britain was forced off the gold standard in September 1931. After that body blow the whole system crumpled. Many key countries still relied on trade with Britain; pegging their currencies with the pound and keeping reserves in sterling was perfectly logical.

The world economy shattered into three zones. The gold standard countries around the US; the sterling area; and the countries of *Mitteleuropa*, led by Germany, where exchange controls prevailed. Such a tripolar arrangement could not hold either. Depreciation of sterling and exchange controls in Germany eroded the position of the gold standard countries. In the end even the prodigious US was compelled to suspend convertibility and devalue.

The political cost in terms of industrial shutdowns, agricultural ruination and mass unemployment radicalised US society. In the 1932 presidential election Franklin Roosevelt defeated Herbert Hoover, who fought the election around his commitment to the gold standard. Taking the dollar off the gold standard was one of Roosevelt's first acts. His famous promise was the New Deal. State power was subsequently used to push down the value of the dollar and thus raise commodity prices and once again generate a white-hot productive activity. Roosevelt also presided over an associated programme of massive public works. Other countries still on the gold standard had no choice. The competitive position of Czechoslovakia, Belgium, France, Holland and Switzerland deteriorated rapidly and the link with gold had to be ended.

The gold standard gave way to the violent oscillations and chaos of floating exchange rates. World trade plummeted and was soon overshadowed in political and economic importance by empire, or zonal, self-sufficiency and import controls. Redivisionism once again comes to the fore. Greedy eyes surveyed China, Stalin's Russia and the sprawling Dutch, Belgium and French empires. Britain's global empire and the associated sterling zone was, though, the main prize.

During World War II, the US extracted from a financial-naval-colonial Britain a binding

pledge to restore sterling's convertibility and the principle of downgrading import controls in return for aid. Britain was in effect bankrupt. The Churchill-Attlee government therefore agreed to peg sterling to the dollar that would in turn be based on a percentage relationship with gold. The dollar was to act as the world currency and other currencies would orbit around it like trapped planets within strictly defined banded limits. This system of half-soft, half-hard money became the basis for the Bretton Woods system which in the 1950s and 60s coincided with - though did not cause - an unprecedented economic boom and the social democratic state.

In Europe, capitalism had in the 1930s and 40s become associated in the popular mind with fascism or collaboration with fascism. That and the boom simultaneously necessitated and allowed yet more systemic concessions - higher wages, full employment, expanded higher education, health services, social housing, nationalisation. Socialism was once again put off by capitalism anticipating the future - yes, albeit in a negative fashion.

Bretton Woods operated as a kind of pyramid selling system. While the world economy expanded and the dollar remained strong, greater and greater heights of accumulated profits could be sustained. Confidence generated confidence. But once growth started to falter and become problematic, the dollar weakened and cracks began to show and grow. Throughout the 1960s the dollar came under increasing tectonic pressure. The Kennedy and Johnson administrations enacted all manner of stopgap measures, but to little or no effect.

The US war in Vietnam proved enormously costly and added to inflationary pressures. By 1971 the dollar fell precipitately. Dollars exchanged for marks. The Federal German government permitted its currency to float sharply upwards. Official holders of the dollar sought to convert them into gold - the agreed price was \$35 an ounce. However, to fend off an impending crash the Nixon administration unilaterally suspended the commitment to provide gold on demand. Instead of consulting with the International Monetary Fund the US delivered a *fait accompli*.

Frantic negotiations followed and an agreement was eventually hammered out which allowed banded currency fluctuation to increase from 1% to 2.25%. US import surcharges were abolished. But non-convertibility of the dollar for gold remained. Within two years any pretence of maintaining the Bretton Woods system vanished, as the dollar suffered devaluation time and again.

The demise of the Bretton Woods system ushered in another uncertain period of floating exchange rates. In general the dollar fell relative to other major currencies. However, the dollar remained the world currency. Elsewhere a strong working class, buoyed up by its post-World War II gains and the gap separating soft money from value, was checked by national governments allowing inflation to rip. Subsequently, forcing down inflation became an economic orthodoxy behind which a full scale attack on the working class took place - from wage controls to high interest rates and allowing unemployment to reach 1930s levels.

The birth of the euro ought to be understood against this backdrop. What was the European Economic Community - and is now the European Union - had been originally envisaged by its founders as a way to ensure that Germany and France never went to

war again. However a whole network of trade and monetary agreements gradually evolved, going far beyond the initial coal and steel community.

Success of the overall project saw an ever increasing share of economic activity accounted for by inter-EEC trade. Exchange rate stability between these partners was therefore highly desirable, facilitating as it did further openness and integration. After a customs union the next logical step was a monetary union, “especially for those who saw the EEC as a nascent political entity”.⁷²

Political appetite combined with worries over the dollar’s instability and the possible consequences for Europe, led establishment circles towards economic and monetary union (EMU). In 1970, to a high powered study group under Luxembourg’s prime minister, Pierre Werner. His team outlined a plan whereby monetary union would be achieved by 1980. Exchange rates would be steadily drawn together and the fluctuation of one currency against another progressively narrowed. Werner recommended coordinating national economies and policies, especially fiscal measures, but offered no vision of a single currency or a European Central Bank. There would be a system of central national banks. The Werner report and its recommendations were endorsed.

Enlargement delayed monetary integration but did nothing to put off the desire for ever closer union. However attempts at convergence through currency pegging proved fraught with difficulties. Dollar devaluation and the shock of successive oil price hikes had an asymmetrical effect on national economies. The so-called ‘snake’ system effectively collapsed in the mid-1970s. The mark emerged as “Europe’s reference currency” and its “anti-inflationary anchor”.⁷³ That by definition implied an accountability deficit. The Bundesbank would rule Europe.

France sought to politically rectify that situation in 1979 through the creation of the European Monetary System. Under EMS measures were put in place to support weaker currencies and associated provisions agreed for unlimited short term credit facilities. Germany’s social democratic chancellor Helmut Schmidt saw the creation of EMS as a step towards a federal Europe and cementing the Franco-German alliance.

Consequently, eight of the nine EC countries participated in the ERM (exchange rate mechanism) from the outset (the exception being Britain). There were frequent realignments between the national currencies, but within set banded limits - shades of Bretton Woods. Economic stagnation and the need to compete with the US and Japan lent additional impetus to the integrationist process, however. The decision was made to go for the creation of a single European market in commodities and labour power. That went hand-in-hand with ending those opportunities which still existed for national governments manipulating exchange rates for narrow protectionist purposes. Both of those goals unmistakably pointed towards a single currency. And this goal found explicit expression in the 1989 Delors report - and after that the Maastricht Treaty adopted in December 1991 and formally signed by the heads of government on February 7 1992.

Maastricht outlined a three stage transition to a single currency. Stage one, which commenced in 1990, was to eliminate capital controls (though Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain were permitted to miss the deadline). Central banks were to be given greater autonomy and this, so it was hoped, would remove them from political pressure exerted from below. Fines were to be imposed on any country running an ‘excessive’ budget

deficit. Concessions to the working class are in that way supposedly curbed or limited. Stage two, set to begin in 1994, was to usher in the coordination of economic policies and the transition towards a single currency. Stage three would irrevocably fix exchange rates and the European Central Bank would then introduce the single currency.

As we know, ERM went into crisis almost from the off. The collapse of bureaucratic socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991 derailed initial plans. Federal Germany, in particular, having incorporated the German Democratic Republic and overseen a one-to-one monetary union, was forced to shoulder a huge budget deficit. The dollar's further decline increased the competitive pressure on Europe and a damaging economic downturn ensued. Denmark then rejected the Maastricht treaty with the June 2 1992 referendum. The peseta, escudo, lira and franc wobbled. The pound dived. Britain and Italy were forced to exit from the system.

Yet despite all the many cast iron predictions from rightwing Tory pundits and 'Marxist' sages alike to the effect that the single currency was doomed to fail, facts speak for themselves. Peter Taaffe and Lynn Walsh of the Socialist Party in England and Wales staked their rather threadbare reputations on their prediction that "it is almost certain that the euro will break down before completion of the final stage, the replacement of domestic currencies by euro notes and coins planned for 2002".⁷⁴ But they were not alone - John Rees and Martin Thomas made similar predictions. Evidently the EU is more than a loose collection of nation-states doomed to fly apart with the first tremors of an economic downturn. After three years of being a virtual currency - a financial instrument used by banks and money traders but not ordinary citizens - the euro became, on December 31 2001, a tangible reality. The euro now exists as coins and notes. Stage three happened.

The launch of the euro in 12 of what were then the EU's 15 countries was greeted with well-orchestrated Europhile enthusiasm on the one hand and on the other an undisguised hostility. Europhiles marvelled at the unexpected trouble free launch and celebrated the fact that from now on commodities had the same money names in Paris and Lisbon, Milan and Helsinki, Dublin and Dresden. There were also claims that the launch of the euro was much more than a dry financial matter, it had tremendous political significance. With euros in people's pockets and purses European integration had crossed a Rubicon after which there could be no turning back.

Europhobes - especially in Britain - objected to the euro on exactly those grounds. A common currency inevitably paved the way to further European integration and an eventual United States of Europe. Simultaneously the prospects of the euro were not rated particularly high. *The Sun* devoted a front page to what it called: "The dawn of a new error" and heaved a sigh of relief that "Britain is not part of it".⁷⁵ The rightwing TV historian Niall Ferguson also took a dim view of the euro. According to him no monetary union can long endure when labour mobility is "so hampered by cultural barriers" and when the "fiscal politics of its member states are so out of kilter".⁷⁶ Unchastened by the failure of their own prediction that the euro would never happen, Ted Grant and Alan Woods - leaders of the Labour entryist group Socialist Appeal - argued that the euro had "been launched at the worst possible moment - on the eve of a world economic downturn" and this "will aggravate the crisis and increase the contradictions between

the states of the EU".⁷⁷ Indeed there were many voices from both the right and left which confidently predicted that the separate interests of the 12 eurozone states would soon wreck the euro - as had been the case with some other experiments in monetary union.

For Niall Ferguson the best analogy with the euro is the monetary union of multiple states or loose confederations. He cites the West African Economic and Monetary Union (which was pegged to the French franc and later the euro) and the Austro-Hungarian empire after 1867. However, as he points out, the African example is little more than a French satellite, while Austria-Hungary constituted a single state, having a common army. Of course, the chaos caused by defeat in World War I and the accompanying hyperinflation tore the dual monarchy apart. Monetary union disintegrated. Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and then Austria broke away and issued their own currency notes. Another example - which is apparently even more "illuminating" - is the Latin Monetary Union of 1865-1927 between France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, the Papal state and Greece. The intention was to expand the union and in due course create a political European Union along with a parliament. As things turned out Italian and Papal fiscal laxity undermined the union. Louis Bonaparte's fall after the defeat of French armies at the hands of Prussia in 1870 put pay to any prospect of new members. France could no longer aspire to dominate the continent. The only thing that stopped the LMU collapsing was the excessive costs associated with dissolution. Its death in 1927 was a long delayed formality. Obviously the US, German and Italian monetary unions, which went hand-in-hand with political unification, are either ignored or explained away.

Through the three years of its virtual existence the euro fell sharply against the dollar and other main currencies and looked far from being the strong currency which had been promised - down 23% against the dollar, 11% against the yen and 12% against the pound. German commentators worried that they had exchanged the deutschmark for a pig in a poke. And far from boosting productivity in the eurozone, closing the gap with the US and stimulating economic growth, the fact of the matter is that Germany has found itself mired in recession. A dismal picture repeated throughout the eurozone. Growth has faltered, unemployment risen, along with gouging competition and takeover bids. And as each country has moved to protect its own corporations various measures designed to open up or liberalise EU trade have been delayed, watered down or effectively sabotaged. Fritz Bolkestein, EU single market commissioner, complained about French and German "knee jerk protectionism".⁷⁸ As for the Stability and Growth Pact, paradoxically it was the Germans - who had been the most insistent on punishingly high interest rates and strict spending limits - who in November 2003 took the lead in pushing through a "suspension" of the rule limiting government deficits to 3% of GDP.

Nevertheless the euro has in many respects proven to be a success. In the year after February 2002 the dollar declined against the euro by 45%. Indeed the euro has by most measures become a strong currency. There has also been a rapid convergence of eurozone bond yields and therefore a lowering of perceived risk, so that now eurozone government bonds are widely regarded "as being (almost) as good as the old German bonds".⁷⁹ According to the Bank of International Settlement bond issues are increasingly denominated in euros; from 29% of the total in pre-euro currencies in 1999 to 51%. In fact the euro is being seen more and more as an alternative to the dollar as a world currency.

That brings with it substantial revenue from seigniorage (central banks are in effect paid by the banking system in exchange for cash). Those outside the eurozone who trade in the euro pay a surcharge for the privilege. Money can be printed in this case without triggering inflation. Some economists estimate that by 2010 Britain alone would gain £4 billion a year - if, of course, it entered the eurozone.⁸⁰

Everything comes back to labour. The EU has to compete with the US and Japan. They might have smaller markets and populations (in the case of Japan much smaller). Nevertheless due to a historically constituted nationality and an economically centralised territory, they are blessed with a unitary working class and a unitary ruling class. Like every other commodity, labour power can easily move, and therefore be bought and sold, anywhere in the US or Japan. Here Europe is disadvantaged. Europe is not only divided by history but language. Commodities can freely circulate, but not the special commodity labour power. Language is a material barrier except for those with higher, specialist education (worst paid labour being a partial exception).

To successfully compete the EU cannot magic into existence a unitary working class. Unemployed Portuguese workers are unlikely to migrate en masse to south-east England. But the EU's component states can oversee the levelling down of wage rates and social provisions. In that way Germany can be made more like Spain. The code words for this are legion: 'labour flexibility', 'over-regulation', 'rigid labour markets'.⁸¹ In plain language, what this means is lower pay increases, enhancing the ability of employers to sack workers, weakened trade unions and removal of unemployment, pension and other entitlements.

Europe consists of unequal state units. Through the euro, the ECB, etc, the whole thing is meant to be given coherence and brought together by fixing interest rates that supposedly suit the whole eurozone. However, while national interests can under certain circumstances coincide or converge, they can also diverge. Power decides. If the leading eurozone states - in particular Germany and France - face militant or intransigent working classes, it is the ECB which is meant to impose discipline by keeping interest rates high or pushing them up further. The small, weaker, countries, thereby also suffer. Either way attacks on the working class no longer appear to stem solely from employers and national governments. Instead there is the ECB - an external and 'depoliticised' Brussels-based institution - which was, of course, deliberately distanced by its architects to be as far away from popular democratic control as possible. The ECB "cannot be given instructions by any democratic body" ... it is in that sense treated "as if it were a court of law".⁸² Populism - right and left - responds to this arrangement by demanding a restoration of national sovereignty, or a withdrawal from the EU. By contrast communists envisage nationalising all banks in the EU and putting the ECB under democratic control.

Let us finally note here that its promoters originally claimed that with the introduction of the euro, interest rates would be appreciably lower than they would otherwise be and that this would help sustain growth and accumulation. Weaker economies would supposedly that way be buffered, there would no longer be an outside anchor currency - the deutschmark or the dollar - which countries are obliged to follow no matter what their circumstances. Shadowing high German interest rates certainly brought Britain, Italy and France to grief in 1992. But as it has turned out Germany - the EU's core economy - is now the sick man of Europe precisely because workers there have so far refused to

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become more like the Spanish or Portuguese. The ECB has imposed *high* interest rates - by statute it is obliged to combat inflation, which in Germany is either virtually non-existent or there is deflation. Anyway the result is that unemployment in Germany has soared to some four million and meanwhile the whole eurozone suffers.

6. National socialism

At the time of writing the situation in Britain with the euro is as follows: a post-Iraq war Tony Blair has beaten a hurried retreat, fearful that a resentful population would inflict a crushing referendum defeat on him and his government. Indirect social vengeance. The massive treasury report on the euro - compiled under Gordon Brown by two teams of elite officials and published in June 2003 - therefore lies buried and forgotten. The Britain in Europe campaign is on hold. Nevertheless if, or when, the Labour government's popularity sufficiently recovers, there is no doubt that Blair still has the *long* term aim of getting Britain into the eurozone. Within the Labour cabinet differences over the euro primarily concern timing, not principle.

Meanwhile Michael Howard and his shadow cabinet have been banging the British chauvinist drum for all they are worth: and behind them there is lined up a ready, if motley, army. The Tories would certainly welcome the rightwing press - not least Rupert Murdoch and his media empire - and the bevy of national centred capitalist companies such as Dixons and Weatherspoons and those represented by the Federation of Small Businesses and the Institute of Directors. Nor would Howard turn away support from trade unions such as Unison which are alarmed by possible government spending cuts and loss of jobs and bargaining power that might come with the (now diluted) stability and growth pact. There are, however, less welcome camp followers. Eg, marooned 'official communists', the Greens, George Galloway and, of course, the United Kingdom Independence Party. What draws them all together is the conviction that the nation-state is the subject of history. In the context of the euro and a confederal European Union, both empire nostalgia and the national socialist utopia appear as exactly what they are - ridiculous.

When it comes to Europe the new Labour left, Galloway and the 'official' communists are often virtually indistinguishable in their rhetoric from Ukip. Together they want to save the pound sterling and restore British sovereignty. The CPB's Robert Griffiths wrote against EU enlargement because the "main political price" will be the "extinction of democratic national sovereignty" as more decisions are taken by majority voting.⁸³ Naturally with the likes of himself, Galloway, Benn, Scargill, etc, British "democratic national sovereignty" is defended in the name of socialism.⁸⁴ Yet the best these 'liberators' could achieve by way of anti-capitalism is a reformist version of Stalinism, Kim Il Sungism or Pol Potism, ie a British autarchy, and that imposed onto a capitalistically advanced country fully integrated into the world economy. The result would be chaos as established markets and trading links close off and capital takes flight. Perhaps the representatives of domestic reaction would plot counterrevolution or request armed EU intervention in order to restore order. Either way the restoration of "democratic national sovereignty" would not advance civilisation an inch but throw it back miles.

Supposedly a more sophisticated 'Marxist' position has been taken up by the so-

called Fourth International and its International Socialist Group section in Britain. Unfortunately, true to form, it actually does little more than dully echo the national socialists. Programmatically the ISG has had a long, and, it has to be admitted, an often less than honourable record, of what Marxists call *substitutionism*. In the absence of a revolutionary mass working class movement, alternative, albeit, so it was said, blunt, agents of social progress have been invented, accepted on face value and promoted with various degrees of enthusiasm. Stalin and the 1928 counterrevolutionary first five year plan, the national communism of Josip Broz Tito, Mao Zedong and his cultural revolution, feminism, black separatism, the guerrillaism of Fidel Castro, the Labour Party and Bennism, pan-Arabism, Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, Scottish left nationalism and even the butcher Ayatollah Khomeini. One after the other they have been pictured in the vanguard of a world revolution which inexorably drove forward despite the absence of active working class leadership.

Using exactly the same method of substitution, the ISG comrades are committed to voting 'no' in any referendum the government may eventually grant on the euro. It should be emphasised, that this is an integral part of a wider "socialist" campaign of forcing a British withdrawal from the EU. Writing in the pamphlet *Even more unemployment: the case against Emu* Alan Thornett calls for a "progressive 'no' campaign". He does not want to share a platform with Ukip or the BNP. However, when stripped of the pious internationalist declarations, the ISG has in actual fact the same immediate *nationalist* programme as the reformist left (which logically leads it organisationally into the most revolting company). "We are for the dissolution of the EU or Britain's withdrawal from it. It is a capitalist club designed to organise the restructuring and concentration of capital to the advantage of the bosses. But our aim is not a capitalist Britain outside the capitalist EU. We want a socialist Britain in a socialist Europe",⁸⁵

In the ISG's distorted perspectives a capitalist Britain which has recovered its mythic national sovereignty over fiscal, legal and political matters by severing its organic links with Europe - in no small part through the working class joining or backing the Europhobic camp - would be a major contribution to a future United Socialist States of Europe. Xenophobic and narrow-minded British nationalism is thereby painted red and made over in the imagination into a vehicle for progress. Not surprisingly the history of the ISG and its various manifestations has been one of heady infatuation followed by the pangs of bitter disappointment.

Our tactics must, on the contrary, be based the programme and historical understanding provided by authentic Marxism. Before developing that line of thought, I feel obliged to make clear that the fundamental reason behind the ISG's substitutionist method is to be found in the objective conditions themselves. Not ill-will or malign intention. In my experience ISGers are essentially honest and often selfless revolutionaries.

Independent working class politics have for an entire historical period been crushed underneath a reactionary ice sheet of global proportions. For over 70 years we have endured what is in political terms an age of glaciation. Thaws and warmer spells have proved tragically fleeting. The ideologically confident and steadily rising international movement of the working class which characterised the last quarter of the 19th century

and the first quarter of the 20th century has been reduced in terms of activity, self-awareness and confidence, under the accumulated weight of defeat, to a slave class whose politics rarely even hint of going beyond the corralled, defensive, limits of trade unionism.

The confinement of the world revolution to the impoverished territory of the former tsarist empire, fascist terrorism in the 1920s, 30s and 40s, the counterrevolution within the revolution in the USSR, the venal international role of social democracy and 'official communism' combined together in a barbarism which cost the lives of countless millions. As a result, capitalism, after what Trotsky had understandably predicted would be a terminally fatal World War II, successfully put off communism - albeit once again by partially negating itself and adopting yet more transitional features and thereby greatly intensifying its own internal contradictions. Nevertheless, independent working class politics were thrown back seemingly to the point of departure. Marxism - which as a practical theory is inseparable from the fortunes of the real working class movement - was in many ways kept alive as an ongoing idea by confessional sects. However these sects were unable to connect with, ie, change, the world in any meaningful sense given the comatose state of the working class. The working class possessed strong trade unions but no vision beyond a capitalism with a human face.

Under these extremely adverse circumstances many sought solace and some self-confirmation in the world by substituting other classes and strata, other movements, for the working class as the agent of social progress and human liberation. Hence what might have justified the existence of such sects - their defence of Marxism in a period where capitalism as a form is on the retreat but where the working class is not yet able to bring about communism - becomes altogether more problematic. What was perhaps part of the solution mutates into another part of the problem.

Evidently the fault line over Europe does not run along the standard right-left axis. Instead, an inner-looking nationalism couples the far right with the reformist left against the outer-looking British nationalism of the centre. Each camp is a kind of popular front - with in each case the working class confined to the subordinate pole. Marxists seek to change this dire situation by fighting for working class political independence. In this context Alan Thornett's call for a "full" discussion on the subject of Europe is, of course, welcome.⁸⁶ Indeed this book is intended to take forward those discussions on the left.

Proletarian socialism - the first stage or phase of communism - is international in content but begins on the terrain of the *given* state formation. Comrade Thornett is therefore quite right when he says "to weaken the struggle at the national level is to weaken it at the international level".⁸⁷

However the historic task of the revolutionary working class is neither to safeguard the existing national state nor to create smaller ones by fragmenting them. Unfortunately comrade Thornett cannot bring himself to grasp that basic proposition.

Nor can John Rees's SWP. After a long silence the SWP eventually came out with a line virtually indistinguishable from the ISG's. "There are very good reasons for workers to be wholly against the European project" declared Charlie Kimber.⁸⁸ Naturally, as with the ISG, the SWP's campaign will be leftwing - they will not be prepared to share platforms with just "anyone against Europe". The xenophobic right are excluded, a prohibition that

will presumably not include the feudal socialists in the Muslim Association of Britain, nor Robert Griffith's national socialist CPB, nor bourgeois socialists such as Yvonne Ridley.

In passing let us note that the SWP, in the form of its antecedent the International Socialists, once possessed a rather more principled and farsighted attitude towards European unity. In 1961, at the time of Britain's initial application to join, the first editorial of its journal to tackle the issue was actually rather favourable to the development. It lambasted the left nationalism of *Tribune* and noted that European integration was inevitable - like the growth of monopolies - and could serve to intensify the class struggle. If Europeanisation "hastens this process as it surely will, cartel Europe will have laid, as surely, the basis for a United States of Socialist Europe. For revolutionary socialists in Britain there is no greater aim. We should be the first to clasp hands across *La Manche*". The editorial admitted that initially entry might have adverse effects, however that was "tantamount to protesting that a cosh has studs". The editorial concluded: "For us the move to Europe extends the scope of the class struggle in which we are directly involved; it worsens its conditions for the present. But it makes ultimate victory more secure".⁸⁹

There was internal opposition, including from leading members. This found expression in the pages of *International Socialism* and there followed a series of polemical exchanges.⁹⁰ In the course of these debates the 'pro' joining line expressed in editorials became successively modified to the point of equivocation. An easy target for Peter Sedgewick. He mocked the suggestion that being "For or against the EEC" was a non-issue for the working class. Europe should not be analysed as a "straight economic question"; that was to fall into crude mechanical determinism. Rather Europe was a mixed "politico-strategico-economic" development. Instead of "sitting on the fence", he urged the IS to assume a clear position and oppose British entry.⁹¹

When Britain's second application came in 1967 John Palmer - later of *The Guardian*, the EU and *Red Pepper* - defended the majority's line: "There can be no positive class or socialist response based upon defence of 'our' state, 'our' right to plan 'our' sovereignty. They are not ours." This brought forth a 'Note of dissent' from Sedgewick: "Opposition to the common market ... remains the only possible stance for socialists." Entering cartel Europe was guaranteed to "strengthen the ruling class" - as if the class struggle did not decide. Nor was there any risk in being allied with left nationalists - IS had allied with them in the Campaign against Nuclear Disarmament and against the government's incomes policy.⁹²

Only in 1971, ie, coinciding with Britain's third and successful application, did IS finally complete its U-turn. The minority had become a majority. Fronted by Chris Harman the new majority demanded opposition to Ted Heath's European strategy. Feeding the "flames of opposition" would, firstly, help undermine the hated Tory government. Secondly, workers would be worse off in Europe, and, thirdly, European integration has no progressive content because "the preconditions for socialism exist" already and capitalism therefore no longer has any progressive content. A bald assessment which would nowadays presumably include technological developments such as broadband and third generation mobile phones and social gains such as equal pay for women and the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

Comrade Harman promised that the "ideological illusions" of chauvinism and national

sovereignty would be steadfastly fought. “But”, he added, “if we are unable to get a majority for our clear and consistent positions, we will have to vote against the government’s common market strategy in the only way possible - by voting with the CP and the Labour left while making our reservations known”.⁹³

An instant rejoinder came from Ian Burchall in the same issue of the organisation’s journal - yes, public disagreement on important current issues was still considered legitimate and not a violation of so-called ‘democratic centralism’. He had been responsible for the most serious attempt to grapple with Europe written by an IS member - ‘The common market and the working class’.⁹⁴ Now he rounded upon comrade Harman’s slippery appeal not to stand aloof from working class opposition to European integration. “It is equally true”, argued Burchall, “that, for example, hostility to foreign workers in Britain derives from class consciousness - concerns to defend employment and conditions ... We have to *relate* to these forms of distorted class consciousness; we certainly do not *adapt* to them”. Comrade Burchall appealed instead to the goal of a United Socialist States of Europe. This slogan may not get much of a hearing in the great ‘yes’ or ‘no’ debate within the bourgeois establishment, he modestly admitted. None the less, it will still be “meaningful when the rest of the opposition has rolled up its union jacks and admitted defeat”.⁹⁵

As a general principle Marxists seek, and tirelessly work for, the merger of all nations and all nationalities throughout the world. It is in this light that Marxists view, assess and champion the right of nations to self-determination. It is not a knee-jerk demand for the break-up of states as left nationalists, their ISG co-thinkers and SWP apologists suggest. Essentially it is a negative demand; a demand for a democratic solution raised against the concrete reality of inequality or oppression - national tensions and resentments, let it be noted, tend to create or sustain conditions which obstruct the voluntary union of peoples that we favour.

Hence, faced with the evolving reality of the EU, the role of Marxists is surely not to vainly attempt to roll history backwards. On the contrary our task must be to exploit the wide conditions created by the EU in order to organise the working class across the whole continent into a single, hegemonic, force. True, as comrade Thornett states, the EU is a reactionary, anti-working class project. That is ABC. What else can one expect of a confederation of 25 reactionary, anti-working class capitalist states? But Marxists must go beyond ABCs. Capitalism is not reactionary through and through. Certainly reaching the XYZs we clearly see that is *relatively* reactionary. It is reactionary compared to socialism. That is true of imperialism and monopoly capitalism in general. However, there remain forward moving, progressive, features. How could it be otherwise? Leave aside technology, this is the epoch of transition between capitalism and socialism. The working class is a constant presence. Lacking communist consciousness it might be, but even in its present state the working class exudes a latent power. It produces on a mass scale and consumes in the same manner too. However refracted, film, television, music, radio, the press, are all affected. So too are political institutions. There is a real degree, or element, of democracy that has been won and can surely be dramatically increased. In this light, to conclude that it is in the historic interests of the working class to force an exit and weaken the EU by tearing away one or another national part is either

short-sighted and stupid or, what amounts to the same thing, to adapt to the crudest national chauvinism.

The shallowness of comrade Thornett's kind of thinking stands exposed if we apply his method to Britain itself. It is surely a "capitalist club" designed to "organise the restructuring and concentration of capital to the advantage of the bosses". Should we call for the "dissolution" of Britain, as do Welsh and Scottish nationalists, or even a working class "withdrawal from it"? Frankly the suggestion is risible. That, of course, does not stop comrade Thornett from cheering on the Scottish Socialist Party and promoting the 'break-up' of Britain. Nor does it stop the SWP from taking an agnostic attitude towards the historic unity of the British people - Chris Bambery irresponsibly wrote that the SWP is for the destruction of the British state by "any means" if the United Kingdom "imploded through nationalist tensions we would not shed one tear".⁹⁶

Interestingly, before the October Revolution of 1917 Lenin and the Bolsheviks confronted similar manifestations of national socialism. The tsarist empire was a vast prison house of many nations. Nevertheless, while fighting for the right of these nations to self-determination up to and including secession, the overriding, central, strategy was cementing the highest and most extensive workers' unity throughout the tsarist empire - in order to *overthrow* the tsarist empire. Unwittingly comrade Thornett has placed himself completely at odds with the Bolshevik tradition. He has embraced nationalism.

In defence of the past, in particular in defence of the welfare state and the post-World War II social democratic gains, comrade Thornett presents a programme that would at best weaken the EU. It would, however, also weaken the European working class movement if its strongest detachments forced upon their capitalists a policy of withdrawal - a road that would lead not to a national socialist paradise but the hell of increased national exploitation and perhaps eventually counterrevolution.

A Britain that had nationalistically followed Howard, that had humiliated New Labour in a Euro referendum, would certainly be ripe for a Tory general election victory ... and, who knows, perhaps even a "fundamental renegotiation of Britain's terms of EU membership" and all its "entanglements of common foreign and security policy" and a reassertion of British sovereignty. Put in Thatcherite speak a withdrawal from the EU and an application for North American Free Trade Association membership as proposed by the baroness in her half-crazed valedictory.⁹⁷

The CPGB advocates consistent democracy under capitalism. Hypothetically, that could culminate in winning a majority of MEPs - 51% for the Communist Party of the European Union would be enough - and then, as we would have already pledged in our election manifesto, proceeding to unilaterally, ie, illegally, declaring the EU parliament a provisional government for the whole of Europe. We would immediately abolish the council of ministers and the unelected commissioners, and call upon a surely already militant working class, which has deep organisation and a correspondingly high level of consciousness, to prepare itself for decisive battle. Without such a perspective, talk of socialism in Britain, and a socialist Europe is just that - talk.

A democratic EU won by a powerful, working class-led, movement from below creates the best conditions for an uninterrupted transition to the United Socialist States of Europe

advocated by Comintern in 1923. The realisation of that aim is well within the capabilities of a combative European working class. In Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Portugal and Greece our forces have a proven ability and willingness to fight. Britain, Scandinavia and new Europe represent a huge reserve that can come into play at any moment. What is needed, as a precondition for any decisive success, is working class unity crucially a single revolutionary party.

The purpose of communist politics is not to fondly look back upon an anti-working class past, albeit one inextricably bound up with working class advances (the welfare state). Communism is overdue. Our programme therefore emphasises the positive advantages of the workers being organised into the largest, most centralised states. All the better to overthrow them and begin the advance to communism. The working class can only suffer yet more defeats if it confines itself to the politics of defence. Communists therefore raise the perspective of the politics of the offensive.

So communists favour a united Europe under the conditions of capitalism - even if, because of capitalist contradictions and national rivalries, that unity remains loose and half-finished. As long as it is arrived at democratically it is a process that should be grasped as an historic opportunity. Naturally being in favour of European unity does not commit us to support every measure that comes from the EU bureaucracy and the bourgeois integrationists. Far from it. Our approach is to promote working class political independence on each and every issue and question.

We can, I believe, at this point in the argument draw a useful lesson from the writings of Marx and Engels, in the context of the division between the free traders and protectionists of their days.

In June 1847 Engels wrote in the *Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung* that whichever system “held sway” the “worker will receive no bigger wage for his labour than will suffice for his scantiest maintenance” nevertheless, in spite of the subjective intentions of the bourgeoisie, a free trade tended to clear the way for the “last decisive battle” between the “propertied and the propertyless, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat”.⁹⁸

Marx reasoned along exactly the same lines in the second half of September 1847 and for flavour added a touch of irony: “If they [the protectionists] speak consciously about the working class, then they summarise their philanthropy in the following words: It is better to be exploited by one’s fellow-countrymen than by foreigners.

“I do not think the working class will for ever be satisfied with this solution, which, it must be confessed, is indeed very patriotic, but nonetheless a little too ascetic and spiritual for people whose only occupation consists in the production of riches, of material wealth.

“But the protectionists will say: ‘So when all is said and done we at least preserve the present state of society. Good or bad, we guarantee the labourer work of his hands, and prevent his being thrown on to the street by foreign competition.’ I shall not dispute this statement, I accept it. The preservation, the conservation of the present state of affairs is accordingly the best result the protectionists can achieve in the most favourable circumstances. Good, but the problem for the working class is not to preserve the present state of affairs, but to transform it into its opposite.

“The protectionists have one last refuge. They say that their system makes no claim

to be a means of social reform, but that it is nonetheless necessary to begin with social reforms in one's own country, before one remarks on economic reforms internationally. After the protective system has first been reactionary, then conservative, it finally becomes conservative-progressive. It will suffice to point out the contradiction lurking in this theory, which at first sight appears to have something seductive, practical and rational to it. A strange contradiction! The system of protective tariffs places in the hands of capital of one country the weapons which enable it to defy the capital of other countries; it increases the strength of this capital in opposition to foreign capital and at the same time it deludes itself that the very same means will make that same capital small and weak in opposition to the working class. In the last analysis that would mean appealing to the philanthropy of capital, as though capital as such could be a philanthropist. In general, social reforms can never be brought about by the weakness of the strong; they must be brought about by the strength of the weak".⁹⁹

A short while later Marx received a request to address the free trade congress at Brussels. After paraphrasing the above argument in his, non-delivered, speech, he made the following telling point - as reported by *The Northern Star's* German correspondent (Engels) - "we are for free trade, because by free trade all economical laws, with their most astounding contradictions, will act upon a larger scale, upon a greater extent of territory, upon the territory of the whole earth; and because from the uniting of all these contradictions into a single group, where they stand face to face, will result the struggle which will itself eventuate the emancipation of the proletariat".¹⁰⁰

That message was propounded to the Brussels Democratic Association at a public meeting in January 1848. After attacking the hypocritical free traders in Britain - Bowring, Bright and co - Marx concluded with these words:

"Do not imagine, gentlemen, that in criticising freedom of commerce we have the least intention of defending protection. One may be opposed to constitutionalism without being in favour of absolutism. Moreover, the protective system is nothing but a means of establishing manufacture upon a large scale in any given country, that is to say, of making it dependent upon the market of the world; and from the moment of its dependence upon the market of the world is established, there is more or less dependence upon free trade too. Besides this, the protective system helps to develop free competition within a nation. Hence we see that in countries where the bourgeoisie is beginning to make itself felt as a class, in Germany for example, it makes great efforts to obtain protective duties. They serve the bourgeois as weapons against feudalism and absolute monarchy, as a means for the concentration of its powers for the realisation of free trade within the country.

"But, generally speaking, the protective system in these days is conservative, while the free trade system works destructively. It breaks up old nationalities and carries antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the uttermost point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. In this revolutionary sense alone, gentlemen, I am in favour of free trade".¹⁰¹

Likewise we can conclude that European integration objectively unites the working class on a larger scale and across a huge territory and thus prepares the "struggle which will itself eventuate the emancipation of the proletariat". In this revolutionary sense alone, we in the CPGB favour the EU.

7. Scottish socialism

The Scottish Socialist Party's position of demanding a Scottish withdrawal from the European Union is perfectly logical. After all the SSP is a left nationalist formation bent on breaking up the existing UK state and achieving Scottish independence - that will be quickly crowned with the achievement of a trail-blazing Scottish socialism, of course, all done under the auspices of a sovereign Holyrood parliament.

SSP leaders are fond of portraying Scotland as somehow occupying a privileged position when it comes to the global struggle for socialism. They envision little Scotland messianically cutting an "earthshattering" reformist path to socialism - marvelling, the workers, youth and oppressed of other countries thereby gain courage and seek to emulate the Scottish model.

Basically, in their schema, Scottish nationalism is proletarian. British nationalism bourgeois. Big business, the rich and powerful are "bitterly hostile towards the idea of independence" write Tommy Sheridan and Alan McCombes. The "cringing" British unionism of Scotland's bankers, landowners and wealthy businessmen "conforms to a historical pattern" stretching back over 1,000 years.¹⁰² By contrast the call for an independent class state in Scotland is linked to the democratic desire amongst ordinary people for control over their lives.

Sheridan and McCombes are at pains to emphasise that they bear no ill-will towards English people as such. Yet they promote the utterly spurious notion that due to the size of England's population - seven times the rest of the UK taken together - Scotland's national identity has been "warped and distorted" because of a "permanent sense of resentment" against its "domineering neighbour".¹⁰³ The break-up of the UK would presumably put everything to rights - like the break-up of Yugoslavia and the USSR. Naturally their independent socialist Scotland would not be an "isolationist Scotland". It would not involve "rebuilding" Hadrian's Wall or quarantining "ourselves from the rest of the world".¹⁰⁴

Rebuilding Hadrian's Wall would, of course, mean extending Scottish territory southwards and the annexation of Northumberland, ie, tracts of land which today lie in England. Townsfolk in places such as Berwick on Tweed, Morpeth, Blyth will presumably welcome with cheers and garlands the incoming Scottish regiments. Are they to be claimed as unconscious brother Scots? The British army in the meantime sits on its butt and twiddles its thumbs. Seriously though, whether or not comrades Sheridan and McCombes achieve a little or greater Scotland is beside the point. Scotland might want to have intercourse with the world but will the world want to have intercourse with Scotland? Castro's Cuba did not impose a trade embargo on the world. But the US did impose a trade embargo on Cuba. Why would Scotland be any different?

The 'tartan revolution' would not, we are assured, suffer the horrible starvation and wars of intervention witnessed in Russia or Cuba's isolation and grinding poverty.

Scotland will not be “brought to its knees” by an American economic blockade. A socialist Scotland will be able to “stand up” to the forces of global capitalism and become an international “symbol of resistance” to economic and social injustice.¹⁰⁵ Fighting talk. But is it mere braggadocio?

Scotland can succeed apparently where others before it have failed because it is “fabulously wealthy”. Scotland already has the “material foundations” for a “thriving” socialist democracy. Besides “long coastlines” and a “clean environment” Scotland has a “flourishing” culture and “legions” of internationally acclaimed musicians, writers, actors and film directors. On top of these blessings Scotland has “land, water, fish, timber, oil, gas and electricity in abundance”. Better still, Scotland has a “moderate climate”¹⁰⁶. While a “fully-fledged socialist society” might not be possible in Scotland, nonetheless a “socialist government” could move in that direction by taking control of the wealth of the country and using it for the common good - oil, gas, electricity, railways, etc.¹⁰⁷

Frankly this is threadbare and deeply worrying stuff. Stalin used to rebuff Trotsky with reference to Russia’s continental proportions and immense wealth in natural resources. Land, oil, forests, gold, a population that stood at around 150 million ... and a very, very long coastline. He did not mention a “moderate climate”, true. Despite that absence Stalin boasted in his version of *Imagine* - the second edition of *Foundations of Leninism* - that Russia had all it needed *internally*. Not to achieve the “final and complete victory of socialism” - that required the efforts of other countries - but to “build up a socialist society”.¹⁰⁸ Stalin might have been either cynical or naive in 1924. But by 1928-29 he had launched an anti-working class, anti-peasant counterrevolution within the revolution. Its name - the first five year plan. Socialism in one country proved to be anti-socialism in one country.

An independent Scotland with a mere five million people can hardly be expected to play any kind of an independent role in world politics. If a radical or revolutionary Scotland embarked on a separatist course that really challenges the power of capital and the leading imperialist power centres, not least Britain, the EU and the US, what is to stop them imposing sanctions or organising armies of intervention? Remember Congo, Panama, Chile. Even the USSR, a superpower, eventually fell.

Would Whitehall meekly hand over North Sea oil and gas to a dangerous Sheridan-McCombes government in Holyrood? There surely would be endless and bitter disputes. Retaliation and tit-for-tat counter-retaliation. What about other industries which they might care to nationalise? Would there be no flight of capital? Banking capital can move anywhere at the speed of light. Would there not be deliberate sabotage? Would not thousands of jobs in Scotland be wiped out virtually overnight? Maybe skilled and professional labour would flood south. How to keep them? The German Democratic Republic erected watch towers and a concrete wall, Albania hermetically sealed itself off with barbed wire and minefields, Cuba relies on a shark-infested ocean.

What about the military threat? Maybe the officer corps in the Scottish regiments - who are sworn to loyalty to the crown - would rebel. Maybe Britain would invade. Maybe the US would threaten to bomb terrorist hideouts. Would not a Sheridan-McCombes Scotland find itself compelled to plough precious resources into greatly expanding their armed forces and military capacity? That requires surplus labour. To survive, this Scottish

socialism would have no choice but to discipline and *exploit* the working class. The SSP socialist liberators thereby find themselves turning into their opposites. All the good intentions vanish into the mists.

Quite understandably the SSP provokes mixed reactions. The SSP has united within its ranks almost everything that is serious on the left in Scotland - including in May 2001 the Socialist Workers Party. The Committee for a Workers' International - in Scotland led by Phil Stott - cannot afford to walk away from the SSP as Peter Taaffe did from the Socialist Alliance at its December 2001 conference. More than that, though. From the solid foundations of uniting the left the SSP has confidently forged ahead and won a real hearing from sections of the working class. Tommy Sheridan is widely respected and admired and in the Scottish parliamentary elections of May 2003 the SSP won six MSPs.

John Rees claims that with Respect the SWP is just behind in terms of popular standing and political impact. And in the May 2004 European elections Respect achieved 252,216 votes; however, this amounted to only 1.7% of the total poll (the results were uneven with strong votes in east London, Birmingham, etc). Further progress is inevitable, says Rees. After the election of Oliur Rahman, as a councillor for St Dunstons and Stepney ward in Tower Hamlets, there were even claims that Respect had now become Britain's "fourth party". If only. The SWP as the controlling faction in Respect still has a narrow and unambitious fixation. Building the SWP as a confessional sect. Hence the SWP ensures that Respect avoids hard political debate and instead settles for socials and football matches a patronising approach guaranteed to ensure that Respect remains a hollow SWP party-front. Seen from England, Wales or Northern Ireland it is therefore no surprise that innocent eyes alight upon Scotland with envy. And yet there is the SSP's putrid left nationalism.

How to explain the paradox? As we have said, the working class in Britain and the world over has suffered many defeats in past decades. It is therefore hardly surprising that separatist tendencies and ideas come to the fore - not least as manifested in the SSP and its nationalist programme. Despite strikes by teachers, civil servants, rail, postal and local government workers and a string of left victories in trade union elections, the class struggle is not sweeping the country and galvanising the minds of the millions. Statistics show that strikes are still at an historic low point. Class consciousness is equally low. But discontent and resentment bubbles below the surface. Under these extremely contradictory circumstances petty nationalism, separatism and the politics of identity can find a ready audience and exert a powerful influence. Hope in a hopeless world.

The SSP combines reformism with nationalism. Furthermore, it has discovered a definite space in Scottish politics. Between the Labour Party's monarchical unionism and the SNP's monarchical nationalism. By positioning itself in this gap the SSP leadership has, of course, put itself completely outside the international revolutionary tradition. A tradition represented by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky. Unflattering though it is, comrades Tommy Sheridan, Alan McCombes, Frances Curren, Catriona Grant, Murray Smith, Colin Fox, Keef Tomkinson and co surely stand in the same 'socialist' camp as Joseph Pilsudski and his Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*).

Who is Joseph Pilsudski? A century ago he was the leading figure in the PSP. Pilsudski edited and published its illegal paper *Robotnik* and initiated the PSP's armed fighting units. Formed in 1892, the PSP 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 finally partitioned Poland out of existence at the 1815 Congress of Vienna).

This was, it is true, in line with the strategic outlook expounded by Marx and Engels throughout their lives. Tsarist Russia, which had taken something like 60% of Polish territory, formed the bulwark of European reaction. Every progressive movement, revolutionary uprising or democratic settlement faced the danger of a Russian blocking intervention. That is why Marx and Engels advocated a war of liberation against Russia. Settling scores with tsarist Russia was a "primary prerequisite" for the European revolution.

The Polish revolutions of the 18th and 19th century were directed squarely against Russia. On every occasion the lead was taken by the Polish nobility, the *szlachta*. In the 16th century this class managed to transform Poland into an aristocratic republic in which the president called himself king. Naturally the serfs were ground down and exploited more or less ruthlessly. As to the 300,000 nobles - many of whom lived in genteel poverty - they acknowledged no relations of feudal dependence. Polish nobles did not bow the knee as anyone's vassal.

By contrast the Russian nobility under the tsars were state slaves. At a whim the tsar could put them to death and confiscate their estates and property. The Polish nobility were determined to avoid that fate. The Polish state had by 1655 all but ceased to exist. No army - the nobility would not countenance one. No diplomatic service - the nobility would not pay for it. No laws - no one could enforce them. Old Poland stagnated.

However Sweden, Prussia, Russia and Austria fixed upon Poland's aristocratic anarchy as their opportunity. The central and western provinces fell into the hands of Sweden, the Muscovites occupied the east and the Cossacks ravaged Polish Ukraine and overran Galicia. Disaster was only put off by a 180 degree about turn to centralism and the return from exile of the king. But it did not last. Aristocratic liberty soon reasserted itself.

Understandably this liberty was perceived as a dreadful threat by the Prussian, Austrian and above all the Russian autocracy. By preventing the establishment of a Polish absolutism the nobility set themselves up as victims, especially of the rising tsarism which emerged from the nuclear winter wrought by the Mongol conquests of the mid-13th century.

Throughout the 17th century the Russian state systematically strove to gain military superiority over the disorganised aristocratic anarchy of Poland. In the 18th there began a series of partitions - 1772, 1793, 1795 - and popular rebellions and revolutions led by the *szlachta*. Napoleon's flight from Moscow finished Polish statehood for a hundred years. The Congress of Vienna to all intents and purposes abolished Poland. All that remained was the short-lived Free State of Cracow. But Poland lived on as language, as catholicism and in the imagination. There were four full blown uprisings in the 19th century - 1830, 1846, 1848, 1863. Each defeat sent a wave of aristocratic revolutionaries fleeing

into exile. Here they were found fighting in the forefront of every revolutionary and progressive cause: Italy and Hungary 1848, the American civil war, Irish freedom, the Paris Commune of 1871, etc.

The partitionist powers sought to liquidate the *szlachta* as a class. Russia incorporated the richest aristocrats into its nobility. The Russian language was imposed along with Russian law. Prussia emphasised the creation of a stable bourgeoisie. The final solution lay in destroying the economic basis of the *szlachta*. Serfdom was abolished - in Prussian Poland in 1823, in Austrian Poland in 1849 and in Russian Poland in 1864. The *szlachta* were henceforth finished as a class capable of reproducing itself and its necessary social circumstances.

Poland became in capitalist terms the most advanced part of the Russian empire. Trade unions formed in the 1870s and socialist groups - crucially the Proletariat Party - briefly functioned in the 1880s. Interestingly, the Proletariat Party took a militantly anti-nationalist position. Despite their detailed knowledge of the opinions of Marx and Engels on Poland the leadership of the Proletariat Party - Ludwik Warynski, Stanislaw Mendelson and Szymon Dickstein - favoured revolutionaries in Poland joining their efforts with "our Russian brothers".¹⁰⁹ The Proletariat Party established close contacts with the Russian Narodnik terrorist organisation People's Will. They believed that the Polish national question was slowly dying and Russia now held out the prospect of revolution.

They were only partially right. Aristocratic Poland had faded into history. The peasantry were national but passive. The bourgeoisie had but one interest - business. Nevertheless in 1893 the Polish Socialist Party came onto the scene. The PSP united real sections of the working class. Unlike the Proletariat Party it was no conspiratorial sect. The PSP tried to revive the legacy of Marx and Engels on Poland. All the luminaries of European socialism were approached to endorse the call for the restoration of Poland and Polish independence. Most did. Bebel, Kautsky, Bernstein, Guesde, Labriola, Hyndman, Eleanor Marx-Aveling.

However the PSP found a different reception from workers in Poland. They had taken on board the anti-nationalist outlook promulgated by the Proletariat Party. As a result the PSP had to paint itself in internationalist colours and highlight its socialist credentials in order to secure a mass following.

The PSP sought to organise in, and liberate, not only Russian Poland. The aim was to organise all Poles along nationalist lines and reconstitute Poland out of the Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian empires. That meant splitting off membership from the existing multinational socialist parties in Germany and Austria. Relations became tense and strained.

Initially PSP members Rosa Luxemburg and Julian Marchlewski strenuously objected. They produced a sophisticated historical analysis of Polish society which, although it ran counter to the exact words of Marx and Engels, eventually put the workers' movement in Poland on to a firm Marxist footing.

In 1897 Luxemburg wrote her *The industrial development of Poland*. On the basis of such profound studies she came to the conclusion that the working class must inevitably become the main opponent of absolutism. Thereby the operative slogan should be unity against existing states, not the resurrection of ghosts. Marx's slogans on Poland

were totally obsolete. Luxemburg even ticked him off for holding to his positions on Poland back in 1848. Nevertheless, Marx's *method* served admirably. Marxism, as Luxemburg stressed, is no dogma but a living method of investigation and a revolutionary practice.

Restoration of Poland is dismissed as anachronistic. It was either a hopeless utopia or it would be reactionary. Freeing Poland had to go hand-in-hand with freeing Russia. Russia "seethed with revolution" and could no longer be viewed simply as the bulwark of reaction. While tsarism decays, a nascent working class stirs. Indeed, the revolutionary explosion Luxemburg expected at any moment would blow away both tsarism and Polish nationalism. On that she banked.

Luxemburg criticised the Proletariat Party for its terrorism, its conspiratorial methods and lack of a minimum programme. Putting forward socialism as the *only* immediate aim politically disarmed Polish revolutionaries. Democracy and overthrowing tsarism would provide the bridge for the united Polish and Russian proletariat. Having done that the "combined" working class movement would tackle the rule of Polish and Russian capital.¹¹⁰ But Luxemburg's main target is the PSP. She damns it as social patriotic, nationalist socialist and national socialist. The PSP simply contented itself with repeating the words of Marx and Engels and feeding anti-Russian prejudice. No serious historical and materialist analysis came from that quarter. Certainly the PSP leadership showed no actual concern for the working people in Russia. Empty words there were aplenty, but the practice of the PSP was to divide a working class that was united by capitalist development and which faced a common enemy in tsarism.

Luxemburg displays no indifference towards the oppression suffered by her fellow Poles. On the contrary tsarism's sordid treatment of the Polish nationality had to be ended. Nor did she display a nihilistic attitude towards Polish culture. What was progressive should be defended and enriched by the working class movement. But Luxemburg contemptuously dismissed general calls for national breakaways. She did not want Alsace-Lorraine separated off from Germany and returned to France. Nor did she want the reconstitution of Poland.

Almost without exception every state in Europe had national minorities and overlapping populations. Germany, for example, contained Danes, Alsatian French as well as Poles. The German Social Democratic Party organised them all, irrespective of nationality. The idea of splitting off workers "along nationalist lines" was for her an anathema.¹¹¹ Class for revolutionary socialists is primary and organising against the existing state the first duty.

Luxemburg and Marchlewski split from the PSP in 1893 against its nationalist programme. They rightly refused to content themselves with serving as a loyal opposition in a nationalist crusade. No matter how small in number, revolutionary socialists could directly address the advanced sections of the working class. They sponsored the formation of the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland (later added to by the merger with the Lithuanian group led by Felix Dzerzhinsky). The title of their party showed that they would organise only in Russian Poland (the Congress Kingdom). Whereas the PSP aimed to reconstitute Poland out of three empires, the SDKPiL had no interest in redrawing borders.

SDKPiL only formed because there was in the early 1880s no working class party in the rest of the tsarist empire. And when it did come into existence it proved hard to join. The first attempt in 1898 ended in a fiasco and the arrest of the newly elected central committee of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. The second attempt, under the auspices of *Iskra* in 1902-3, produced unity and a central leadership *and* a cleavage between the minority (Menshevik) and the majority (Bolshevik) factions. When reunification did eventually occur in 1906 it proved fragile and fleeting. Nevertheless, SDKPiL joined the party of Lenin, Martov, Plekhanov, Trotsky and others in Russia on the basis of one state, one party.

Luxemburg herself explained this elementary principle. With the First International Marx and Engels mainly had to make do with sects. Their aim was to unite the British trade unions with European revolutionaries organised under leaders such as Pierre Proudhon, August Blanqui and Mikhail Bakunin. They had groups - smaller or larger - scattered throughout the Germanic, Latin and Slav countries. So in tiny Switzerland there might at any one time be three or four separate and competing branches of the International Workingmen's Association. However, the Second, Socialist, International represented a big step forward. Under its banner were gathered *class parties*. The Second International therefore promoted the idea of class unity within and against the existing state (a position carried on by the Third International of Lenin, Trotsky and Zinoviev in 1919).

It cannot be denied that in opposition to PSP nationalism Luxemburg overstated her case. Famously she threw out the slogan of national self-determination along with the nationalist bathwater. Self-determination was impossible under capitalism, she argued, and undesirable under socialism. Neither being true, Luxemburg deserved the stinging rebukes she received from Lenin.

Lenin stood by the *right* of Poland to secede. But alongside Luxemburg he argued strongly for the voluntary unity of Polish and Russian workers. In point of fact he insisted on unity as a principle time and time again. Eg, we find Lenin typically writing - in 1916 - that socialists in the "oppressed nation must, in particular, defend and implement the full and unconditional unity, including organisational unity, of the workers of the oppressed nation and the oppressor nation".¹¹²

So whatever the theoretical disputes between Lenin and Luxemburg, they were agreed that objective conditions demanded the unity of workers - Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Estonians, Letts, Poles, etc, - in the battle to overthrow the common enemy, the tsarist state. Pilsudski, in contrast, wanted the independence of Poland and the independence of the PSP from the Russian "imperialist" revolutionaries.¹¹³ Lenin was consequentially loath to regard the PSP as a "genuine" socialist party.¹¹⁴ Quite right too.

Suffice to say, most national socialists within the SSP, who know something of European history, prefer to be identified not with Pilsudski - who in 1926 led a fascistic colonel's coup - but with other, more acceptable, figures. Recently John Maclean and Ernesto 'Che' Guevara have been pictured in backdrops to official SSP rallies and platforms. Fitting eclecticism. Neither of them produced anything of lasting significance theoretically. Though both Maclean and Guevara were brave and fearless revolutionaries, they wandered far and wide from the basic principles of Marxism. Maclean refused to

join the CPGB when it was formed, convinced that British government secret agents provided the finances. Instead he founded a short-lived left nationalist sectlet. As for Guevara, his politics owed more to Maoism than Marxism.

Nevertheless, I have come across one or two honest national socialists in the SSP who are prepared to defend Pilsudski and the PSP against Lenin and Luxemburg. Allan Armstrong of the Republican Communist Network - an officially recognised SSP platform - comes to mind. In a hard hitting polemic against the CPGB he argued that Lenin and Luxemburg should have carried out Pilsudski's programme of breaking up the Russian empire. Comrade Armstrong is positively committed to nationalism, he welcomes the division of people into nations and unlike most Marxists is convinced that nationalities and nations will characterise communism. So he is being perfectly consistent.

Not surprisingly, according to comrade Armstrong, Lenin's and Luxemburg's "political formulations" "failed (... only too clear in the case of Poland)". It was Lenin and Luxemburg, needless to say, who were responsible for handing the struggle for self-determination "to Pilsudski's 'national-socialists' on a plate".¹¹⁵

Necessarily, by their very nature, neither the SSP, nor any of its national socialist platforms, are able to admit 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 closest unity of workers under existing capitalist conditions. The CPGB therefore makes no apology for opposing the break-up of Britain. We too are perfectly consistent. Supporting a right does not mean one is indifferent about how that right is used.

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 condemning and campaigning against the formation of a new protest group. We recognise the *right* of even reactionaries like Brian Sutter to campaign for his Neanderthal view on homosexuals. However, we will at the same time fight against the influence such bigots have over the working class and other sections of the population.

But let us pick up our historical thread. Did the politics of Lenin and Luxemburg fail? I think "the case of Poland" proves exactly the opposite. Lenin and Luxemburg were, by no stretch of the imagination, responsible for handing the struggle for self-determination to Pilsudski and his 'national-socialists'. It was after all hardly possible for them to dictate the new geopolitical relations that emerged during and after World War I. And it was this carnage, which saw the collapse of half of Europe, that allowed Pilsudski and his Austrian-financed military 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 national socialism would lead those workers who followed it to demoralisation.

To begin with, the mass of militant workers backed the PSP and Pilsudski. Unrest in Poland in 1904 resulting from the Russo-Japanese war saw membership soar from 4,000 to 40,000. Pilsudski travelled to Japan and attempted to strike a military deal with the

Mikado. Poland would open a second front in Japan's war with Russia. Pilsudski established the 'Militant Organisation' which would lead the uprising.

The outbreak of the 1905 Russian Revolution changed everything. Separatism was swept aside. Hostility to the "overbearing" Russian neighbours vanished. Workers in Warsaw and Lodz joined workers in St Petersburg and Moscow in the common fight to overthrow tsarism. Proletarian supporters of the PSP willingly looked to the SDKPiL for theoretical and practical leadership and enthusiastically took up its slogans. SDKPiL grew massively though it remained smaller than the PSP. Pilsudski, however, suffered marginalisation. "The pure nationalists, the 'social patriots'", writes Luxemburg's outstanding biographer, "saw with horror their hopes of an independent Poland were ebbing away as fast as the Russian revolution was advancing".¹¹⁶

The official leadership, staying true to its nationalist programme, ended up turning its back on the revolution. The PSP split at its 8th Congress in February 1906. The leftwing majority abandoned the programme of national independence. They adopted the substance of the SDKPiL programme. Poland should have autonomy within a democratic Russia.

Pilsudski for his part turned towards a reliance on physical force on the one hand and diplomatic dealing on the other. When the PSP's 9th Congress in November 1906 condemned the terroristic activity of Pilsudski's Militant Organisation, he and his followers indignantly withdrew from the party. They formed a separate organisation - the PSP-revolutionary fraction. Sheltering under the wing of the Austrian state Pilsudski transformed the Militant Organisation into a nucleus of a conventional military formation. It was legally recognised as a rifle club and in 1914 the Union of Active Resistance (ZWC) attached itself as a self-willed servant to German and Austrian imperialism against the Russian foe. Austria envisaged a triple Austrian-Hungarian-Polish crown. Germany a 700,000-strong Polish army to hurl against the Russian hordes. Pilsudski remained committed to an independent Poland.

What of Luxemburg? Coming from almost nowhere organisationally, Luxemburg's politics had within 12 years captured virtually the whole working class movement in Poland. In 1918 the PSP-Left united with the SDKPiL to form the Communist Workers' Party of Poland (as the Communist Party of Poland was known till 1925). The party was eventually banned by Pilsudski.

Lenin and Luxemburg only failed in Poland in the sense that the Marx and Engels team of 1848, which strove for a centralised and democratic Greater German republic, including Austria, failed. They only failed in the sense that the 1871 Paris Commune failed and the Bolshevik's 1905 dress rehearsal failed. The point though is not failure of this or that attempt, but the rightness of the politics of world revolution and universal human liberation.

8. International socialism

What does globalisation mean for the strategies and programmes of human liberation? Though the spread and intensification of capital is carried out under the overall hegemony of US imperialism, though it is driven by the needs of capitalist accumulation and though it is often carried out in a brutal and destructive manner, there is undeniably a progressive aspect. Despite all the human suffering, the growth of capitalism means that today the working class is in all probability the biggest class on the planet. For the first time in history there are certainly more urban dwellers than peasants. Capitalism has also massively added to the abundant material wealth without which socialism cannot arise.

However, while capital shows continued technical dynamism, its intrinsic or epochal limits are impossible to ignore. Ecological destruction and vast agricultural surpluses, devastating financial crises and stock market crashes, managerial exploitation and endemic corruption, the growing gulf between actual and potential production, the use of the means of production to produce means of destruction which can within an instant destroy hundreds of millions of people, the further impoverishment of the already impoverished, the discrediting of existing political institutions and the *increasing* role of the state in organising prices and ensuring profits: arms contracts, reliable utilities, efficient road and rail communications subsidies and tax breaks - all help keep the vital sphere of circulation functioning.

Capitalism still operates as capitalism. But as we have argued, its essential laws are historically in decline - value, money, free competition, the labour market, private ownership - and contradictions pile up and become ever more intractable and fraught with danger. Society, if it is to survive, must assert control. The way forward lies not in localism, nationalism or appeals to the supposed common sense or humanity of the self-interested personifications of capital. Leave that to archbishop Rowan Williams, Bob Geldof, Bono, Oxfam, Jubilee 2000 and the myriad other NGOs - here is the sanctimonious face of capital.

The task of communists is to programmatically equip and politically train that class that capital itself has recruited and economically organises. The global working class is alone capable of forging itself as an alternative power which can overcome the capitalist state and reorganise the world according to human need and the goal of fully rounded human development. Labour both stands immediately opposed to capital in the workplace and has the potential collective strength to turn theories and revolutionary programmatic demands into socially transforming deeds. No other class, social stratum or protest issue can do that - hence 'goodbye' obituaries to the working class are not only wrong headed, but are declarations of abject political surrender before capital.¹¹⁷

Global production and reproduction and global ecology mercilessly punish all antiquated and blinkered notions of local exclusiveness and isolation. Humanity is interdependent. Exploitation links workers everywhere. They still speak national

languages but mutual conditions, their radical chains, make them a world-class. In the stirring battle cry of the *Communist manifesto* the emancipation of the workers requires a world revolution, the “forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions”.¹¹⁸

Thankfully programmes for instituting socialism within, through or over a single national class state nowadays appear increasingly idiotic or because of past experience simply unthinkable. Much to the chagrin of our national socialists neither a Stalin-type command economy nor the social democratic state any longer represent a coherent alternative to existing neo-liberal capitalism theoretically. Hence the wailing against globalisation and gnashing of teeth by Stalinites and left reformists alike. Showing a maudlin attachment to auto-Labourism, even the SWP’s Chris Harman mounted a gallant defence of “old fashioned” trade unionism and “reformist governments”.¹¹⁹ It did not serve to convince.

However, within establishment circles ‘globalisation’ is more than the latest buzz word. It serves as an ideological drug to lull workers into acceptance of permanent wage-slavery. In a world where capital is meant to be stateless and comprehensively mobile, wage claims and demands on governments for improved conditions are patronisingly and poisonously attacked as self-defeating. Higher subsistence levels, or so the story goes, will simply see capital swanning off to where labour power is dirt cheap. China, Burma, Mexico, Indonesia. And, of course, the apologists of capital insist that ideas of launching a socialist challenge to the system and its logic of accumulation for its own sake are a chimera.

We do not, for one moment, accept the new-old ‘iron law of wages’ theory peddled by the political and academic servants of capital - like the nonsense about complete automation and artificial intelligence, it is a fiction, albeit a useful one, invented in order to sustain the socially constructed image of a capitalism without history and without end.

Through class struggle gains can undoubtedly be won. Capital cannot locate just anywhere. Supplies of “skilled workers and efficient infrastructures” are vital.¹²⁰ So is a reliable and trustworthy legal system, and it should be added, close, often friendship ties with the state bureaucracy and government. Not surprisingly then, even amongst the transnationals production and sales rely predominantly on the home country. Hence, while there is a tendency to equalise wages and conditions there can come into effect real improvements in wages and conditions. The key is coordination and organisation. With the renewed globalisation of capital that obviously means *international* coordination and organisation. There is no need to bid each other down. Workers can still limit competition between themselves.

The self-serving economic determinism of the neo-liberals is not only contemptible - morally and intellectually. It also makes an easy target for those wanting to rescue the flailing reformist project. A still useful example is Ron Bellamy’s ‘Fighting the myth of globalisation’ articles in the *Morning Star*.¹²¹ (Bellamy subsequently fell out with *Morning Star* editor John Haylett and his ally Robert Griffiths - part time Communist Party of Britain general secretary - he sided with the unsuccessful Mike Hicks-Mary Rosser rebellion.) By setting-up and duly knocking down absurd and crude formulations, in general from unnamed people and/or institutions, Bellamy tried to give the kiss-of-life

to 'official' communism's cadaverous version of national socialism - the *British road to socialism* programme.¹²² It remains dead if not buried.

Evidently the modern state is not "powerless". Nor do transnational companies exist in mid-air detached from "country".¹²³ Ford is rooted in the US, BMW in Germany and Toyota in Japan. These mighty states have a long and very effective record of ruthlessly defending *their* transnationals at home and abroad. "At least 20 companies in the 1993 *Fortune* 100 would not have survived at all as independent companies if they had not been saved by their respective governments in the last decade and a half".¹²⁴ Neither does it follow that within the framework of the global market "national agents and governments have no role".¹²⁵ Diverse they may be, but the Bank of England, the CIA and the Communist Party of China are far from irrelevant when it comes to ensuring capital accumulation.

Common sense tells us that there is no "world state", nor a non-national "world capitalist".¹²⁶ Nato, the UN and the EU are by definition intra-state organisations. "Where are the armies, police forces, courts and prisons of the world capitalist state" Bellamy artfully inquires. There are, of course, none. There is no world state and nor can there be one under capitalism. What of a supra-national capitalist class? Most boards of transnationals are mono-national. Richard Branson, Bill Gates and Silvio Berlusconi are respectively British, American and Italian. And yes, seen from that angle capital is "owned by capitalists of one state which they export from their own nation state to others".¹²⁷ Calling transnationals 'multinationals' is a complete misnomer. There are few if any multinational companies. Capital is not stateless.

Furthermore, capital cannot spread evenly throughout the world. There is, Bellamy triumphantly points out, a strong regional bias. Before him Trotsky called it combined and uneven development. Most exports and overseas investments are between capitalistically advanced countries. For instance, in the early 1990s three-quarters of British foreign direct investments were concentrated in North America, the EU and Japan. It is also right to stress that "though there are new features", international or global capital, in the sense of capital being exported from one country to another, is in itself "no way new".¹²⁸ Just prior to World War I, when Britain was at its imperial zenith, investments abroad amounted to 13% of GDP - roughly the *same* as today. Between 1880 and 1913 British overseas capital increased fourfold to some £4 billion - "total income from foreign investments reached close on £200 million".¹²⁹ And I hardly need to add that international trade in commodity capital considerably pre-dates industrial capitalism.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, though there was a crash in capital exports and global trade with World War I and then the autarchy of the 1930s, there have been rapid changes in recent decades. The state capitalisms of 1914-45 have been superseded by another bout of internationalisations. Foreign assets accounted for a mere five percent of world GDP in 1945. By 1995 that figure had risen to an "astonishing" 57%.¹³¹

The neo liberals indulge in hyperbole. So too do national socialists. The neo liberals maintain that the state is powerless. This excuses dismantling the social democratic consensus and rolling back working class gains. The national socialists in turn maintain that because globalisation has been much exaggerated by the neo liberals *ipso facto* the existing state can be used as the vehicle for their neo-Keynesian alternative economic

strategy and in due course a British socialism. They need a non-global capitalism to justify this programme.

The truth is that capital is both simultaneously international and national - a configuration full of contradictions. The noted Marxist thinker Istvan Meszaros says there is a “mismatch” between capital’s reproductive structures and its state.¹³² National capital is by definition tied up with the national state. But as repeatedly pointed out above, global capital has no state formations proper. Nevertheless it is capital at a global level that functions as the final determinant. Hence capital exists as a single world metabolism, but within a system of national states.

Capital by its own logic demands the unlimited exploitation of labour. Yet the national state cannot allow this, observes Meszaros - neither economically nor politically. The masses would rebel, and that failing, starve. Therefore other solutions are sought out ... sometimes at enormous cost in terms of human suffering. The 20th century witnessed two world wars, the rise, decline and rise again of imperialist parasitism, the capitalist national socialism of Adolf Hitler, and the post-capitalist national socialism of JV Stalin. In this last named context Ron Bellamy transparently entertained another, unstated, agenda. Implicitly the national socialism of the USSR, despite its abject failure, is exonerated - along with his own record as one of its toadying propagandists. Stalin’s USSR - naturally minus its proletarian and revolutionary genesis - remained Bellamy’s model.

Nationalisation for national socialists and many others, Trotskyites included, is monstrously equated with socialism or/and a workers’ state. The result can be run bureaucratically or democratically but “property relations” are for the whole national socialist school the bottom line. Such a viewpoint not only involves mangling Marxist theory and the programme of democracy and social liberation. It is an unsolicited gift for capital’s paid persuaders. The USSR’s terror, mass oppression, censorship, gulags, irrationality and poverty are turned into a dire *warning*. This is what happens if you epsilons dare interfere with the natural order of things!

Bellamy was particularly mindful of those left labour bureaucrats who were looking towards the EU bureaucracy in the forlorn hope of salvation. Ken Livingstone and Brendan Barber still do. In the attempt to return them to the true national socialist fold he cited figures showing that the UK governments spent 56 times more on goods and services than a proposed EU job creation programme: £2,300 per head as opposed to £41 per head. Bellamy concludes that reformist social change via the EU is a fantasy. Not only would “scrapping the Rome treaty” be necessary but a “majority of left national governments” on the council of ministers. “How long should the people of one country wait for that” Bellamy asks, “when they can obtain their own left government?” A British socialism that weakens “transnational big businesses”, pulls out of the EU and restores welfare would, he sincerely believed, inspire others and thereby prove to be the most effective form of “international solidarity”.¹³³ As we have seen, exactly the same argument is used by the Scottish Socialist Party’s Alan McCombes and Tommy Sheridan to justify their “tartan revolution”.¹³⁴

Yet we have seen on numerous occasions what follows reformist experiments in national socialism. They are hardly inspirational. Spain in the mid-1930s and Chile in the

early 1970s ended in bloody tragedy. France in the mid-1930s and then again in the early 1980s saw a flight of capital and an almost instant programmatic reversal - both Leon Blum and Francois Mitterand presided over popular fronts with the Communist Party of France.

The guardians of national socialism explain away history by insisting that the state's powers to impose restrictions over capital were not used forcefully enough. Chris Harman doubtless imagined he was very audacious when he appended a call for "direct action of workers from below" to prevent moves by capital designed to "sabotage attempts to improve the condition of the mass of the people".¹³⁵ Suffice to say, this is an unconscious echo of the *British road to socialism* and shows how the comrade had adapted to national socialism and strayed from revolutionary Marxism. Only "in the long run" would an attempt to supersede capitalism in one country "succumb to its pressures", he argued.¹³⁶

The transition from capitalism to communism finds its first decisive expression with the revolutionary seizure of state power at a national level and working class administration over what is to begin with an essentially capitalist metabolism. Nevertheless, there can be no staying still. Settling for, or attempts to build, a national or local socialism are doomed to disaster. Global capital must be brought under human control and superseded as a totality.

By imposing draconian restrictions on capital - or even by abolishing capital negatively - the isolated revolutionary regime might well survive for some considerable time. However, in so doing it inevitably and very quickly becomes its opposite - a freak society like Stalin's USSR, Mao's China or Pol Pot's Kampuchea. Year zero marks not the birth of real civilisation but horrendous barbarism. No single country - not even the richest - has within it the means necessary to positively supersede capital. Individual capitalists can be expropriated through a political revolution. But creating a sustainable and dynamic alternative mode of production is a universal task.

Certainly for Marx and Engels there could be no socialism in one country because socialism must break out of capitalism positively, an outcome "which presupposed the universal development of the productive forces and the world intercourse bound up with them". In a word 'globalisation'. The capital relationship cannot be positively superseded within the narrow framework of the national state. It exists at the level of the world market and world economy - and here and only here are the necessary material conditions for socialism and communism. That is why in the *German ideology*, written way back in 1845, Marx and Engels savaged all notions of national socialism.

Universal capital produces in all countries a mass of propertyless workers and makes "each nation dependent on the revolutions of the others." If by foolish design or unfortunate accident the workers' revolution remained national all that would happen is that "want is merely made general, and with it the struggle for necessities would begin again, and all the old filthy business would necessarily be restored." So "empirically", communism is only possible as the "act of the dominant peoples 'all at once' and simultaneously".¹³⁷ Hence the need for regional and global communist organisation - eg, the Communist Party of the EU and the Communist International. Only that way can we successfully coordinate our revolutionary actions.

The fundamental mistake made by all national socialists is the notion that capital is a thing - money, mines, factories, food, jewels - in the grip of a class of very wealthy individuals. Peter Taaffe's *Militant* had its 200 top monopolies for a "socialist" Labour government to nationalise. Ownership for them is all. In this way the modern capitalist class is, so it is said, no different from the ancient slaveowner or the feudal lord. Remove them from the levers of the state, take away their companies, and hey presto there is no capitalism. Marx held all such 'socialist' magic in contempt. The idea that we "need capital but not capitalists is altogether wrong" he explained. "It is posited within the concept of capital that the objective conditions of labour - and these are its own product - take on a personality towards it".¹³⁸

Capital is no mere thing - like land or chattels - but a "social relationship" whereby alienated, dead, labour dominates and feeds off living labour. Capital is in essence subjectless. It is its own cause. Its determination runs from capital to the capitalist, not the other way round. The individual owner is no more than the *personification* of an exploitative relationship; a relationship that can be assumed by anonymous fund managers, a friendly cooperative or Harman's reformist state. By definition, merely legally controlling the individual capitalist, or expropriating private capital within the national space, leaves capitalism intact as a reproductive metabolism along with its hierarchical system of control. It is capitalism without capitalists and workers remain exploited wage labourers.

Production under capitalism is separate from control. Production is not about satisfying wants. Production takes place for the sake of production. In this subjectless system capital's objective requirement for unlimited self-expansion must overcome the subjective wishes of any of its personifications. Thereby control is alienated from everyone. Decision-making simply becomes finding ways to allow capital to expand. Profits have to be realised. Accumulation must proceed. Either that or face certain extinction. The personification is in actual fact controlled by the system.

Capital has to be superseded in its totality and replaced by an open-ended communist totality. Without the positive supersession of capitalist society's division of labour and the domination of living labour by dead labour, the power of capital will reassert itself. For Marxists that is why, although the workers' revolution starts politically on the terrain of the national state, the content of our project is to bring the product of humanity back to humanity. What decides the matter is control. Does control over the worker continue to be the unlimited self-expansion of dead labour? Or do the associated producers control the products of work and thereby stop being workers?

Meszaros explains that any attempt to "gain control over capital" by treating it as a "material thing" tied to a "simple relation" with its private owner - instead of instituting a sustainable alternative to its dynamic process "in whose various movements it is always capital" - can only result in catastrophic failure.

No act of parliament can by itself remove capital from the "social metabolic process as the necessary *command over labour* under the historically long prevailing and after the revolution unavoidably inherited circumstance." So it is not possible to "resituate" the alienated power of command over labour to labour itself by "simply targeting the private capitalist personification of capital". That can be done only by replacing the

established “organic system” as the “all-embracing and dominating controller of societal reproduction”.¹³⁹

We communists take universal capital as the real point of departure for humanity. If capital is grasped as a relationship then questions such as whether or not workers are paid in pounds or euros, or the degree to which governments are sovereign and can fix exchange rates or borrowing levels stand revealed as secondary issues at best or else nothing more than smelly red herrings.

9. Extreme democracy and the limits of capital

Our movement has long been riven by profound disagreements over democracy - its origins, significance and relation to the struggle for socialism and communism.

There are always timid 'possibilists' who stress democracy to the point where it becomes for them something almost for itself *within* the bounds of existing society. That was true in the mid-19th century of *moral* force Chartism and a few decades later of the nascent trade union bureaucracy. It is still true. Respect fought the June 2004 European elections on a minimalist manifesto which went no further than calling for a "different" Europe which would be "based on need not profit" and thus become a "clear alternative to global capital".¹⁴⁰ Yet neither the 's' nor the 'c' word got a mention. Others are even more minimalist. Over recent years the pages of the *Weekly Worker* have been blessed occasionally by Dave Craig and his argument that the working class party should self-limit its programme to the extension of democracy under capitalism: abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords, self-determination for Scotland and Wales, a republic, etc. The maximum programme for socialism and communism should, he says, be *temporarily* put aside till there arises a revolutionary situation. In other words, we have the pledge to be a Marxist some time in the indefinite future, not under present-day conditions, not at this particular moment in time. This is Marxism on credit, Marxism as a promise, Marxism deferred. And such advice, if taken, today would place us on the far left - of bourgeois radicalism. Populism thereby replaces socialism and suggests its own volatile methods.

Instead of socialism (communism) being vigorously promoted - for example in the anti-capitalist milieu - as the only historically viable alternative to capitalism, it is regarded quizzically or even as a threat. The merest programmatic mention of the rule of the working class and communism would wreck our unity and have allies - trade union officials, former Labourites, Stalinites, greens, "muslims and other faith groups" - scurrying off like panicked mice. Yet how worthwhile is 'unity' which sees Marxists vote down "shibboleths" such as the free movement of people, keep a diplomatic silence over abortion and hide their long-term aims? That is not what we advocate when we speak of unity. We have argued and still argue for the *practical* unity of the serious Marxist groups in the fight to establish a single democratic centralist Communist Party. In this context let me quote Lenin. "Unity is a great thing and a great slogan", he remarked in April 1914. "But", Lenin pointedly added, "what the workers' cause needs is the *unity of Marxists*".¹⁴¹

Organisation loyally follows politics. Whereas we advocate a mass Communist Party, our opponents conclude that the best that can be obtained under today's circumstances is on the one hand the continuation of myriad confessional sects and on the other hand

a “rainbow coalition” or a “communist-Labour party” which advocates socially circumscribed reforms. Naturally Marxists, whether they be a majority or a minority in such a hybrid, and inherently unstable, formation, are tolerated, well-regarded and valued by all - no doubt because they only advocate revolution and socialism as a private sect belief, in restricted forums and ritualistic propaganda articles - ie, they have in practice ceased being Marxists.

Sadly we have seen the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ deployed in a thoroughly dishonest manner precisely to produce a blind panic. After all, communist parties are “by definition” committed to the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ - and ‘dictatorship’, it is falsely implied, is the opposite of democracy. The benighted masses outside the charmed circles of the initiated few cannot possibly understand, let alone rally to such a concept. Therefore we should keep quiet about our plans in public and only whisper the terrible words ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ when amongst fellow sectarians.

Suffice to say, for Marxists, ‘dictatorship’ means nothing more frightening than the ‘rule’ of a particular class. The term derives from the Roman *dictatura* - a temporary form of government voted for by the senate during times of dire emergency. And this is how the word percolated down into English and French and into the heads of the great figures of the American and French revolutions in the 18th century. George Washington, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, Jean-Paul Marat, Maximilien Robespierre and Louis-Antoine St-Just all borrowed the political symbols and phrases of the Roman republic.

So Marxism did not invent dictatorship as a way of describing a *form* of the state. Marxism did nothing more than ground *all* state forms in the palpable existence of class and the struggle of one class against another. Hence in the lexicon of Marxism there can be the rule, or dictatorship, of an exploiting minority, or the rule of the overwhelming majority: ie, the working class. Put another way, democratic republics like the USA or France - depending on the class struggle - could have a proletarian or bourgeois *content*.

Only in the 20th century did bourgeois ideologues try to shift the linguistic meaning of dictatorship so as to make it synonymous with absolutism or tyranny. That way the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Republic could be damned as the *self-confessed* antithesis of democracy. Evidently contemporary Marxists therefore have every reason to dispute this semantic sleight of hand.

Leaving aside the many highly problematical statements of Lenin and Trotsky on this subject, the works of Marx and Engels contain a dozen or so now famous - infamous - references to the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’. Unless we are going to allow Marx and Engels to be traduced by bourgeois society and portrayed as anti-democratic *advocates* of absolutism or tyranny, there must be an ongoing battle to reassert and defend the unambiguous content the founders of scientific socialism gave to the phrase, which, as Engels remarked in March 1891, has always “filled” the philistine “with wholesome terror”. That “wholesome terror”, it should be emphasised, was not because the dictatorship of the proletariat is the antithesis of democracy. On the contrary, it concretely implied a direct challenge to the quasi democracy of kaiser Germany and taking democracy to its extreme limits, ie, beyond capitalism.¹⁴² Obviously, as we had to tell Martin Thomas of the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty, because of the combined effect of cynical bourgeois propaganda and the monstrous crimes of bureaucratic socialism

carried out under the name of Marxism, we must rescue other hotly contested terms too - 'communism', 'Communist Party', 'Bolshevik', etc.¹⁴³

In contrast to those who advocate democracy without socialism, on the other wing of our movement we find those who counterpose democracy to socialism, or who at least say that socialists should maintain an "ambiguous attitude" towards democracy - the latter phrase surprisingly coming from Hillel Ticktin.¹⁴⁴ Democracy is considered to be either positively harmful or an optional extra, hence their socialism without democracy.

Such a viewpoint amongst communists and leftwing revolutionaries dates back to at least the first half of the 19th century: ie, to a time when the governing classes freely expressed an almost visceral contempt for the idea of democracy and loathing of those who advocated such an 'unnatural' and 'ungodly' system - "The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate, god made them high and lowly, and ordered their estate."

The term 'democracy' was subject to much less dispute than today - no government apart from perhaps the USA pretended that it had established itself on the basis of a democracy. As Hal Draper points out, in those days it had not yet become necessary, or fashionable, to "redefine democracy out of existence". Hence the enemies of popular sovereignty attacked the democratic idea openly and forthrightly, "instead of embracing it in a crushing vice".¹⁴⁵

The British 'liberties' celebrated by arch-conservatives like Edmund Burke and syrupy liberals such as Charles Dickens owed far more to the rights of land and money than the rights of the common man. True, because by its very nature capital is fractured, its personifications tend to advocate pluralism, ie, access for a range of different views and interests in the press, parliament and public life in general. That should not be confused with democracy, however. When the franchise was extended in 1832 only a tiny minority of the British *male* population benefited. That is exactly what the bourgeoisie wanted. They got the vote. Not the swinish multitude. Property qualifications did what they were intended to do - exclude the vast majority and *prevent* democracy.

When *they* were excluded the bourgeoisie - ie, the class of medium-sized capitalist farmers, middle-ranking civil servants and the up and coming manufacturers - still in the main considered themselves to be part of *the people*. This was the case in Britain. It was especially the case in mainland Europe. Hence during the revolutions of 1789, 1820, 1830 and even 1848 the emperors, divinely appointed kings and petty electors had ranged against them on the other side of the barricades *the people* - a political concept which embraced many outstanding bourgeois democrats. Only after 1848 did the bourgeoisie decisively separate off from the people.

Understandably the extreme left had little love for the bourgeoisie. An exploiting class, it was, they knew, prone to vacillation. However, certain ultra-radical elements, including the precursors of the modern-day anarchists, despised the bourgeoisie and their commercial and money-grabbing spirit to such a degree that they willingly lined up with the autocracy. Ferdinand Lassalle, the famed German socialist and would-be labour dictator, was one such figure. Mikhail Bakunin another. The former secretly entered into negotiations with the kaiser's iron chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, with a view to cementing a proletarian-Hohenzollern united front against the bourgeoisie. The latter similarly tried to secure himself a royal patron and thus a shortcut to the social utopia - with everyone

from Charles XV of Sweden, Louis Bonaparte in France and even the tsar of all the Russias himself, Nicholas I.

The Marx-Engels team frequently had to deal with ultra-radicals who thought nothing of firing off propaganda articles aimed directly against democracy and objectively siding with the Prussian autocracy. In *The German ideology* they lambasted the “old thesis” and accused its advocates of working gratis for the monarchy. But there existed another, more fundamental, reason why certain leftists shunned, or actively opposed, the fight for democracy.

Apart from proletarian socialism - which is the forward, self-liberating movement of the great mass of the population as it breaks free from the confines of capitalism - there are many other kinds of anti-capitalism: namely, varieties of elitist socialism. These socialisms - statist, feudal, bureaucratic, military, etc - owe everything to the schememongering of certain would-be universal reformers or self-selected bands of revolutionary conspirators.

The desired reconstruction of society could hardly be entrusted to the ignorant majority, mentally crushed, befuddled and misled as they were by pulpit, yellow press and trash culture. Instead of the masses liberating themselves and remaking society according to their interests and wishes, the far-seeing genius, the revolutionary clique, the benign elite would preside over the envisaged transformation. For such schools of thought, democracy is a danger to be guarded against or carefully rationed. The stupid masses might after all prove less than enthusiastic about the fantastic blueprints dreamt up by the enlightened minority.

Marx and Engels believed that with the growth of working class confidence and the formation of the workers into a party such elitist socialisms would prove to be a passing phase. Put another way, an infantile, or childhood, disease. As we know that was not to be ... yet.

The 20th century witnessed the complete surrender of social democracy to bourgeois society. But it also saw the degeneration of the USSR and Stalin's counterrevolution within the revolution. This anti-capitalism was spread to, or was copied in, many other countries - half of Europe, China, Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea, etc. Stalin and all the local Stalins - Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Kim Il Sung, Tito, Pol Pot, Castro, *et al* - paid lip service to democracy. In actual fact the masses languished under a tyranny far more deadly, draconian and all-pervasive than anything seen in 19th century Europe.

Despite routine claims to practise the full list of basic democratic rights - right to free elections, right to organise, right to publish, right to demonstrate, etc - reality was altogether different. There were no free elections nor right to publish or demonstrate. The democratic rights *won* and *maintained* through popular struggle in the advanced capitalist countries - North America and western Europe - were far more substantive. People could organise independently of the state in the USA. In the USSR they were dragooned by the state. Bureaucratic socialism was anti-capitalism but it was also anti-proletarian socialism.

Marx and Engels took an altogether different approach to their liberal reformist and ultra-radical contemporaries. They viewed democracy neither as a thing in itself nor a threat. Rather than counterpose democracy to socialism they saw their task as to integrate

the two objectively (in terms of programme and, crucially, the real mass movement). In general Marxism stands for the complete democratisation of society, not merely of political forms. Like the revolutionary democrats of the 19th century Marx and Engels began by prioritising the fight to democratise political forms. But for them, however, this was an integral part of the fight for socialism and communism.

Marx and Engels did not come to their conclusions simply through quiet contemplation in book-lined studies. The revolutions of 1848 - in which they were active and leading participants - were key to solving the correct relationship between socialism (communism) and democracy - an analysis fully rounded off by the Paris Commune of 1871 which produced a new kind of state, a semi-state, with a definite working class content, along with truly democratic forms. Far from taking an “ambiguous attitude” towards democracy, the Communards showed that democracy must constantly be broadened and taken to new heights so that society comes to be fully controlled by the masses. As democracy steadily advances, the state - a special body for administration and force - withers away, as its functions cease to have any purpose or are simply absorbed into society itself.

The revolutions of 1848-49 temporarily put some power into the hands of the bourgeoisie in Germany and France. In terms of programme and social composition the legislative chambers were bourgeois and, compared with the previous regime, were chosen more or less democratically. During this period Marx and Engels did not operate through a specifically workers’ party - the workers’ movement was still at an elementary level and their Communist Party consisted of no more than 30 secret local sections with a membership of under a thousand. Instead they launched a daily paper, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, as an organ of extreme democracy: “a democracy which everywhere emphasised in every point the specific proletarian character”, as Engels said many years later.¹⁴⁶

The Marx-Engels team mercilessly attacked the Prussian monarchy but did not flinch from criticising the shortcomings and pretensions of the opposition movement, left and right. Opponents were treated with deserved “scorn”. Eg, the ultra-radicals around Andrew Gottschalk - a member of the Communist League and leader of the Cologne Workers’ Association - were given short shrift. Gottschalk urged his supporters to shun any participation in the broad democratic movement and he soon clashed with Marx. Likewise rejected was the ‘left economism’ of Stephen Born, which sought to keep working class demands within the narrow confines of “occupational economic goals”. This would have diverted workers from the democratic tasks that faced the German people - above all founding a centralised republic and waging a liberation war against tsarist reaction.

Neither Marx nor Engels doubted, even for one moment, the advantages of democracy under the capitalist system of production. Rather they sought to overcome those limits imposed upon democracy either by the monarchist state or the bourgeois republic: eg, property qualifications. Popular influence and control had to be maximised. That included arming the masses and thus the right to overthrow an unacceptable or oppressive government.

For the Marx-Engels team, German society stood between an uncertain future and

an overhanging past. While constitutional assemblies had been established in Frankfurt and Berlin and wide freedoms gained by the revolution, Prussian absolutism remained intact and exercised executive power. Alongside the citizens' militia there stood the Prussian army. The police state had been weakened but lived on. There was then a dual power monarchy.

The workers and the extreme left of democracy had therefore to unite their efforts in order to sweep away the monarchy using the most revolutionary methods conditions allowed. Things would though not stop there. Democracy had to be given a social content and the rights and power of those below pushed forward again and again. What became known as the permanent revolution. That necessarily meant combating the backtracking tendency amongst liberals and other inconsistent democrats to seek a compromise in the form of a British-style constitutional monarchy. Indeed, everywhere the representatives of the bourgeoisie shrank back from a direct clash with the Prussian monarchy.

With that in mind *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* encouraged popular pressure on, or intimidation of, parliamentarians. A motion proposed by the radical Johann Jackoby to the effect that all decisions made by the Frankfurt assembly should automatically have the force of law without needing consent by the monarch saw the conservative deputies Hansemann, Reichensperger and von Berg jump to their feet in order to denounce this outrageous attempt by the leftwing minority in the assembly to rouse outside support, an attempt which was "bound to lead to civil war".

Engels replied to such objections that the "outsiders" in question were the people, the voters, who had made the assembly through the March revolution. He denounced von Berg and other such worthies for wanting to abolish political propaganda, which is nothing more than the freedom of the press and the right to organise in practice. Whether these rights do or do not lead to civil war is "not our concern", said Engels. It is sufficient that such rights "exist" and "we shall see where it 'leads' if they continue to be infringed".¹⁴⁷

Engels took obvious delight in excoriating one particular deputy - a former young Hegelian opponent. Speaking to the Frankfurt assembly, Arnold Ruge made his political direction all too clear: "We do not want to quarrel, gentlemen," he politely announced, "over whether we aim for a democratic monarchy or a pure democracy; on the whole we want the same thing: liberty, popular liberty, the rule of the people." With such hollow catchphrases Ruge sought to simultaneously please the right and subsume the programme of the left into that of the right.

Such cowardice was typical of the liberal left and encouraged reaction to go onto the offensive. As soon as it could, the autocracy began to "cheat the revolution of its democratic fruit" by chopping back on the rights won on the March barricades. Democratic clubs were closed, free assembly compromised, the democratic press hauled before the courts. The *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* fought back at every stage before constitutional phrases were transformed into Prussian realities and full blown counterrevolution was suffocatingly imposed. The revolution was put to death in the name of the fatherland. Marx and his family sought safety in Paris.

In the decade that followed the European-wide defeat of the 1848-49 revolutionary

wave, Marx wrote extensively on constitutional forms. Hal Draper concludes that for Marx the distinguishing feature of a “truly democratic constitution” was the degree to which it “limited and restrained the independent scope of the executive power”.¹⁴⁸ Democracy is only genuine to the degree to which it means popular control from below.

The first constitution Marx analysed was the French, adopted in November 1848. Marx showed how worthless were the democratic guarantees enshrined in the constitution. Every one of them could be nullified by subsequent laws enacted by the government. Freedom of movement, freedom of the press, the right to hold opinions and to associate are all there. However, the constitution stipulates that the “enjoyment of these rights has no other limit, than the equal rights of others, and public safety”. For Marx “public safety” was the joker in the pack and he showed how the enjoyment of constitutional rights has in fact been systematically violated. Press freedom was taken away by the imposition of a mass of financial hurdles - stamp duty, etc - while the right to associate and assemble were effectively removed through decrees which put everything under police “supervision and caprice”.¹⁴⁹

Voting and other such rights were undermined using similar devices. Labour books and internal passports were made obligatory so as to make the worker dependent on the employer and the police. Under the facade of freedom, freedom was repressed.

In other articles discussing the draft constitution of Schleswig Holstein and the Prussian 1850 constitution, Marx showed with devastating effect the gulf that existed between fine phrases about liberty and the sorry practice which reduced all the rights of the people to a “dead letter”.¹⁵⁰ Under the Prussian constitution most of the population was denied the franchise. Those privileged enough to be allowed to vote were, however, subject to all manner of restrictions. Elections were indirect, constituencies could be altered at a whim and gerrymandered and each of the tax-paying colleges of electors - high tax-payers, middling tax-payers, lower tax-payers - were given equal representation despite their unequal size.

Marx wanted to curb bureaucracy and the powers of the executive. As Hal Draper lists, he consistently stood for a wide range of freedoms - opinion, the right to assemble, organise and demonstrate. He also railed against all property and educational qualifications put in the way of voting and each and every gerrymandering measure. Marx generally advocated a unicameral representative assembly. No upper house to delay legislation and block change. The single-chamber parliament can more effectively stand up to the executive and is subject to greater and more immediate pressure from below.

However, Marx was fully aware that parliament and the whole political system of what is commonly called ‘bourgeois democracy’ - another oxymoronic term - could be used as a “safety valve” which dissipated the anger and passions of the population. That did not imply that democracy as such was a swindle but that democratic forms were used by capitalism - the plutocracy - to “frustrate genuine democratic control from below”.¹⁵¹ The highest example of this was the USA. Not because there was less democracy there, but on the contrary. Unlike the monarchical and Bonapartist pseudo-democracies of Europe, the USA had, through the revolution of 1776 and its aftermath, taken the formal structures of democracy to highly developed forms - referendums, the

election of judges and local sheriffs, etc. The USA was therefore the least unfree country in the world.

To successfully dominate through such a system establishment politicians had to perfect the art of lying, double-dealing, corruption and divide-and-rule manipulation to the highest degree. Tricking the masses, persuading them that they are masters of the country's destiny, assumes cardinal importance. Again it should be stressed that such an assessment led neither Marx nor Engels to shrink from the struggle to remove all obstacles, shortcomings and deformations imposed upon democracy by the bourgeoisie. Equally it should be underlined that for Marx and Engels the working class should not only fight for formal democratic rights but for a society that would satisfy the wants of all. Engels called this a "social democracy" in his 1845 book *The condition of the working class in England*.

That class agenda was summed up by the physical-force wing of Chartism, led by George Harney and Ernst Jones, which proclaimed that it wanted the "charter and something more". That is, the vote plus the social programme which challenged bourgeois property and wealth. That battle could not be confined to democracy alone. Another principle must gain an ascendance - the principle of socialism, which rises above everything that is merely political. "Merely political" as Hal Draper explains, "is merely political democracy" which stops short at governmental forms and does not extend into social questions, the "democratisation of socio-economic life".¹⁵²

Marx and Engels recognised that democracy under capitalism inevitably has two sides. There is the mystification by which the masses are reconciled to their exploited position and fooled into imagining themselves to be free. On the other hand there is the creation of new forms of democracy and the struggle to give existing forms a new social content. The aim is to remove all juridical, structural and socio-economic restraints on, or distortions of, control from below; in other words "extending the application of democratic forms out of the merely political sphere into the organisation of the whole of society" till the qualitative, socialist, rupture.¹⁵³

Socialism will not and cannot be delivered from on high. Not by a leftwing government in Westminster nor Brussels, or by an enlightened despot like a Robert Owen or a Fidel Castro, nor by would-be labour dictators such as Mikhail Bakunin or Arthur Scargill. To achieve socialism requires revolution. Not just any revolution though. The socialist revolution will have to be democratic, in the sense that it is an act of self-liberation by the working class majority which aims to take the democratic state to its limits as a semi-state that is already dying. As Rosa Luxemburg said: "The masses must learn how to use power by using power. There is no other way." So democracy and socialism should never be counterposed. The two are inexorably linked. Without socialism democracy is always formal and stops short of ending exploitation. Without democracy socialism is only post-capitalism, it is not *proletarian* socialism.

10. Confederal constitution

June 18 2004 was undoubtedly a defining day for the European Union and its political elite. After two years of debate, months of haggling and redrafting, failed summits and fraught brinkmanship the EU's 25 heads of government finally agreed their constitution. Just before midnight, they emerged bleary-eyed to announce success before the small army of reporters and camera crews gathered in Brussels.

Naturally, in the days up to and following the agreement the Tory right, the United Kingdom Independence Party and the anti-EU press went into a fit of patriotic frenzy. An unseemly sight.

Shadow foreign secretary, Michael Ancram, insisted that the constitution created a "gateway to a country called Europe." Robert Kilroy-Silk likened Tony Blair to Neville Chamberlain. "It's appeasement" he spat. "He is waving a piece of paper saying 'It's okay, I've only given a little bit away of our national sovereignty', when in fact this is the beginning of the end of Britain as a nation-state governing itself". Writing in *The Times* the aging young foggy Michael Grove said the new constitution "goes further than ever in stripping the British people of the right to govern themselves".¹⁵⁴ *The Sun* agreed: Tony Blair is prepared to sign away "a thousand years of British sovereignty. Our independence to run our own lives, make our own laws, be masters of our destinies, will be lost".¹⁵⁵ *The Daily Telegraph* protested that the constitution was the "capstone of a federalist state" because of the creation of the EU as a legal personality, a five year term president, a foreign minister, a prosecutory magistracy and a "federal police force".¹⁵⁶

Meanwhile, a group of 28 senior business executives including Sir Rocco Forte, the hotelier, Sir Crispin Davis, chief executive of publishers Reed Elsevier and Lord Sainsbury, a Tory peer and president of the supermarket chain sent an open letter to Tony Blair. They complain that he had "committed Britain to a structure that will harm our prosperity and weaken democracy". One of the signatories, Michael Spencer, chief executive of ICAP, the money broker, explained: "A lot of businesses are worried about the implication of the EU charter of fundamental rights, which would damage our flexible economy" - the charter enshrines the right to strike.¹⁵⁷

Most of this is hysterical nonsense, of course. The EU is no more a single country than is the United Nations or Nato. Nor is it the equivalent of Hitler's Europe. As for *The Sun's* claim that British sovereignty dates back a thousand years, this is a blundering mix of hyperbole and ignorance. The kingdom of Great Britain dates from the accession of James VI of Scotland as James I of England in 1603; and it was not till 1707 that the act of union creates a single parliament. As a nation - a people sharing a common language, culture, economy, territory, identity, etc - Britain comes into being only after 1745 and the defeat of the Jacobite counterrevolution.

Moreover, the fact of the matter is that far from representing a further step down the federal road the proposed constitution is an admission that the EU will remain a loose

confederation of independent states. There is the introduction of majority voting in the European council of ministers in certain areas of common concern; but this will be heavily circumscribed, done through a 'double majority' system requiring at least 15 member states comprising at least 65% of the EU's population. However, apart from minor details, Tony Blair and Jack Straw basically got what they wanted. Unanimity is still necessary when it comes to tax and social security, foreign affairs and defence. It has also been made clear that the charter of fundamental rights does not create new employment rights. A fact recognised by the continental press. The Italian daily *Il Corriera della Sera* said that Britain had "succeeded once again slowing down and diluting the process of integration". *Le Figaro* noted that Britain had blocked Franco-German plans. "This is one of the great paradoxes of the EU: its most sceptical member has the upper hand." While in Belgium *La Libre Belgique* asked: "Why did you join the union, other than to sabotage it?"¹⁵⁸

Nevertheless, it is clear as day that the anti-EU press are right in at least one important respect. Britain is becoming more and more reliant on others and sovereignty is *increasingly* shared and as a nationalist ideal is thoroughly compromised. Under these circumstances reactionaries will, of course, atavistically hark back to a mythical past. But the glories of the British empire can never return. Britain cannot operate effectively in the world in isolation from Europe. Nor can Germany, France, Italy or any other EU country. Only together can they hope to withstand or match, let alone outcompete the US and Japan.

The real question is what sort of EU? Since Jean Monnet and the European Iron and Steel Community in 1952, the strategic aim of the French and German ruling classes has been clear. A federal Europe which would eventually rise to become the dominant world power and thereby occupy the top position in the imperialist pecking order.

Nowadays this ambition is situated in the context of recharged US super-imperialism. But it remains. Hence Jacques Chirac, the French president, is said to want a "multipolar world in which Europe is the counterweight to American political and military power." Former German chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, has openly declared that his country and France "share a common interest in not delivering ourselves into the hegemony of our mighty ally, the United States." Even Chris Patten has called for Europe to become "a serious player ... a serious counterweight and counterpart to the United States".¹⁵⁹

Needless to say, such ambitions have been frustrated, or at the very least put on hold, by the EU's constitution. As noted in our opening chapter Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the former right-centrist French president who chaired the EU's constitutional convention ostentatiously drew inspiration from the American declaration of independence of 1776 and the Philadelphia constitution which cemented the unity of the 13 states in 1787. Yet his federalistic rhetoric and goals were ruthlessly shot down and buried during the course of the constitutional convention - eg, the suggested titles 'United Europe' and 'United States of Europe'. Moreover, since he delivered his final draft on July 18 2003, the Atlanticist grouping, in particular Britain, Italy and Poland, but including the Nordic countries and some other member states in eastern Europe, further watered it down. Blair can justifiably claim to have speared any immediate prospect of a federal EU with his 'red lines'.

The proposed EU constitution has none of the brevity and simplicity of the US constitution. It is both a dense legal text and a massive work of condensation. Though 330 pages long this is from a starting point of the EU's four treaties and laws that together total some 80,000 pages of text. Whether or not the constitution can contain and reconcile the confederalist and the federalist visions of Europe's future remains to be seen. But in recognition of these two camps a new 'brake-accelerator' mechanism has been introduced.

Any country objecting to a particular integrationist move can put on the 'brake'. Not only can they appeal to other member-governments through the council of ministers, they can effectively opt out, while others, using the 'accelerator' proceed. Germany and France have already indicated that they intend to apply the accelerator mechanism of "enhanced cooperation" in order to harmonise their corporation tax, including by setting a minimum rate. Under the constitution they would form an "avant-garde" of countries around them, who are prepared to abandon their vetoes on taxes and proceed on the basis of qualified majority voting - thus leaving behind another one of the supposed cherished features of 'national sovereignty'.

Of course, this is how adoption of the euro and the creation of the eurozone worked in practice. Britain, Denmark and Sweden decided to wait while the other 12 motored ahead. The idea was that they would catch up later. Incidentally it is worth noting that the constitution gives eurozone governments increased powers over limits on deficits set by the now discredited stability and growth pact. Eurozone members will be able to decide their own policies with a degree of flexibility and decide who can, and who cannot, join.

Taken as a whole the brake has been applied to the project of "an ever closer union" laid out by the founders of the European Economic Community in the 1957 treaty of Rome. The rights of national governments over tax, social security, defence and foreign policy have been fenced off. National parliaments have also been given a blocking role in overseeing EU legislation. Nevertheless in 43 specific, albeit narrow, areas the accelerator pedal has been gently pushed down.

A couple of specific examples. Though there is already an EU representative for foreign affairs and national governments retain a veto over foreign policy, the EU is to be given a higher, sharper profile with the appointment of a foreign minister and a new corps of EU diplomats. Essentially the same approach has been taken with the presidency. Instead of the six month rotating presidency, the council of ministers will appoint someone to serve for a fixed term of five years who will chair their meetings and represent the EU on the world stage. The constitution also smooths the way for greater cooperation in arms procurement, combating crime and strengthening fortress Europe in order to keep out unwanted migrants.

Some other key constitutional innovations stem not from the division and compromises hammered out between federalists and confederalists. The main motivation behind giving the EU a constitution in the first place was to deal with expansion, specifically the entry of 10 new members on May 1 2004. The EU's big powers - Germany, France, Britain and Italy - were concerned that the whole edifice could become hopelessly unwieldy, prone to endless delay and hence blackmail by small states. That explains the

complex new system of voting on the council of ministers. It reduces the powers of small states; blocking would require a minimum of four votes. The same is true of the reduction of the size of the EU commission from 2014 - the big countries keep their commissioners, but from then on two-thirds of the states will have to make do with members on a rotation basis. As a consolation Germany is limited to 96 MEPs and the number granted to micro countries like Malta and Luxembourg increased to six.

The constitution is neither the “gateway to a country called Europe”, as claimed by Michael Ancram, nor is it merely a “tidying up exercise” as maintained by Jack Straw. The EU is a unique hybrid, in part a means of coordinating fractious and unevenly developed states and bringing about economic convergence; in part a supranational organisation linking and directly operating upon 450 million citizens. The EU already has the European Central Bank and the euro currency, a council of ministers, the European Commission, an elected parliament and a whole raft of other such institutions.

Historically though, the burning question is whether or not those below, crucially the working class, can pursue their own agenda and create an EU which embodies extreme democracy. Obviously at present it is the forces of capitalism that hold the initiative. Continental unity is being forged in the overt interests of big capital and its vampirish needs, eg, those of the European Roundtable of industrialists which groups together 42 of the largest companies in Europe - Bayer, BAT, BP, Carlsberg, Deutsche Telecom, Shell, Pilkington, Pirelli, Philips, Renault, F Hoffmann-La Roche, ICI, TotalFinaElf, Siemens, Unilever, Thyssen-Krupp, Volvo, Nestle, Nokia, Fiat, etc.¹⁶⁰

Compared to the US in the 18th century, European unity has evolved thus far at a much more cautious and protracted - and for our rulers an altogether safer - pace. There has been no great wave of liberation nor the voluntary coming together of risen peoples. Nevertheless, European integration, though piecemeal and only quasi-democratic, has gone a long way since 1957. The six-strong common market - born of the terrible slaughter and mutual destruction of World War II and then the cold war system which divided the continent - is now a 25-member giant.

Whatever they exactly think of the pros and cons of the new constitution, the EU's heads of government and bureaucratic elite of commissioners believe that without it there is a distinct danger that the whole project would not only run out of momentum but that it might also sink into paralysis. Agreement in Brussels is, however, only the first hurdle. Now there must be a vote in 25 national parliaments and after that as many as 10 referendums. If just one of them returns a ‘no’ vote - especially if it is one of the big four - the EU might have to hobble on with its existing arrangements or begin the whole process of negotiations afresh. A knotty problem, underlined by the paltry turnout for the June 10 elections to the European parliament, 44.2% overall, and by the high votes scored by hard right Europhobic parties - eg, Ukip, Belgium's Vlaams Blok, Le Pen's National Front, Transparent Europe in Holland and the League of Polish Families.

Those saddled with having to hold a referendum include the United Kingdom government, of course. Having flatly rejected all such demands, Tony Blair performed his sudden flip in April 2004. Tarnished by the war against Iraq, failure to find WMDs and the quagmire of occupation, under growing pressure from a still somewhat flatlining Tory Party, hounded by the rightwing press and crucially threatened with a withdrawal

of support by Rupert Murdoch and his media, Blair decided to go for the least worst option and kick the constitution into the long grass.

Huff and puff though they did, Michael Howard and the Tory press were never going to get their immediate referendum. Blair played a slow game - waited for toilettage (translation into the EU's legally recognised languages), the queen's speech in November 2004 and the parliamentary debate on the constitutional bill. Even now he will wait till after the next general election and his truncated third term. Moreover, the electoral commission conveniently insists that there should be no confusion between a general election and a referendum on the EU constitution. Then in July 2005 Britain takes over the presidency of the EU. Ministers, we will surely be told, are too busy with other EU business for the ten week referendum campaign. So there is unlikely to be a UK referendum till some time in 2006.

One official 'yes' and one 'no' campaign will be recognised and each will be handed £600,000 worth of government funding and given a free mailshot to every household. The 'no' campaign will presumably be run by the Tory Party - they are not keen to let Ukip and other such extreme types into their big tent. As to the 'yes' campaign, it will be a Lab-Lib pact, but will certainly include Tory big beasts such as Michael Heseltine and Ken Clarke. Nevertheless Blair has had a high-risk strategy forced upon him - not least because of the right wing press, the very idea of an EU constitution is at present deeply unpopular with a large swathe of the British electorate. In June 2004 over 50% of those polled said they opposed the EU constitution, only 23% said they supported it.

Not only rightwing nationalists object to the constitution, virtually as a matter of principle. Many left reformists equally loath everything European because it is seen as a threat to their totem of British sovereignty. Denis Skinner, Labour Against a European Superstate and the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain line up alongside the far right, including Ukip, the British National Party, etc, in an outright rejection of the very idea of an EU constitution and demanding British withdrawal. Not that the Respect coalition and its leading *revolutionary* component are noticeably better. SWP leaders, such as Chris Nineham, dismiss the EU and the draft constitution as "boring" and a "non-issue". An approach which combines surreal self-delusion with the anarchist contempt for politics.

As to Respect's pinched and belated manifesto for the June 10 2004 European elections, it was not only foisted upon the membership without any semblance of debate or consultation, but what there was of it consisted almost entirely of bland platitudes and negative statements. Diplomatically, it carefully steered around the thorny question of withdrawal but it did oppose a European constitution *per se*. Supposedly it "would set in stone" treaties. Respect also nationalistically defended existing "elected parliaments" along with the veto rights of smaller countries and warned against decision-making being "handed over to an unelected bureaucracy" - ignoring the fact that it is the *elected* council of ministers, which actually constitutes the EU's central executive.¹⁶¹

It is quite legitimate, indeed it is vital, to highlight what we revolutionary socialists and communists are against in the EU - lack of democracy, the neoliberal agenda, the stability and growth pact, plans for an even more restrictive fortress Europe, etc. However, socialism is not an anti-movement, it requires a *positive* programme. We must say, even

if it is in broad outline, what we are for, and that certainly includes *constitutional* demands. No Marxist, no genuine Marxist that is, would ever dismiss the need for a constitution.

There is nothing mysterious, uniform, let alone necessarily democratic about a constitution. The complaint heard from some French and Italian comrades, that the EU's is not a "real constitution", rather an "intergovernmental treaty", because it was bargained over and redrafted by the heads of government, not the EU parliament, testifies to a peculiar kind of narrow, academic formalism. Applying such restrictive criteria would mean discounting virtually all constitutions presented to us from above over the long course of history - from theocratic ancient Ur to the dual kingdom of Sparta, from emperor-mandarin Ming China to autocratic Tudor England, and from the merchant republic of Venice to post-revolutionary USA (its 1787 constitution being finally agreed by an all-male electorate in each of the 13 separate states, not the American people taken as a whole).

The plain fact is that a constitution is merely a state's system of fundamental laws, powers, procedures and conventions which regulate relations between state bodies and classes or estates or/and individual citizens or subjects in *any* state, even the most primitive, peculiar or undemocratic. My battered old Oxford dictionary defines a constitution as follows: "mode in which a state is organised; body of fundamental principles according to which a state or other body is organised". The EU might not be a fully fledged state, but it is certainly an "other body". And it should almost go without saying, that all things being equal, Marxists favour written over 'unwritten' constitutions, simply because they tend to be less opaque, more open to scrutiny and thereby progressive change. Hence the EU constitution cobbled together in Brussels, systemising as it does the Rome, Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice treaties and the EU's main laws - ie, the EU's 'unwritten' constitution - and putting them into a single document presents the left and the working class movement with an unsolicited opportunity.

Saying that implies neither constitutionalism nor constitutional illusions. But it does suggest the necessity of engagement with a view to winning progressive changes. No serious revolutionary would ever be so light-minded as to reject the struggle for such reforms. No matter how minor or paltry, all gains are worthwhile - *if* they increase the fighting capacity of the working class. Sometimes the state will, of course, give concessions in order to dampen and divide. But Marxists distinguish themselves under all such circumstances primarily by keeping in view the 'ultimate aim' and by assessing every parliamentary bill, every public enquiry and every reform, demanded or gained, from the point of view of the *global* revolutionary struggle. Only then is it possible to guard against opportunism and the seductive pull of lesser evilism.

Constitutions are the result of protracted and often bitterly fought struggles - sometimes between rival exploiters, patriarchs, established and aspirant national elites, etc - but fundamentally between antagonistic classes. On the one side monarchs, aristocrats, bureaucrats, capitalists - and, of course, their hirelings and dupes. On the other side peasants, artisans and workers - and, yes, their allies and recruits. For all their pretentious language and dubious claims on god, history and destiny, constitutions - written and, yes, unwritten - are nothing more than a photographic record of the *result* of victories scored by the masses and their defeats. Constitutions, albeit in a refracted

manner, thereby show the actual material balance of the contending *class* forces in a society.

Constitutions can be fictitious when severe social contradictions cause law and reality to cleave apart. A classic example of this kind was the constitution of the Soviet Union, purportedly written by Nikolai Bukharin and introduced with much fanfare in 1936 by Stalin himself. It guaranteed the basic list of democratic rights - "freedom of speech; freedom of the press; freedom of assembly, including the holding of mass meetings; freedom of street processions and street demonstrations".¹⁶²

Suffice to say, these freedoms were worthless, they were always trumped by the constitutional five trick hand: the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as the "leading and guiding force" in society (article 6), the obligation to "uphold the honour and dignity of Soviet citizenship" (article 59) and the obligation to "safeguard the interests of the Soviet state, to enhance its power and prestige" (article 62). Those obeying the commands of the Soviet bureaucracy, ritualistically and unenthusiastically, exercised them as collective unfreedoms; opponents, real or imagined, were terrorised into silence, were imprisoned, or simply killed.

But normally law and reality broadly coincide, even in abnormal circumstances. The monocratic constitution of Nazi Germany was much less fictitious and therefore far more *honest* than the Soviet Union's. Using the *law* Hitler banned the Communist Party; then dissolved all other opposition parties; nationalised Germany's state governments; had the Reichstag abdicate its powers; outlawed the trade unions; got "unconditional obedience" from the army; and finally, in April 1942, secured absolute power for himself. William Shirer, a mainstream American historian, comments: "Not even in medieval times nor further back in the barbarian tribal days had any German arrogated such tyrannical power, nominal and legal as well as actual, to himself".¹⁶³

The trouble with the SWP, and Respect in turn, is that they seem to have fallen under the unedifying spell of little Britishers, right and left, who claim that constitutions - specifically, written constitutions - are nothing but a dastardly foreign plot. For them a constitution is not a field of struggle, but a fixed abstraction, an unmitigated evil, an attack on national culture and democratic rights. The SWP's Charlie Kimber can be cited, when, in the context of the debate with us over the euro currency, he wrote that no European institution has "delivered substantial reforms for workers".¹⁶⁴ Logically this can be taken to include the EU constitution too. Indeed we find the same writer saying: "the EU constitution is an attempt to set in stone a capitalist vision of the world with penalties for those who defy it. It will erode democracy and make officials even less accountable".¹⁶⁵

Leave aside how one calculates what is, and what is not, "substantial", the fact of the matter is that most sections of business in Britain noisily objected to Giscard d'Estaing's inclusion of the EU's existing charter on fundamental rights precisely because they feared it would confer *extra* rights upon workers in Britain. That is why, in May 2004, Gordon Brown promised the British Chamber of Commerce that the government hurl one of its red lines in order to keep workers in this country in a position where they enjoy *less* rights than those in Italy, France and Germany. A promise to keep Tory anti-union laws repeated by Tony Blair at a high profile Downing Street press conference on

June 15 - that is just before he travelled to Brussels. "We are not prepared to have anything that takes away our ability to make sure our industrial laws in this country remain as flexible as they are now", he is quoted as saying.¹⁶⁶

More to the point, no constitution, European or otherwise, has ever seen ruling classes *willingly* deliver anything substantial. But sometimes they *unwillingly* deliver: not, it should be stressed, out of tender concern for fellow human beings or due to pangs of conscience. Social reforms are in general not brought about by the weakness of the strong, rather the strength of the weak.

Constitutions are sites of class struggle and record in laws, conventions, etc, the *ever changing* balance of class forces. The EU constitution certainly embodies working class victories as well as defeats in its various articles. None of them come out of airy good intentions; instead they reflect the historic organisation of the working class in powerful trade unions and parties, bitter experience of capitalism's complicity in the horrors of fascism *and* the continued but tenuous hold of a declining capitalism, a hold maintained not least through the lie that capitalism and democracy are virtually synonymous. They are not. In fact, as we have exhaustively documented elsewhere, capitalism is only democratic to the extent that the weak have made themselves strong.

Under capitalism there is a wide spectrum of what might be called constitutional types: eg, nakedly autocratic, concealed autocratic, liberal monarchical, liberal republican, radical republican, dual power. At the one extreme the working class is either yet to stir or has suffered a strategic defeat. At the other extreme, it stands on the threshold of state power. The EU's constitution inhabits neither extreme: it is a *confederal* mix of the liberal monarchical and liberal republican.

All constitutions - including the one proposed for the EU - are actually different *forms* or *manifestations* of the class struggle and far from being "set in stone" they are, on the contrary, made and constantly remade. Take the unwritten, ie, labyrinthine, partly inherited from feudal monarchs, partly legislated by parliaments, partially judge-made British constitution. Walter Bagehot emphasises in his classic study that though it has "continued in connected outward sameness" in actuality it is "ever-altering".¹⁶⁷ A brief outline of its "thousand year" history shows that it is hardly "set in stone".

In 1066, through the social tornado of conquest William I more or less expropriated the old Anglo-Saxon ruling class and founded his pure monarchy. Constitutionally it was an extreme of feudalism. Compared with the crown, the barons and bishops were feeble, slight and diluted. However, over the proceeding centuries there followed a series of struggles, embracing every corner of the British Isles, which had the effect of much reducing the monarchy. The constitution begins to arrive at constitutionalism. Eg, in 1215 the great landed barons got the Magna Carta enshrining their feudal rights and privileges; the lesser landowners and town burghers won the provisions of Oxford in 1259, which imposed an administrative council upon the king; and still later the Cromwellian revolution established a short-lived but puncturing bourgeois republic. After the flight of James II and 1689 a constitutional monarchy system evolved under which crown-appointed cabinet ministers had to command a majority in the House of Commons. The mediated monarchical system of Thomas Hobbes gives way to the proprietary system of John Locke.

Britain was unmistakably capitalist by the 19th century. Nonetheless, the lucrative business of government remained a virtual monopoly of the landed aristocracy. The constitution reflected continuity, but also ongoing change. Capitalists and the upper-middle classes gained the vote in 1832 - after threatening bloody revolution. Workers decisively moved onto the political stage in the 1840s with Chartism and began to make a democratic breakthrough from the 1870s onwards. Women virtually formed an oppressed sex-class, till through struggle - respectable and revolutionary - they secured voting rights (equal to men in 1928). After World War II the working class made *substantial* reformist gains, in the form of the social democratic state, which was rolled back, but not abolished, by the Thatcherite counterreformation following the Tory general election victory in 1979 and crucially the defeat of the miners' Great Strike in 1985. Tony Blair introduced a new national settlement within the UK after 1997 - a Scottish parliament, Welsh assembly, the Good Friday agreement in Ireland, etc. This coincided with the delabourisation of Labour.

Because it is multinational and of continental proportions, the EU constitution should be viewed as a *higher* field of class struggle. Revolutionary socialists and communists must actively engage. A modest but nonetheless welcome start was made over May 22-23 2004 when 100 representatives from a wide range of organisations from across Europe got together in Rome (unfortunately the SWP decided not to send anybody).

The EU's constitution should certainly be carefully studied and both our main disagreements and demands popularised through imaginative education and campaigning work. It is also an eminently worthwhile exercise to distinguish between what should be kept and what should be deleted. Drawing up an alternative draft on that basis *and deciding what should be added* obviously necessitates long and painstaking international exchanges on the left. But to counterpose these two approaches, as some have done, is obviously mistaken. Combine both.

As a matter of urgency we should also challenge and seek to quickly overcome those in our ranks - eg, the SWP and Socialist Action - who say Europe and the EU constitution are "non-issues". That comrades from Italy and France strenuously fought for the London *European* Social Forum - October 15-17 2004 - to include the EU constitution as a major theme showed the right spirit. Eventually the ESF's programme organisers agreed, albeit reluctantly, to three lines of discussion on Europe, one of which might possibly touch upon the EU constitution. Criminally complacent and totally inadequate, of course.

For our part, we say that if the working class is ever to realise the goal of socialism in Europe, or anywhere else, it is essential to take a *lead* in the battle for democracy. Where the member-states have been haggling over a cribbed and cramped, quasi-democratic EU, the left is duty-bound to develop an alternative vision of a united Europe in which democracy is greatly expanded and filled with another social content.

Capitalism has proven itself incapable of uniting Europe democratically into an effective "counterweight" to US superimperialism. Reliance on the market, an unelected bureaucratic elite, a series of tortuous makeshift deals by member governments and an essentially powerless EU parliament, produces nothing but quasi-unity and a quasi-democracy. No wonder the Euro masses show little or no enthusiasm for the EU and its

essentially meaningless elections. Clearly the historically long overdue task of uniting Europe falls to the working class - as envisaged by Marxists such as Frederick Engels, Karl Kautsky and Leon Trotsky.

Communists wish in general to bring about the closest voluntary unity of peoples - and in the biggest state units at that. All the better to conduct the struggle of class against class and prepare the wide ground needed for socialism. Hence our formulation, "To the extent the EU becomes a state, that necessitates EU-wide trade unions and a Communist Party of the EU".¹⁶⁸

Given the relative economic and military strengths of the competing countries in today's world, the varied levels of working class organisation and consciousness, and the likelihood that the tempo of the struggle for socialism will proceed unevenly in the future, one must conclude that the best hope of withstanding the concerted global might of US counterrevolution lies in securing a united revolutionary Europe. From here socialism can both be defended and the flame rapidly spread ... first perhaps into Russia, China and India, then Africa and Latin America, and finally to the US itself.

That strategic perspective helps explain why communists are far from indifferent about the EU constitution and the project of unifying Europe. Where they have made their bureaucratic-bourgeois Europe from above, the working class must make its democratic Europe from below. So there should be no truck with calls to pull the UK out of the EU because it is a "bosses' club", or because it is not "socialist". An almost laughable case of pandering to left nationalism. One might just as well suggest pulling the working class out of Britain.

Not that such a daft programme has not been tried. In the 18th and 19th century there were those utopians who argued that communists should have nothing to do with bourgeois society. It was by definition a capitalist or "bosses' club". They established colonies in the Americas, which would practise liberty, equality and fraternity. Suffice to say, they were ill-fated. All failed. And not surprisingly Marxism has consistently criticised such schemas. The utopian communists' denunciation of capitalism provided wonderful ammunition for propaganda. However, opting out of the struggle within capitalism was attacked as akin to surrender. Though they specifically insist that there is no longer an *outside* and therefore no possibility of opposing capitalism externally, the same must be said of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt and their 'postmodern' call for "refusal" and "desertion, exodus and nomadism" and winning the battle "against the empire" through "subtraction and defection" and a placeless "evacuation of the places of power".¹⁶⁹

On the contrary the communist-socialist project starts with working class organisation, positive and militant engagement, invasion and conquest of the specific centres of *state* power that manifestly exist and historically present themselves. The journey begins not with the destination, but the first step. So we can and must begin with the EU.

There can be no doubt that the EU, through the Rome, Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice treaties, is, as the SWP says, the "central project of the European employers". Nor can it be denied that the EU is an "anti-working class project" aimed at increasing the exploitation of European workers in order that European capital can "compete more effectively in world markets". The EU "bosses' club" aims to "maximise job flexibility"

and “increase the power of the bosses in the workplace”. To that end EU institutions have been made as “undemocratic” as possible, with an “unaccountable” ECB, etc.

Against this “bosses’ Europe” it is right to proclaim oneself being in favour of “workers’ Europe. But, try as you might, you will find no SWP programme outlining how to achieve a workers’ Europe other than by rejecting the bosses’ Europe. There is no logically established linkage joining means to ends. Just saying ‘no’ to the bosses’ Europe does not lead to a workers’ Europe.¹⁷⁰

The EU is a quasi-democratic “bosses’ club”. There is no difference here. But, instead of joining with Michael Howard and the Tories, the Murdoch press and Ukip, the BNP and the national socialist left, communists take up the weapons of organisation and democracy. We have a positive programme. A social Europe, within which the political power and economic interests of the broad masses - albeit initially under capitalism - are qualitatively advanced. To bring forward this immediate aim the following seven demands, specifically concerning the EU, are presented:

1. For a republican United States of Europe. No to the Brussels constitution. Abolish the council of ministers and sack the unelected commissioners. For a single-chamber, executive and legislative, continental congress of the peoples, elected by universal suffrage and proportional representation.

2. Nationalise all banks in the EU and put the ECB under the direct democratic control of the European congress. No to the stability pact and spending limits. Stop privatisation and so-called private finance initiatives. End subsidies to, and tax breaks for, big business. Tax income and capital. Abolish VAT. Yes to workers’ control over big business and the overall direction of the economy. Yes to a massive programme of house-building and public works.

3. For the levelling up of wages and social provisions. For a maximum 35-hour week and a common minimum income. End all anti-trade union laws. For the constitutional right to organise and the constitutional right to strike. For top-quality healthcare, housing and education, allocated according to need. Abolish all restrictions on abortion. Fight for substantive equality between men and women.

4. End the Common Agricultural Policy. Stop all subsidies for big farms and the ecological destruction of the countryside. Nationalise all land. Temporary relief for small farmers. Green the cities. Free urban public transport. Create extensive wilderness areas - forest, marshes, heath land - preserve and rehabilitate animal and plant life for the enjoyment and fulfilment of the population.

5. No to the Rapid Reaction Force, Nato and all standing armies. Yes to a popular, democratic militia, equipped with the most advanced and destructive weaponry.

6. No to ‘Fortress Europe’. Yes to the free movement of people into and out of the EU. Full citizenship and voting rights for all who may wish it who have been resident in the EU for longer than six months.

7. For the closest coordination of all working class forces in the EU. Promote EU-wide industrial unions - eg, railways, energy, communications, engineering, civil service, print and media. For a democratic and effective EU Trade Union Confederation. For a single, centralised, revolutionary party: ie, the Communist Party of the European Union.

Armed with such a continent-wide programme, a republican Europe, a social

Remaking Europe Conferederal constitution

Europe, the United Socialist States of Europe, can be realised. By taking the lead over every democratic shortcoming, by coordinating our defensive and offensive activity, by building upon our strength and extending our room for manoeuvre through securing far-reaching economic and political gains, we can change the “bosses’ club” into a workers’ club.

11. Economism and the programmatic alternative

No one can discredit Marxism as long as we do not discredit ourselves. That maxim ought to be constantly borne in mind when looking at disputes over Europe and the European Union. As the reader knows by now, virtually the entire left in Britain adopts a hostile attitude towards the struggle for democracy within the European Union. It is either an utter bore or positively sinister. Morbid sectarians even denounce any suggestion of radically extending democracy in the EU as a 666 type mark characteristic of Kautskyism.

Unfortunately Alan Thornett - leader of the International Socialist Group - speaks for the majority of the left in Britain when he blunderingly calls for two disengaged and entirely opposed outcomes: on the one side “the dissolution of the EU or Britain’s withdrawal from it”, and on the other side “a socialist Britain in a socialist Europe”.¹⁷¹ Not that he passes over the need for reforms: “We are for the best deal in the EU for the workers and demand the levelling up of all conditions, wages and services, to that of the highest level”.¹⁷² In other words, when it comes to Europe workers should lend their support to the withdrawal programme of the left reformists in parliament and seek redress for their economic grievances through industrial militancy. Meanwhile the left will sagely declare that all this helps bring forward the socialist dawn.

Marxism has a well established category for such a patronising, short-sighted and emaciated outlook - economism. A term originally coined in pre-revolutionary Russia. Naturally the likes of Thornett, who parade themselves as Marxists of the first rank, define economism in a particularly selective, reduced, fashion. That way, in their own minds at least, they can plead not guilty to the charge.

Here are four specially selected, but representative, definitions of economism. We shall begin with Tony Cliff, founder of the SWP: “Socialists should limit their agitation to purely economic issues, first to the industrial plant, then to inter-plant demands, and so on. Secondly, from the narrow economic agitation the workers would learn, through experience of the struggle itself, the need for politics, without the need for socialists to carry out agitation on the general political and social issues facing the Russian people as a whole”.¹⁷³

Next an ‘official communist’ dictionary definition of economism: “Its proponents wanted to limit the tasks of the working class movement to economic struggle (improving labour conditions, higher wages, etc). They held that political struggle should be waged by the liberal bourgeoisie alone”.¹⁷⁴ Thornett’s fellow ISGer, Bob Jenkins, can speak for orthodox Trotskyism: economism is “orientating to daily trade union struggles” and this “leads them to underestimate the important new political issues and movements unless they are to be found in the unions”.¹⁷⁵ Finally, we turn to the Alliance for Workers’

Liberty's Pete Radcliff for a definition from the camp of unorthodox Trotskyism: "Economism was the term Lenin used to describe the politics and approach of revolutionaries who exclude themselves from the political struggle ... and merely concentrated on trade union agitation".¹⁷⁶

All partial, all cut short. Even against the "old economism" of the 1890s Lenin fielded the term in the "broad sense".¹⁷⁷ According to Lenin the *principal* feature of economism is lagging behind the spontaneous movement and a general tendency to downplay or belittle the centrality of democracy. So there is what we might call *narrow* economism and *broad* economism. Economism need not necessarily mean therefore an underestimation of "important new political issues and movements" or "merely" concentrating "on trade union agitation." On the contrary economists can and do follow, and even staff, all manner of existing campaigns, causes and demands - eg, petty bourgeois greenism, feminism, black separatism, CND pacifism, Scottish nationalism and left Labourism. Hence economists do not, by any means, shun politics. Rather, economism veers away from the Marxist conception of politics. Crucially economism eschews taking the *lead* on democratic questions and uniting all democratic demands into a single working class led assault on the existing state.

No wonder most left groups and factions nowadays do their best to ignore the unabridged, complete definition. They might not exactly fit the bill when it comes to narrow economism. Broad economism, however, is another matter. What goes for Alan Thornett and his ISG goes for the others - SWP, Socialist Appeal, AWL, the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain, Workers Power, Independent Working Class Association, Socialist Party in England and Wales, etc. Despite a superficial loyalty to and knowledge of Marxism they all downplay the necessity of democracy. So what passes itself off as Marxism to the public is in actual fact economism with all its anti-democratic philistinism and prejudices. No wonder Marxism is commonly seen as suspect, discredited or irrelevant.

Let us examine economism in Russia. Its growth from 1894 onwards was aided by four main local, specific, factors. Firstly, in the early stages of their movement communists in Russia "restricted themselves merely to work in propaganda circles". When they took up the work of agitation amongst the masses they were "not always able" to restrain themselves "from going to the other extreme". Their leaflets brilliantly exposed the terrible factory conditions in Russia and roused the admiration of workers, but little more. Secondly, they pitted themselves against the Narodnik socialists, who understood politics as activity isolated from the masses and often as terroristic conspiracies. In rejecting this sort of politics the communists "went to the extreme of pushing politics entirely into the background". Thirdly, in the prevailing conditions where workers and revolutionaries were meeting in nothing more than small discussion-propaganda circles, the communists "did not devote sufficient attention to the necessity of organising a revolutionary party which would combine all the activities of the local groups and make it possible to organise the revolutionary work on correct lines".¹⁷⁸ Fourthly, there was the arrest and exile of Lenin, Martov and other theoretically experienced comrades in December 1897, and the success the new, younger, generation of leaders enjoyed in influencing mass strikes.

On top of these four local factors was the publication, and international significance of, Eduard Bernstein's *Evolutionary socialism* in 1899. Anticipating the bourgeoisification of the western labour movement, the basic thesis of Bernstein's book - much acclaimed in its day by modish left academics and condescending liberals alike - was that *national* capitalism, through the growing organisation of the productive forces, was inexorably widening the democratic space in society and gradually leading to its transformation into a socialism from above. Wars, crises and violent revolutions were discounted as phenomena of a past age. Bernstein also proposed that the Social Democratic Party in Germany would greatly benefit from discarding all antiquated notions and phraseology: eg, the dictatorship of the proletariat and class war. Instead it should concentrate on the real business at hand: parliamentary elections and the day-to-day improvement of the overall condition of the working class. Bernstein included the infamous phrase: "the final aim of socialism" is "nothing"; it is the movement itself that "is everything".¹⁷⁹ By the "movement" he meant the existing institutions, elected representatives and routine economic struggles of the working class; not historically accumulated theory, fighting capacity and revolutionary consciousness. As to the "final aim" being "nothing", that, he claimed, referred not so much to socialism itself, rather "indifference" to the "form of the final arrangement of things".¹⁸⁰ Be that as it may, Bernstein's revisionism admirably suited the economists in Russia.

Despite their popularity with strikers the problem with the economists, loosely grouped around *Rabochaya Mysl*, *Rabocheye Dyelo* and various other such papers and journals, was that they attempted to elevate the one-sidedness of the movement into a "special theory", which they in turn linked to the "fashionable" Bernsteinism and the "fashionable" refutations of Marxism. Like 'analytical Marxism' and the 'market socialists' in our day, this was in reality nothing but old, repackaged bourgeois ideas. As a result of economism the danger was that the connection between the working class and the struggle for political liberty would be weakened or even broken. Against such backsliding, Lenin intransigently declared that the "most urgent" task of Marxists in Russia "is to strengthen that connection" in order to bring to quick fruition the overthrow of the "autocratic government".¹⁸¹

Nonetheless, economists declared that economic issues were key to both mobilising the masses and enlightening them. The "final aim" of replacing tsarism with a democratic republic was increasingly downgraded on the list of priorities to the point where it simply disappears into a far distant future. Republican demands therefore had no practical significance. Only the liberal bourgeoisie and intelligentsia were interested in such remote and obscure matters. Not the workers. Hence there was supposedly no leverage in making anti-tsarist agitation. On the other hand, spontaneously following the line of least resistance, workers were actually striking - not taking to the streets demanding a republic and a constituent assembly. Consequentially the economists argued, in true tailist fashion, that the job of the party was to assist workers in their efforts to build trade unions and to give their demands a 'socialist coloration'. Trade unionism was virtually equated with socialism.

Lenin and his comrades launched a ferocious assault on the economists and joined the international campaign opposing Bernsteinism. In the hands of the economists

Marxism was being “narrowed down” and the attempt was being made to turn the party of revolution into a party of reform. Lenin warned that “the working class movement is being sundered from socialism”. Yes, the workers are being “helped to carry on the economic struggle,” but “nothing, or next to nothing, is done to explain to them the socialist aims and political tasks of the movement as a whole”. Self-fulfillingly the economists were beginning to talk “more and more” about the struggle against the tsarist government having to be “carried on entirely by the intelligentsia because the workers confine themselves to the economic struggle”.¹⁸²

Lenin defined the party as the living combination of the working class movement and the aim of socialism. The party should therefore not “passively serve” the working class movement at its various stages, but constantly strive to represent the interests of the movement as a whole, in its ultimate aims and established, or if necessary, ascribed, political and ideological independence. Isolated from the party, the working class movement becomes “petty and inevitably bourgeois”. In waging only economic struggles the working class movement is doomed to fragmentation and simply going round in the same endless circles. In all countries there have been periods, longer or shorter, where the working class movement and Marxism have gone their separate ways, to the great detriment of both. The thing to do is to fuse them together, not just in word, but deed.

Suffice to say, by 1903 economism lay discredited and defeated, above all due to the hammer blows struck by *Iskra* - the celebrated polemical paper edited by Lenin, Martov, Potresov, Plekhanov, Axelrod and Zasulich. And suffice to say, in the years that followed economism constantly reappeared in new virulent forms and guises. For example, despite having *Iskra* origins, the Mensheviks inexorably slid in that direction. Having fatefully rejected the Bolshevik strategy of the working class taking the lead in the fight for democracy, aligning with the peasantry and striving to form a post-tsarist worker-peasant government, the Mensheviks turned more and more towards highlighting the economic struggles of the working class as a seemingly militant substitute. It was, of course, nothing of the sort. Their strategy of urging working class support for the liberal bourgeoisie (in the schema - capitalism) against the tsarist autocracy (again in the schema - feudalism) tended towards such a pose. Their mechanical Marxism was a complete dead-end and doomed to disappointment; it was, tragically, in the last analysis, counterrevolutionary.

Not that the Bolsheviks were immune. Economism is highly infectious. During World War I a ‘left’ faction emerged around Bukharin and Pyatakov. It dismissed, amongst other vital aspects of the Bolshevik’s minimum programme, the right of nations to self-determination. Self-determination was branded as illusory and damaging. Capitalism at its imperialist stage could never grant such a right and under socialism it would anyway be unnecessary because nations had long ago become reactionary. Class unity, not national rights, should come first. Lenin took up the cudgels against this trend. He branded his own Bolshevik comrades as ‘imperialist economists’ in a series of devastating polemics.¹⁸³ National self-determination, he rightly insisted, was neither illusory nor damaging. On the contrary the working class had to take the lead in offering a positive, democratic, solution to national questions where they exist ... if it were ever to become a ruling class.

So economism is not something that Marxists equate with industrial militancy in and of itself. Certainly no authentic Marxist would denigrate, let alone denounce, striking workers and their attempt to defend, or better their lot under capitalism. Any such dismissive attitude is, of course, repugnant, stupid and misdirected. Economism, though, concerns the left. It is a theory or practice quietly carried out, or noisily advocated, by those who typically describe themselves as Marxists, but who either elevate and flatter economic struggles or downplay the primacy of the political. As well as narrow *striktist* economism other *broader* manifestations of economism can therefore be cited - not only Menshevik and 'left' Bolshevik economism, but *atheist economism*, the reliance on technological and scientific progress to overcome religious superstition, or *Trotskyite economism* which equates the former USSR with some kind of workers' state due to nationalised property forms.

Modern-day economists, just like their Russian ancestors, sincerely talk of the global fight against capitalism and the final aim of socialism. However the practical effect of their approach is to maintain the workers as an oppressed class. Wages, hours, conditions, social services, etc, are what is deemed to be really important for the workers. This implicit or explicit emphasis on the 'base' of capitalist society, is, of course, nothing but an unconscious, ideological, reproduction of capitalism itself and its unique bifurcation of social life into two apparently separate spheres: the economic and the political. That incidentally being why economism constantly reappears.

Allow me to elaborate. In pre-capitalist society - Asiatic, slave, feudal, autocratic, etc - the extraction of surplus-product was pretty unproblematic. Typically, it was naked and undisguised. Exploiters took, and were not *in reality* obliged to give anything in return. Brute force, or the threat of brute force, ie, extra-economic means were used to extract surplus product from the immediate producers (tithes, taxes, labour services, etc). This historically established ability to deploy commanding military force was reflected, legitimised and glorified in the exploiter's elevated *legal* position: high priests, senators, mandarins, barons, bishops, kings, emperors, etc. Ditto the lowly, despised position of the common people. As a result, be they helots, slaves, coloni or villeins, no one was in any doubt that they were both oppressed and exploited. Hence the class struggle spontaneously runs straight to the political.

Capitalism, however, exploits *indirectly* through the generalisation of wage labour and the market. An ultimately alienated social form, which apparently equalises the relationship between exploited and exploiters - workers themselves typically ask for a 'fair day's pay' in return for a 'fair day's work'. Exploitation is thereby thoroughly disguised, or mystified, within a sphere which bourgeois ideologists seal off from ready perception under the disembodied rubric of the 'economy'. The economy is treated ahistorically as a mere technical arrangement and drained of all social content. In reality the economic is thoroughly political and the political is thoroughly economic. Capitalist exploitation certainly begins with a defining political act, the bloody separation of the producers from the means of production - as harrowingly detailed by Marx in the last section of *Capital* volume one - and continues to rely upon a political relationship. Exploitation, and the reproduction of the conditions of exploitation, would be impossible without the state - supposedly a neutral arbiter but in reality completely partisan - holding

a monopoly of the means of force. Though wherever possible it remains in the background, state power exists to guarantee the law, property rights and hence the fundamentally unequal relationship between capital and the *propertyless* class of workers (by ‘property’ we mean, of course, the means of production, not personal property like clothes, a car or a house).

Capitalism not only apparently separates politics and economics: by the same measure it also separates economic militancy from political consciousness. Class conflict under capitalism spontaneously finds its first expression at the point of production, in the workplace, and the relationship between employee and employer. Not the exploited against the state. As also pointed out by Ellen Meiksins Wood, the Canadian leftwing academic, that means class conflict under capitalism is spontaneously downgraded from the political to the economic and therefore to the “local and particularistic”¹⁸⁴. A medieval peasant, for example, owns some means of production and would largely control their own work. Hence their struggle against the feudal lords - over rents, tithes or labour duties - had an overtly political content. The feudal lord was the state. By contrast, the fight over wages that constantly rages and rumbles within the belly of capitalism, no matter how militant, leaves the labour-capital relationship untouched. This is true even if workplace militancy impinges upon management’s right to manage.

That need not, however, present an intractable dilemma. Capitalist progress does not necessarily go hand-in-hand with a systemic decline in political consciousness. There is no reason to look back fondly at pre-capitalist societies or for that matter less developed capitalist societies. In modern times, so goes the argument, it has been backward countries, because of the greater role of extra-economic surplus extraction and therefore spontaneous political consciousness, that have produced most anti-capitalist revolutions. Leave aside the hollow pretence, grinding poverty and complete inability of Mao’s China, Castro’s Cuba, Ho Chi Minh’s Vietnam, etc, to positively transcend capitalism, the fact of the matter is that if we take Russia as our example, it is quite clear that here it was the working class which played the leading role in the revolution. Not because of surviving pre-capitalist forms and relationships, as erroneously suggested by Meiksins Wood, amongst others. There is a staggering lacuna in her account. She completely overlooks the Bolshevik Party - and its programme, sophisticated theory, recruitment of tens of thousands of proletarians and unremitting struggle to overcome spontaneity, including economism. Indeed, only with the mediation of such a combat organisation, its scientific name being Communist Party, is it possible to *practically* join together the economic and the political.

Economism works to reproduce, or even further reduce, the already cramped horizons of the working class. High politics and the vistas of extreme democracy are not for today and ought not to disturb the bovine minds of ordinary folk. Eg, demand the resignation of Tony Blair but do not even think about bringing to the fore the monarchical-prime ministerial constitution. Such a deeply condescending approach leads inevitably to an attenuated view, and not only of political tasks. As we have said many times before: organisational forms loyally follow political content. Hence narrow, trade unionist-type, politics unfailingly begets narrow-type organisations. Economism therefore engenders and excuses the continuation and proliferation of primitive sects and at best aims for

little more than reviving, or reinventing old Labourism - whether that be Respect, Scottish Socialist Party, Labour Representation Committee, Socialist Alliance or a reddish-greenish protest party still longed for by some timid souls.

Not surprisingly a democratic centralist party of the Bolshevik type - which affords the right of minorities to establish temporary or permanent factions and unites as one in agreed actions - is completely beyond them. Economic struggles against employers and the government's anti-trade union laws hardly require a revolutionary programme. Nor does swelling the numbers for the next anti-war protest. Nor does defending the NHS demand a body of professional revolutionaries. Nor can contesting European elections on the basis of vague platitudes give rise to a mass Communist Party of the European Union which exists to elevate all protests, all movements against injustice, all discontent with the EU and its 25 governments - eventually into one final assault. That much is surely obvious.

Economists not only consign democratic questions towards the bottom of their list of priorities, but can sometimes even be found opposing them. Take the federal republic (which is the state form required in Britain if the working class is to begin to liberate itself). We have been told on countless occasions that raising such a demand is unnecessary and diversionary because capitalism is on its last legs and what we should be demanding instead is a socialist republic. A clear case of programmatic illiteracy. Historically speaking we undoubtedly live in the epoch of moribund capitalism and the transition to communism. That has been the case, though, since monopoly capitalism and imperialism emerged at the end of the 19th century. However, that *economic* truth should not lead anyone to reject democratic demands nor the logical ordering of our *political* programme.

First, the immediate, or minimum, section - it crystallises and presents those fundamental demands that are technically achievable under the socio-economic conditions of capitalism; through the mass, militant and conscious fight for them, and of course in their practical fulfilment, the working class is readied for revolution. And that is where the maximum programme starts off. It describes the socialist transition period to communism and universal human freedom and here, in the maximum programme, not in the minimum programme, one finds the *socialist* republic. Obviously both sections of the programme are internally connected. They form an integral and related whole.

Certainly without the minimum programme and the struggle for democracy, the maximum programme and its socialist republic, abolition of the wage system and money, becomes nothing but a pious wish list. Putting forward an abstract socialism as the answer to every problem - a socialist London, a socialist Britain, a socialist Europe, etc - is therefore more than useless. It is a downright hindrance. The minimum programme and the struggle for democracy cannot be skipped. Let me mention a small, annoying, detail. State power remains to be conquered. Revolution and the overthrow of the old order is not yet an accomplished fact. The parties and factions of the left are not busily setting up makeshift offices in Buckingham Palace, nor are workers' councils using the chamber of the House of Commons as a convenient central meeting place.

Counterposing the immediate demand for a federal republic and the maximum demand for a socialist republic is to hopelessly mix the tasks of today with those of tomorrow. It

might sound terribly revolutionary to reject a federal republic in Britain in favour of a socialist republic, but the effect is to disarm ourselves before the existing state. This helps explain why the left is so muddled and ineffective. A telling example - Respect's founding declaration boldly points to the "crisis of representation, a democratic deficit" in Britain. Yet presented with the opportunity of providing a concrete answer - by calling for a republic - John Rees and the SWP successfully urged the January 2004 'convention of the left' to reject the demand. Hence apart from calling attention to a burning constitutional question, Respect has no constitutional answers. Perhaps the 'R' in Respect does after all stand for 'royalist' and a commitment to pursuing equality, peace, community, socialism and trade unionism under the existing constitution.

Chosen SWPers lined up to tell us that a republic was irrelevant, that France and the US are republics, and that they are no better or worse than royalist Britain. A misdirected argument. No one suggested that we should seek to copy the French or US presidential republics. But only by *politically* challenging and fighting to replace the existing constitution could we seriously and convincingly raise the perspective of bringing into being the social republic.

Instructively, that is the approach taken by Engels in his *Critique of the Erfurt programme* written in 1891. Engels took to task his Social Democratic Party comrades for their failure to raise the demand for the republic in kaiser Germany. They excused themselves from this task, not because it was deemed an irrelevance, rather they pointed to the ominous possibility of another savage anti-socialist clampdown by the Bismarck government. Engels suggests various semantic ways of avoiding overtly illegal statements. Yet whatever the evasive formulation in the programme, the party, he said, had to be clear: the hold of Prussianism and its monarchy had to be broken. What was needed? "In my view", says Engels, "the proletariat can only use the form of the one and indivisible republic".¹⁸⁵

Significantly from our point of view, in the same work Engels reiterates that in the British Isles a "federal republic" - formed between Britain and Ireland - "would be a step forward".¹⁸⁶ Marx and Engels had on a number of different occasions raised that demand. For them the workers in Britain must take the political lead in the struggle for the fullest democracy. Lenin approvingly cites the call by the Marx-Engels team for a federal republic in the British Isles in *State and revolution*. That does not mean the slogan is necessarily correct when addressing the Scottish and Welsh national questions today. But to dismiss it out of hand reveals a big political problem for those who claim to be Marxists.

Trotsky's writings on Spain in 1930 are instructive too. Spain was still a monarchy. He therefore calls for a democratic republic and tells the communists to "struggle resolutely, audaciously, and energetically for *democratic slogans*." Not to do so "would be to commit the greatest sectarian mistake." The communists should distinguish themselves from all the "leftists" not by "rejecting democracy" (as the anarchists, syndicalists and left economists did) but by "struggling resolutely and openly for it".¹⁸⁷ The proletariat "needs a clear revolutionary democratic programme", he insists.¹⁸⁸ Only so armed can the proletariat lead the coming revolution, says Trotsky. Was Trotsky right? On this occasion, absolutely!

A final point. Rejecting the minimum-maximum programme nowadays passes for

common sense amongst a wide range of leftists. The AWL's executive committee even agreed a solemn resolution denouncing the CPGB because of our commitment to a minimum-maximum programme; such a configuration is hangover from "their Stalinist past" it claims. Pitiful huff and puff, of course.

The minimum-maximum programme is not only a product, and characteristic of, orthodox Marxism, it is proven to work. Following their minimum-maximum programme, and, yes, whenever necessary renewing and modifying - not abandoning it as the old fable alleges - the Bolsheviks steered their way to the world historic moment of October (November) 1917 and the Soviet Republic of workers, soldiers and peasants. Dogmatists and the pig ignorant will protest. But history shows the truth.

Undaunted, the minimum-maximum programme is derided and dismissed by every half-educated Trotskyite. In the venerated, almost mystical, name of Trotsky's - totally outdated, deeply flawed and frankly economistic - *Transitional programme*, every group, sect and cult, advances either formally or informally what is billed as an infinitely superior alternative. It ain't so. Instead of a *revolutionary* minimum programme they ritualistically genuflect before an abstract socialism, meanwhile pursuing their real obsession: economic demands which leave the existing state and its constitution completely untouched.

Such is the muck, myth and nonsense that has been thrown at the minimum-maximum programme, that advocating this honourable and proven strategic perspective in most leftwing circles is akin to uttering the sacred name 'Jehovah' amongst ancient Jews. To even say the two words together in a positive fashion is to invite invective, mocking curses, if not a deadly hail of rocks and stones. In the minds of the devotees the point blank refusal by their masters to even consider the minimum-maximum programme represents a heroic restatement of the highest achievements of Marxist theory. In reality it is a sad combination of banality and bankruptcy.

Of necessity the minimum-maximum programme must be rescued from the geriatric clutches of social democracy and 'official communism' and restored to its proper place in the basic armoury of the international working class movement. To hammer out and adopt a minimum-maximum programme is not to repeat the sins of German social democracy which, true, in part stemmed from the *minimal* nature of its minimum programme. As we have seen, Engels lambasted the SDP not because it arranged its programme in two logically related parts, but for what was a fearful unwillingness to include abolition of the kaiser monarchy and a centralised democratic republic in the minimum section of its programme. So there are minimum programmes and minimum programmes.

12. Equality and the Euro gravy train

Peter Mandelson's appointment as Britain's European Union commissioner was an inspired choice. The man is perfectly suited for the role. Not for nothing has he been dubbed the prince of darkness. Devious. Slippery. Conceited. Tarnished. Loathed by the Labour Party's rank and file activists, he exudes the patrician's contempt for democracy, openness and accountability.

Twice forced to quit Tony Blair's cabinet amid allegations of shady financial dealing, he is now free to exploit all the perks, privileges and piggery offered by life in Brussels. Mandelson will have his suite of plush offices in the star-shaped Berlaymont building which cost the EU a cool £80 million to purchase and has just been lavishly refurbished. As a commissioner he is set to receive an annual salary of £142,000 plus a 15% top up towards accommodation. Besides that there is a veritable cornucopia of tax free benefits and bonuses: travel, entertainment, even a chauffeur. Proxies insist he will work a gruelling 12 to 15 hour day; doubtless, though, that will include hobnobbing with business lobbyists and socialising with Europe's political elite - Brussels is blessed with many sumptuous restaurants of world renown. Over fine wines and cognac favours will be asked and favours will be given.

The 25 commissioners are merely the top of a rotten pile. The European parliament is famously pampered and famously corrupt. Official perks for MEPs cost around £140 million annually. MEPs are paid the equivalent to members of their national parliaments. At the upper end Italians get £78,244 while those from Spain have to make do with around £25,000. MEPs from Britain are on £57,485. Those who are MPs too are paid at a so-called duality rate - that would put them on a basic £76,647. However, there is a £19,162 top up to help with accommodation. MEPs also receive two more standard payments, one of 44% of their salary and the other of 33%. The first is for office expenses, the second for office staff. That amounts to a total package of around £120,000.

There are many other ways of making money, though. Claiming no-questions-asked travel expenses has proved particularly lucrative. MEPs are reimbursed at the highest economy rate for making the round trip in order to attend the regular sessions of the EU's parliament - whether that be in Brussels or Strasbourg. Air flights are often discounted, though, and sold at rock-bottom prices. Some MEPs thereby manage to notch up substantial savings of around £10,000 - which they duly pocket. Allowances are also provided for taxis, language lessons, daily living, etc. Most tax free. Nor is there any prohibition on MEPs employing their own relatives as aids - at least two dozen reportedly do. There are generous pensions too. MEPs over 60 who have served for more than five years receive around £1,000 per month.

The EU's so-called 'fraudbusters' calculate that in the year ending June 2003, proven scams amounted to £590 million. Probably the figure is twice that amount. Subsidies provided under the Common Agricultural Policy being an easy target. According to the

United Kingdom's own National Audit Office, during Neil Kinnock's period as a commissioner corruption doubled. Amongst those accused of petty cheating was one Glenys Kinnock.

Fittingly, the EU as a whole has, in popular parlance, become a byword for cronyism, extravagance and venality. And Tory rightwingers, the Murdoch media, the *Daily Telegraph*, the United Kingdom Independence Party and the whole ugly chorus of little British chauvinists never miss an opportunity to heap scorn and further reduce the standing of the EU's institutions and personnel.

Rank hypocrisy. Blundering Tory MEPs have been caught with snouts deep in the EU trough. More importantly, the constitutional ideal cherished and promoted by the Europhobes - monarchy, cabinet, unelected House of Lords, established church and Whitehall mandarins - is inextricably interwoven with the system of bribery. Capitalism strives to commodify everything - including virtue, propriety and honour. The wheels of profit must be greased. Democracy subverted. Hence fat donations to party funds, liberal wining and dining, luxurious Caribbean holidays, the old NUS network, jobs for sons and daughters and straightforward blackmail. That way come continued restrictions on trade union rights, extensive infrastructural projects, useful legislation, juicy government contracts, huge subsidies, massive tax breaks, etc.

To a greater or lesser extent all countries dominated, or penetrated by capitalism present the same essential picture. Italy, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Japan, Russia, China and South Africa are notoriously corrupt. But nowhere is immune. Capitalists will always try to use the state to fix the market. Despite the pious dreams of Adam Smith and classical political economy and their present-day Chicago epigones, there is not and there never has been anything remotely approaching 'perfect competition'. There is only unfair competition.

Frankly, the anti-capitalist left faces an open goal. Eg, *Socialist Worker* reports that young people often automatically presume that "deceit, spinning and personal ambition" are endemic amongst politicians.¹⁸⁹ And it is not only youth. Opinion polls regularly show that wide swathes of the population regard the entire political establishment with utter contempt. Clearly the fight to expose and uproot corruption is not only to key into mass discontent - it is, if it is more than a sham, to take up the war against capitalism itself. Our guiding slogans here must be equality and democracy. And yet, and yet ...

In the midst of the June 2004 European election campaign, John Rees - Socialist Workers Party's paramount leader and Respect candidate in the east Midlands - issued what might appear to be a well aimed authoritative statement: "Our MEPs", he pledged, "will be leading the campaign in the European parliament to derail the financial gravy train and clear up the mess".¹⁹⁰ Unfortunately a rather sorry own goal. It was not that Respect failed to get anyone elected. The words of comrade Rees simply rung hollow. There is the stench of double standards. After all one of the 'shibboleths' voted down by the SWP majority at Respect's January 25 2004 convention was the second letter in the Respect acronym. Supposedly the 'e' in Respect stands for 'equality' and could, if it were taken seriously and made concrete, have a profound impact on a working class that has grown sick and tired of Labourite politicians such as Mandelson and their naked careerism.

At the Respect convention the CPGB backed a motion, ably moved by Lesley Mahmood, which would have committed all its elected representatives to stand well clear of the gravy train and take a personal salary no greater than the average skilled worker - the balance being donated to the movement. We have no wish to see yet another generation of socialists become hooked on the bloated parliamentary life style - one which is undoubtedly designed to open them up to all manner of conservative and backsliding pressures. The fighting instincts of even the best militant can be subdued in conditions of political theatre, cosy compromise ... and middle class affluence.

Disgracefully the motion was overwhelmingly defeated (other 'shibboleths' which were unceremoniously dumped included republicanism, open borders and political inclusivity - women's and gay rights would surely have gone the same way too, if the SWP leadership reckoned they could have got away with it).

The SWP has landed itself in a hopeless mess over the question. Paul Holborow, for instance, urged the Respect convention to vote down the motion calling for workers' representatives to stand on a worker's wage because "Respect is not a socialist organisation".¹⁹¹ Quite frankly this is risible: limiting the pay of representatives is a principle which our tradition applies to *all* spheres of representation.

The 1871 Paris Commune - originally the equivalent of the Greater London Authority - guarded against the "inevitable" danger of the "transformation of the state and the organs of the state from servants of society into masters of society". It filled all posts - administrative, judicial and educational - "by election on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned, subject to the right of recall at any time by the same electors". And all officials were paid "only the wages received by other workers". In this way said, Frederick Engels, "an effective barrier to place-hunting and careerism was set up".¹⁹²

The Bolsheviks upheld this heritage. In Vladimir Lenin's so-called 'April thesis' we read: "The salaries of all officials, all of whom are elected and displaceable at any time, not to exceed the average wage of a competent worker".¹⁹³ Later in *State and revolution* Lenin argued for the growing "equality of wages" as an integral part of the programmatic aim of introducing labour certificates and finally realising a communist society where need determines consumption, not hours done.

True, the Bolsheviks were forced to conduct a complete about turn over 'bourgeois experts' in 1918. To dissuade them from going over to the whites in the erupting civil war and to get them to work diligently and effectively, engineers, agronomists, scientists, etc, were generously bribed by the Soviet Republic. Nevertheless, till the Stalinite counterrevolution within the revolution and the first five-year plan, no member of the Communist Party was allowed to earn more than a skilled worker. Tony Cliff - SWP founder, rightly says this provision was "of great importance".¹⁹⁴

And only a few years ago the SWP experienced no problem voting for this principle in the Socialist Alliance. Indeed there was unanimity amongst us on this question. Subsequently every one of the SA's 98 candidates in the 2001 general election, not least the chair, Dave Nellist, a former Coventry MP, proudly proclaimed that they were not like the self-seeking career politicians who dominate establishment parties. They were not in it for the money. Tommy Sheridan and the Scottish Socialist Party made the same pledge ... and won considerable esteem in the working class as a result. Today their six

MSPs take home something like £23,000. Roughly half the official Holyrood salary.

This approach was unproblematically extended to the entire labour movement. *People before profit* - the SA's election manifesto - demands that trade union officials must be regularly elected, accountable and "receive the average wage of the workers they represent" (p7). Ditto the recent SWP pamphlet written by Martin Smith. After slating the "astronomical" salaries enjoyed by the trade union bureaucracy they confidently promise that "a rank and file trade union official" would be expected to take home the "average wage of the workers he or she represents".¹⁹⁵

Whether it be a class party or a sect, nothing it seems can be easier than to accrue prestige by repeating elementary Marxist principles. Eg, Alex Callinicos boldly, and not without foundation, says that to "demand equality is to propose revolution".¹⁹⁶ However, it is only when there is a price to pay - eg, a government ban, temporary unpopularity, loss of big names - do we discover beyond any shadow of doubt what is authentic, serious and worthwhile and what is merely affectation.

The right and centre of the German Social Democratic Party showed their true colours in August 1914 by treacherously voting for the kaiser's war budget. Obviously the SWP did the same on January 25 2004. Its leadership routinely preach Marxism in books and articles and at their fortnightly Socialist Worker forums. But SWP practice is thoroughly opportunist, ie, principles are sacrificed in favour of anything advantageous in the short-term. Quite frankly in that light *Socialist Worker* has no right to criticise Labour Party turncoats such as Charles Clarke and Diane Abbott for betraying their principles (nor does International Socialist Group/*Resistance* leader Alan Thornett - who suddenly no longer knows what an average skilled workers' wage is, or how one might arrive at a suitable figure).

Presumably the SWP calculated that sticking to a workers' representative on a workers' wage might risk seeing celebrities like George Galloway and Yvonne Ridley swiftly head for the door marked 'exit'. Galloway publicly states that he needs a minimum of £150,000 if he is "to function properly as a leading figure in a part of the British political system". Ridley is the same, only more so. She sends her daughter to an expensive Lake District public school and enjoys a rich *Harper's and Queen* lifestyle. Not surprisingly, she views the idea of getting by on a skilled worker's wage with a mix of unconcealed horror and blank incomprehension. Not that an MP's "mere" wage of £57,485 would be enough for her. "Give me three or four times as much" she says. Only then can she "do the job properly".¹⁹⁷

Leading SWPers, crucially John Rees and Lindsey German, have, of course, assiduously courted, defended and promoted the likes of Galloway and Ridley. Why? These paragons of middle class socialism rate with the bourgeois media. Minor celebrities they may be, but they are celebrities for all that. As such, they and their aristocratic airs, hallowed prejudices, sudden whims and garbled politics must be allowed to set Respect's agenda, because they alone are conceived of as the bridge to a mass audience. The operative conclusion is clear: shed the baggage of past ages and move further and further to the right. Then, at last, the left can garner votes - a mirror image of what the SWP used to say about the sorry right, right, right course plied by successive generations of Labourites.

Under the Rees leadership the SWP's craving for respectability is palpable. Increasingly elections are seen not as a means of making propaganda and enhancing class combativity, rather saying what you think people want to hear in a desperate bid to get yourself elected - despite failure in June 2004 and the subsequent ratcheting down of expectations, the fond hope is that eventually careers as MPs and MEPs will follow.

To achieve that end Respect must be all things to all people. "What you want: we've got it" Galloway is fond of saying. In other words, Respect is a rainbow coalition within which any working class component is merely listed alongside pensioners, students, muslims and other religious groups, ethnic minorities "and many others" who have been "deeply disappointed by the authoritarian social policies and profit-centred neoliberal economic strategy of the government".

This non-class approach is understandable from Galloway. His background lies in Stalinism, third worldism and left Labourism. But for Rees and the SWP it represents a *practical* collapse into populism: "a form of politics which emphasises the virtues of the uncorrupt and unsophisticated common people against the double-dealing and selfishness to be expected of professional politicians and their intellectual helpers. It can therefore manifest itself in left, right or centrist forms".¹⁹⁸

There can be no doubt that Respect is a manifestation of left popularism, nor can there be any doubt that the SWP leadership is nowadays consciously acting as a conduit for bringing petty bourgeois influences into the socialist and workers' movement - not least from those gathered together in 2003 in the Stop the War Coalition "mothership".

13. The new right in Europe and the spectre of fascism

Mainstream opinion has successively been shocked, stunned and dismayed by the electoral success of the far right. Across Europe extreme rightwing parties continue to make a malevolent, but fluctuating, impact. Belgium is, of course, particularly worrying. The Vlaams Blok is a well established menacing force in the Dutch speaking Flemish east, having 20 of the 50 seats on the Antwerp city authority. In the June 2004 European elections it gained an extra MEP. In the same elections Jörg Haider's Freedom Party in Austria took a hammering. Nevertheless much to the unease of official Europe it holds six cabinet seats. The same feat has been achieved by the 'post-fascist' *Allianza Nazionale* in Italy. Gianfranco Fini, its leader, occupies an important post in Silvio Berlusconi's cabinet. Meanwhile the *Dansk Folkeparti*, under its "housewife leader" Pia Kjaersgaard, props up Denmark's conservative government. And Jean-Marie Le Pen, of course, caused a political earthquake when he reached the second round of the May 2002 French presidential elections. In the Euro 2004 elections his party got 10% of the vote. The *Lijst Pim Fortuyn*, after its spectacular rise, went spectacularly bust. However, its space in the politics of the Netherlands has effectively been occupied by the former whistleblower Paul Van Buitenen and his *Transparent Europe*.

Not that 'moderate' Britain is immune. The United Kingdom Independence Party pushed the Liberal Democrats into a humiliating fourth place in the June 2004 European elections with 16.8% of the vote. From having three MEPs they now have 11 (Ashley Mole had the Ukip whip withdrawn on July 15 2004 after a scandal involving alleged housing benefit fraud). A stunning electoral achievement which scuppered the breakthrough hopes entertained by the British National Party. Nonetheless Nick Griffin's outfit achieved credible results for what is a party with barely disguised Nazi roots - eg, 8% in Yorkshire and Humberside. Nor should it be forgotten that the BNP has around two dozen councillors.

In new Europe too the far right also has a looming presence. Poland's League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*), led by Roman Giertych, got 10 MEPs and 15% of the poll in the 2004 Euro elections; and though disappointed by its results, the even more rightwing *Self-Defence* party, led by Andrzej Lepper, still won 13%. In the Czech Republic, the Europhobe *Civic Democrats* got a massive 30%. The picture is essentially the same in Slovenia, Hungary and Latvia. Nor is the EU's near abroad much different. Norway's *Progress Party*, led by Carl Ivar Hagen, won over 15% of the vote in 1997. Christoph Blocher's *Swiss People's Party (SVP)* performed even better in 1999. His party secured 22.6% of the vote.

How should this political phenomenon - and it is a phenomenon, albeit a highly uneven one, which is undoubtedly coloured and shaped by uneven national conditions

- be assessed?

Undoubtedly, electoral and organisational support for mainstream bourgeois and bourgeois workers' parties is in secular decline. The ruled and the ruling political establishment are becoming disengaged. Hence the numbers not bothering to vote, or voting for rightwing protest parties, is steadily increasing. A negative phenomenon which reflects common perceptions that with neo liberalism and globalisation the nation-state and national parliaments are powerless, if not irrelevant.

Does this decay of the post-World War II social democratic settlement equate with the general crisis of the capitalist system and an imminent danger of counterrevolution? According to many on the left - most notably the Socialist Workers Party and its International Socialist Tendency - today "resembles the 1930s in slow motion (but speeding up)". Europe is witnessing the collapse of the centre and a renewed forward march of fascism. Indeed the SWP's Anti-Nazi League - recently subsumed into Unite Against Fascism - habitually branded all far right parties with the loathsome tag of Nazism. These parties might not be "identical to classical fascism", argues a slightly more sophisticated Kevin Ovenden, but they have fascists "at the core" and their leaders often have "long histories on the fascist right." They are aiming for "electoral respectability" first, before "turning that into mass paramilitary support".¹⁹⁹

The SWP is not alone. Jacques Chirac, Romano Prodi, Lionel Jospin, Wim Koch, Jack Straw, Peter Hain and all their court media and jesters have thrown the 'Nazi' or 'fascist' charge at far right opponents. The more freaky US isolationists even warn that Europe is reverting to the pathological madness that produced two world wars. A new European holocaust is on the agenda, maintain these paleoconservatives.

And yet, according to *Socialist Worker* Ukip is "not a fascist party". Why? Though its "core politics are viciously rightwing", and its "official position on immigration is racist to the core", much of its vote came from "a confused lashing out at the mainstream parties" rather than "a firm commitment to hard right politics." Hence, apparently, Ukip does "not represent a social layer in British society".²⁰⁰ One could, of course, say the same about the BNP.

The Ukip's membership are mostly rightwing populists of the narrow-minded, red-faced, fuming kind. Everything about today's Britain is feared, loathed and bitterly attacked - its boozy/druggy Friday night/Sunday morning youth culture, mosques, black churches and visible migrants, foreign foods, metric weights and measures, and ethos of women's and homosexual equality. They are British nationalists who hate the overwhelming bulk of the British people, and who can neither sympathise with, nor understand the present. Instead they forlornly hark back to the whiteness and supposed moral certainties of the 1950s and beyond that to an empire whose glories they never knew. For them Europe and the euro are the last straw. Not surprisingly then, within Ukip's commanding heights one finds those who have "long histories on the fascist right." It has more than its fair share of holocaust deniers, 'scientific' racists and other such sickoes.

This is attested to by, and seen in the person of, Aidan Rankin; once a prominent Ukip 'thinker'. His political origins lie in green-leftism - he contributed occasional articles to *New Left Review* and the *Ecologist*. In the 1990s, however, disillusioned with the soft left, he gravitated towards the far right, supposedly in search of the "frisson" associated

with political incorrectness. He developed close links with the Third Way, a breakaway from the National Front, and co-wrote the Ukip's 2001 manifesto. A few years ago, though, he seems to have undergone something of Damascene conversion. Now he viscerally writes of how the "dangers" of homosexuality and Europe are interwoven into a single system by the Ukip's "brownshirt-in-blazers tendency".²⁰¹ That, and undisguised hostility to migrants, especially muslims, is all that keeps the fractious and highly paranoid Ukip together.

Ukip's website hysterically talks of Britain being "full up" and "busting at the seams". Migration is crassly, but poisonously, blamed for "clogged up" roads, the bad state of the railways and growing hospital waiting lists. Ukip pledges to "to put an end to mass immigration". And though Ukip denies that it is in any way racist, it certainly uses the 'race card' at every opportunity. Robert Kilroy-Silk says he wants asylum seekers "herded together" by the paras and "dumped on a slow boat to ... somewhere".²⁰² Ukip's London mayoral candidate - and boxing promoter - Frank Maloney, notoriously castigated muslims in Tower Hamlets for "not integrating with British society" and having no "allegiance to Britain". During the June 2004 electoral campaign he also protested against gay parades where policemen held hands. He even said he would refuse to visit Camden because it has "too many gays". Doubtless in the same bigoted spirit, one of Ukip's two London Assembly members, Damien Hockney, proudly stated, when he stood against Michael Portillo in Kensington and Chelsea in the 1999 by-election, that it takes "a real man to defend the pound" - neatly combining homophobia with opposition to the euro.

Then there are Mike Nattrass and Jeffrey Titford. Besides being MEPs - the former is Ukip national chair and West Midlands organiser - both are former members of Denis Delderfield's New Britain Party, which is pro-apartheid, pro-Rhodesia and opposed to black African, Afro-Caribbean and Asian immigration. In 1980 the NBP hit the headlines, for the first and perhaps only time, when it absorbed Patrick Moore's equally revolting United Country Party. The change of party by Nattrass and Titford owes less to conviction, more, they confess, to hopes of being elected.

Other "core" Ukipers entertain similar sympathies. Nigel Farage MEP helped to promote a certain Mark Deavin to the Ukip's national executive committee. Deavin is author of *The grand plan: the origins of non-white immigration* (in 1997 he was exposed as a BNP infiltrator). His book claims that "the mass immigration of non-Europeans into every white country on earth" results from a plot hatched by a "homogenous transatlantic political and financial elite" which aims to "destroy national identities and create a raceless new world order ... These concerns are jewish in origin".²⁰³ According to the same source, Alan Sked, former Ukip leader, tells the story of an argument between himself and Farage. Sked wanted the inclusion of a statement committing Ukip to opposing discrimination against minorities. "We will never win the nigger vote", Farage told him. "The nig-nogs will never vote for us."

Clearly Ukip is not aiming at "electoral respectability"; it has, to a significant degree, already achieved that. Moreover, as we have shown, some of its "core" leaders have proven links with the "fascist right." Though, in the short term, it is surely not contemplating turning its electoral success into "mass paramilitary support", it is complacent in the extreme to dismiss it as just "a confused lashing out at the mainstream

parties”.

What of the assassinated Pim Fortuyn? Contradictorily, showing the headlong retreat from hard, and therefore consistent, political categories, and prefiguring the collapse into the swamplands of left populism, SWP writers seem to include him, and his LPF, under the fascist rubric. The LPF “mopped up” many fascist activists and gave confidence to those “who want to build Hitlerite stormtroopers” says comrade Overdon.²⁰⁴ Be that as it may, Fortuyn and his list surely have more in common with Robert Kilroy Silk and the “non-fascist” Ukip than with Mussolini or Hitler.

In retrospect he certainly makes a rather odd Nazi. Fortuyn claimed to defend Dutch liberalism, liberties and tolerance. Openly homosexual, he dressed the dandy. Chauffeured around in a Bentley, Fortuyn reportedly began political life on the left. His LPF movement attacked official corruption, highlighted crime and delighted in tilting at consensus politics. Ideological shibboleths such as the pending ecological collapse and multiculturalism were mockingly derided. Accept that Holland is essentially a single urban landscape. Forget agriculture, promote industrial and commercial growth, build more motorways and turn what remains of the countryside into parks. Worries about global warming and rising sea levels were answered by Fortuyn with the promise that he would increase the height of dykes.

Fortuyn wanted the assimilation of all recent migrants into *his* Dutch commonality. He singled out Koranic hostility to gays. Islam, he insisted, is a backward religion. Unlike christianity and judaism it had never gone through the ‘laundromat’ and undergone a reformation. A halt should be put on further mass migration. Holland is full.

What of “fascist activists” and those “who want to build Hitlerite stormtroopers”? The fact of the matter is that neo-Nazis, such as the Nederlandse Volksunie, were shunned. Moreover, Fortuyn even denied any affinity between Le Pen and himself. He certainly rejected charges of racism. Appearing on TV Fortuyn, famously slapped down one critic by saying that he had nothing against Moroccans - “After all, I’ve been to bed with so many of them”. That Fortuyn’s deputy was black and born in the Cape Verdi Islands should also say something.

So was Pim Fortuyn a fascist? And what of Jörg Haider’s Freedom Party, the Alleanza Nazionale, the Dansk Folkeparti, Le Pen’s Front National, the Vlaams Blok, Andrzej Lepper’s Self-Defence party, the Czech Republic’s Civic Democrats and other such political formations?

Our intention is to help bring some clarity by first showing why a sloppy, catch-all, use of the term is so dangerous. Then what might be called the 19th century precursors of fascism will be briefly discussed. Fascism will then be put in its proper historical and socio-economic context. Next we examine fascism through the prism of how it was theoretically assessed and explained away by the bourgeoisie establishment. On that basis the contemporary situation becomes altogether clearer.

The term ‘fascism’ has been subject to all manner of different definitions since first coined (Benito Mussolini adopted the *fasces*, a bundle of sticks with an axe at their centre, the symbol of state power in ancient Rome, as the emblem of his movement). Mussolini formed the ‘Italian Fascisti of Combat’ in March 1919 when 54 people - mostly demobilised soldiers, pro-war former syndicalists and extreme social chauvinists - signed up to his

programme. Fascism, in the words of *Il Duce*, stood against liberalism, the “exhausted democracies” and the “violently utopian spirit of Bolshevism”.²⁰⁵

Nowadays on the left, however, the term has degenerated into little more than a throw away insult. A swearword. Members of Italy’s paramilitary police force are routinely dubbed fascists by black bloc anarchists; the guerrillaist left in Turkey describe all the country’s governments as fascist since the foundation of the modern state by Kemal Attaturk in 1923; fascism is frequently equated with any manifestation of racism or anti-semitism; restrictions of civil liberties imposed by David Blunkett are denounced as creeping fascism; etc.

Such abusive labelling rallies support and fills those who use it with righteous indignation and often provokes a pleasingly spluttering response from the target. Yet it does nothing to reveal the true nature of fascism as it emerged historically and functions as a social force in capitalist society. This is no matter of pedantry or semantics.

If you sheer fascism of history, if fascism is reduced to little more than something foul or threatening, an object of opprobrium, then you cannot methodologically distinguish between the role played by fascism in mercilessly destroying the organised working class in Europe during the 1920s, 30s and 40s on the one hand, and on the other the Peterloo massacre of 1819 or the anti-trade union legislation introduced by Margaret Thatcher’s government in the 1980s.

Giving back fascism a clear, definite meaning by rooting it in history has nothing to do with any softness towards carabinieri violence in Italy, fondness for the Turkish state, toleration of racism and anti-semitism, or endorsement of Blunkett’s draconian terrorism act. On the contrary by labelling fascist what is not fascist terrible mistakes in political practice are inevitable and building an effective movement against the real fascist menace is severely impaired.

For example, in the late 1920s and early 30s ‘official communism’ dogmatically classified everything and everyone from the Labour left to Ramsay MacDonald’s national government, and from German social democracy to Franklin D Roosevelt, as fascism or tending towards fascism. Roosevelt’s New Deal administration was written about by Britain’s foremost ‘official communist’ political thinker as a “transition to fascist forms, especially in the economic and industrial field”.²⁰⁶

Fascism was said to grow organically out of bourgeois democracy. According to Dimitri Manuilsky - a trusted member of Comintern’s presidium - in his report to the executive committee of the Communist International, only a liberal “can accept that there is a contradiction between bourgeois democracy and fascism”.²⁰⁷ Stalin summed this approach up by coupling together social democracy and fascism as “twin brothers”.

This ‘third period’ theory led the Communist Party of Germany to shun any united front with the “social fascist” Social Democratic Party. Meanwhile Adolf Hitler - supposedly not especially dangerous - swept to power. After 1933 the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party were both banned, trade unionism abolished and parliamentary democracy ended. Concentration camps awaited communists and social democrats alike.

Over 1934-35 Stalin’s Communist International ‘corrected’ its analysis of fascism. First at the 13th plenum, and then at the 7th congress, Georgi Dimitrov delivered a new formulation which was duly adopted by all ‘official communist’ parties. Dimitrov redefined

fascism as the “open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital”.²⁰⁸

His cure was, though, not much better than the original disease. Fascism was still viewed as an outgrowth of capitalism. But overcoming fascism was completely divorced from the revolutionary class struggle against capital. Besides blessing cooperation with social democrats, the door was held ajar for the forthcoming drive for popular fronts in every country - Britain, India, US, Chile, France, Spain, etc. They would countenance communist support for the less terroristic, less chauvinist and less imperialist representatives of finance capital. Eg, Churchill, Roosevelt, de Gaulle.

From afar Trotsky damned the ‘fourth period’ as a headlong descent into naked class collaboration. He ranked Comintern’s new line on a par with social democracy’s collapse before inter-imperialist war in August 1914. The *Marseillaise* is drowning out the *Internationale*. The Communist International was entering the “social patriotic camp” he concluded.²⁰⁹

We can safely say then that putting the term fascism on a firm scientific footing hardly blunts, but greatly sharpens serious, meaningful, political practice. Certainly without a correct theory the fascist germ that lies festering in the womb of present-day socio-economic conditions can neither be successfully fought nor killed.

Fascism’s intellectual cradle lay in the growth of bourgeois irrationalism during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Social Darwinism, the pseudo-science of race, state worship, romantic national history, anti-semitism, and vilification of international socialism and the organised working class were the dominant ideas of the European ruling classes prior to the outbreak of World War I. Colonial empires found justification in racial theory. Romantic national history bound masses of people at home to the imagined community of the state and social Darwinism reconciled them to the ‘natural’ hierarchical social order.

Nevertheless, though fascist leaders and their shrill publicists freely deployed such ruling class notions, they did so in an entirely demagogic fashion. There is with fascism no body of logically sustainable reasoning of the kind found in the catholic church or Marxism. Read *Mein Kampf* or Mussolini’s *My autobiography*. Hence frantic attempts to locate Le Pen’s ‘fascism’ in his outbursts against the “cosmopolitan elite” and “rootless capital”, or quoting Jörg Haider’s ‘fascist’ admiration for the Third Reich’s system autobahns and public works programme is entirely misplaced. There is no fascist theory systematically linking proposition to practice.

Organisationally fascism has precursors in the anti-liberal and anti-socialist counterrevolutionary movements of the same late 19th to early 20th century period. A loose analogy can be drawn between Louis Napoleon Bonaparte’s movement and fascism. While not pushing his case too far, August Thalheimer - a former top leader of the Communist Party of Germany - did just that and with rewarding results.²¹⁰ Thalheimer took as his *starting point* the profound insights he found in Marx’s *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* and his *The civil war in France*. Leon Trotsky too argued that there “is an element of Bonapartism in fascism”.²¹¹

In 1848 the bourgeois monarchy of Louis Philippe was overthrown. A popular, working class-led, revolution, restored the republic. However, neither the workers nor

the bourgeoisie proved strong enough to impose their rule upon society. Fronting the party of order, the Cavaignac dictatorship could arrest August Blanqui and suppress the Parisian workers' rising of June 1848, but not establish a stable constitutional order. The traditional ruling bloc was hopelessly split. The big landlords and church favoured another restoration of the Bourbons. Meantime the aristocrats of high finance and big industry, along with army chiefs and a retinue of smooth-tongued lawyers, newspaper editors, professors and other such hangers-on remained committed Orleanists. There ensued an inherently unstable revolutionary-counterrevolutionary stand-off between the two main classes in society. Under these circumstances Louis Bonaparte - nephew of emperor Napoleon I - went from being an object of mockery to become the saviour of bourgeois society.

Bonaparte gathered together an amorphous layer of decayed elements - swindlers, thieves, pimps, discharged prisoners, beggars, former soldiers, gamblers, ruined adventurers - those whom the French call *la bohème*. Backed by this volatile but easily manipulable social base, Bonaparte skilfully constructed a broad cross-class coalition. Before workers and the lumpenproletariat he spoke with flamboyant revolutionary phrases; the peasants were fobbed off with traditional family values and the promise of national glory. At the same time Bonaparte quietly aligned himself to high finance.

In December 1848 he managed to get himself elected president of the republic. Over the next few years he whittled away democratic rights and amassed more and more power into his own hands. Elections to the National Assembly showed a revival of the radicals and the left. However, control over the state machine itself - which employed something like 500,000 people - allowed Bonaparte to carry out his coup d'état in December 1851 with the blessing of the French army. A move he legitimised by holding a quick plebiscite. In November 1852 the republic was abolished and Bonaparte was proclaimed as Napoleon III. The Bonapartist state thereby raised itself above society. Bourgeois political power lay broken but bourgeois social power had been rescued from the working class threat.

The Boulangist movement and Paul Deroulede's League of Patriots was also something of a prefiguration. It shot to a fleeting prominence during the late 1880s. Mixing strident nationalism with mass agitation against parliamentary corruption, influential members of the French Workers' Party, including Marx's son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, entertained the illusion that the Boulangist third way represented a "genuine mass movement" which could, if encouraged, develop a socialistic character. Like impatient leftists today, Lafargue tried to swim with a populist tide. Frederick Engels for his part would have none of it. He urged the French comrades to "fight under their own flag" - against both the bourgeois political establishment and the Boulangists.²¹²

Action Française, established in 1899, bears an even closer approximate resemblance to fascism. Action Française combined anti-semitism with nationalism and dynastic royalism. Of key importance though, here we have the first 'shirt movement', ie, non-state rightwing fighting squads. The 'Camelots du Roi' began as Action Française's street gang and in 1917 became a full blown mass counterrevolutionary militia.

In February 1934 they were part of a royalist-fascist bloc - armed with revolvers, clubs and cut-throat razors - which invaded the parliament building in Paris and put the "the smiling, somewhat senile" Gaston Doumergue into power as prime minister.²¹³

Supported by big capital - tycoons such as Ernest Mercier of the electrical and oil trust - these fighting squads were recruited from embittered war veterans, the lumpenproletariat, the never out of debt middle classes and their restless university sons who despaired of ever getting a lucrative government post or a rich client. They dreaded being forced into the ranks of the proletariat. Brought to desperation by the blind workings of capitalism, this amorphous mass was united in howling and screaming for the destruction of the republic. They said they wanted 'France for the French'.

The Union of Russian People, formed in 1905, likewise mobilised declassed elements into fighting squads: "tramps, rowdies, and hawkers". With the cry of Nicholas II on their lips and Mother Russia blessing their vile hatreds, Black Hundreds - overseen by the police - conducted pogroms against striking workers, revolutionaries and jews. Terror from below which was protected from above. The Bolsheviks, and to their credit, the dissident Mensheviks, responded by organising self-defence groups and raising money for arms.

World War I marked an epochal turning point. The means of production are subordinated to the means of destruction. Capitalism can only be sustained through massive state intervention and organisation. The law of value, competition and other essential laws are, though, partially demystified. They are exposed as essentially political. Socialism becomes immanent on a global scale. Where it can, collective capital puts off the transition by granting wide ranging concessions to an increasingly assertive working class.

Official Europe, especially in the defeated countries, emerged from the mayhem of World War I thoroughly discredited, weakened and riven with internal divisions. Our class was presented with an unprecedented historic opportunity. Bolshevism brilliantly illuminated the path in Russia. Tragically, elsewhere the organisations of the working class proved either inadequate or wretchedly recoiled from the gigantic task and sought accommodation with capitalism. Bourgeois society was exhausted and chronically prone to split. But the working class lacked the necessary consciousness and leadership with which to deliver the final revolutionary blow. Fascism erupts as a counterrevolutionary social movement under these conditions.

Following World War I virtually every country in Europe spawned its clutch of fascist groups and grouplets. At first they were entirely marginal. Mussolini secured not a single MP in the 1919 elections. Polite society looked down at them with barely concealed contempt. Hitler was dismissed as a crank. However, the unresolved class struggle and the inability of the bourgeoisie to rule in the old way produced one spasm of economic and political dislocation after another. The malign aura of fascism vanished. Mussolini's blackshirts and Hitler's brownshirts appeared before the ruling class as heaven-sent deliverers. The communist vermin must be exterminated.

Mussolini took power in 1922 at the invitation of king Victor Emanuel III - with the active encouragement of big capital and the benign neutrality of the army assured. The famed march on Rome was pure theatre. Mussolini knew beforehand that the establishment would give him a hero's welcome. A decade later, in the aftermath of the 1929 crash, Hitler formed a government with the willing support of president Hindenburg and the parties of the far right. This was not second time as farce. Hitler proceeded to impose fascism in its most brutal, most terroristic form. The fascist revolution was

counterrevolution *in extremis*.

Not surprisingly, the initial response from Marxists was somewhat confused. At the 4th congress of the Communist International in 1922 - the last attended by Lenin - the victory of fascism was blamed in part on the inability of the communists to resolve the revolutionary situation positively - which had in 1919 seen the seizure of the factories by Italian workers. "Primarily" fascism served "as a weapon" in the "hands of the big landowners", ran the argument. Italy presumably was going backwards down a fixed evolutionary ladder from capitalism to feudalism. The bourgeoisie escaped blame in this clumsy schema. They were said to be perturbed by Mussolini's "black Bolshevism". Crucially though, Comintern failed to come to terms with the fact that with fascism's triumph the working class had suffered a strategic defeat. The fascist danger tended therefore to be played down. Fascism could not hold for long. A renewed rising by the working class must occur - and very soon.

Actually fascist success in Italy plus the continued grip of a deep socio-economic crisis stimulated the growth of other fascist movements. There were inevitably some mere imitations - eg, the Romanian Fascist Party founded in 1923 and George Valois's Fasisceau of 1924. However fascism is fundamentally a national chauvinist movement. That is how it gains a mass base - as stressed by Clara Zetkin and Karl Radek. Hence the general tendency was to aggressively take on the trappings, prejudices and antagonisms of extreme nationalism. Fascism was undoubtedly an international phenomenon. But it was not in any way a united international movement.

Hitler's National Socialist German Workers' Party was no clone of Mussolini's fascisti. The same goes for the Austrian Heimwehren, Hungary's Arrow Cross, Spain's Falangists, the ABC and Falanga in Poland and the Croix de Feu and Solidarite Francaise.

Naturally the German military conquest of much of continental Europe after 1939 created not only a rash of quisling collaborators, but an allure for Nazification amongst fascist groups. Only in Poland did native fascists resist this for any time. In general, however, the Germans did not elevate their fascist co-thinkers into governing satraps. They preferred to deracinate them. Many went on to serve on the eastern front with units such as the Waffen SS.

Characteristically the fascist movements of pre-World War II Europe were fanatically attached to a bloodthirsty nationalism. War and violence are the ultimate manly virtues. The fittest countries alone survive. Others deserve to perish. Liberalism was rejected as an effete trap. Parliament dismissed as a den of corruption. Democracy is unnatural. Embrace the eternal spirit of the nation and submit to the will of the great leader. Paradoxically subservience gives self-importance to those wretches otherwise squeezed and crushed by monopoly capital, allowing and encouraging them to feel superior to others. They become the nation which is ideologically elevated above history and above their mundane reality of powerlessness.

A formless anti-capitalism was often rhetorically advocated. George Strasser's wing of the Nazi party dreamt of a return to pre-monopolistic conditions and a kind of feudal national socialism. Suffice to say, the organised working class - trade unions and leftwing political parties, along with the ideas of Marxism and international socialism - were the real enemy, not capital. Big business generously financed Mussolini and Hitler. In power

the upper echelons of fascism and capital merge.

Besides garbled propaganda denigrating Marxism, fascism launches itself against the working class using physical force. Mussolini recalls how in March 1921 his blackshirt goons “assaulted” and “burned” the offices of *Avanti*. He brags that from that day onwards “Italian subversive elements”, the communists and socialists, were “driven like rats to their holes” and had to barricade themselves in workers’ chambers and district clubs.²¹⁴ Put another way, fascism is a terroristic variant of Bonapartism.

Fascism organises counterrevolutionary fighting squads from *below* and *separate* from the state - though at critical junctures often in close cooperation with established forces of law and order. Fascism is therefore frequently structured internally according to command-and-obey military principles. *Mussolini ha sempre ragione!* (Mussolini is always right) chanted the black shirts. Discipline and obedience were the watchwords.

Fascism beats down the working class with fighting squads and clears its own the path to state power by rallying a wide, though befuddled, mass behind its crude concoction of slogans, half-truths, hatreds and promises of national and personal redemption. Where exactly fascism gains its human raw material can obviously vary - but it tends to be dislocated, frenzied, ill-educated, insecure and/or in desperate need of a sense of belonging. Obtaining power, fascism is obliged to restrain or even silence its mass base, though. Capital has no fondness for freelance armies. The blackshirts were therefore incorporated into the state by Mussolini. Hitler massacred his brownshirts. Fascism is thereby bureaucratised and becomes what Trotsky calls “Bonapartism of fascist origins”. From this bureaucratised position fascism brings to bear the whole unmediated weight of the state machine against any manifestation of working class independence. The results are terrible and bloody.

Simultaneously fascism acts to temporarily suppress contradictions within the ruling class - if need be by recourse to state force. Property is usually left untouched but traditional political parties are turned into mere husks, dissolved or absorbed into the body of the bureaucratised fascist movement. Yet while fascism strikes in two directions - against the working class and against divisions in the ruling class - it objectively acts to preserve the capitalist system of exploitation. Fascism is, then, a particular form of anti-socialism. It is counterrevolution from below.

Not surprisingly, once fascism moved from the obscure fringes to the storm centre of big power politics and world conflict it had to be explained - and urgently. A wide range of theories have been produced by semi-Marxists, non-Marxists and anti-Marxist - most of which are deeply flawed and deserve to be dismissed out of hand.

Christian apologists saw fascism as the direct result of secularisation. By rejecting god humanity is visited by evil. The antidote is obvious - take up the cross and restore religion. Conservative aristocrats painted fascism as a revolt of immature masses, the common herd, who have been freed from the constraints and responsibilities of a properly ordered agrarian society. Forlornly they yearned for the days when they formed the natural class of governance.

Equally hopeless is the offering that comes from modern-day evolutionary psychology. It puts fascism down to the aggression and pack instincts supposedly genetically hard-wired into the male brain by conditions in the African Palaeolithic some

1.5 million years ago - a viewpoint shared by some radical feminists and the self-loathing Kevin Williamson, a regular *Scottish Socialist Voice* columnist.²¹⁵

Since the 1930s psychologists and psychoanalysts have sought to locate the rise of fascism either at the level of some mass psychosis or in the warped personalities of its leaders. Wilhelm Reich - half despairing, half ridiculous - argued that humanity is "biologically sick" and should free itself by discarding sexual repression.²¹⁶ Most Freudian psychologists disagreed. They insisted on entirely speculative, and entirely loaded, clinical examinations of fascism's leaders - Mussolini, but most of all Hitler. Raymond de Saussure, for example, believed that Hitler exhibited a strong Oedipus complex and needed to channel his sexual energies in order to conceal his impotence from the public. The German Reich was a penis substitute. Useless when it comes to organising practical opposition, of course, and quite frankly puerile.

An altogether more insightful, semi-Marxist, psychological approach is to be found in Eric Fromm's *Escape from freedom* (1941). Fromm sought to understand how millions of Germans were captivated by Hitler. Capitalist alienation and the reduction of the human subject to a mere cog in the production process is blamed. Fascism answers the need in the human soul for a sense of belonging. Nevertheless Fromm can offer no effective solution, no escape from the dilemma. He merely posits a democratic socialist society.

Theodore Adorno amongst others in the so-called Frankfurt school claimed to have discovered the 'authoritarian personality' which was apparently rife amongst all classes in Germany. This was an integral part of a general theory of the period. Liberalism was in decay. Capitalism and mass culture were producing an all pervasive totalitarian society. The Soviet Union was essentially no different. Herbert Marcuse argued that fascism was the almost inevitable result of monopoly capitalism - a view he subsequently modified by claiming that though post-World War II western capitalism still maintained a democratic outer shell the tendency was towards a grey conformity and complete subordination of the personality to the needs of capital, ie, a totalitarian society. New Left radicals in the 1960s US gleefully denounced fascist Amerikka!

Establishment figures such as Hannah Arendt and Zbigniew Brezinski readily adopted totalitarian theory. Its great virtue lay in the fact that it directly linked Nazism and Stalinism. However, they gave the theory a none too subtle twist by disaggregating capitalism from totalitarianism. Capitalism, in this rightwing version of the totalitarian theory, is equated definitionally with freedom, democracy, choice and personal liberty. That capitalism flourished under Mussolini and Hitler is completely ignored. As the reader will know, mainstream bourgeois society now propagates this intellectually barren explanation for fascism over the airwaves, in the press and in schools and colleges. What was a leftist critique of existing conditions has been thoroughly colonised by the right and turned into its opposite.

Joining fascism and bureaucratic socialism together into a single category admirably suited the needs of the cold war. Capitalism was excused of all blame and the Soviet Union is made into a culprit. In the hands of Karl Popper totalitarianism became truly suprahistorical. Sparta, Ch'in China, the empire of Diocletian and Calvin's Geneva are all classified under that heading, of course, along with Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Plato, Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche form a totalitarian human chain that joins the periodic

culling of the helots to the gas chambers.

Inventors and advocates of such clumsy philosophic constructions were embraced, and richly rewarded, by the capitalist system, above all in Europe. Fascism was beaten not only by the armies of the Soviet Union, the USA and Britain. There were radical partisan movements and popular risings throughout Germany's empire. Yugoslavia, Greece, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, etc. Equally to the point, the capitalist class was deeply compromised. Almost without exception the bourgeoisie collaborated with fascism, often with great enthusiasm. For example, in France the bourgeoisie welcomed the German invasion. Since 1936 the working class had made huge gains at the expense of capital. The forces of the left were feared and detested by respectable France but could not be crushed. The German Nazi would, however, do that particular job.

The situation in other counties was substantially the same. Hence after 1945 bourgeois Europe was forced to reinvent itself. The fascist past had to be denied and turned into other. World War II became our finest hour. A crusade for freedom. The motive was to save the jews, not the British empire. Hence totalitarian theory, the Holocaust industry, Popperism and Unesco's anti-racist, anti-fascist statements such as the July 1950 declaration on race which 'scientifically' supported the "ethic of universal brotherhood" and the warning that "men and nations alike" can "fall ill".²¹⁷

Roger Knapmann, Jörg Haider, Pia Kjaersgaard, Jean-Marie Le Pen and Gianfranco Fini are reactionary rebels against this carefully constructed post-World War II consensus ideology. The liberal bourgeois establishment reacts with such hostility to them because they - with their crude chauvinism, campaigns against immigrants, occasional anti-semitic outbursts and far right nationalism - reminds, and brings attention to, official Europe's shameful pre-1945 past. Few establishment historians, or other paid persuaders, willingly dwell upon how official Europe vigorously promoted social Darwinism, race theory, anti-semitism and a brutal arrogance towards colonised peoples. Let alone how, in the barely disguised interest of capital, all these ideas were sanctified by the clergy and enforced with police batons and army bayonets.

Nowadays, official Europe is once again striving to meet the 'legitimate concerns' of its far-right doppelganger. Illegal migrants are to be confined, sent back and kept out. They are to blame for crime, drugs and overcrowded schools. Muslims replace jews and Bolsheviks, anti-terrorism becomes the new internal policeman. The message blurs and becomes the same.

Le Pen is a man who stands in the historic shadow of Action Francaise, Camelots du Roi and catholic anti-communism. His personal loyalties undoubtedly lie with Vichy, white Algeria, Pierre Poujade and the OAS. In their own different ways the other leaders of the far-right in Europe are essentially the same. They are reactionaries who reject the post-World War II ideological consensus. They rail against the self-satisfied political elite and their insatiable lust for political donations and kickbacks. Roll back the evils and competition brought by globalisation, neo-liberalism, free trade and migrants. The future for them is national, decentralised and somewhere in an invented past.

Shouting 'fascist' sounds very militant. But 2004 is not 1922. The extreme right is not organised along fascist lines. There are no fighting squads worth the name or military lines of command. We are neither in a revolutionary nor counterrevolutionary situation.

Yes, Le Pen, Haider and Fini have definite sympathies for fascism. Many of their founding cadre come from post-World War II fascist sects. But skinheads are unwelcome, stiff-arms salutes banned and street clashes avoided. Tomorrow all that might change. However, the 1920s and 30s show that fascism does not come from the far right alone. Mussolini began on the far left. He actually edited the Socialist Party's paper *Avanti*. Oswald Mosley served as a Labour minister; one of the first recruits to his New Party being AJ Cook, the miners' leader. Joseph Pilsudski, the Polish nationalist socialist, made a similar journey.

Second-guessing the future is futile. Saying who will and who will not be a fascist is a nonsense. Our task is to organise against capitalism and its defenders as they presently exist, not as they might appear if we fail.

Appendix I: American echoes

Together the 13 American states fought as one in an “epoch making revolutionary war” against the Hanoverian crown from 1775-83. However they could not, to begin with, put in place even a customs union of the type that later laid the foundations for the timid, Zollverein, unification of Germany. Nor was there a single foreign or domestic policy. The revolution cut the link with Britain but did not put in place any other unifying authority. After the Battle of Lexington unity tended to weaken. The smaller states jealously guarded their rights. Congress existed on sufferance and the states began to erect customs barriers against each other. Their “bickering” was in danger of getting out of hand and tearing the confederation apart.²¹⁸

What became the United States of America emerged not only as a result of a straightforward victory in the war of independence conducted by a subject people against an external master. The USA came into history through a complex stand-off between mass democratic forces unleashed by the revolutionary war on the one side, and on the other, exploitative interests, and rival state interests, which from the beginning stood above.

In point of fact, it was the threat from the ‘mobocracy’ that more than anything else brought together the northern merchants and industrialists and the southern slavocracy in a keen realisation of the inadequacies of a loose confederation. The existing articles of confederation had to be re-written. Having unleashed a revolution the problem that confronted the constitution makers in 1787 was how to curb the masses and how to harness their energy behind one or the other exploitative system - labour or slavery.

The promise to nationalise state debts accumulated during the revolutionary war, the mutual advantages offered by protection of nascent industries and the prospect of lucrative trade deals with overseas powers were all factors that encouraged the jealous states to overcome their parochial concerns. Danger of war with France and restive native tribes were important factors too.

The 1786 Shays rebellion in Massachusetts and the seizure of the Rhode Island government by indebted small farmers “served notice on the ruling classes of the precariousness of their position in face of the rising popular clamour”.²¹⁹

Confronted by a population who had flintlock muskets in their hands and Tom Paine’s revolutionary manifesto *Common sense* in their heads - published in January 1776 it advocated independence, republicanism, egalitarian democracy and inter-colonial unity - the drafters of the constitution had to tread a careful line between the interests of the northern capitalists and the southern planters on the one side, and on the other, gaining acceptance from the great mass of the people, whom they feared with a passion.

Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that the ruling principle that guided the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention - all from the propertied classes - lay in keeping political power as far away as possible from the urban and rural masses. Their thinking can be

gleaned from the famous federalist papers of 1787-88. Alexander Hamilton argued that a “firm” union would be of the “utmost moment to the peace and liberty of the states, as a barrier against domestic faction and insurrection”.²²⁰ Some kind of democracy was unavoidable - the people had risen and were liable to organise on their own behalf. Yet the natural inclinations of those above were aristocratic and anti-democratic. So the smaller the proportion of the people represented and the more checks and balances, the better. Black slaves, native Americans and women were automatically excluded. Ellen Meiksins Wood adds pointedly that the American role model was Rome not Athens, Cicero not Pericles, not the rule of the demos but SPQR - the “mixed constitution” of the senate and the Roman people, the *populus* with rights of citizenship “but governed by an aristocracy”.²²¹

It is therefore one of those historical tragedies that the Committees of Correspondence, the Sons and Daughters of Liberty, the so-called ‘Mohawks’ (led by the great revolutionary Sam Adams) who, taken together were the American equivalent of the English Levellers and the French Enrages, failed to transform themselves into a programmatically coherent national party completely separate from the men of property.

The constitution that emerged was therefore a multi-layered compromise. A compromise between rival states; a compromise between two contradictory social systems - the slave system of the southern plantation owners and the wage-labour system of the budding northern industrialists; and most fundamentally a compromise between the aristocratic and democratic principles of government.

The US constitution exists as a system of checks and balances *against* democracy. It has an *indirectly* elected monarch, who exercises enormous executive powers. The president is head of state, chief administrator and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He appoints all secretaries of state (ministers) and members of the supreme court - who serve for life. The two houses of congress - the House of Representatives and the Senate - exist to ratify presidential proposals. If, for one reason or another, he is met by stubborn refusal the president can veto the congress and try again. Suffice to say, popular initiatives and pressures from below can be held back and frustrated - either by the presidency, the congress or the supreme court.

Democratic forces in America - including popular leaders such as Mercy Otis Warren, James Warren and Eldridge Garry - had little trouble in recognising the constitution as a victory for the Tories (as the country’s conservative right were then called). They opposed not unity but unity without liberty. In her *Observations on the new constitution* Mercy Otis Warren objected to the lack of democratic guarantees - no press freedom, no right of conscience, no right to trial by jury. In addition she opposed the standing army as “the nursery of vice and the bane of liberty”. Furthermore she objected to representatives setting their own salaries and called for annual elections. The electoral college - which to this day elects the president - was branded an “aristocratic junta”.²²²

The democratic left rallied around the demand for a Bill of Rights - which became for them a condition for the adoption of the constitution and was finally enshrined in the first 10 amendments to the constitution. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison took the initiative here, so reconciling the anti-federalist left to the constitution. Not that these rights were realised in practice. The practical fight transferred down to each separate

state.

Two great parties arose after the fierce arguments around the US constitution. Through a disorderly course of splits and fusions the pro-federalist and anti-federalist camps became the Federal Party and the Republican Party (officially the Democratic-Republican Party till 1828). Crudely put, the Federal Party - led by Alexander Hamilton - articulated the interests of the northern merchant class and the up and coming industrial capitalists. The Republican Party - under Jefferson - defended the south and the plantation system. After a bitter struggle within George Washington's cabinet the Federal Party triumphed. It took over the reins of government and embarked on a single-minded programme of primitive capitalist accumulation.

A national bank and common finances and a system of industrial protection against British competition were put in place. Tough restrictions were also imposed on land sales in the west. Labour power had to be retained and kept cheap. Funding for the nationalised debts came from taxation - primarily on land owners and the country's rural masses (90% of the population). This programme stimulated overseas trade and allowed capitalist accumulation to take off. However it provoked stiff opposition from the southern slavocracy. Wasteful and ecologically unsustainable plantation agriculture - tobacco, sugar and especially cotton - quickly exhausted the soil. Virgin land was therefore vital for the continued health of the system. Yet the great plantation-owners found their 'natural' route to the west blocked by the Federal Party administration.

Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and similar figures from amongst the slavocracy moved into opposition and sought to rally the majority of the population behind them through an overlapping series of political and class alignments. Their main slogans concentrated on championing state rights and western expansionism. The industrial bourgeoisie found support draining away. Isolated and desperate, it enacted the draconian Alien and Sedition Act in order to scapegoat the democratic clubs founded in the wake of the French Revolution. There was vitriolic talk of "French gold" and outside subversives. But the tide moved inexorably against the Federal Party. The slavocracy aligned the whole countryside to their programme. Doubtless that is why in the mid-1930s Earl Browder, general secretary of the Communist Party of the USA, attempted to claim Jefferson as a representative of "agrarian democracy".²²³ He was, of course, no such thing.

Jefferson and his party captured both the presidency and congress in 1801. However, the Federal Party, in a pre-emptive move, stacked the courts - especially the Supreme Court - with their chosen men. Jefferson's two administrations were characterised by a constant to and fro struggle with the judiciary. Under John Marshall, a leading Federalist, the Supreme Court tried to impose a judicial dictatorship. Marshall deliberately issued a loaded court decision which declared that a particular piece of obscure legislation passed by congress was unconstitutional and therefore void. This highly controversial precedent was kept in reserve - they had no stomach for a popular explosion - till the notorious Dred Scott case in 1857 ... and then a revolutionary civil war was necessary to expunge that decision and its consequences.

Federalist minds turned to out-and-out treason. They plotted with Britain to halt the western expansion of the US. The old colonial power stood to regain the west and New

England. Plans were also discovered to hive off the newly acquired Louisiana Territory. Justice Marshall, presiding over the trial of the conspirators, ruled administration evidence out of order. He thus saved their necks.

Though the Federalist Party quickly collapsed, never to rise again under that name, none of the administrations that followed touched the foundations of American capitalism laid down over the years 1789 to 1800. Indeed Jefferson knew that the slavocracy had no long term future - he actually prohibited the importation of slaves in his second term as president.

The slavocracy willingly cemented an historic compromise with the northern industrialists and the small family farmers - it held fast till the constitutional crisis that led to the civil war of 1861-65. America rapidly spread to the west through a series of mammoth purchases, violent land grabs and peaceful absorptions of frontier states - all at the expense of the native Indian tribes. Each successive enlargement benefited both the slavocracy and the small farmers. However industry found itself more than compensated for the loss of eastern proletarians to the lure of the west by the huge surge in demand for its commodities and the encouragement of mass migration from Europe.

The civil war was America's second revolution. National rights and union authority triumphed over state rights; the north over the south; the system of wage labour over slave labour. After the war the banking and industrial bourgeoisie stood as the sole ruling class in the US. The slavocracy and the southern secession was crushed using the plebeian methods favoured by the most extreme wing of democracy. Civil war excluded any middling course. Having taken up the struggle against the slave states, the northern bourgeoisie and their working class and rural allies were forced to resort to increasingly daring and far-reaching measures.

However, following the civil war the northern bourgeoisie took fright and recoiled from any thorough going and permanent democratic transformation in the south. Most Republican leaders - the Republican Party was formed in 1854 out of the remnants of the Federal Party - were unenthusiastic about freeing the slaves. Lincoln hesitated time and time again before announcing abolition.

After the Confederacy had been defeated they feared that the poor - especially the doubly oppressed black population - would push democracy way beyond the limits imposed upon it by the interests of property. Black soldiers in the union army kept their guns and the freed slaves organised action committees and defence squads. There was a series of splits in the Republican Party. What had been a military dictatorship over the south with the support of the poor and black masses gave way in 1876 to a squalid deal between the managers of the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. Rutherford B Hayes was allowed to assume the post of president in return for the restoration of white supremacy in the south. Most Democrat hierarchs in the north opposed the confederate succession and did nothing to stand in the way of Lincoln's military conduct of the war; but they opposed ending slavery in the south. After abolition they were resolutely against giving any kind of equality to former slaves. Military government in the south officially came to an end in 1877 - though radical democracy had been under constant attack throughout the entire period following general Lee's surrender at Appomattox

Court House.

Looking at the USA of today it is clear that whether the Republicans or the Democrats hold the presidency or have a majority in the congress it is the plutocracy which wields real power. Elections are about money and buying politicians from either persuasion. Today the gulf separating rich from poor has never been greater. Blacks remain the poorest of the poor. For the vast mass of the US population democracy is purely formal. They have, as Karl Marx famously, said “the right” every four years to “choose who will misrepresent them”. No wonder millions abstain and only a minority vote in presidential elections.

In envisaging a third, workers’ revolution socialists and communists in the US will, of course, learn from the Patriots of 1776 and the Radicals of the Civil War. What these revolutionaries began in terms of democracy, the third revolution must complete. The third revolution must therefore arm itself, as a vital precondition for success, with a programme for a root and branch overhaul of the 1787 constitution.

As is their “inalienable right” the American people should as a matter of elementary self-interest abolish the monarchical presidency. It is an oppressive system of government. No one should forget that in 2000 George W Bush was appointed by a rightwing Supreme Court majority and secured less popular votes than his Democratic Party opponent Al Gore. Bush was elected indirectly by an electoral college. And he only secured the Florida electoral college delegates after the Supreme Court stopped the hand-counting of votes. The Senate and life long appointments to the Supreme Court must also be abolished and “new guards” to secure the well-being and happiness of the people put in their place. All judges must be elected *and* subject to instant recall.

A single chamber of congress, elected annually, which has full legislative and executive powers, is what is needed. Congress delegates, or representatives, should get their democratic mandate from an equal constituency basis. The democratic case against the standing armed forces - grown to the point of hypertrophy since World War II - is surely unanswerable. A system of popular militias must be initiated.

Technically none of these demands in themselves go beyond the limits of capitalism. However, they do, taken together, provide the necessary salient from which the battle for democracy can be fought and won. Then the rule of the majority can be realised - not merely in form but in substance. That is a truth we communists hold to be self-evident.

Appendix II: Marx and Engels on German unification

German unification does not represent a direct parallel with European unification in the 21st century and the European Union - there is, for example, no common language. Nonetheless valuable lessons - theoretical and programmatic - can be drawn from the fight for German unity in the 19th century. This is particularly so because Germany was the birthplace and revolutionary testing ground of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels and remained central to their ongoing intellectual interest and political activity during their permanent exile in Britain.

Admittedly, given the division of labour that existed between the two men, much of what we shall quote comes over the signature of Engels. Yet they communicated with each other virtually daily and worked so closely together, to all intents and purposes they formed a single identity. Therefore when one says 'Engels' one might just as well say 'Marx' - or 'Marx and Engels' or even better 'Marx-Engels'. Having underlined that particular point, we shall move on.

When Marx and Engels began their life-long partnership, Germany was woefully backward compared with France, Belgium, Holland and above all Britain. Moreover Germany was in decay. Everywhere there was frustration, oppression and ignorance. No state education, no free press, no public spirit, no extended commerce with other countries. Migrants were Germany's biggest export - labourers, but especially prostitutes. Internal disputes and wars of foreign intervention were endemic. The people suffered from the double burden of government overtaxation and lack of government spending. Nothing worked.

Protracted decline was caused in part, and was definitely exacerbated by, the division of Germany into dozens of rival absolutist states, ranging from the medium to the micro. A fragmentation that went hand in hand with different currencies and different weights and measures. Customs posts were ubiquitous. In short, Germany desperately required radical unification. Without unity there could be neither capitalist progress nor hope for working class rule - so reasoned the Marx-Engels team. Tasks of national unification and the social revolution therefore interweave.

Germany was a cultural expression reflecting common language but was not a unified politico-economic unit. During medieval times this was, of course, true for most of western and central Europe. Feudalism is characteristically decentralisation and fragmentation *in extremis*. Only England - because of the thoroughgoing nature of the 1066 conquest - constituted a partial exception.

Let us take a slight detour and expand upon this point. Present-day nation-states such as Spain, France and Italy were in medieval times little more than geographical terms, and even relatively stable kingdoms were cut across by countless and often

overlapping feudal domains. Hence it is misleading to speak of ‘French kings’ in this period. Better ‘kings of France’ and their aristocratic vassals. Standard *national* histories which project modern borders and contemporary notions of nationhood back into the mists of time owe everything to recent invention and subsequent narrow-minded prejudice, nothing to the truth. Standard “national” history is indeed imprisoned, in what Hugh Kerney calls a “cage of partial assumptions”.²²⁴

For example, the *feudal* social location and outlook of the ‘English king’ Henry II is more accurately and evocatively rendered as Henri II roi de l’Angleterre ... and putative overlord of adjoining realms such as Scotland, Wales and Ireland, besides being Henri du Mans, Henri Courtmanteau, comte de Maine et de Tours, duc d’Anjou, de Normandie et d’Aquitaine. Like the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the Crusader states in Palestine, the Kingdom of England was an “outpost” of the French feudal order.²²⁵ Not surprisingly, later kings of England claimed the crown of France.

Before he became king, Henri FitzEmpress had visited England only twice ... and briefly. Certainly if anyone had dared call Henri English to his face such an appellation would either be met with blank incomprehension, or taken for the words of a fool. Henri’s everyday language was Norman French, his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, originated from high aristocratic France and his main source of revenue derived from the extensive and wealthy fiefs in France. Meanwhile, the humble subjects of the house of Anjou spoke not only the various patois of early English but also numerous other mother tongues - ranging from Gaelic in the far northern domains to Provençal in the deep south.

Germany displayed the same checkerboard feudal pattern. Take the empire of the Salians (1024-1125). It was a conglomeration of kingdoms and principalities, duchies and marches, church lands and free towns, each with their own political structure, legal standards and customs. Furthermore this ‘German’ empire incorporated Slav lands to the east, Burgundy to the south west and the whole of northern Italy. The imperium was therefore made up of an official ‘triad’ - Germany, Italy and Burgundy. Equally to the point, the royal house presented themselves - to themselves and the outside world - as the legitimate inheritors and continuation of Roman civilisation. In a word, they ruled the Holy Roman Empire.

During the late medieval period Germany ranked as an advanced feudalism. Besides cutting edge improvements in agricultural and mining technique, guild industry produced amongst the best in ecclesiastical and secular luxury - gold and silver, sculpture and engraving, wood carving and armour. Towns prospered and grew rich. The trade league - cemented between Lubeck, Hamburg, Wismar and Rostock in 1259 - ensured a grip over Baltic maritime trade and sucked in a differential profit from Pomerania, Sweden, Courtland and Novgorod.

However, as Engels observed, by the 16th century relative decline was unmistakable. Germany found itself strategically bypassed. Northern Europe’s trade route to India and the far east were once fixed and went through Rhineland Germany. Then Vasco da Gama discovered the Cape and a much cheaper way to access the exotic riches of the Indian Ocean. Then Portugal, Holland and following them England seized control of Atlantic trade. The consequences were revolutionary. In France, England, northern Italy and the lowlands serfdom faded and died. Moreover the tendency to parcelise power and the

unproductive extraction of surplus associated with feudalism was replaced by strong, centralised bureaucratic or commercial states and in the case of England a self-generating agrarian capitalism. Germany fell progressively behind. When the steam-powered industrial revolution took off in Britain, the “small is beautiful” manufactures in filigrated Germany faced extinction.

‘Old Germany’ - the Holy Roman Empire – was inaugurated in 962, lasted formally till 1806. Quixotic Roman empireship ideologically ruled out any goal of German unification from above and dissipated energies and resources in fruitless campaigns of Italian conquest (reminiscent of the feudal monarchies in England and their countless attempts to re-establish themselves in France). To cap it all the German religious revolution proved inconclusive. Protestant imperial knights, free towns and the peasant masses failed to unite their efforts against the common catholic enemy. The empire was nevertheless reduced to a shell and as such fell into the hands of feudal princes, barons and dukes. Their centralising powers overwhelmed the centralism of the whole. Over these hardening petty divisions, Germany now found itself cleaved into hostile theological zones - a predominantly protestant north, a predominantly catholic but mixed south west, and an exclusively catholic south east.

Here Germany shows an opposite pattern to France and England. France exterminated or exiled the protestant Huguenots in 1685. England had already broken with Rome under Henry VIII. Both powers were therefore essentially monoreligious. Aside from the obvious advantage of cohesion this brought, the “eventual suppression” of protestantism in France was, comments Engels, “no misfortune”. Instead of protestantism France got enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire and Diderot. Anti-clericalism is the other France and stands today as the *dominant* intellectual tradition.

Being a precursor, the English form of development is in many ways comparatively primitive. The official protestantism of the Tudor and Stuart monarchs was catholicism without the pope. Put another way - cod-catholicism. Engels mockingly describes England’s universities, colleges and public schools as being “protestant monasteries”.²²⁶ Real protestantism in England came in the form of the lollards, puritans and methodists. Yet there is still no theoretically rigorous mass tradition of anti-clericalism, let alone militant atheism here - a definite misfortune.

Religious divisions and the hollowing out of the Holy Roman Empire turned Germany into the main battleground for the contending protestant and catholic powers in the 16th and 17th centuries. The pope, the Spanish and Austrian Hapsburgs, the German catholic princes fought it out with the protestant German states and their backers in Bohemia, Denmark, Sweden and the Dutch Republic. The result of the Thirty Years War (1618-46) was the plunder and ruination of Germany. The treaty of Westphalia in 1648 sealed the political-theological dismemberment of Germany. The German empire became a byword for disunity and ineffectiveness. Outside powers too gained the right to freely intervene as they saw fit.

One ray of light existed amidst the mordant decline. High intellectual life flourished. Handel, Mozart, Goethe, Schiller, Kant and Fichte. A short while later Beethoven and Hegel. German economic and social backwardness found its opposite in music, literature and philosophy, which served as a kind of hope. After Copernicus, Galileo and Newton

catholicism hardly deserves to be taken seriously as an object of criticism. It could be defeated by invective and ridicule alone. On the other hand German protestantism was “worth criticising”. It could only be overcome “scientifically”: that is, in the words of Engels, “explained historically”, a feat which still remains and will forever remain beyond the natural sciences.²²⁷ Hence Ludwig Feuerbach and the ‘Theses on Feuerbach’ and Marxism.

Where Britain forged itself into a nation with a common economy binding its peoples together, Germany languished in fragmentation. Each electorate, principality and duchy acted independently of the other. They were all formally subject to the power of the emperor - if there was one - and the diet (consisting of deputations of the petty states, it was intended to keep the emperor in check). However, the emperor increasingly became ever more a fiction and the diet never did anything positive - its deliberations were laughably insignificant.²²⁸

German passivity condemned it to the predatory designs of its more dynamic neighbours, crucially France. To further its own ends catholic France was quite prepared to finance German protestant princes. It was not uncommon to find that when the German empire declared itself at war (with the traditional enemy, France) some of the German petty states took the other side.

The French-speaking areas on the western bank of the Rhine were under these conditions hacked away. Burgundy, then the three bishoprics of Metz, Toul and Verdun, then the rest of Lorraine, then parts of Flanders and Alsace – all were split off and joined to France. In a similar manner Switzerland was allowed to break away and become independent and Belgium was handed over to Spain by the legacy of Charles V. They all fared better separated from Germany.

Germany was in a hole. Remnants of feudalism still held sway and serfdom was rigorously reinforced in the east. The embattled nobility had aristocratic standards to maintain. For the serfs that meant labour services, tributes, land-sale taxes, death taxes, protection money, etc. Besides taxes the serfs were expected to hand over an inexhaustible supply of female flesh without complaint. Either that or earn a savage beating. Every attempt at revolt was crushed without mercy. To add insult to injury, bloodsucking armies were routinely quartered on the oppressed. Needless to say, the emperor showed not the slightest concern either for the peasants or the internal life of the petty states.

What of the so-called free cities? They were hardly beacons of liberty. The burgermaster and a caste of self-selected senators ruled like tyrants. Cheated and robbed by the princes, the bourgeois class tried to profit from the chaos. They righted the wrongs done to them by their oppressors by cheating and robbing in turn.

If they had put themselves at the head of the people, they might have been able to refound the country, as the bourgeoisie did between 1640 and 1688 in England and the French did in 1789. But the German bourgeoisie lacked the courage. Engels seethed with angry contempt. He compared them to shit, or in polite translation, dung: “Germany is nothing but a dunghill, but they were comfortable in the dung because they were dung themselves, and were kept warm by the dung about them”.²²⁹

The 1789 French revolution acted like a thunderbolt - not upon the mass of the people in Germany, but the middle classes and sections of the nobility. However, their enthusiasm

was, said a qualifying Engels, “theoretical”. Once the French revolution moved to its most extreme stage with the fall of the Girondists, as those below exerted the maximum pressure, odes of joy gave way to overt hostility: “Germany was converted to a fanatic hatred against the revolution”.²³⁰ The bourgeoisie preferred a quiet life in the dunghill to the French whirlpool.

But the days of the Holy Roman Empire were fast coming to an end. The revolutionary armies of France punched straight into the heart of Germany and effortlessly made the Rhine the frontier of France. France preached liberty and equality. A social acid. Nobles, abbots and princes fled in droves. A purple migration.

Once Napoleon Bonaparte became the democracy with a “single head”, after the month of Thermidor 1794, he poured armies into Germany time and time again. Napoleon dissolved the Holy Roman Empire with his stunning wars of conquest and sweeping reorganisation of Europe. Christian-Germanic society expired.

Napoleon was “always revolutionary *vis-à-vis* the princes”.²³¹ In Germany new, larger states were formed under his sponsorship. The *code Napoléon* was exported to them - a code which enshrined equality before the law and which was infinitely superior to the feudal law that had previously crippled Germany.

Napoleon tried to unify Europe from above using dictat and brute force - he was a civilised Adolf Hitler. Not surprisingly, though he shattered the *anciens régimes* in Germany, Spain and Italy, his methods alienated those whom he had freed. In Germany the peasants resented the taxes and the recruitment of their sons into Napoleon’s armies. In their uneducated minds France became associated with atheism and wickedness. The bourgeoisie were even more parochial. The embargo against British goods might lay the basis for a future German manufacturing industry but it meant certain imports were unavailable - Engels cites coffee.

Disappointed by their lack of revolutionary zeal, he tore into all classes. The peasants must be, he said, “the most stupid set of people in existence”. German students and the run-of-the-mill intellectuals fared no better. As to the bourgeoisie, they merely wanted to buy cheap and sell dear ... and drink unadulterated coffee. Nevertheless Engels has to admit that, where before there had only been self-interest, a German national consciousness appeared.

As an aside it is worth mentioning the reactionary anti-imperialism of Andreas Hofer. He was the leader of peasant guerrilla war against the French army in Tyrol in 1809. Shades, one might say, of Hamas, bin Laden, the Taliban, etc. Years later Hofer had evolved into something of a folk hero amongst republicans and democrats in Britain. They would toast his memory and cheer his name. Engels was fed up with such nonsense and sought to put the record straight. He roundly condemned Hofer and his backward-looking programme. Hofer was a “stupid, ignorant, bigoted, fanatical peasant”. He fought for the “church and emperor”, for the paternal despotism of Rome and Vienna. Yes, he fought bravely, but as Engels pointed out, so did the counterrevolutionary French peasantry, the Vendéans.²³² Engels contrasted him to Thomas Münzer, the leader of the peasant insurrection of 1525. He was worthy of being toasted and cheered.

Britain, Austria, Russia, Prussia and the whole of reactionary Europe fought for the downfall of Napoleon in order to destroy the French revolution. However, so afraid were

they of the French people that, though the Bourbon dynasts were re-imposed upon them and maintained by an army of 150,000 foreign muskets, they got a tolerably liberal constitution. Other countries saw the counterrevolution pressed home - the old despotisms were restored in Spain and Italy. The surly masses in Britain were put in their place by dragoons and sabres at Peterloo. In Germany things took a similar course.

At the 1815 Congress of Vienna the nations of Europe were bought and sold, divided and augmented. However, only three powers knew what they were about. All the rest was sentimentalism and egoism.

Britain wanted to keep its colonial plunder and extend its commercial supremacy. France sought not to suffer too much. Russia - the most reactionary state in the European system - determined to add yet more territory to its vast empire. And each was out to weaken the other European powers. The result was a counterrevolutionary new world order. France managed to spoil the plans of the bigger German states, not least Prussia. Britain extended its maritime power and domination of continental markets. As for Russia, it became master of eastern and central Europe.

The tsar humiliated Prussia, crushed Hungary, divided Poland, appointed his creature king of Denmark, etc. Germany was once again 'Balkanised'. To ensure it could never stand up to Russian might 36 states were carefully crafted and, to make matters far worse, they were disorganised into over 200 separate small or larger patches of land. Not surprisingly most of these states were obsessed with their own legitimacy. What Germany won in the war against Napoleon it lost in the peace.

The German despots purged French liberties and reintroduced old ways. Yet a return to pre-1789 conditions was impossible. The middle classes possessed neither the daring nor the strength enough to govern. But they were strong enough to force some concessions. Hence the reaction was somewhat cautious and even listless. Constitutional guarantees were given to the middle classes in some places: Bavaria, Wurttemberg, Baden, Hanover. Everywhere else bureaucratic governments - directed by aristocrats - pretended to take care of the interests of the middle classes through good governance.

Ironically William III's Prussia was another factor holding back the counterrevolution. But he did so for his own counterrevolutionary reasons. Prussia now vied with Austria for domination over Germany - and in order to weaken the other German states he encouraged them to enact "mongrel constitutions" and provide for vaguely representative assemblies. Yet, while the micro autocracies were weakened, no power was given to the people - not even the middle classes.

Such an arrangement could satisfy no one. Neither the christian Germanists - romantics and reactionaries - nor the liberals. And from these two sects - they were not parties - arose the "mongrel liberals" who between 1815 and 1830 formed the dominant opposition current. Trapped in the numerous petty states, the liberal-reactionary middle classes proved utterly impotent. In their secret societies they dreamily planned for a German emperor decked out in crown, purple, sceptre and all the gaudy imperial rubbish, not to forget an assembly of estates in which clergy, nobility, bourgeoisie and peasants would be properly separated. They shunned the 1789 revolution. Their model was medieval, their intentions servile.

Germany was made a confederacy of states by the post-Napoleonic order in Europe.

But there was no risk that the people might impose their will. There was no genuinely representative national assembly. The delegates who formed the confederal diet were sent by the governments alone. Every state was bound by resolutions of the diet. Yet between them Prussia and Austria ruled absolutely. All they needed to do was to threaten to abandon the micro-autocracies in their struggle with their assemblies and the lesser princes would fall into line and utter obedience. Nothing could be done in the petty states. Prussia and Austria were crucial.

Engels contemptuously dismissed the Prussian king, William III, as one of the “greatest blockheads that ever graced a throne”.²³³ The man knew only two feelings - fear and imperiousness. The king of Prussia had been cheated by Britain, cheated by France, cheated by the emperors of Russia and Austria. Nevertheless he was happy. Napoleon had been overthrown. There was no fear. Having had half his kingdom confiscated by Napoleon, he surrounded himself with a party of half-and-half reformers. They abolished serfdom, feudal services and reorganised the municipalities. An unthreatening constitution was drafted - though it never appeared in law. However, fear returned. Fifteen years after the Congress of Vienna the masses of Paris once more rose up. Fear of revolution replaced fear of Napoleon.

The 1830 revolution signalled the general outbreak of middle class, aristocratic and popular discontent throughout Europe. The results were mixed. In Italy the insurrection - partly middle class, partly national - was suppressed. The aristocratic Polish revolution was also put down. The bourgeoisie in France and Belgium succeeded and in Britain the middle classes got the reform bill that gave them the vote.

In Germany too there were numerous movements and several dozen insurrections between 1830 and 1834. They were hampered by the division into numerous states. There was no community of interest and no focal point. However, two or three of the middle class revolutions managed to succeed. Germany began to move. Headed by Prussia, 17 of the states came together to form a customs union - the Zollverein - in 1834. Austria was kept out and wrapped itself up in its own separate tariff system. The Zollverein oversaw the general introduction of steam power and the growth of an internal market. This brought the states and provinces closer together. Interestingly the US historian, Paul Kennedy, argues that in this respect the situation in mid-19th century Germany was “similar” to the European Economic Community - economic success encouraged new members to join and that created the possibility of turning the customs union into “a power state” and a “major new actor in the international system”.²³⁴

The Zollverein customs union paved the way for Prussian hegemony. Something welcomed by many middle class provincial patriots, who believed that the Prussian bureaucratic straightjacket was the only means whereby Germany could obtain some kind of cohesion.

Despite the miserable record of the middle classes the Marx-Engels team were in 1847 still looking for a re-run of the 1789 French revolution. “The party of the bourgeoisie is,” said Engels, “the only one that at present has a chance of success”.²³⁵ Both men expected the bourgeoisie to do its historic duty and take the lead. Their own party, the communists, would try to win the minuscule but growing working class to fight alongside them. But once the bourgeoisie got themselves into power the workers would constitute

themselves as the party of extreme opposition. From here the proletariat would gather their strength before squaring up for the next, final, battle which would be with the bourgeoisie.

Marx and Engels had definite immediate aims *vis-à-vis* the constitutional question which were concretised in the platform of the Communist Party in Germany. Its 'Demands', written jointly by Marx and Engels in March 1848, was what we would nowadays designate as a minimum programme. It is well worth summarising its 17 clauses. In first place we find that the "whole of Germany shall be declared a single and indivisible republic". The working class required the unification of Germany at long last into a *nation*. But to ensure a democratic and lasting unification, the 'giants' of Germany - Austria and Prussia - had to be broken up into autonomous provinces. The interests of the proletariat forbade either the Prussianisation or Austrianisation of Germany just as much as the perpetuation of its division into petty states.

The 'Demands' go on to call for universal male suffrage (2); the "universal arming of the people" (3); "free" legal services (5); measures to aid the peasantry and small tenant farmers (6,7,8); "a state bank" (10); nationalisation of the "means of transport" (11); the "complete separation of church and state" (13); curbs on the right of inheritance (14); a steeply graduated income tax and "abolition of taxes on articles of consumption" (15); "state guarantees" for those who are "incapacitated for work" (16); and finally "universal free education" (17). The short document concludes that it is in the interests of the German proletariat, petty bourgeoisie and small peasants "to support these demands". "Only by the realisation of these demands will the millions in Germany, who have hitherto been exploited by a handful of persons ... win the rights and attain to that power to which they are entitled as the producers of all wealth".²³⁶

Evidently the Marx-Engels team considered the republican demand for the abolition of the fragmented monarchy system in Germany a matter of the utmost importance. True, the realisation of their minimum programme presented in the Communist Party's 'Demands' was not in itself to transcend the bounds of bourgeois civil society. Rather it was to prepare the working class for higher tasks. Something that would be ensured by making the revolution permanent. In the meantime, during the period of transition, what was to replace the monarchy? Not necessarily the socialist republic. The exact class content of the state is left open ended. But its form is unmistakable. It is the democratic republic based on the "sovereignty of the German people" and a constituent assembly elected by universal, male, suffrage. Here, as Engels explained in the launch issue of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, was the organ of the anti-monarchist revolution won by "fighting in the streets of almost all the cities and towns of the country, and especially the barricades of Vienna and Berlin".²³⁷

Interestingly for our purposes, Engels also mused about the possibility of a European federation. However, for him, a "European federation" had to be based on the unity of all the main nations of Europe - each defined by common language and fellow-feeling - in their own broadly homogenous nation-states. In other words a centralised German republic was a precondition for the voluntary coming together of a federal Europe.²³⁸

In 1848 a huge, unplanned, impulsive revolutionary wave swept Europe. Paris took the lead. Italy and Hungary followed. The Chartists in Britain made moves for a

nationwide, physical-force uprising. Germany was no exception. Munich, Cologne, Berlin, Vienna, Dresden, Frankfurt. Crowns wobbled, street barricades were built, constitutions rewritten. Marx and Engels hastily packed their bags and returned to Germany along with some 400 fellow Communist Party members. Under their leadership the working class in Germany appeared before history for the first time in its own right and with its own mission. And yet, though communists pushed, pleaded and pulled, the bourgeoisie refused to act in any decisive fashion. A miserable bunch. No Cromwell, no Ireton, no Marat, no Robespierre.

The Frankfurt national assembly generated plenty of speeches and countless proclamations. Bluster, bluster, bluster. It was the parliament of an imaginary country. Resolutions amounted to nothing more than platitudes. Not one prince was overthrown. No army recruited. The official left of the Frankfurt assembly was no better. Marx and Engels lambasted the radical democrats for their timorous plan for a federal *monarchical* Germany. The petty princes would remain as constitutional monarchies but the central government was to be republican! The ‘model’ of these radicals was the USA. But, of course, they shied away from the methods of 1776.

It was under these circumstances that Marx and Engels developed their programme of permanent revolution - the working class would have to take the lead in the anti-autocratic national revolution, and, having done so, would not hand power to the bourgeoisie, but would take things as far as objective circumstances allowed.

Because of its autocracy, relatively large size and long militaristic tradition, Prussia was viewed as the main obstacle to revolution in Germany. Prussia might move to unite Germany as an act of counterrevolution. But even then it could only unite Germany by tearing Germany apart. Prussia would have to exclude German Austria. The same would apply to Austria - the most reactionary German state. An Austrian Germany would have to exclude Prussia. Under either Prussia or Austria there could only be a ‘smaller Germany’. That is why, in the name of “real unification”, Marx and Engels wanted to see the “dissolution” of Prussia and “disintegration” of the Austrian state.²³⁹ If Germany were ever to achieve anything worthwhile there could be neither an Austria nor a Prussia.

It should be stressed that Marx and Engels sought the “dissolution” of Prussia and the “disintegration” of Austria in the context of bringing about a *centralised* revolutionary social republic. A country like Germany - which had suffered extreme fragmentation - if it was to survive, needed the most “stringent revolutionary centralisation”. This was especially so because the Germany of 1848 contained “20 Vendées” - an allusion to the peasant counterrevolution in France - and found itself sandwiched between the two most powerful and most centralised European states: ie, Russia and France. Such a country cannot, in the present period of universal revolution, avoid “either civil war or war with other countries”, proclaimed Engels.²⁴⁰

Specifically the Marx-Engels team advocated a revolutionary liberation war against Russia - that would unite Germany on the basis of democracy and hold out the promise of Polish independence and reunification. But, though Germany had made “several dozen small and big revolutions”, these had narrowed the mental horizons of the middle classes instead of broadening them. To ingratiate itself with the partitioning powers - Russia, Prussia and Austria - the Frankfurt national assembly endorsed the partition of Poland!

With such a cowering, directionless and powerless high command, the writing was on the wall. By 1850 the situation had been stabilised in favour of reaction - especially in the 'big' German powers, Prussia and Austria. Concessions were rolled back. However, Engels explained the defeat of the revolution not in the betrayal of this or that leader. Rather he looked to the fragmentation of Germany itself. The incoherence, myopia and irresolution which prevailed at every turn derived from interests so varied, so conflicting, so frustratingly cancelling each other out that decisive action was impossible.

After the failure of 1848 some disillusioned liberals yearned for unity under Prussia. But, as outlined above, that little Germany meant excluding Austria. Fanatical nationalists, on the other hand, hoped for the restoration of the feudal empire. This dream, if it ever came to fruition, would be a Greater Austria. Austria, Prussia and the rest of Germany unite into a federal state and proceed to Germanise Austria's Hungarian and Danube empire by means of schools, colonies and gentle violence. The formerly Austrian Netherlands would also be incorporated as a vassal state. Engels damned these "patriotic fanatics".²⁴¹ Meantime, disorientated radicals sank into admiration of the Swiss constitution. Only the communists remained committed to a German republic "one and indivisible".

In 1866 the armies of Prussia defeated those of Austria in a stunning eight-day war. From this moment onwards Prussia stopped viewing the rest of Germany as prey. Prussia became *nationalised*; Germany was its protectorate - even if that meant excluding a large part of Germany: ie, Austria. War with France followed. Again Prussian forces scored a swift and resounding victory. France surrendered. Napoleon III was replaced by a republic. Prussia could now impose its terms on the rest of Germany, and in 1871 the king of Prussia became the German emperor.

Let us note that both Marx and Engels predicted a European-wide war - between Russia (aligned with France) and Germany. This was something they dreaded. The transition to socialism would be put off by such a war for a long time. Engels warned that such a "conflict will be the downfall of the Prussian state and the Prussian army - probably in a war with Russia, which might last four years and would yield nothing but disease and shattered bones".²⁴² He also talked of 20 million deaths.

How did Engels assess this Prussian version of German unity? Bismarck - Prussia's uncrowned Bonaparte - had, he said, carried out a "revolution" and a "revolution with revolutionary methods". Only, because it was carried out from above, it was "not revolutionary enough"; this half-unification of Germany was only a "half-revolution".²⁴³

Real measures which unified the country were welcomed as a step forward: eg, the common legal code and Bismarck's legislation creating common banking laws and a common currency over 1873-75. Engels expressed the opinion that it would have been better if the mark could have been pegged to one of the big three - dollar, pound or franc.

Yet Prussia had not dissolved into Germany. Instead Bismarck introduced the Prussian system throughout most of Germany. Bavaria and the southern states retained a degree of autonomy. In certain ways it was as if the feudal Scottish highlands had managed to conquer England in 1645. Political power resided with the emperor and a caste of aristocratic bureaucrats and the military top brass. Universal male suffrage was granted, but the emperor appointed the chancellor and the feeble Reichstag could not

turn down tax demands. A carbon copy of the 1850 Prussian constitution. Put another way, there existed a pseudo-parliamentarianism. The Reichstag served as a cover for absolutism. Germany was in fact a police-guarded military despotism with parliamentary embellishments.

But this was no return to the past. Germany set itself on a course of rapid industrialisation and with that the bourgeoisie came to exercise a decisive influence. There also came into existence a powerful, well organised and highly educated proletariat.

It was in these promising circumstances that Marx - writing in 1875, in what became known as the *Critique of the Gotha programme* - took issue with the newly formed Social Democratic Party. Amongst other problems and shortcomings they were reluctant to highlight the demand for the abolition of the monarchy in their new programme. By contrast Marx renewed his call for a “democratic republic” against the Prusso-German monarchy.²⁴⁴ As we have already seen, a theme Engels elaborated upon some 15 years later in his *Critique of the Social Democratic draft programme* in 1891 (unlike the SWP, parties associated with Marx and Engels regarded programmes as vital and took great pains in trying to perfect them).

Because there still exists widespread misunderstanding on the left the argument is worth revisiting. Engels attacked Prussianism and the peaceful illusions being entertained by some party leaders in Germany. There could conceivably be a peaceful transition to socialism in countries where the “representatives of the people concentrate all power in their hands, where if one has the support of the majority of the people, one can do as one sees fit in a constitutional way; in democratic republics such as France and the USA, in monarchies such as Britain ... where this dynasty is powerless against the people”.²⁴⁵ But not absolutist Germany.

Engels admits that due to police censorship and legal restrictions it may not be possible for the SDP to feature the abolition of the monarchy in its programme. Some devious formulation ought therefore to be concocted. Either way, Engels is insistent that the working class “can only come to power under the form of a democratic republic”. He calls this the “specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat”: that is, the rule of the working class.²⁴⁶

So as to open up the road to power Engels argues for the “reconstruction of Germany”. The system of small states within Prusso-Germany “must be abolished”. How, he asks, can you revolutionise society while there are special rights for Bavaria-Württemberg and even the small state of Thuringia consists of statelets? Again he balances off the abolition of the small states with the call to abolish Prussia and break it up into “self-governing provinces”. For Engels the system of small states and Prussianism are the “two sides of the antithesis now gripping Germany in a vice”, in which one side “must also serve as an excuse and justification for the existence of the other”.²⁴⁷

What should take the place of Prusso-Germany? Engels opposes federalism and repeats the demand for the “one and indivisible republic”. He is no dogmatist. Remember, there is no principle involved. The goal is to achieve the closest voluntary union between peoples, most importantly the working class.

In his reckoning, federalism is on the whole necessary in the “gigantic” USA, although in the eastern states it was already “becoming a hindrance”. “It would be a step forward”

in the British Isles, where the two islands contain four peoples - English, Scots, Irish, Welsh - with three different systems of legislation and, at the time, a single parliament. In “little” Switzerland federalism “has long been a hindrance, tolerable only because Switzerland is content to be a purely passive member of the European state system”. For Germany, federalism on the Swiss model would be an “enormous step backwards”. Germany already had a second, federal, chamber - the Bundesrat - that, like the House of Lords in Britain, served reaction. Germany certainly did not need separate legislation enacted in each state or canton.

No, the best conditions for progress and preparing the working class for the revolutionary transition is the unified *democratic* republic: ie, elections at every level, local self-administration and absence of bureaucracy, a militia system and the abolition of the standing army.

Appendix III: Lenin and the United States of Europe slogan

Opportunism often gives itself orthodox airs and graces by regurgitating various half-digested ‘theoretical’ snippets and catchphrases. Hence one tried and tested way ‘official communism’ and ‘official Trotskyism’ alike try to counter the fight for extreme democracy in the European Union is to cite Lenin. After all he did write a forthright article in August 1915 on the United States of Europe, dismissing it as either “impossible” or “tantamount to an agreement on the partition of colonies”.²⁴⁸

It would, of course, be easy to contemptuously brush aside attempts to dragoon Lenin’s shade into the withdrawal camp and to curtly reply that what Lenin said in 1915, in the midst of World War I, has little or no relevance to the situation in Britain nearly a century later. But that would be mistaken. We consciously inhabit and draw strength from our movement’s history and achievements in theory.

Even if we think Lenin displayed a one sidedness, or was simply wrong in 1915, those of us who consider correct theory vital for the success of the workers’ self-liberation movement, especially those who call themselves Marxists and Leninists, are obliged to approach a thinker, and revolutionary politician, of Lenin’s calibre with the utmost seriousness. Objections and disagreements must be put forward after much thought and in a fully considered manner.

Before dealing with Lenin’s article ‘On the slogan for a United States of Europe’ it will benefit our discussion if some background is provided. The Stalinite editors of Lenin’s *Collected works* say the slogan in different variations “gained wide currency” during World War I and was promoted by bourgeois politicians and the “Kautskyites, Trotskyites and other opportunists”.²⁴⁹ This is indeed true. By the same measure it is also true that the slogan had a prior life - moreover, the Bolsheviks, under Lenin’s leadership, deployed the slogan as part of their first collective response to the outbreak of inter-imperialist war.

After he managed to get from Kracow in Poland to Berne, and the safety of neutral Switzerland, during August 1914, Lenin drafted a set of theses which were approved by the ad hoc Bolshevik leadership gathered there - Zinoviev, Bukharin, Shylovsky, etc. ‘The tasks of revolutionary social democracy in the European war’ included the demand for the “United States of Europe”.²⁵⁰ This very same formulation was carried over into the manifesto of Russian Social Democratic Labour Party Central Committee - again drafted by Lenin.

In this manifesto, as before, it was stressed that the slogan for a United States of Europe did not imply the coming together of existing dynastic Europe. The Bolsheviks presented a *revolutionary democratic* way out of the carnage. Without the “revolutionary overthrow of the German, the Austrian and Russian monarchies” the slogan of a United

States of Europe is “absolutely false” and “meaningless”, Lenin explained a short while later.²⁵¹

The Hohenzollern and Hapsburg monarchies in Germany and Austria were, of course, only half-democratic. Behind the facade of parliament lay autocracy. As to Russia, the tsar's дума was nothing more than a pathetic fig leaf - Bolshevik deputies who expressed militant opposition to the war found themselves summarily clapped in jail. Exile in Siberia awaited.

Hence the Bolshevik demand: “propaganda for republics in Germany, Poland, Russia, and other countries” and “transforming of all the separate states of Europe into a republican United States of Europe”.²⁵² Naturally such a “republican United States of Europe” went hand-in-hand with other key elements in the minimum programme such as self-determination for Europe's colonies in Asia and Africa and the oppressed nations languishing in the internal Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires.

As indicated above, the Bolshevik slogan for a “republican United State of Europe” did not spring out of thin air in September 1914. The slogan was part of the common culture of the pre-World War I Second International. A loose parallel might be drawn with the pan-Africanism of the Organisation of African Unity. Before the “winds of change” in the 1960s actually reproduced a series of petty states - and therefore vested bureaucratic interests - *within* the arbitrarily drawn old French, Belgian and British colonial boundaries, the likes of Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Toure envisaged a petty bourgeois African socialism stretching from the Cape to Cairo.

I am not sure exactly who originally coined the “republican United States of Europe” slogan. Suffice to say within the Second International differences over the slogan reflected broad factional alignments and philosophical inclinations. Hence in his *The national question and social democracy* (St Petersburg 1909) the Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer writes of “a United States of Europe” in essentially evolutionary terms. It is “not an empty dream” but the “inevitable end of the road on which the nations set foot long ago”.²⁵³ Rosa Luxemburg, Parvus and other ideological heavyweights might also be cited. But it seems clear to me that the moving spirit behind the republican United States of Europe slogan was the Second International's leading theoretician Karl Kautsky.

In his April 1911 article ‘War and peace’ Kautsky argues in favour of linking anti-militarist propaganda to a United States of Europe. The United States of Europe is thought of as an alliance “with a common trade policy”, a single parliament, a single army, etc. Not that Kautsky preached pacifism and social reformism. On the contrary, the Kautsky of 1911 is convinced that “a European war is bound, by natural necessity, to end in social revolution”. That is why the most farsighted sections of the ruling class strive to “preserve peace” and seek measures of “disarmament.” They recoil from war because it will bring revolution. “War”, considers Kautsky, “is followed by revolution with inevitable certainty”. This is not the result of some devious “social democratic plan” but “the iron logic of things”.

Industrial capital has given way to finance capital and brought to a halt all measures of social reform. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties of realising the United States of Europe, “efforts to peacefully unite the European states in a federative community” are by no means hopeless. “Its prospects are bound up with those of the revolution”,

maintained Kautsky.

Whether revolution arises from “competition in armaments” or from “war” itself - there will in any case be an “international revolution.” Even if revolution “does not arise from reaction against the burden of armaments” or “against the horrors of war” but from other causes, and even if at the outset it is not international, but restricted to a single state, it “cannot remain so for long under present conditions”. The revolution is “bound to spread to other states”. As it does, Kautsky believes that the “United States of Europe” and eventually the “United States of the civilised world” progressively comes into being.²⁵⁴

Obviously having been content to repeat the “republican United States of Europe” slogan in 1914, Lenin began to rethink. His first objections, in 1915, appear secondary, or technical. He expressed himself keen at the RSDLP’s conference of groups abroad, held in Berne, to put the slogan on hold “pending a discussion, in the press, of the economic aspect of the matter.” So far, the discussion had been “purely political” - the economic aspect had, by implication, been neglected.²⁵⁵

However, a blistering criticism soon followed. *Social Democrat* No44 - the Bolshevik central organ - carried Lenin’s article ‘On the slogan for a United States of Europe’. What was Lenin’s argument?

Propaganda backing the *republican* United States of Europe “expressly emphasised” that the slogan was meaningless “without the revolutionary overthrow of the German, Austrian and Russian monarchies”. Lenin said he did not quarrel with such a presentation of the question “*within the limits* of a political appraisal”. In other words Lenin rejected the charge that the republican United States of Europe slogan “obscures or weakens” the “slogan of a socialist revolution”.

To counterpose democracy and socialism is to fall head first into the murky waters of economism - still inhabited by the bottom-dwelling left in today’s Britain. “Political changes of a truly democratic nature”, especially a political revolution, “can under no circumstances whatsoever either obscure or weaken the slogan of a socialist revolution.” Quite the reverse. In Lenin’s opinion, they always bring it closer, extend its basis and draw in petty bourgeois and semi-proletarian masses into the struggle for socialism.

The republican United States of Europe slogan - if accompanied by demands for the revolutionary overthrow of the most reactionary monarchies - is “quite invulnerable as a political slogan”. However, there still remains, argued Lenin, the “highly important question of its economic content and significance.” From the angle of the economic conditions of imperialism - the export of capital and the division of the world by the leading powers - a United States of Europe “is either impossible or reactionary.”

Britain, France, Russia and Germany controlled vast tracts of the planet either directly in the form of colonies and dominions or indirectly in the form of semi-colonies. These powers (bar Russia) also exported capital in huge sums so as to exploit the world and extract super-profits - from which elite state officials, high clergymen and “other leeches” gain their fat sinecures.

That system of plundering the majority of the world’s population by a handful of great powers represented the highest stage of capitalism. Britain, Germany, France and Russia could no more renounce their colonies and spheres of influence than they could

the export of capital, reckoned Lenin.

Following this line of reasoning, Lenin insisted that a United States of Europe under capitalism must be tantamount to an “agreement on the partition of colonies.” Furthermore such an agreement between the great powers is itself impossible except by way of a trial of strength. And that in plain language means war. Germany was growing economically four times faster than Britain and France. As to Japan, its economic growth was ten times more rapid than Russia’s. Hence the *redivisionist* inter-imperialist contest and its attendant slaughter.

So temporary arrangements were possible, conceded Lenin. In that sense a United States of Europe is possible “as an agreement between the European capitalists”. But to what end? Only for the purpose of “suppressing socialism in Europe” and jointly “protecting colonial booty” against Japan and the United States, ie, great powers denied their ‘fair’ share of colonies.

Compared to the USA, the United States of Europe “denotes economic stagnation” and signifies the organisation of reaction. Under capitalism a United States of Europe would retard the more rapid economic development of the USA. Lenin also wanted to strike a blow against the Eurocentric prejudices that frequently passed for common sense in the Second International: “The times when the cause of democracy and socialism was associated only with Europe have gone for ever” announced Lenin.

Lenin concluded on the basis of the above arguments that the slogan for a United States of Europe “is an erroneous one”.²⁵⁶

Lenin elaborated upon the *economic* argument against the United States of Europe in his *Imperialism the highest stage of capitalism*. Some raw material for this pamphlet came from *Imperialism* by the British liberal anti-imperialist JA Hobson (first published in 1902).

We find Hobson approvingly quoted by Lenin when he warns that imperialism - the conquest of colonies and the export of capital on a huge scale - carried the risk that western Europe would end up like the South East of England, the Riviera or the “tourist-ridden” or residential parts of Italy and Switzerland - “little clusters of wealthy aristocrats drawing dividends and pensions from the far-east”, surrounded by professional retainers and tradesmen, personal servants and workers in the transport trade with all the real work done in Asia and Africa.

Hobson specifically held out the danger of an “alliance of western states, a European federation of great powers which, far from forwarding the cause of world civilisation, might introduce the gigantic peril of a western parasitism”. Hobson admitted that the “situation is far too complex, the play of world forces far too incalculable, to render this or any other single interpretation of the future very probable”. But the influences which govern the imperialism of western Europe today are “moving in this direction”, and unless “counteracted or diverted”, point towards some such “consummation”.

Lenin enthusiastically concurs. “The author is quite right: *if* the forces of imperialism had not been counteracted they would have led precisely to what he has described. The significance of a ‘United States of Europe’ in the present imperialist situation is correctly appraised”.²⁵⁷

So what is Lenin’s own political perspective? Essentially it lay in making revolution

in one's own country. Not in some messianic nationalist fashion but as the beginning of a process that can only be completed on a global scale.

Not surprisingly Lenin argued against the United States of the World as an immediate slogan in 'On the slogan for a United States of Europe'. Such a state form of the unification and freedom of nations is associated with socialism. But as an immediate slogan it would be incorrect for two reasons. Firstly, it merges with socialism. Secondly, it may be wrongly interpreted to mean that the "victory of socialism in a single country is impossible".

This second point was squarely directed against Leon Trotsky, who as his splendid biographer Isaac Deutscher says, had "seemed to imply that revolution could break out in Russia only simultaneously with a European upheaval".²⁵⁸ Trotsky, we should add, denied the charge and defended the slogan of a United States of Europe throughout World War I ... and beyond.

Lenin feared that if erected into a rigid, self-fulfilling prophecy such an insistence on a simultaneous European revolution could excuse revolutionary fatalism and breed passivity. "Uneven development", states Lenin, "is an absolute law of capitalism." Hence the "victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country alone." After expropriating the capitalists and organising its own socialist production the victorious proletariat of that country would "rise against the rest of the world" and attract to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries. The use of force is not ruled out in order to spread the revolution abroad. "A free union of nations in socialism is impossible without a more or less prolonged and stubborn struggle of the socialist republics against the backward states." Finally, Lenin once again stresses, the "democratic republic" will be the "political form" of the dictatorship (rule) of the proletariat and the oppressed classes.

This argument on the possibility of a victorious socialism in one country is, of course, now famous - infamous. Having discovered it nearly 10 years later Stalin went on, in 1924, to use this very passage quoted above in order to justify his theory of socialism in one country against what he dubbed Trotsky's "theory of the simultaneous victory of socialism in the principal countries of Europe".²⁵⁹

It has to be admitted that Lenin's formulation about the victory of socialism in one country is open to such a nationalist interpretation - if one shamelessly ignores the corpus of his writings which take for granted the necessity of socialism being international. Evidently, on that basis, what Lenin meant - and here Trotsky agreed - was that in all probability the proletariat of one country would seize state power ahead of others and might have to survive in isolation for a short period of time before revolutions arose elsewhere. No country should wait for others. An elementary principle. Revolutionary initiatives in one country takes forward the struggle in others. But in the face of a counterrevolutionary Europe revolutionary Russia could only succumb or turn into its opposite.

Nevertheless in 'On the slogan for a United States of Europe' Lenin is hardly at his best. Leave aside the sloppiness around the "victory" of socialism in one country, Lenin rests the whole weight of his case against the republican United States of Europe slogan on a rigid conceptual separation between the political and the economic. Politically he says it is a good slogan. Economically bad. True, capitalism has put in place such a

structural separation between the ‘economic’ and the ‘political’ spheres. It is, though, argues Ellen Meiksins Wood, “the most effective defence mechanism available to capital”.²⁶⁰ Let us once again see why.

Previous modes of production - such as feudalism and Asiatic despotism - are completely bound up with political force. ‘State unit’ and ‘economic unit’ are indistinguishable. The position of exploiter is inseparable from their political (military) power and consequent place in the hierarchy. Surplus is extracted from the direct producer either by custom backed by armed might or simply obtained through employing naked force. The exploiter has nothing or very little to do with production itself or even supervising production.

It is capitalism that creates a separate sphere of economics by discarding the former extra-economic means of exploitation. Conventional labour duties, tithes, royal tribute, social obligations and functions are discarded too. The business of the capitalist is business.

The extraction of surplus-value can in principle be achieved through purely ‘economic’ mechanisms. Private property becomes absolute. Having been ‘freed’ from the means of production, workers must sell their ability to labour to the capitalist - who now monopolises the means of production. So although the coercive force of the political sphere is still necessary in order to stand guard over property and the general conditions of production and reproduction, the inescapable need to gain a living, provides, in normal circumstances, all that is required to persuade the worker to make themselves available for exploitation.

That is precisely why the capitalist market is a political as well as an economic space. By taking up the struggle for democracy and giving it a definite social content the working class thereby begins to challenge not only the state but also the conditions of its own exploitation. As a rule Lenin experienced no problem whatsoever in recognising that. Hence for him the task of Marxist politicians was to lay bare the economics in politics and the politics in economics.

In that light Lenin’s numerous writings on the right of nations to self-determination oddly contrast with his rejection of the republican United States of Europe as either being “impossible” or “reactionary”. Leftist critics - eg, Luxemburg, Bukharin and Pyatakov - maintained almost exactly the same thing when it came to “self-determination”. Self-determination of small nations under the conditions of imperialist capitalism was either a “reactionary utopia” or “impossible”. “So long as capitalist states exist”, writes Luxemburg in her Junius pamphlet, “there can be no ‘national self-determination’ either in war or in peace”.²⁶¹

On the contrary, Lenin replied, the demand was perfectly feasible. He used Norway’s separation from Sweden in 1905 as proof. Furthermore, he insisted, if they were to achieve anything serious, not least socialism, Marxists must champion the rights of oppressed nations, especially against the great powers. Not to do so is to abandon the fight for socialism.

Self-determination is a demand for the equality of rights between nations. No serious Marxist - leave aside Alex Callinicos - imagines that the right to self-determination is limited to oppressed nations alone. There is no need, for example, to get into a complete

tangle about whether or not Scotland is, or is not, an oppressed nation. The right to self-determination is nowadays exercised by all advanced capitalist powers, especially to the degree real measures of democracy have been won from below. Marxists merely demand that that same right be extended to all nations. The bottom line must be the right to secede. Those who do not stand by this right are condemned by Lenin as chauvinists.

However self-determination is just that. The *right* to leave. National self-determination does not guarantee equality of population, military hardware, economic development or anything of the kind - a stupid argument fielded by stupid people *against* the call for a secular democratic Palestine alongside a secular democratic Israel. Self-determination simply means the right for a nation to determine - through a referendum or by electing deputies - its own future. Palestine should have that right - and so too should Israel - even though the latter will remain for some time militarily and economically much the more powerful state.

Nor does self-determination suggest, or hint at, advocating breakaways and the establishment of a multitude of dwarf states. Lenin touches upon this in 'Socialism and war' - the pamphlet he and Zinoviev jointly wrote in 1915.²⁶²

"The championing of this right", the right to self-determination, "far from encouraging the formation of petty states, leads on the contrary, to freer, fearless and therefore wider and more universal formation of large states and the federation of states". The authors insist that such states "are an advantage" to the masses and that workers, in the *oppressed* nation, must "unfailingly" fight for the "complete" unity of the workers of the oppressed *and* oppressor nationalities, "including organisational unity" - Alan McCombes, Tommy Sheridan and other comrades in the Scottish Socialist Party might care to take note.

It is one thing to oppose a United States of Europe brought about by blood and iron. But there is no need to conflate that with the republican United States of Europe won through revolution and completed by the voluntary agreement of the peoples. If there is a general right to freely merge into larger and larger state units and federations, surely that applies as much to Europe - which is ripe for socialism and has long established economic and cultural ties - as it does to any other corner of the world.

So why did Lenin perform an 180 degree about turn between 1914 and 1915 on the republican United States of Europe slogan? Undoubtedly there were numerous reasons, including, I suspect, psychological factors, besides those of economic analysis, political programme and factional calculation.

But let us begin with the obvious. There existed many out-and-out reactionary advocates of a United States of Europe. Germany was not untypical. Here such people ranged from conservative Humboldt university professors and influential figures in the imperial high command to social chauvinists. A modern-day version of Charlemagne's Holy Roman Empire appealed to those beguiled by romantic national historiography and obedient to Hegelian state worship. Bayonets, artillery bombardments, poison gas and brutal conquest were the methods they excused, or directly promoted in order to achieve their chosen ends. Unity brought about in such a way could only multiply existing social oppression and national grievances many times over. Their Europe was to be swaddled in chains.

German military strategy, in the words of Friedrich von Bernhardi, a junker general, writing in his 1912 best-seller, sought to finally settle scores with France in the west and expand territorially deep into tsarist Russia in the east. After the crushing victory continental power would be consolidated through a “Central European Federation” - with at its core a Greater Germany incorporating Austria, Holland, South Prussia, etc.²⁶³ From this fortress Europe Germany proudly steps forth - fulfilling its god-given destiny - as the world’s leader. The narrow-mindedly commercial Anglo-Saxon powers Great Britain and the US are henceforth reduced to a more fitting place in the international pecking order.

In good measure the German ruling classes turned to imperialism in an attempt to put off socialism. The Social Democratic Party achieved remarkable electoral successes after Bismarck’s anti-socialist laws were lifted. The 1912 election in particular “frightened all the forces of the establishment”, notes Paul Kennedy. The results, which were a “stunning victory” for the SDP, provoked pan-German calls from big industrial capital, the great landowners and Lutheran newspaper owners for a “*coup d’etat* from above”. Plans to curb the Reichstag’s already severely limited powers were certainly given a more than sympathetic hearing “in court and army circles”.²⁶⁴

However, German socialism was far from united and far from single-mindedly revolutionary. German armies fighting in the trenches of Flanders were complemented and given succour on the home front by rightwing social democrats such as Gerhard Hildebrand. This socialist empire builder had, even before the outbreak of war in August 1914, vigorously promoted the idea of a “United States of Western Europe” (he excluded Russia) fronted, of course, by Germany. His united Europe would fend off the “great islamic movement” rising in Asia and teach the “African negroes” the virtues of hard work and industry. The “African people require guidance and care”, he said, “for an indefinite time to come”.²⁶⁵

The August Babel-Karl Kautsky leadership quite rightly expelled him from the party. Yet with the declaration of war Hilder brandism - to use a phrase - almost instantly became official SPD doctrine. Rosa Luxemburg, half in mourning and half in defiance, described the SPD as a “stinking corpse”.

Other equally disgusting social chauvinists can be cited from Russia, France and Britain. Longuet, Guesde, Vaillant, Chernov, Plekhanov, Hyndman, Snowden, etc. Meanwhile Lenin sifted through a vast mass of books, journals and papers in the well stocked libraries of Switzerland to find the political ammunition he needed in order not only to expose the predatory war aims of the belligerent powers but to polemically demolish rightwing social democracy. Suffice to say the views of Hildebrand, and his ilk, on *their* united Europe were useful for “understanding the tendencies of opportunism and imperialism within social democracy!”²⁶⁶

Besides the united Europe advocated by the generals and the social chauvinists there were, however, other plans for a united Europe - crucially those still emanating from former comrades who Lenin now scornfully referred to as the Kautskyites. Lenin was determined to draw a clear line of demarcation that would completely separate off the Bolsheviks and the principled internationalist left from Kautskyite centrism.

Centrism is a political category defined not so much by what it is, rather it must be

grasped in movement. To avoid a split, Kautsky, for example, refused to condemn the SPD majority when the entire Reichstag fraction voted to finance the war. Nor did he protest when the right acted as the kaiser's loyal recruiting sergeant.

Kautsky alibied the right and held out the prospect of recentring unity with them once the war finally finished. Palpably, in so doing Kautsky betrayed himself and, of course, the great cause of socialism. What made him a particularly dangerous source of social contamination, though, was not only his past reputation as an outstanding Marxist theoretician, but the fact that he still continued to speak in the name of an authoritative Marxism.

Such centrism was not confined to Germany. Far from it. Every country had its centrists and whether they stood on the right of that spectrum or on the extreme left, what marked them out for Lenin was their unwillingness to countenance an irrevocable political and organisational schism with the social chauvinists *and* those who defended them. In Russia this amorphous and ever shifting centrist current included Jules Martov - the Menshevik Internationalists leader who would, in 1918, gain an overall majority in the Menshevik Party - and so-called independents, most notably Trotsky.

Here I think we must bring into our account psychological as well as factional considerations. The relationship between Kautsky and Lenin before 1914 might be described as that of star pupil to learned teacher. Lenin expressed his disagreement with Kautsky on this or that episodic issue. However, he considered Kautsky the worthy intellectual leader of the Second International and sought wherever possible to secure his invaluable support in the inner-party struggle against the Mensheviks. Kautsky often wrote about Russian affairs and in general sided with the Bolsheviks - eg, over the worker-peasant nature of the Russian Revolution, election tactics and combining insurrection with general strike in 1905.

Kautsky's miserable collapse in 1914 hit Lenin like a bolt from the blue. He could hardly believe the news when it came. Nevertheless he quickly fought, back hurling invective against Kautsky for all he was worth. The strategic goal, in Lenin's mind, was though, a complete and absolute rupture with such centrists, as well as the social chauvinists. The Bolsheviks intransigently raised the call for a Third International and turning the inter-imperialist war into a civil war of social liberation. To begin with the Bolsheviks made little headway. Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, writes amusingly of the situation of the Zimmerwald left in 1916 when it consisted of "The Dutch left plus ourselves, plus the German left, plus nought".²⁶⁷

The general mood internationally - as revealed by the socialist conferences in London, Berne and Zimmerwald - was for arriving at a broad consensus around inoffensive slogans such as "peace" and harmless resolutions pointing out the errors of social chauvinism.

It was in this context of murderous world war and the left's continued conciliation with centrist and rightwing traitors that Lenin turned against the republican United States of Europe slogan. Lenin decided to associate the slogan with Kautsky and those who refused to break with the right. It became intertwined with Lenin's undeniably correct campaign to draw lines of demarcation

Surely, however, he overcompensated and drew a line that was far too defensive on

this occasion. In so doing he gave away a highly serviceable political weapon. Post-1914 Kautsky might have come to give the slogan a “pacifist reading”. But, if the slogan was supplemented with the call for revolutionary civil war throughout Europe and other key planks of the minimum programme such as self-determination for the colonies and oppressed nations, then, yes, even in the darkest days of World War I, it would carry a powerful message.

Workers throughout the European continent share a common history and can together make a common contribution towards finishing the world revolution.

Appendix IV: Trotsky and the United States of Europe slogan

Comintern's draft programme - published in 1928 over the signatures of Nikolai Bukharin and Joseph Stalin - deleted all mention of the United States of Europe slogan. This was an integral part of the headlong retreat by the Communist International away from the goal of world revolution. Not surprisingly, given the closure put on serious debate - Comintern's 6th Congress met over July-September 1928 - the draft was adopted without any substantial alterations. From now on the ruinous 'theory' of socialism in one country served as official doctrine.

Leon Trotsky - hero of the October Revolution but ten years after an outcast - subjected the whole draft to a detailed and devastating critique (punishment soon followed - internal exile became exile abroad). The United States of Europe slogan featured prominently: "There is no justifying the omission" protested Trotsky.²⁶⁸

His trenchant defence of the slogan - not only in 1928, but as far back as 1915 - deserves serious study by revolutionary socialists and communists. Trotsky now has a secure reputation as one of the 20th century's foremost Marxists - he stands alongside Lenin and Luxemburg as a theorist and practical revolutionist. Anyone who fails to properly engage with Trotsky's programmatic and strategic thoughts, including on the United States of Europe slogan, deliberately disarms themselves intellectually. The result is not mere benign ignorance but the unconscious acceptance of bourgeois ideology. When it comes to the contemporary EU, such a socialist is therefore likely to succumb to cynical popularity chasing and the fallacies of leftwing nationalism.

Equally worthless when it comes to the class struggle are those sects who specialise in repeating parrot-fashion various passages and formulations plucked from Trotsky and treating them as timeless verities. The results owe more to theology than science (ie, rational debate and testable investigation). Truth that is frozen perishes. Such sects might once have found a certain justification by guarding the flame of Trotsky's Marxism against the calumnies and quackery of Stalin and his successors. But if we are to avoid the trap they have inevitably fallen into of unintentionally turning Trotsky's Marxism into its opposite - fought over by warring sects using calumnies and quackery - there must be *critical* engagement.

Hence, despite the essentially descriptive limitations of this appendix, the reader will find sympathy and respect for the revolutionary and thinker Trotsky combined with an attempt to point out ambiguities and shortcomings in his writings. Our aim at the end of the day is to separate out what is mistaken or transient from what is enduring.

In 1928 Trotsky felt compelled to refer back to Lenin and his rejection of the United States of Europe slogan in 1915 - Stalin and Bukharin were wielding the dead Lenin like

an ideological club in order to bludgeon the living Trotsky. We have already discussed Lenin above and came to the conclusion that he wrongly “gave away” the slogan because of its close association with Karl Kautsky. Suffice to say Kautsky was not Lenin’s sole target in the 1915 article ‘On the United States of Europe slogan’. Though he did not say it openly, Lenin also had his sights on Trotsky - during this period Trotsky can best be described as a leftwing centrist. Lenin attacked the unnamed Trotsky with cutting remarks about the United States of Europe slogan being used as a cover to excuse revolutionary inaction. Trotsky, as readers of the Bolshevik press knew, had appeared to suggest that there must be a simultaneous revolution across the whole European continent. That or nothing. How did Trotsky respond? In his ‘The peace programme’ - published in 1915 - Trotsky shows that there existed a basic affinity between the two men. “A more or less complete economic unification of Europe accomplished from above through an agreement between capitalist governments is a utopia”, writes Trotsky. Remember this was in the middle of World War I and at a time when Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary were still ruled over by autocratic monarchs. “Along this road” of unity from above “matters cannot proceed beyond partial compromises and half measures” - again that sentence shows that both Trotsky and Lenin shared a similar outlook.

However, Trotsky continues: the “economic unification” of Europe - which would bring colossal advantages to both consumers and producers, and advance culture in general - “is becoming a *revolutionary task of the European proletariat* in its struggle against imperialist protectionism and its instrument - militarism”. Hence for Trotsky the “United States of Europe” represents “the only conceivable form” of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Europe.²⁶⁹

Trotsky intentionally blurs what is, I believe, the necessary distinction between minimum, immediate, demands, ie demands which train, mobilise and empower the working class, but can technically be met under conditions of capitalism - and those of the maximum programme. Throughout his writings we find the terms ‘United States of Europe’, ‘United Socialist States of Europe’, ‘United Soviet Republics of Europe’ used interchangeably. One slips and crosses over into the other. A methodological problem that will not be explored here.

Looking back, the Trotsky of 1928 concedes that there had been no example of working class rule in a single country, nor any theoretical clarity on this possibility amongst Marxists before the reality of Soviet Russia. So in 1915 the United States of Europe slogan “might” have given rise to the notion that proletarian revolution could only take place simultaneously across the whole of Europe. But he pleads not guilty to advocating any such thing. Indeed Trotsky quotes himself from 1915 insisting that: “Not a single country must ‘wait’ for the other countries in the struggle”. Moreover in 1915 he lambasted the idea of substituting temporising international *inaction* for “parallel revolutionary action” - conclusive proof if it was needed. Trotsky unhesitatingly called for beginning and continuing the revolutionary struggle on “national grounds” in the conviction that all initiatives provide inspiration and will enhance the “struggle in other countries”.²⁷⁰

Trotsky considered that an isolated revolutionary Russia could not hold out against counterrevolutionary Europe. The same applied, he said, to an isolated Germany. Yet by

1928 any such hint at the necessity of world revolution had become heresy: for Stalin such “Trotskyism” went hand in hand with “lack of faith” in the inner forces of the Russian Revolution. Trotskyism was officially deemed antithetical to the new party-state cult of Leninism. Of course, Trotsky could, and did, cite Lenin on any number of different occasions saying exactly the very same thing. “Without a revolution in Germany, we shall perish”, etc, etc.

Stalin rested his case ‘theoretically’ on the undeniable fact that capitalism develops unevenly - supposedly a brilliant discovery made by Lenin. True, Lenin’s writings are full of rich observation about uneven development. But the same can be said for those of Marx and Engels - especially in regard to their native Germany.

Anyway, according to Stalin, uneven development - brought about by imperialism - virtually precluded simultaneous or parallel revolution. Furthermore, as revolution would typically break out in one discrete country at a time, the primary task of communists lay not so much in spreading the conflagration. Instead of international socialism he preached national socialist construction. His island socialism in the USSR would become a paradise on earth and henceforth the object of unalloyed admiration by the whole of humanity. The USSR’s success would thereby stimulate attempts at emulation - the book *Imagine* by the Scottish Socialist Party’s Tommy Sheridan and Alan McCombes is founded on exactly the same premise.

Needless to say Stalin was radically shifting the political-linguistic meaning of the term socialism. Socialism, according to Stalin is post-capitalism and entailed little more than the nationalisation of industry and agriculture. He had at his command the full might of the Communist Party apparatus and the Soviet state to give a crushing authority to his every statement.

The Soviet Union, he famously claimed in the second, 1924 edition, of the pamphlet *Foundations of Leninism*, did not simply aspire towards socialism - previously understood as the self-liberating rule of the working class and a transitional period between the system of global capital and fully fledged communism. Stalin now maintained that the Soviet Union possessed everything required by way of human material and natural resources to “build a socialist society”.²⁷¹

In the mid-1930s Stalin triumphantly proclaimed that the Soviet Union had actually achieved socialism. The path to a national communism now stretched out before its happy peoples. Reality was very different.

The Soviet Union had expropriated the capitalists and landlords and set itself on a course of rapid accumulation. But after 1928 and the first five-year plan the working class had been forcibly driven back into the position of an exploited slave class. As to the peasants, they were effectively re-enslaved. The Soviet Union was post-capitalist, but had become anti-socialist.

Trotsky continued to categorise the Soviet Union as a workers’ state till his murder by Stalin’s agent in 1940 - albeit a “degenerate” one. Indeed some of his epigones - eg, in the International Socialist Group and Workers Power - have maintained that Vladimir Putin’s Russian Federation is still some kind of workers’ state because 50% of the means of production, or some such figure, remained in state hands. These supposed conquests of the October Revolution in reality have as much to do with socialism as does Railtrack

in Britain.

But we must pick up the main thread of our argument. Trotsky concluded that Lenin's rejection of the United States of Europe slogan in 1915 was of a "restricted, tactical, and, by its very essence, temporary character". That, says Trotsky, is best proven by the "subsequent course of events".²⁷² The fact of the matter is that in 1923 - at Trotsky's urging - the Communist International adopted the slogan. If, as Stalin maintained, the slogan of the United States of Europe was unacceptable on the basis of principle, why did Comintern adopt it - and why did Lenin raise no objection?

Indeed the slogan appeared in Comintern literature as late as 1926. Comintern's publishing house issued an official pamphlet *The United Socialist States of Europe*. Written under the name of John Pepper, it roundly polemicised against the "bourgeois-social democratic slogan" of a 'pan-Europe' to be brought about peacefully under capitalism. Communists, the author instructed, must not only demolish the "fraudulent pacifist" content of the 'pan-Europe' slogan, but should set up against it a "positive slogan". For the "next period" the "slogan of the United States of Socialist Europe" is to serve as the "comprehensive slogan for the *European* communist parties".²⁷³

However that slogan quickly fell from grace. Factional consideration meant it had to be expunged. Firstly, the slogan was too closely associated with the pariah Trotsky. Secondly, it ran completely against the grain of the Stalin-Bukharin national socialist programme.

Let us carefully examine Trotsky's case for the United States of Europe slogan in 1923. Responding to the French occupation of Germany's economically vital Ruhr region and the nationwide political crisis it provoked, Trotsky wrote a short discussion article, dated June 30, for *Pravda* - 'Is the slogan of the "United States of Europe" a timely one?'.²⁷⁴ Here we find Trotsky's strategic application of the slogan to the immediate post-World War I conditions.

Defeat reduced Germany from a rabid oppressor nation, bent on the reorganisation of Europe under its militaristic domination, to the status of abject victim. The country underwent involuntary surgery - the amputation of whole wedges of territory - by the terms of the Versailles treaty. West Prussia, Poznan, Upper Silesia, Alsace-Lorraine, the Hultschin and the Memel districts. France, Poland and Denmark benefited. Danzig (Gdansk) became a 'free city'. The Saar region was placed under League of Nations administration for 15 years and a plebiscite was ordered in Northern Schleswig. All colonies in Africa passed to Britain.

Severe limits were also put on its armed forces. No more than 100,000 men. No tanks, no planes, no submarines. Fortifications along the Rhine were raised. Merchant ships, fishing boats, and railway wagons and locomotives were confiscated too. Furthermore the allies imposed onerous reparations upon Germany. In 1920 the Boulogne conference fixed the sum at 269 billion German goldmarks to be paid over in 42 annual instalments.

That proved impossible. In January 1923 Germany announced that it could not pay. Unemployment, poverty and hunger had crippled the country economically and socially. Compared with 1913 industrial production stood at around 50%. France cynically used the failure to make the reparations payment on schedule as a pretext to seize the Ruhr - the coal producing heartland of German industry. An act of victor's aggression that

triggered a massive wave of protest throughout Germany.

Initially fascist bands and rightwing nationalists were to the fore. France is the traditional enemy dating back to before Napoleon Bonaparte. Wilhelm Cuno's conservative government even called for defiance and passive resistance. Strikes in the Ruhr were financed through recourse to the hyper-inflationary printing press. Adolf Hitler dared to take what the US historian William Shirer calls an "unpopular line": "No - not down with France, but down with the traitors of the fatherland!" "That must be our slogan" insisted the National Socialist leader.²⁷⁵ Hitler admits he was "attacked no little" over this by men whose "national attitude" was nothing but an "outward sham".²⁷⁶

The Communist Party of Germany - born amidst the tragic failure of the November 1918 revolution - managed to outflank such forces. Under the so-called 'Schlageter line' - a strategic reorientation promoted by Karl Radek named after the German nationalist gunned down by French occupation forces after he was spotted planting a bomb - there was even a brief "experiment" at cooperation between the CPG and the Nazis.²⁷⁷ A large CPG rally on August 10 1923 included an address by one of their top speakers.

Actually that *joint platform* involved no softening of the struggle against fascism by the CPG - only a different angle of attack. CPG eyes were firmly set on the National Socialist's plebeian rank and file. There was no let up in "hostility to" or "denunciation" of fascist doctrines and actions, reports EH Carr.²⁷⁸ However Germany's national mortification was skilfully linked with the CPG's social programme and willingness to agitate for militant methods such as the political general strike throughout Germany.

Minds in the Kremlin re-awoke to the prospect of revolution in Germany. Trotsky - who was being eased from the topmost summit of power and was understandably disgruntled about the course of events - actually volunteered to put himself at the service of the German comrades "as a soldier of the revolution".²⁷⁹ He did after all possess proven qualities when it came to organising an uprising. The emerging Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev triumvirate were, however, unwilling to allow Trotsky the chance he relished of leading the German Revolution - and thus securing himself either martyrdom or an unassailable position of world influence. Nevertheless, given the objective balance of forces, plans for an uprising spluttered out into something of a humiliating fiasco. Mutual recriminations followed in Moscow.

For our purposes though, what matters is Trotsky's analysis of Europe and the political solutions he offered. World War I was in essence, he said, a European war. US and Japanese participation did not alter this. Behind the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914 Trotsky saw the productive forces of capitalism - productive forces which had outgrown the narrow framework of the nation-states of Europe.

Germany in particular - populous and economically dynamic - needed to reach out globally and expand its markets. However Germany found itself blocked by Britain's vast official and semi-official empire on the one hand and the customs barriers that restricted and divided Europe on the other. World War I showed that the continent had to be radically reorganised - only labour could perform that task using civilised and humane methods.

Germany's great rival Britain had little concern for Europe. Battered by the war, what was once the biggest creditor nation found itself in hock to the US. Assets around the

world had been sold off in order to finance the total war against Germany. South America effectively changed hands. From being a British sphere of influence it became a US one. The Monroe doctrine of 1823 at last came to fruition. The British lion licked its wounds and looked to its Asian and African empire and the Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and South African dominions as the source of recovery.

France could aspire to nothing more than keeping Germany permanently bled white. In any armed conflict the much more numerous and industrially developed Germans would always win. France therefore demanded - and got - debilitating peace conditions. France also encouraged the national fragmentation of middle Europe. The Austro-Hungarian and Turkish empires - allied to Germany between 1914 and 1918 - were shattered in to innumerable petty states. None of which were capable of anything like an independent role in world affairs or doing much militarily. The same applied to those national areas cut away from Russia - Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, etc.

The US now ranked as the world's leading economic power. Yet rather than pressing for the dismemberment of the creaking British empire and risking another cataclysmic war so as to impose its will on Europe, the US was on balance content to let the old world slowly rot. Ruling circles in Washington had no stomach for taking on British imperialism; but they were convinced that, sooner rather than later, the 20th century was going to be the American century. The trick was to patiently bide one's time until chaos in Europe reached the point where the US would be welcomed in and could buy the whole continent for a mere pittance.

Surveying this sordid mess Trotsky said that "our unfortunate continent" had been cut up, exhausted, disorganised and "Balkanised" - unlike Chris Bamberg, Alan Thorne, Tommy Sheridan and co, Trotsky did not welcome, or view with indifference, the 'break-up' of existing states. Europe had been transformed into a "madhouse" by capital.²⁸⁰ Nothing positive could develop from within the petty state and tariff walls created by Versailles. Europe must either remove these barriers or face the threat of complete decomposition.

The methods used by the ruling class to overcome frontiers - total war and military conquest - had left millions dead and inadvertently exacerbated an already constricting fragmentation. Another bourgeoisie attempt to organise unity would result in either the destruction of European civilisation or US counterrevolutionary domination.

On the basis of this exceptionally far-sighted assessment Trotsky had no hesitation in declaring that only the proletariat could save Europe. He therefore proposed in his June 30 1923 *Pravda* article that the united front slogan of a "workers' and peasants' government" - put forward in a laudatory attempt to win over the majority still wedded to social democracy - be posed more "concretely".

It should be coupled with the call for a United States of Europe brought about by the efforts of the workers themselves. Such a route alone offers "salvation for our continent from economic decay and from enslavement to mighty American capitalism".²⁸¹

Could this play into the hands of pacifists and bourgeois reformists? Trotsky mocked these silly leftist notions. Like the demand for a federal Britain and a united Ireland, or a Sixth Republic in France, or a two state solution between Israel and Palestine, the United

States of Europe slogan could, yes, be taken up by any number of different political trends. That is undoubtedly true. However the slogan was to be advanced not as a panacea, not by itself, but as an additional component, or plank, within the overall communist programme.

Trotsky displays an admirable optimism. The Kautskyite centrists are no longer in sole charge of things. Communist parties are growing in size and experience. Where others may yearn for piecemeal reform from above, Trotsky wants the communists to combatively link the slogan to the tasks of furthering world revolution.

His reasoning is straightforward. The revolutionary wave that exploded upon Europe in 1917 and 1918 had subsided by 1923. Communists must actively encourage a fresh upsurge by restoring the confidence of the European working class and overcoming their real fears about whether they too would share the awful fate of the workers and peasants in Russia - wars of intervention, misery, blockade, famine and epidemics (the shrivelling of effective democracy was another source of apprehension - but that can be left to another discussion).

The loss of class nerve produced by genuine worries about making revolution on diminutive national ground was to be assuaged by the perspective of the United States of Europe. This was an extensive continental ground and would moreover be free to join together with the Soviet Union to form a mighty combination that could even withstand the United States.

Did Trotsky distinguish between his United States of Europe and the rule of the working class? He supplies no clear answer. The United States of Europe slogan “corresponds” to the slogan a workers’ and peasants’ state. The United States of Europe has an “exactly similar and parallel significance” as the demand for a workers’ and peasants’ government. The United States of Europe is regarded as a “stage” towards the dictatorship of the proletariat.²⁸² Either way without this supplementary slogan the communists could not hope to galvanise the workers of Europe, let alone storm the heavens.

Europe, for Trotsky, is conceived of not as a mere geographical entity. Europe is thought of as an economic reality built on layer upon layer of criss-crossing cultural commonalities and historical links that long predate capitalism. Hence the US could temporarily stand aloof from Europe. But Germany cannot stand aloof from France. And France cannot stand aloof from Germany “Therein lies the crux, therein lies the solution to the European problem”, Trotsky maintained.

What of unevenness? The continent consists of many different state units all displaying marked variations one with another. And yet Europe moves according to a rhythm different to the other side of the Atlantic. Compared to the US, the European countries taken together exhibit a definite *evenness* economically and politically due to geography, culture and history. Put another way European unevenness is relative. Europe exists on one scale of unevenness. The US on another. That is why a general strike or a constitutional crisis in France has a far bigger impact on Germany than it does on the US. Certainly a revolutionary situation in France will touch Germany, Italy, Spain and elsewhere in Europe in a profound sense - something that cannot be said about the US.

In general Trotsky is of the opinion that although no one could predict when exactly

Europe would be united under the leadership of the revolutionary working class, the sequence of events would probably put Europe ahead of the US. That is why events in Europe are in the final analysis of decisive importance for the US as well. Revolution in Europe will surely shatter the overarching confidence of the American capitalist class and accelerate the coming to power of the US proletariat no end.

The United States of Europe is envisaged by Trotsky as an historically necessary stage that must be passed through. This *transitional* stage arises from the real situation, ie, the profoundly different situations faced by Europe and the US not only before but after World War I. To deny this unevenness by pretending that everywhere is equally ripe, or unripe, for revolution obscures the actual path of development that must be followed and is to substitute empty phrasemongering for hard analysis.

Naturally the spread of working class power will not stop at a European phase. Trotsky believed that the Soviet Union afforded a bridge for the United Europe into Asia. The Soviet Union plus a United Europe would exercise a magnetic attraction for the oppressed peoples of Asia. The gigantic bloc of the nations of Europe and Asia would then be established and will face down any threats coming from the United States. A disunited Europe could never do that.

Notes

¹ There is also a small but not unimportant pro-euro left in the form of London mayor Ken Livingstone, PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka and *Red Pepper's* John Palmer.

² *The Economist* December 2003.

³ Valéry Giscard d'Estaing chaired the EU's constitutional convention which consisted of 105 delegates - chosen by the 15 member and 13 candidate states, the national parliaments, the European parliament and EU commission - each government had one representative, while the national parliaments had two. Former Europe minister Peter Hain was the voice of the UK government, Gisela Stuart and David Heathcote-Amory spoke respectively for the Labour and Conservative sides of parliament.

⁴ R Graves *The Greek myths* Vol 1, Harmondsworth 1975, p197.

⁵ N Davies *Europe: a history* London 1997, p8.

⁶ See WH Parker 'Is Russia in Europe?' in *An historical geography of Russia* London 1968, p27.

⁷ Quoted in D Hay *Europe: the emergence of an idea* Edinburgh 1957, p123.

⁸ Quoted in N Davies *Europe: a history* London 1997, p8.

⁹ Germany planned a united Europe. In 1942 Walter Funk, president of the Reichsbank, wrote the first chapter of a book called *Europäische Wirtschaftsgesellschaft* which called for a common currency. Other chapters outlined the Nazi blueprint for a Common Agricultural Policy, a single market and a central bank. The new European order would have been promoted as an ideology which would have made German conquest more palatable by emphasising European commonality and promoting antagonism against Slav and American outsiders (see RE Herzstein *When Nazi dreams came true* London 1982).

¹⁰ J Noakes and G Pridam (eds) *Nazism 1919-1948* Vol 3, Exeter 1998, p741.

¹¹ C Attlee *Labour's peace aims* London 1940, p12.

¹² Quoted in W Lipgens (ed) *Documents on the history of European integration* Vol 1 New York 1985, pp474 , 479.

¹³ Quoted in *Financial Times* July 1 2003.

¹⁴ See www.isnet.org/archive/vanderveen.html.

¹⁵ N Davidson *The origins of Scottish nationhood* London 2000, p11.

¹⁶ VN Voloshinov *Marxism and the philosophy of language* London 1986, p13.

¹⁷ Quoted in C Bhatt *Hindu nationalism* Oxford 2001, p127.

¹⁸ Figures from W Loth 'The process of European integration' in C Wurm (ed) *Western Europe and Germany: the beginnings of European integration 1945-1960* Oxford 1995.

¹⁹ Figures from N Ferguson *Colossus* London 2004, pp236-37.

²⁰ Figures from Bank of International Settlements *Annual Report 1999*.

²¹ Figures from *New Scientist* April 27 2002.

²² F Fukuyama *The end of history and the last man* London 1992, pxiii.

²³ D Sassoon *One hundred years of socialism* London 1996, p649.

²⁴ *New Left Review* January-February 1998.

²⁵ N Harris *The return of cosmopolitan capital* London 2003, p264.

²⁶ *Workers' Liberty* December 2002.

²⁷ M Hardt and A Negri *Empire* Cambridge MA 2001, p55.

²⁸ *Ibid* p190.

²⁹ *Ibid* p33.

³⁰ K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 6, Moscow 1976, p486.

³¹ Quoted in J Riddle (ed) *Lenin's struggle for a revolutionary International: documents 1907-16*

New York 1984, p6.

³² *Ibid* p12.

³³ Quotes K Kautsky *Socialism and colonial policy* from *Workers' Liberty* December 2002 - incidentally, whatever its faults the AWL is to be congratulated for reprinting this work. Kautsky deserves to be more widely read.

³⁴ R Luxemburg *The accumulation of capital* London 1971, p416.

³⁵ K Kautsky *Selected political writings* London 1983, p90.

³⁶ *Workers' Liberty* December 2002.

³⁷ VI Lenin introduction, N Bukharin *Imperialism and the world economy* London 1972, p14.

³⁸ G Zinoviev 'The social roots of opportunism' *New Internationalist* No2, winter 1983-84.

³⁹ Quoted in D Reynolds *Britannia overruled* London 1991, p161.

⁴⁰ J Kent 'The British empire and the origins of the cold war, 1944-49', in A Deighton [ed] *Britain and the first Cold War* London 1990, p166.

⁴¹ C Barnett *The collapse of British power* London 1972, p592-93.

⁴² D Reynolds *Britannia overruled* London 1991, p179.

⁴³ P Bolsover *America over Britain* London 1953, p34.

⁴⁴ D Reynolds *Britannia overruled* London 1991, p180.

⁴⁵ R Palme Dutt *The crisis of Britain and the British empire* London 1957, p27.

⁴⁶ M Kaku and D Axelrod *To win a nuclear war* London 1987, p29.

⁴⁷ Quoted in *ibid* p33.

⁴⁸ P Kennedy *The rise and fall of the great powers* London 1989, p666.

⁴⁹ *Ibid* p690.

⁵⁰ *Ibid* p664.

⁵¹ J McMahan *Reagan and the world* London 1984, p4.

⁵² *New York Times* March 8 1992.

⁵³ Quoted in M Kaku and D Axelrod *To win a nuclear war* London 1987, p33.

⁵⁴ N Ferguson *The cash nexus* Harmondsworth 2002, p46.

⁵⁵ Quoted in *Financial Times* December 22 2001.

⁵⁶ See www.cer.org.uk

⁵⁷ W Hutton *The world we're in* London 2002, p321.

⁵⁸ *Ibid* p322.

⁵⁹ *Ibid* pp352, 357.

⁶⁰ *People before profit* London 2001, p19.

⁶¹ B Eichergreen *Globalising capital* Princeton 1996, p8.

⁶² F Braudel *The wheels of commerce* Berkeley 1992, p424.

⁶³ B Eichergreen *Globalising capital* Princeton 1996, p7.

⁶⁴ K Marx *Capital* Vol 1, Moscow 1970, p102.

⁶⁵ B Eichergreen *Globalising capital* Princeton 1996, p19.

⁶⁶ *Ibid* p31.

⁶⁷ Quoted in *ibid* p41.

⁶⁸ VI Lenin *CW* Vol 22, Moscow 1977, p298.

⁶⁹ JM Keynes *Economic consequences of the peace* London 1919, p233.

⁷⁰ A Alensia 'End of large public debts' in F Giavazzi and L Spaventa (eds) *High public debt: the Italian experience* Cambridge 1988, p38n.

⁷¹ N Ferguson *The cash nexus* Harmondsworth 2002, p154.

⁷² B Eichergreen *Globalising capital* Princeton 1996, p153.

⁷³ *Ibid* p160.

⁷⁴ 'Socialist Party conference resolution' *Members Bulletin* No35 January 1999, p5.

⁷⁵ *The Sun* January 1 2002.

⁷⁶ N Ferguson *The cash nexus* Harmondsworth 2002, p333.

⁷⁷ T Grant and A Woods 'Towards European unity?' January 3 2001.

- ⁷⁸ *Financial Times* June 14 2004.
- ⁷⁹ N Ferguson *Colossus* London 2004, p232.
- ⁸⁰ See A Fischer, Thomas Jordan and Caesar Lack *Giving up the Swiss frank* CEPR discussion papers, December 2001.
- ⁸¹ From European Round Table *Job creation and competitiveness through innovation* London 1998.
- ⁸² J Grahl *After Maastricht* London 1997, p138.
- ⁸³ R Griffiths *No to the Euro!* London 2002, p26.
- ⁸⁴ Robert Griffiths simply repeats, but forgets, the dire warnings issued by ‘official communism’ over the years. Sovereignty, it seems, has been lost and lost time and again. For example, back in the 1960s John Gollan, CPGB general secretary, was predicting in his pamphlet, *The common market: why Britain should not join*, that if the “pro-marketeters” got their way they would “sacrifice British sovereignty ... For them profit comes before country. This is something, which when fully grasped, the British people, we are sure, will never tolerate” (quoted in T Naim *The left against Europe?* Harmondsworth 1973, p100). Suffice to say, the pro-marketeters got their way in 1973 ... despite that Griffith still patriotically stands guard over a British sovereignty that was supposedly lost 30 years ago.
- ⁸⁵ *Even more unemployment: the case against Emu* London nd, p11.
- ⁸⁶ *Socialist Outlook* February 2002.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁸ *Socialist Worker* August 24 2002.
- ⁸⁹ *International Socialism* No6 autumn 1961.
- ⁹⁰ See *International Socialism* editorial No8, spring 1962; John Fairhead ‘Polemic: the Common Market’ No7, winter 1962; editorial No11, winter 1961; John Palmer No12, spring 1963.
- ⁹¹ *International Socialism* No11 winter 1961-62.
- ⁹² *International Socialism* No28, spring 1967.
- ⁹³ *International Socialism* No49 autumn 1971.
- ⁹⁴ *International Socialism* No27 winter 1966-67.
- ⁹⁵ *International Socialism* No49 autumn 1971.
- ⁹⁶ C Bambery *Scotland's national question* London 1990, p37.
- ⁹⁷ See M Thatcher *Statecraft* London 2002.
- ⁹⁸ K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 6, Moscow 1976, p94.
- ⁹⁹ *Ibid* pp280-81.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid* p290.
- ¹⁰¹ *Ibid* p465.
- ¹⁰² T Sheridan and A McCombes *Imagine* Edinburgh 2000, p178.
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid* p184.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid* p187.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid* 189.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Ibid* p189.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid* p190.
- ¹⁰⁸ JV Stalin *Works* Vol 6, Moscow 1953, p111.
- ¹⁰⁹ Quoted in R Luxemburg *The national question* New York 1976, p65.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid* p93.
- ¹¹¹ R Luxemburg *The national question* New York 1976, p74.
- ¹¹² VI Lenin *CW* Vol 22 Moscow 1977, p148.
- ¹¹³ JK Pilsudski *Memories of a revolutionary and soldier* London 1931, p32.
- ¹¹⁴ VI Lenin *CW* Vol 6 Moscow 1977, p458.
- ¹¹⁵ A Armstrong *Fight for the right to party* Edinburgh nd, p24.
- ¹¹⁶ P Frolich *Rosa Luxemburg* New York 1972, p110.
- ¹¹⁷ For example, A Gorz *Farewell to the working class* London 1982.
- ¹¹⁸ K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 6, Moscow 1976, p519.

- ¹¹⁹ *International Socialism* No73, winter 1996.
- ¹²⁰ J Stopford and S Strange *Rival states, rival firms* Cambridge 1991, p1.
- ¹²¹ Published over the three days of June 25-27 1997 and defended against a hapless critic in an August 8 1997 letter.
- ¹²² For our critique see J Conrad *Which road?* London 1991.
- ¹²³ *Morning Star* June 25 1997.
- ¹²⁴ W Ruigrok and R van Tulder *The logic of international restructuring* London 1995, p218.
- ¹²⁵ *Morning Star* June 26 1997.
- ¹²⁶ *Morning Star* June 27 1997.
- ¹²⁷ Letters *Morning Star* August 8 1997.
- ¹²⁸ *Morning Star* June 25 1997.
- ¹²⁹ R Palme Dutt *The crisis of Britain and the British Empire* London 1957, p76.
- ¹³⁰ See F Braudel *The wheels of commerce* Berkley 1992.
- ¹³¹ N Ferguson *The cash nexus* Harmondsworth 2002, p309.
- ¹³² I Meszaros *Beyond capital* London 1995, p65.
- ¹³³ *Morning Star* August 8 1997.
- ¹³⁴ T Sheridan and A McCombes *Imagine* Edinburgh 2000, p188.
- ¹³⁵ *International Socialism* No73, winter 1996.
- ¹³⁶ My emphasis *International Socialism* No73, winter 1996.
- ¹³⁷ Original emphasis K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 5, Moscow 1976, p49.
- ¹³⁸ K Marx *Grundrisse* Harmondsworth 1973, p512.
- ¹³⁹ I Meszaros *Beyond capital* London 1995, p610.
- ¹⁴⁰ Respect *Manifesto for the European elections* April 22 2004.
- ¹⁴¹ VI Lenin *CW* Vol 20, Moscow 1977, p232.
- ¹⁴² K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 27, Moscow 1990, p191.
- ¹⁴³ See 'Smoke and mirrors polemics' *Weekly Worker* March 28 2002.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Weekly Worker* August 30 2001.
- ¹⁴⁵ Hal Draper *Karl Marx's theory of revolution* Vol 1, New York 1977, pp285-86.
- ¹⁴⁶ K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 26, Moscow 1990, p122.
- ¹⁴⁷ K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 7, Moscow 1977, p239.
- ¹⁴⁸ H Draper *Karl Marx's theory of revolution* Vol 1, New York 1977, p282.
- ¹⁴⁹ K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 10, Moscow 1978, p579.
- ¹⁵⁰ K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 16, Moscow 1980, p80.
- ¹⁵¹ H Draper *Karl Marx's theory of revolution* Vol 1, New York 1977, p306.
- ¹⁵² *Ibid* p310.
- ¹⁵³ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁵⁴ *The Times* June 22 2004.
- ¹⁵⁵ Editorial *The Sun* June 18.
- ¹⁵⁶ *The Daily Telegraph* June 19.
- ¹⁵⁷ *Financial Times* June 21.
- ¹⁵⁸ Quotes from Peter Riddle *The Times* June 22 2004.
- ¹⁵⁹ All quotes from N Ferguson *Colossus* London 2004, p227.
- ¹⁶⁰ Founded in 1983 the Roundtable was one of the moving spirits behind the euro and monetary union. It also successfully argued for the TransEuropean Network (Ten), which was incorporated into the 1991 Maastricht treaty, and which is the biggest transport infrastructure plan in history - the Channel tunnel, the Øresund bridge connecting Denmark and Sweden, a series of high-speed railway links, airport extensions and 12,000 kilometres of new motorways. The Roundtable also consistently pushes for further deregulation of the economy: in particular the privatisation or liberalisation of telecommunications, transport and the energy markets. Not surprisingly the constitution contains a veritable peon of praise for the market and a solemn commitment to the neo-liberal religion of competition: "Member states and the union shall act in accordance with the

principle of an open market economy with free competition”.

¹⁶¹ Respect *Manifesto for the European election* April 22 2004.

¹⁶² *Constitution of the USSR* Moscow 1969, p102.

¹⁶³ W Shirer *The rise and fall of the Third Reich* London 1960, p1,036.

¹⁶⁴ *Socialist Worker* August 24 2002.

¹⁶⁵ *Socialist Worker* June 26 2004.

¹⁶⁶ *Financial Times* June 16 2004.

¹⁶⁷ W Bagehot *The English constitution* London 1974.

¹⁶⁸ *Weekly Worker* ‘What we fight for’.

¹⁶⁹ M Hardt and A Negri *Empire* London 2001, p212.

¹⁷⁰ Quotes from SWP-International Socialist Group motion to October 12 2002 to Socialist Alliance conference on euro.

¹⁷¹ A Thornett et al, *Even more unemployment* London nd, p11.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ T Cliff *Lenin* Vol 1, London 1975, p59.

¹⁷⁴ I Frolov (ed) *Dictionary of philosophy* Moscow 1984, p118.

¹⁷⁵ *Socialist Outlook* January 2001.

¹⁷⁶ *Weekly Worker* January 11 2001.

¹⁷⁷ VI Lenin *CW* Vol 5, Moscow 1977, p317.

¹⁷⁸ VI Lenin *CW* Vol 4, Moscow 1977, pp367.

¹⁷⁹ E Bernstein *Evolutionary socialism* New York 1961, p202.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid* pxxiv.

¹⁸¹ VI Lenin *CW* Vol 4, Moscow 1977, pp368.

¹⁸² *Ibid* pp366-67.

¹⁸³ For example, VI Lenin *CW* Vol 23, Moscow 1977, pp28-76.

¹⁸⁴ E Meiksins Wood *Democracy against capitalism* Cambridge 1999, p45.

¹⁸⁵ K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 27, London 1990, p228.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ L Trotsky *The Spanish revolution* New York 1973, pp59-60.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid* p77.

¹⁸⁹ *Socialist Worker* February 28 2004.

¹⁹⁰ Press statement, June 6 2004 www.respectcoalition.org/index.

¹⁹¹ *Weekly Worker* January 29 2004.

¹⁹² K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 27, London 1990, p190.

¹⁹³ VI Lenin *CW* Vol 24, Moscow 1977, p23.

¹⁹⁴ T Cliff *State capitalism in Russia* London 1974, p68.

¹⁹⁵ M Smith *The awkward squad* London 2003, p26.

¹⁹⁶ A Callinicos *Equality* Cambridge 2000, p128.

¹⁹⁷ *Weekly Worker* July 1 2004.

¹⁹⁸ A Bullock, O Stallybrass and S Trombley [eds] *The Fontana dictionary of modern thought* London 1988, p668.

¹⁹⁹ *Socialist Review* June 2002.

²⁰⁰ *Socialist Worker* June 19 2004.

²⁰¹ *New Statesman* June 14 2004.

²⁰² Quoted in JohannHari.com.

²⁰³ Quoted by Martin Sullivan in *Left Labour Briefing* July 2004.

²⁰⁴ *Socialist Review* June 2002.

²⁰⁵ B Mussolini *My autobiography* London nd, p65.

²⁰⁶ R Palme Dutt *Fascism and the social revolution* London 1934, p251.

²⁰⁷ Quoted in M Kitchen *Fascism* London 1983, p5.

²⁰⁸ G Dimitrov *The working class against fascism* London 1935, p10.

- ²⁰⁹ L Trotsky *Writings* 1935-36 New York 1977, p129.
- ²¹⁰ See M Kitchen *Fascism* London 1983, pp71-75.
- ²¹¹ L Trotsky *The struggle against fascism in Germany* New York 1971, p444.
- ²¹² F Engels letter to Laura Lafargue July 15 1888.
- ²¹³ W Shirer *The collapse of the Third Republic* London 1970, p254.
- ²¹⁴ B Mussolini *My autobiography* London nd, p114.
- ²¹⁵ See *Weekly Worker* February 28 2002.
- ²¹⁶ W Reich *The mass psychology of fascism* New York 1946, p273.
- ²¹⁷ Unesco, Paris 1952.
- ²¹⁸ H Brogan *The Penguin history of the USA* London 1999, p193.
- ²¹⁹ H Frankel 'How the constitution was written' in G Novack *America's revolutionary heritage* New York 1993, p128.
- ²²⁰ J Maddison, A Hamilton, J Jay *The Federalist* London 2000, p36.
- ²²¹ E Meiksins Wood *Democracy against capitalism* Cambridge 1999, p225.
- ²²² Quoted by D Feeley 'Mercy Otis Warren - mother of the American revolution' in G Novack *America's revolutionary heritage* New York 1993, p111.
- ²²³ E Browder *The people's front* London 1938, p255.
- ²²⁴ H Kerney *The British Isles* Cambridge 1195, p1.
- ²²⁵ N Davies *The Isles* London 1999, p321.
- ²²⁶ K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 23, London 1988, p608.
- ²²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²²⁸ The diet spent its time on endless futile disputes between the embassy of baron so-and-so (consisting perhaps of his son's tutor and an old servant) and the embassy of some other noble, about who should have ceremonial procedure. There were thousands of little privileges which were considered points of honour and therefore quarrelled over with the utmost obstinacy.
- ²²⁹ K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 6, New York 1976, p17.
- ²³⁰ *Ibid* p18.
- ²³¹ K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 23, London 1988, p603.
- ²³² K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 6, New York 1976, p26.
- ²³³ *Ibid* p23.
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