What's wrong with the European Union?

Workers Solidarity Movement

May 2004

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What ever happened with the European Union? Privatisation of services, introduction of charges for needed services, massive congestion on the roads and the collapse of the health services. These things don't happen by accident. There is a motor that is driving these policies and you'll find it in Europe.

This is why the European summits, which bring together the heads of all the EU member states, are accompanied by massive demonstrations against the Europe of the Bosses. Meeting behind closed doors, a tiny number of those who rule Europe are making decisions that will effect the lives of every one of the hundreds of millions of people living in the European Union as well as the countries to the east and North Africa.

The workers of Europe have no say in these decisions whatsoever. The Nice referendum demonstrated that in the exceptional circumstances where citizens of a European country get to vote on an aspect of the process they are only allowed give one answer. Ireland was the only country in Europe where the citizens got to vote on the Nice treaty and when they voted it down the government simply held another referendum and told them to vote yes.

The EU is one of the motors of capitalist globalisation, the rule that all decisions should be made on the basis of profitability alone. The World Trade Organisation is trying to impose this on the global level through the Global Agreement in Trades and Services. This covers 160 services' sectors including healthcare, education, housing, water, waste management and other basic services. The EU web page proclaims "the EU therefore leads in the drive to liberalise trade in services world wide and remove barriers to a truly global market".

Decoded, what this means is that the EU wants to turn water supply, education, health and refuse collection from being social services provided to all to profit making enterprises provided to those who can pay. This is the agenda behind the introduction of local service charges like the bin charge and the water charge. If the charge is successfully introduced the service will be sold off and the cost will soar to hundreds of Euros per year. If this is done successfully in relation to refuse charges next on the privatisation agenda will be aspects of the education and health services.

Migration

The nastiest side of the EU is on the question of migration. Here EU policy has resulted in thousands of deaths in the last decade. The European bosses want to use North Africa and the other countries on the fringes of Europe as a highly exploitative, low wage sweatshop where workers have no union rights and environmental legislation is minimal. There are two parts to this policy.

Firstly EU rules are adjusted to encourage low wage industries to re-locate from Europe to these regions. In Ireland Fruit of the Loom has moved thousands of jobs from the north west to new plants in Morocco where workers are paid one seventh of what the (low paid) Irish workers were paid.

We would hope that these jobs would enable Moroccan workers to organise and improve their wages and conditions. But there is no freedom to organise in Morocco. It is infamous for jailing political prisoners in an underground jail in the desert. One of the services this regime provides for the European bosses is the suppression of trade unions. An International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) report notes that *"21 Moroccan trade unionists were imprisoned in 1999 for trade union activities, and that they were tortured during their detention."*

The logical thing for Moroccan workers to do is to flee these areas of low wages and oppression for the better conditions of the European Union. But while the EU is all about opening the borders to flows of capital it is also all about closing the borders of Europe to flows of people.

Thousands have died trying to cross the borders that surround Europe. They have drowned in the Mediterranean and suffocated in the backs of containers. Dozens have died in suspicious circumstances at the hands of immigration police. Tens of thousands more sit in prison camps across Europe, waiting to be deported. At the same time large sectors of the European economy, particularly in agriculture, cleaning and fast food are dependent on the low wage workforce the migrants who manage to cross the border provide.

The neoliberal agenda at the heart of the EU

For anarchists one of the first issues we always look at is how are decisions made. When you come to the EU this is a mysterous process that very few understand. But we can say for sure that the people of Europe have no real say in any of the decisions reached in out name. Here we look at the mechanisms by which many of key economic decisions that drive the EU are reached.

The economic agenda of the EU is carefully buried behind layers of boredom and jargon. Despite this in recent years as the pace of so called 'reform' has quickened some, like transport workers facing privitisation have been forced to unpick this jargon.

What soon emerges is an agenda driven solely by corporate interests. Profit is to be the bottom line on everything from transport to health to the environment. Fine sounding generalizations are followed by tightly worded specifics that make the one test that must be passed the economic one.

The odd thing about this is that if the citizens of Europe were to engage in setting the European agenda it would almost certainly reverse the current priorities. Instead of profit before all we would probably see an agenda dominated by quality of life issues like education, healthcare and the environment. So where does the EU's actual agenda come from?

For an anarchist the obvious answer is 'the ruling class' but rather than leave it at that it is useful to untangle the web by which these decisions are formulated, made and then monitored. For what emerges from behind the curtain are the most powerful corporations in Europe, bodies with no pretence of any mandate beyond their combined turnover of 950 million and the fact they employ some four million workers.[1]

In Ireland in recent years the mechanisms that drive the planning process have become a matter of public knowledge as tribunal after tribunal hears evidence of brown envelopes stuffed with cash being handed over in return for favorable rulings from politicians. This is a sort of comedy version of what happens on the European level where an army of 10,000 industrial lobbyists haunt the corridors of Brussels.

By far the most powerful and exclusive of these is the collection of the 40 or so biggest European corporations who jointly lobby the EU through the quaintly named 'European Round Table of Industrialists'. These are nearly all household names with Ireland being represented by Michael Smurfit.

[1] www.ert.be, in their letter to Bertie Ahern, Spring 2004 they citied a turnover of 1,400 billion.

The ERT is normally careful to frame its demands in a way that suggests they will be good for everyone (and not just the profits of the corporations). But in the run up to the Dublin Summit, the mask slipped a little. The ERT wrote to all members of the European Council to express their concern about the continuing erosion of Europe's competitiveness'.

The appendix to this letter includes the line "Accustomed to social safety nets and an assured standard of living, the general public in much of Europe fails to see either the benefit of or need for competitive attitudes. Large state and semi-state sectors mostly shielded from competition are similarly heedless of the warning signs"[2]

This is a bit of a slip of the tongue from the ERT as normally they dress up their demands in far more careful language. But here it emerges into the open, an end to 'social safety nets' and 'an assured standard of living'. The language is still a little jargonized but it is easy enough to translate it into an end to free social services like health and education and an end to the very limited protection from absolute poverty found in the dole and pensions.

How do they propose to achieve this? Well in reality it is already underway. In Dublin in the last year a furious battle was fought against the removal of one such social service, free refuse collection. All sort of environmental excuses may have been trotted out to explain why Michael Smurfit should pay the same bin tax as the guy who empties his bins but the truth is this is part of the neoliberal agenda to remove social services.

In terms of education recent years have seen the growth of the private college industry and now serious talk are underway aimed at making the larger colleges go private in a decade or so. In healthcare an increasingly inadequate public health system means large and large numbers of workers feeling they need the assurance e of private health schemes with the VHI or BUPA. The existence of this two tier health system mean that under EU law the entire health system can be opened up to 'competition'. Public health is being quietly wound down so it is no more than the last refuge of the chronically poor. In telecoms we have seen the privitisation of Telecom. In transport we see the targeting of Dublin Bus and Aer Lingus for privitisation .

But as far as the ERT is concerned 'we an't seen nothing yet'. The ERT regularly produces lobby documents for the EU bodies. Almost all point out that the ERT represent corporations that employ millions and have a turnover of billions in case the politicians and bureaucrats forget for a moment who they really work for. We can confirm that the EU bureaucrats do know which side their bread is buttered on. ERT letters and lobby documents have for some years formed the basis of the agreements at the subsequent EU summits.

For instance the ERT 'Message from the European Round Table of Industrialists to the Barcelona European Council' sent before the 2002 Barcelona summit complained of *"continuing resistance to liberalisation of electricity and gas markets"* and *"too little progress on pension reform"*. Sure enough the official 'Barcelona European Council, 15–16 March 2002: Presidency conclusions' include; on page 10 (pt. 25) *"..the European Council calls for the reform of pension systems to be accelerated .."*[3]. On page 15 (pt 37) it *"urges the Council and the European Parliament to adopt as early as possible in 2002 the pending proposals for the final stage of the market opening of electricity and gas"*. And under *"Effective liberalisation — Electricity and gas"* on page 37 it reads *"set an ambitious calendar at the Spring Summit for [corporate] access to free supplier choice."*

[2] www.ert.be

[3] Barcelona European Council, 15–16 March 2002: Presidency conclusions, online at ue.eu.int

Lets stop for a moment to explain some of the jargon above. Liberalisation as you are probably already aware is corporate speak for privatization of public utilities. But perhaps 'pension reform' sounds nicer? Perhaps not, among the reforms demanded by the ERT are ending *"policies that push up the costs of pensions, such as automatic links between benefits and wages and encouragement of early retirement."*[4] So the ERT wants to end the situation where some pensions increase when wages increases and where some people can choose to retire early. In other words lets make people work as long as possible and then pay them as little as possible when they retire.

The ERT may hide its demands behind jargon but is fairly honest about the access it enjoys to European politicians on its web page to make these demands. Under working methods it includes *"At European level, the ERT has contacts with the Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament…Every six months the ERT meets with the government that holds the EU presidency to discuss priorities… At national level, each Member has personal contacts with his own national government and parliament, business colleagues and industrial federations, other opinion-formers and the press."*

The Irish governments official EU summit features the prominent statement that "The Lisbon Strategy, to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic economy in the world, is a major priority for the Irish Presidency of the EU". Of course very few of us know what the Lisbon agenda is and may even think that a 'competitive and dynamic economy' is good for us. The Lisbon Agenda specifically targets "gas, electricity, postal services and transport" for privitisation. Which we have learned means worse working conditions for those who provide such services and higher costs for those of us who consume them.

Beyond this where did the Lisbon Agenda come from? It came out of the EU's 'Jobs Summit' in Lisbon (March 2000). Baron Janseen of the ERT wrote that "The European Round Table of Industrialists and our Competitiveness Working Group were very much involved in the preparation of the Summit," Indeed this summit also identified pensions systems as candidates for privatization, as we have seen another piece of the ERT agenda.

The ERT has also kept the pressure on for rapid implementation of this Lisbon Strategy. Before the 2001 Stockholm summit they sent a letter to the European leaders expressing "concern that the progress in achieving objectives fixed in Lisbon was too slow, European competitiveness is being held back by the reluctance of several individual member states to implement at national level actions agreed in Lisbon". Pretty much sounds like an end of year report from a headmaster doesn't it!

And of course the European Commission also released an evaluation of the implementation of the Lisbon decisions, with a set of demands calling for specific commitments to be taken at Stockholm. The demands are almost identical to those submitted by the ERT. In fact if you study the ERT documents and the EU policies that are formulated shortly after they are issued you can see the depth of the influence this unelected and secretive club of the top 40 or so European corporate bosses has. The Stockholm summit also asked the European Commission to "prepare a review on the issue of moving towards increased involvement of the private sector in education and pension systems, again two core ERT demands".

If you search the Irish media in the run up to the Mayday protests you will probably not find a single mention of the ERT outside of the business pages. While the press spokespeople for the

[4] Will European Governments in Barcelona keep their Lisbon promises? Message from the European Round Table of Industrialists to the Barcelona European Council, March 2002, online at www.ert.be

Dublin Grassroots Network have to answer endless questions about a non-existent riot plan no journalist seemed to be interested in what we had to say about the ERT. Whether this is a product of the EU success in making their documents so boring and jargonised that people turn off at the first mention of EU policy, or whether its due to the fact that those who own and control the media are wealthy fellow travelers of the corporation bosses is something we can only speculate on.

Perhaps we are picking on the ERT too much? It's estimated that Brussels hosts some 500 industry lobby groups employing some 10,000 professional lobbyists. 1999 for instance saw a multi-million Euro lobbying campaign by the biotech companies which saw the introduction of the industry friendly 'Patents on life' directive. Changes to Article 133 was one of the key issues of the Nice treaty (but one ignored by the media). According to ATTAC — Ireland, *"a BBC "Newsnight" investigation revealed that industry chiefs of the services lobby-group, the European Services Forum, held exclusive meetings with the EU's Article 133 Committee, which sets the European Commission's trade policies. The Article 133 Committee's deliberations are supposedly confidential. All other social partners, trade unions, Civil society NGO's, small business organisations are excluded from these meetings."*[5]

The point here is that EU decisions are driven not by the needs of the people of Europe but by the wishes of the European based corporations. These corporations produce drafts that are later turned into EU policy and then the follow the implementation of these drafts and issue 'end of term' reports. Because this process is more distance and obscure then the identical process that occurs at the national level the vast majority of the population are unaware that this is even happening.

The Europe Union being built from above can never satisfy the needs of the European working class. Any system constructed in this manner will always end up serving the bosses. We need a Europe built from below.

Andrew Flood (May 2004)

Fortress Europe

Increased integration of EU asylum and immigration policy

Over the last 15 years or so EU states have been gradually increasing cooperation and attempting to establish common policy and law on areas related to immigration and asylum. Successive agreements, treaties and 'action plans' have led to the creation of Fortress Europe, causing thousands of deaths of refugees and asylum seekers and as well as criminalizing and marginalizing immigrants within the EU.

One of the first steps towards the creation of Fortress Europe was the Schengen Agreement which was originally signed in 1985 by five EU states (France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) to eliminate border control between those countries and to establish a common visa policy. The agreement was said to be about the freedom of movement over the internal borders between the Schengen countries however in order to "compensate" for increased freedom of movement within the Schengen area, much of the agreement was about increased control

[5] Conor O'Brien, ATTAC Ireland, Submission to the Forum on Europe, 1st December 2001, online at www.forumoneurope.ie

of travellers coming in. Common rules regarding visas, asylum rights and checks at external borders were adopted and coordination of the police, customs and the judiciary was increased. In fact while just four articles in the convention are about open borders, 138 are about increased control.[6] Little by little the Schengen area has been extended to include almost every Member State, with the exception of the United Kingdom and Ireland.

As part of the "compensatory measures" of the Schengen agreement, designed to negate the freedom of travel within the Schengen area, the Schengen Information System (SIS) was set up. This vast database system, housed in Strasburg, is comprised of records on people's identities as well as lost or stolen objects, which are entered by Schengen member states and which are then accessed by the other state agencies. At the end of 2001 there were 10,541,271 records held on the SIS.[7] A large number of the people listed in the SIS files so far have been asylum seekers.

In May 1999, the Schengen agreement was incorporated within the legal and institutional framework of the EU in the Treaty of Amsterdam. This treaty sought to regularise the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees trying to gain entry to all European states and required the European Council to adopt legislation in several key asylum and immigration related areas by May, 2004. The Treaty of Amsterdam was also the first time that refugees and asylum seekers were specifically criminalised — this position has continued from the EU, governments and the media where asylum seekers are termed 'illegal immigrants' and roped in with child pornography, stolen vehicles, terrorism, counter fitting and drug offences.

Subsequent EU summits on asylum and immigration, such as in Tampere and Seville, have attempted to come to agreements on common EU immigration and asylum law before the deadline in May. At these summits agreements have been made which generally make it increasingly difficult and dangerous for refugees and asylum seekers to gain entry to the EU and which increase cooperation on the surveillance, harassment and deportation of "illegal" immigrants. On 29th of March this year, for example, the EU justice and home affairs council met to examine various directives relating to asylum seekers and refugees including one on the obligation of carriers to communicate passenger data and the proposal for a European Agency for the management of operational cooperation of external borders. Following this meeting, leading EU NGOs called for the complete withdrawal of the directive on minimum standards on procedures for granting and withdrawing refugee status, which they state is "intended to deny asylum seekers access to asylum procedures and to facilitate their transfer to countries outside the EU."[8]

Death by Policy

One EU policy is the containment of refugees and migrants within their home regions, regardless of the human cost One of the strategies to achieve this has been to target migrants' country of origin and force their governments to cooperate in "migrant management". For example, in the recent EU summit in Seville it was agreed that in future all EU agreements with non-EU states are to: "include a clause on joint management of migration flows and on compulsory readmission in the event of illegal immigration" (para.33). This is to include those who are "unlawfully present" in the EU, e.g.: own nationals of the third country and people who may have passed through the third country in transit. "In the event" that there is an: "unjustified lack of cooperation" in joint

[6] "EU Charter Gives Cops Greater Powers", www.hartford-hwp.com

[7] "SIS II takes ominous shape " www.statewatch.org

[8] "EU Presidency Conclusions at the Seville European Council 21/22 June" www.statewatch.org

management of migration flows, the EU may apply direct pressure through agreements on trade, aid and assistance coupled with political and diplomatic sanctions.[9]

Other steps taken to make it as difficult as possible for migrants to enter EU countries have been the drive towards increased security at external borders. At the Seville summit it was agreed to establish, possibly within the next five years, an EU border police force (to be called the European Union Corps of Border Guards) to patrol shores, ports and crossing points against "illegal" immigrants. This EU police force would have its own uniform and badge and be drawn from all 15 member states. As a step towards this, cooperation among the police and immigration units of member states is to be increased immediately with the creation of a special unit of heads of border control from member states and the setting up of a network of liaison officers.

Thousands of people have died so far because of EU policies such as these. According to UNITED, a European anti-racist network, from 1993 to 2001 more than 2000 refugees and migrants died in and around as a result of European refugee policies. Details of the 2042 cases are available from their website (www.united.non-profit.nl). Anti Racist Initiative Berlin also published a report documenting deaths and injuries of refugees, in more than 3,400 individual cases, that resulted directly and indirectly from Germany's refugee policy.[10] They record for example that 121 refugees had killed themselves in the face of their pending deportation or died in the attempt to flee their deportation; 47 of these people died in deportation imprisonment.

Increased Internal Policing/Intelligence

With regards EU asylum and immigration policy inside the EU, the focus has been on increased surveillance, racist harassment and control. The 1988 "Strategy Paper on Asylum and Immigration Policy" presented by the then Austrian EU presidency stated that control must cover "every step taken by a third country national from the time he begins his journey to the time he reaches his destination". The paper outlines clearly the extent to which non-EU nationals are to be harassed and spied upon, it recommends "security nets in areas whose geographic or transport characteristics mean that they are particularly exposed, spot checks in the hinterland, *unprompted by suspicion*, and intensive cooperation on the part of the authorities beyond the sphere of competence of the individual State".

Increasingly draconian measures are being taken to increase police powers of surveillance. Since S11 there has been a drive to extend the Schengen Information System and set up two new databases one dealing specifically with protesters and the other dealing with "foreigners". The aim is to facilitate the removal of third country nationals who have not left the EU with the "prescribed time frame". This database would be in effect a register of all third country nationals in the EU who will be tagged with an "alert" if they overstay their visa or residence permit.

It is EU policy to treat asylum seekers and refugees as criminals. For example, in 2000 the proposal for a system for the identification of asylum seekers (EURODAC) which involves taking and comparing fingerprints of asylum-seekers, was formally adopted by the European Council.

[9] www.statewatch.org
[10] www.statewatch.org

Why Fortress Europe?

No matter how tight controls at EU borders are, immigration to the EU is inevitable and people fleeing persecution, war and poverty, will continue to risk their lives trying to get into the EU zone. However, by maintaining strict control over migration into the EU and by turning down the vast majority of asylum requests, thousands of immigrants are forced to live in Europe illegally. This creates a workforce that will accept the most insecure working conditions together with the worst salaries and conditions. Entire sections of the EU economy base their profits on the exploitation of these people: building companies, restaurants, textiles, agriculture, etc. Illegal workers are a workforce that can be easily controlled and which, against their will, can put pressure on fellow insecure workers. Where immigrants are granted work permits, they are often on short term contracts, with their work permits held by their employers, so they can be subjected to super-exploitation.

Fortress Europe has other advantages for the European bosses. It acts as a wall, keeping people into the areas of the world where working conditions, humans rights etc are poor. Although the European bosses do not want to allow immigrants to enter Europe they do want access to these same people as cheap labour. For example, the EU is continuing the exploitation of the people of North Africa through creating a special trade zone of some of the North African countries similar to the free trades zones North America has created in Mexico. In Ireland this has been most visible with 'Fruit of the Loom' closing plants in the north west of Ireland and opening new plants in Morocco where workers are paid one seventh of what the (low paid) Irish workers were paid.

Finally, racist EU policies and propaganda which marginalize immigrants and portray them as a social, political and economic threats create useful scapegoats for European bosses. The ruling class wants to set Irish workers against immigrant workers so as to prevent the workers from seeing that their interests are the same regardless of nationality. Take for example the upcoming referendum which attempts to take away the rights of Irish children whose parents do not have Irish citizenship. In calling this racist referendum the Irish government intend to deflect the current anger of the population at, for example, the crises in our health service and the appalling housing situation. It suits the Irish elite to scapegoat refugees for all the problems that their mismanagement of society causes. The minister for injustice, Mc Dowell, has been caught several times blatantly lying and creating scare stories about immigration. He has spoken of "citizenship tourism", of "massive inflows" of non-nationals to the maternity hospitals, of the situation "snowballing out of control", and of the Masters of the Dublin hospitals "pleading" with him to change the laws on citizenship. None of this is really true. The Masters themselves have accused the Minister of exaggeration, and the figures bear them out. Take the Coombe Hospital, for example. The increase in non-national births last year was just 2 per cent. As with the other Dublin hospitals, a major portion of its 20 per cent of foreign mothers were living and working in Ireland entirely legally, with many from Britain and other EU countries, and the US.

They are among the growing number of immigrants on which this country is becoming vitally dependent for its economic survival, now and into the future. In the overall context of Ireland's rapidly declining birth rate, our society has no choice but to change or die.

No borders

Immigration controls are by their nature racist in that they always aim to exclude particular distinct groups. They cause massive suffering, cost billions and promote racism. It is completely unjust that there are more travel rights for Capital, bank accounts and commodities than for people.

As anarchists, our opposition to the immigration restrictions of Fortress Europe is based on the recognition that immigration is a phenomenon produced by Capitalist globalisation that makes life unbearable in many areas of the world. It is based on our recognition that every human being has the same right to happiness, to the opportunities and good things of life no matter what their skin colour or place of origin.

Deirdre Hogan (updated 2004)

The EU, militarism and Ireland

The story of the European Union and militarism goes back as far as 1955 when the Western European Union (WEU) was formed. This was the main avenue for joint European security efforts and was closely tied to NATO. In particular it allowed the integration of the West German armed forces into NATO and, after France had pulled out of NATO's command structure in 1958, it provided a bridge between the French military and its allies in NATO.

In 1984 the WEU was reactivated with an agreement, signed in Rome, to work towards a gradual harmonisation of members security policies. Although it had never put a soldier in the field, it did provide a framework for joint military operations between EU states, for example Anglo-French co-operation on nuclear weapons. 11 of the 15 member states of the EU are part of NATO and the membership of the WEU is identical except for the fact that Denmark chose not to join. In addition to the 10 members there are 6 associate members who are also members of NATO. The WEU is, in essence, the regional European co-ordination of the NATO military alliance. Ireland never joined NATO or the WEU and this has been one of the major ways in which the Irish government has been able to claim that it is a 'neutral' state and does not belong to any of the international military alliances.

Neutrality

Most Irish people seem to agree that neutrality is a good thing, and certainly in the run up to the Nice Treaty, the government is at pains to emphasise that this treaty does not in any way affect our neutrality. After the Nice treaty was rejected the first time, the one concession that the Irish government offered to their electorate is a declaration reaffirming Irish neutrality, agreed by the June 2002 EU summit in Seville. *"Ireland confirms that its participation in the European Union's common foreign and security policy does not prejudice its traditional policy of military neutrality"*[11]. It seems that the government figured that fear of our neutrality being prejudiced was what had caused the Irish people to reject the treaty of Nice in 2001.

But why are the Irish attached to this neutrality? Since we were hardly going to join the Warsaw pact, why didn't we join NATO in case we were attacked? After all the NATO alliance is

[11] Declaration of the Seville summit of the EU

supposedly a defence agreement, a commitment to help each other out if the member nations are attacked by a foreign enemy. Is it just Irish isolationism? Are we selfish and content to let others protect us, pay for our security and leave us with a feeling of moral superiority while they do all the work?

NATO

In fact the Irish peoples' suspicion of these defence agreements rests on much more valid foundations. NATO, was originally conceived as an alliance to protect the Western democracies against any invasion by the Soviet block during the cold war, however none of the 19 member nations of NATO have ever been subject to attack by a foreign army since they have been a member. Indeed, even during the cold war, NATO and its various offshoots had almost nothing to do with common defence; instead it acted as the military arm of the powerful Western nations. The list of NATO interventions hardly reads as a glorious history: Vietnam, Algeria, Suez, Bosnia, Iraq, and Kosovo. The common thread has been that NATO interventions involve military forces from wealthy parts of the world fighting with a massive technical advantage against impoverished groups in the third world. Humanitarian reasons have been used as justifications in most of these wars, and anti-communism used to be very common until anti-terrorism took over, but they all still ended up with a whole load of hi-explosives being sprayed around the third world.

NATO is the military alliance of the major ex-colonial powers and many of its interventions in the 20th century were in opposition to National Liberation struggles in the third world. NATO support was crucial to the wars against national liberation movements waged by the impoverished Portuguese dictatorship in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Bissau during the 1960's and 70's. NATO allies supplied 33 military vessels, almost a third of Portugal's fleet[12]. The concept of the 'defence pact' was stretched to allow NATO planes to firebomb peasant villages in the African interior. The 1962 NATO secretary general explained the motivations for their intervention in saying: *"The Portuguese soldiers are defending a territory, raw materials and bases which are indispensable not only to the defence of Europe, but also to the whole of the Western world"*[13]. It is clear from this and indeed virtually every NATO action before and since, that the alliance acts in the self-interest of the 'Western world'. It has nothing to do with defence of the countries involved, rather it exists to maintain and enforce the global order between the strong and the weak. NATO and its various appendages exist to police the world for the powerful nations and their corporations, to wreak death and destruction wherever there is a threat to the extreme inequality that is the hallmark of the capitalist world. Given the Irish history of colonisation and imperial exploitation, it is no surprise that Irish people want little to do with alliances like this.

NATO by stealth

However, our government has been slowly edging us towards effective membership of the imperial NATO alliance. Since the state's inception, despite Ireland's constitutional neutrality, the government has, wherever possible, provided assistance to our powerful military neighbours. Since the idea of neutrality has always been popular in Ireland, the government has generally achieved this by stealth. Many Irish people know little of the extent of Irish assistance to the

[12] Portugal's African Wars, p38, Humbaraci & Muchnik, TPH, Dar es Salaam1974
[13] Ibid p.176

military forces in NATO countries. From supplying radar information to the British military, to allowing the French nuclear submarine radar station to be established in Ireland, the government has assisted NATO without the merest hint of debate.

In 1999 Ireland joined NATO's 'partnership for peace'. *"Partnership for Peace (PfP) is the basis for practical security co-operation between NATO and individual Partner countries (19+1). Activities include defence planning and budgeting, training and civil emergency operations."*[14] Fianna Fail brought Ireland into this partnership without any consultation with the people, despite their pledge in their previous election manifesto (1997): *"we oppose Irish participation in NATO itself [and] in NATO-led organisations such as the Partnership for Peace."*[15] Recent European treaties, signed by the Irish government, have gone further to bring us into the mainstream of the European branch of NATO. European security after the cold war

With the end of the cold war, the European powers started to feel the need for a more powerful local military co-operation. The WEU was limited since it had no forces of its own and its actions were limited to co-operation between the various national military structures, under their separate commands, often bedevilled by petty rivalries and ancient animosities. NATO remained the only body capable of turning out a military force under a unified international command structure. However, due to its domination by the US military, and its inclusion of non-EU countries such as Turkey, it was an unwieldy tool for carrying out military action in the interests of the EU states. The US not only monopolises the command structure; it also provides the bulk of the troops and finances to NATO. Thus, in situations where EU commercial interests are threatened, NATO is obviously not an ideal tool, since the American military would obviously not be overly keen to deploy troops and finances around the globe if US commercial interests were not at stake. Therefore, from the early 1990's on, the EU started to take steps to establish a local military force, more a local European branch of NATO than a rival; an army that the EU states could put in the field without having to prove that the expenditure of capital and manpower made sense from a US point of view.

CFSP

Thus, in 1991, the European Union resolved to create a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as part of the Maastricht Treaty. This laid the groundwork for the creation of Eurocorps, consisting of 50,000 troops from 5 countries. This force remained purely symbolic since it consisted of the same national troops that were formally committed to NATO. However, it did set in motion the process whereby the EU powers could start to move towards a situation where they could deploy troops as a regional branch of NATO, without having to utilise the entire machinery of the broad NATO alliance. Although the CFSP was initially dominated by the French and Germans, it took an important step forward in 1998 with the signing of an agreement in St. Malo. London and Paris declared that the EU *"must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible forces, the means to decide to use them and a readiness to do so in order to respond to international crises."* What this meant in practice was that the European NATO states now had an agreed way to embark on collective military interventions without having to get the Americans to agree to lead and finance the action. Since the CFSP was an EU policy, it also meant that countries who were not NATO members were committed to providing finances and manpower to a

[14] Partnership for Peace introduction, www.nato.int

[15] Fianna Fail, 1997 general election manifesto

force that would operate within the NATO planning and decision making structures, i.e. under NATO's overall command. Although the Danes were exempted from this clause of Maastricht after an electoral revolt, it passed almost without notice in Ireland.

Rapid Reaction Force

The shifting of military responsibilities, from the WEU to the EU itself continued when the EU agreed, at Cologne in June 1999, to take over the crisis management role of the WEU. The fact that the recently retired NATO Secretary General Javier Solana was given the job of High Representative for the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy illustrates how independent of NATO the EU's military policy was likely to be. This agreement led to the commitment, announced in November 2000, to create a European "Rapid Reaction Force" by 2003. The RPF is to be a force capable of deploying 60,000 EU troops within 60 days, for 'crisis-management' operations thousands of miles from home, under the political control of the EU. The Irish government pledged 7.4% of the Irish armed forces — the third highest proportion of any EU country — as well as agreeing to financial and support commitments. Even though the force is nominally independent of NATO political control (albeit with Solana at the helm), it will operate within NATO's overall strategic and planning framework for the foreseeable future.

A rival to NATO?

It is worth noting that the emergence of the CFSP and the Rapid Reaction Force has not been in opposition to the US dominated NATO alliance, indeed some of its most vocal backers have come from within the upper echelons of NATO and the US military. To put it simply, the US wants the other major Western powers to pay for more of the military invasions that are necessary to keep the wheels of global capitalism turning. The Europeans have gone along with the US desires; for example they have contributed $200 million to the US plan Colombia, which is financing the Colombian states war against the rural poor. However there have been some disagreements between the European NATO powers and their American mentor. In particular the French desire to give the European military alliance the capacity to act autonomously of the NATO alliance, while the Americans desire to see it as a regional grouping remaining entirely within NATO's planning structure. This dispute has focused on what appears at first glance to be an obscure bureaucratic point; whether or not the EU force and NATO would share the NATO planning staff. If it did, then a US veto would be implicit. If not then the EU powers could potentially take steps that would be contrary to American wishes. To put it simply, the Americans want the Europeans to provide the manpower and finances for NATO operations that are taken at the behest of the EU countries, while the French say that 'if we are paying for it, we get to decide what we can do'. Still, this is really a moot point, at least in the immediate future. The European powers don't have the military forces, the strategic and planning capabilities, or the defence budgets to allow them to go it alone against US wishes. Indeed, rather than expressing fear of EU military build-up, the US has repeatedly promoted increased defence spending on the part of EU states and chastised them for the low proportion of their budgets spent on weapons. To sum US strategic thinking:

"An EU force that serves as an effective, if unofficial, extension of NATO rather than a substitute is well worth the trouble."[16]

During the war on Iraq the central role Ireland is playing is supporting global military operations was seen at Shannon airport. Hundreds of thousands of US troops have flown to and from Iraq via Shannon during the war and occupation. An unknown quantity of US military cargo has also been flown through Shannon. The government may have been claiming to be 'anti-war' and 'pro-neutrality' throughout this period but in order to keep Shannon open for military refuelling they arrested over 60 anti war protestors and mobilised hundreds of riot police.

Nice Treaty

The Nice treaty brought us another slow step down the path of EU military integration and in particular, the transferral of responsibility for military matters from the WEU to the EU. The Nice treaty included an amendment to Article 17 of the Treaty of Europe. Pre-Nice the article included the following in paragraph 1:

> *"The Western European Union (WEU) is an integral part of the development of the Union providing the Union with access to an operational capability notably in the context of paragraph 2. It supports the Union in framing the defence aspects of the common foreign and security policy as set out in this Article. The Union shall accordingly foster closer institutional relations with the WEU with a view to the possibility of the integration of the WEU into the Union,"*
>
> This passage has been deleted as part of the Nice treaty, probably because the integration has been achieved! The EU now assumes formal responsibility for *'operation capability notably in the context of paragraph 2'*. This refers to *"humanitarian and rescue tasks, peace keeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking."* The other mention of the WEU in the Treaty of Europe, in Article 17, paragraph 3: *"The Union will avail itself of the WEU to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications"*, is also deleted.

The EU becomes the official military alliance of Western Europe and Ireland's neutrality became utterly meaningless. Ireland is part of an EU military alliance which will serve as NATO's European arm. The responsibilities of this agreement are broad enough to cover any conceivable type of military action. Peacemaking is a particularly vague term. It means making peace where there is war by the use of military force — best achieved by winning the war! Given the sorry history of NATO's interventions in the past and the political realities of the global power order, it is all too likely that 'peacemaking' will mean aerial bombardments and military invasions of poor countries by the armies of the wealthy, all in the 'national interest' of the powerful states.

To sum up, the EU nations are slowly moving towards a greater integration of their military forces, particularly in terms of their operations within the NATO alliance. These operations have the effect of inflicting massive damages on poor regions of the globe and serve to reinforce the inequality of the global power order. Important steps along this path have been the agreement

[16] Europe's Rapid Reaction Force: What, Why, And How. William Anthony Hay and Harvey Sicherman, Foreign Policy Research Institute, February 2001

of the CFSD in 1991 and the creation of the Rapid Reaction Force. One of the important steps is the integration of the non-NATO EU states into the military alliance.

Neutrality is no longer the issue in Ireland. As the Iraq war showed we are no longer neutral in any meaningful sense. We are involved in the European and US military machines. Those opposed to war need to shift from the traditional ground of defending national neutrality to being part of a European and global movement against militarisation.

Based on an article written by Chekov Feeney in Sept 2002

The libertarian alternative to the bosses Europe

The Laeken Summit (Brussels) ended the Belgian presidency of the European Union during the second half of 2001 with the approval of a new "EuroOrder" and the setting up of a "Rapid Intervention Force." The Spanish government started its presidency in 2002 with two clear objectives: greater repression, using security as a pretext, and greater trade.

Despite the protests and the ever-increasing amount of resistance against the European institutional policies in favour of capital and war, the current stage of the construction of the European union shows an increase in these tactics. In order to favour "Europe, Ltd" there is a reinforcement of social injustice, of the oppression of the rich against those they exploit and of their inequalities, of patriarchy against women, or in relation to the eastern and southern countries considered as their "back yards." Algeria and Argentina are the most recent examples of the despoiling brought about by transnational companies from anywhere, including Europe, without any concern about the hunger and the massive crimes used as means to obtain financial benefits.

In June 2002, the Sevilla summit will increase the policies of social control over people, under the excuse of fighting terrorism; the real reason, however, is an attack against our privacy. They want to turn the entire population into submissive beings permanently and totally controlled by Big Brother.

The border policies established in Schengen, with its EuroPolice, EuroJustice and EuroOrder is not enough for them. In Sevilla they want to include the fight against terrorism in the EU defence and security policies: increasing police control in daily life and at the borders, giving legal cover to the control of Internet communications, while spreading the use of security cameras in all public areas.

They will carry on preparing a European Constitution, the preamble of which will be the Charter of Human Rights. It was precisely the opposition to this Charter, which made a clean sweep of existing social rights, that brought thousands of protesters from the Nice to Brussels. The leaders of Europe are standing by their Charter, in complete opposition to the aspirations and needs of the majority of society. This is why we are on the march again, to refuse be stripped of our most elementary rights. Social resistance is on the march to Sevilla.

All of this resistance, all of the demands that the libertarian movement supports and promotes, through direct action and self-management, are part of a long-term fight to radically change society, to share wealth, establish equality and to build a libertarian self-managed democracy.

EUROPE: A LIE?

Since the beginning of the "building of Europe", politicians, of all countries and of all tendencies, have lied to us about their real plans and the true consequences of their acts and decisions.

Their real objective, is to be a political institution at the service of capitalism, and to give capitalism all it needs to compete in the global market, against the interests of the social majority. They try to convince us that this is what is best and, therefore, we should give up our rights as, according to them, it is the only possible solution. We reject all of these lies.

EUROPE: MORE FREEDOM?

More freedom for financial transactions, including the whitewashing of money, for capital, for goods irrationally produced further and further away from where they will be used. Transport by lorries implies more pollution, causing conflict amongst workers, and putting them into competition against one another. It always ends up in less freedom for people, social groups and the oppressed. It always means fewer rights and democratic spaces in which we can organise ourselves and to carry out our social struggle.

European policies are characterised by an increasingly more important deregulation of working conditions. This can be seen in the increase of insecurity and misery, the disappearance of social rights and a privatisation of anything that can produce benefits: health, education, transport, … Deregulation has nothing to do with freedom. Freedom, in the eyes of the European Union, is that of a fox in a henhouse.

This privatisation of public institutions is accompanied by a new policy that affects the impoverished. To this end, the management of misery calls on more and more prisons. Social apartheid is the culmination of this evolution of capitalism. One of the objectives of European policies (an objective which is not exclusively European, and is shared by all the major powers), is that of controlling the poor wherever they are. This is converting Europe into a real and true Fortress.

The poor are being confined in ghettos in the outskirts of the cities. Misery in these neighbourhoods is on the rise. Likewise, the people who face misery find it harder and harder to live where they wish. More often than not, when a victim of poverty tries to move to a new region, they are told to return to where they came from.

A larger police force is needed to manage this misery. Governments, both right and left, are aware that it is impossible to control such a numerous population just by using the police. Therefore, they want to turn each and every citizen into a plainclothes cop, in charge of policing and denouncing any uncivil or strange behaviour. No wonder the harangue about zero tolerance is so popular.

The building of Europe, in the point of view of capitalists, means taking apart the welfare state, and substituting the "soft" face of the State for its most "hard" face, strengthening authoritarian policies and security. In this context, the events of September 11th was an unexpected gift for politicians in power: with the excuse of fighting terrorism, it puts into effect a whole judicial arsenal to reprise those who live in the ghettos and those militants who are fighting against globalisation and/or capitalism.

We propose:

- The abolition of freedom-destroying laws and states of siege.
- The abolition of two-tiered justice: the end of impunity for politicians and the police, the end of assaults on the poor and those who fight for freedom, justice and liberty.

EUROPE: FREE CIRCULATION?

Immigration policies are becoming more and more coercive. But their goal is not that of expulsing all illegal immigrants from Europe. This is impossible due to three reasons:

- A lack of means: how many aeroplanes or boats would be needed to expel all the illegal immigrants?
- A political problem: if the State wanted to expel all the illegal immigrants, it would have to organise raids on a major scale. The European States cannot risk the enormous protests that this action would cause.
- Problems of the economy: illegal workers are a workforce that can be easily controlled and which, against their will, can put pressure on fellow insecure workers.

The goal is have at hand a workforce that will accept the most insecure working conditions together with the worst salaries and conditions. Entire sections of the economy base their profits on the exploitation of these people: building companies, restaurants, textiles, agriculture, etc.

Immigrants are those who most suffer the freedom-killings measures taken to build the EU. All over Europe we are experiencing a flood of undocumented "sans papiers," and forced expulsions, which, at best, return the immigrants to oppression, misery or death. These measures affect all those who live in Europe. Restrictions on public and individual freedom are the norm. The global war declared against terrorism as a result of the 11^{th} September is used as a pretext to continually reinforce emergency policies, under the plan of truly increasing the power of capital and of the State over society.

To this respect we demand:

- An ample development of public liberties and elementary rights. In first place the freedom of movement and of residence for all, without taking nationality into account.
- The abolition of all racist and xenophobic European laws.
- International solidarity to those countries where the immigrants in Europe originally came from.

EUROPE: MORE PROSPEROUS?

Europe has tens of millions of ever more controlled, exploited, dominated and insecure workers. Millions of workers are driven to poverty due to meagre salaries. There are millions of unemployed, homeless or in shantytowns, sick people without medical attention or proper schooling.

Prosperity is reserved for a tiny fraction of the population, the industrial or financial capitalists and their watchmen formed by politicians, technocrats and experts, together with stock investors, those who create stock market layoffs, relocate companies and stuff themselves with subsidies and of fiscal grants.

For our part, we adamantly reject the capitalist accumulation of wealth in the hands of a small minority.

- We fight, in line with other struggles, to impose a real redistribution of wealth and advance towards achieving the principle of "to each according to his/her needs, from each according to his/her means".
- This redistribution is meant to end up in the self-management of all means of production and exchange.
- Starting now, we will fight to gain the strength and the capacity to be an alternative against Capital and State mechanisms. We follow the struggle to extend and spread the rights of workers and the repressed to expropriate the bosses and shareholders, destroying their control over society.

EUROPE: PEACE?

The European Union countries are part of NATO, the major cause of world-wide conflict. These countries have actively participated in the wars in Iraq, in ex-Yugoslavia, and in Afghanistan. Europe sells her weapons to and trains the soldiers and policemen of the world's worst dictatorships.

Europe is carrying out political, economical and cultural policies of imperialism, which are capable of provoking violent opposition and resistance and the arising of national identities. This imperialism is the cause of the current barbarity suffered by the majority of the planet.

To this end we demand the immediate:

- Converting of military industries to civil and social uses.
- Dismantling of armies.
- Asylum for deserters throughout the world, to force the authorities to take specific measures to help freedom struggles around the world, especially, at this moment in time, those undertaken by revolutionary and democratic women in Afghanistan.

EUROPE: SECURITY?

It's security is for speculators, for bosses who sack workers and for corrupt politicians.

At the same time, it is police insecurity. The cops have all the rights, they carry out more and more identity checks and other types of oppression, without depriving themselves of controls "just-because-they-want-to", with the support of racist laws. Europe equals police shooting real bullets and the assassinations of protestors in Gotenburg and Genoa.

Finally, Europe is social insecurity, institutionalising unemployment and insecure employment as a norm, using misery and fear to break any vague desires for struggle or fight.

To get rid of this daily insecurity, we must:

- Impose a right for all producers, users, and consumers to control their products and their social usefulness.
- Build through our struggles an equality that is not just a catch-phrase, but rather an economical and social reality.

EUROPE: RESPECT FOR NATURE?

The capitalist plans to increase production are driving us straight into a brick wall. We are clearly reaching the ecological limits of our planet: weather changes, global warming, nuclear danger, toxic food, genetic manipulations and so on… Economic powers and their political partners have pledge for increasing productivity in order to improve profits. These are the true criminals against nature, who are making our planet impossible to live in.

Europe is above all ecological and health insecurity: oil-spills, industrial catastrophes, mad cows, hoof and mouth disease, and GMO's (Genetically Modified Organisms.)

To this end we must:

- Make a radical break from capitalist productivism.
- Question any production that is not socially useful, redirecting it to in lines that are respectful with Nature.

EUROPE, DEMOCRACY?

The Europe of bureaucrats finds no objections to the presence of governments including Fascist ministers in Austria and Italy. It does not take into account the referendums held in Denmark, and more recently in Ireland, against building a Europe designed to favour the bosses. It simply ignores or repeats them until the result suits the interests of the technocrats in Brussels. The way Europe works is antidemocratic, and is the result of a gang of technocrats at exclusive service the bourgeoisie and multinational companies.

Western societies, in Europe especially, cannot eternally avoid their responsibility with respect to the policies adopted by their respective governments. In effect, the capitalist barbarity that is carried out under their name. Democracy is the government of the people by the people. The so-called democratic governments are elected on the basis of programmes proposed to their voters, without any sort of controlled mandate. Reality shows that voters do not have any control or sway over the policies taken by their governments.

In this way, in Genoa, the people in charge of the G8 ignored the calls of the 200,000 demonstrators, and decided to resort to force, murdering one of our fellow demonstrators. On the other hand, the European commission voluntarily submits itself to the pressures of the multinational lobbies located in a nearby building. Put another way, 200,000 protestors are not "hearable," while the politicians and bureaucrats carefully listen to capitalist lobbies. Where is the democracy here? We reject this empty concept of market democracy, cut off from the people.

We want:

- Direct democracy and self-management.
- An open and sincere debate on all that affects our lives.
- A truly federalist organisation based on direct action, egalitarian in both access to and use of power,anti-hierarchical and anti-bureaucratic.

SOCIAL RESISTANCE DOES NOT STOP IN THE COUNTER SUMMITS.

It is necessary to organise against the international summits of world capitalism, the European Union, the G8, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, etc. But that is not enough to radically change society.

In order to defeat capitalism, our struggle must be permanent and daily. It must be in all spheres, be they social, workplace, or political, carried out by the workers, the precarious workers, unemployed workers, social collectives, by citizens. Together, defending our rights, fighting for an improvement in our conditions of living, for freedom and equality, for a culture and a society unfettered from commercial tyranny, and following the principles of direct democracy.

For us, the libertarians, these struggles are not a means to conquer the power of others. For us, these struggles are a means to radically change society. Instead of power, we want freedom; instead of privilege, we want justice.

[This text is taken from the Libertarian call to Sevilla 2002 which was put together by groups involved in International Libertarian Solidarity for the Seville 2002 EU summit protests. The original text is online at struggle.ws. **PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS in SIL include: AL BADIL (Lebanon), ALTERNATIVA LIBERTARIA (Cataluña), ALTERNATIVE LIBERTAIRE (France), CGT (Spain), CNT (France), CONSEJO INDIGENA POPULAR Oaxaca (Mexico), FAG (Brazil), FAU (Uruguay), MARMITAG (Greece), NO PASARAN (France), ORA-S (Czech Republic), OSL (Argentina), OSL (Switzerland), SAC (Sweden) & UNICOBAS (Italy) Support Messages Sent ANACHO SYNDICO (India), FAF (France), IWW (USA), NEFAC (North-East Canada-USA), SKT (Siberia), USI-Rome (Italy), WSM (Ireland), Bikisha Media Collective (South Africa), Zabalaza Books (South Africa)**]

Workers Solidarity Movement
What's wrong with the European Union?
May 2004

Retrieved on 12th August 2021 from struggle.ws

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