

A NEW MANIFESTO FOR
ANARCHIST COMMUNISM

**MANIFESTO FOR
THE MILLENNIUM**

DRAFT COPY

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

INTRODUCTION

The following text is a draft copy of a manifesto being prepared by the Anarchist Communist Federation. Revisions will take place at a special conference in December and a section on an anarchist communist programme will be added. The finished document will be ready early in the New Year.

Regard this then as an unfinished document, but one which gives an outline of the way we see the developments of the last century and in particular the last few decades. Any comments or criticisms will be gratefully considered. You can write to ACF (London) c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1

A NEW MANIFESTO FOR ANARCHIST COMMUNISM

THE END OF A PERIOD

To talk about the end of a period should not be understood in terms of instant transformation from one historic phase to another. In periods of change elements of the past coexist with those of the present, and new ways of functioning and the developing of new tendencies within society prefigure the possible outlines of the future.

The reasons we can talk of a new period of history opening are the following coming together simultaneously: the depth of economic crisis, the end of a geopolitical "equilibrium" on an international level, crisis of the State as instrument of economic regulation, crises of Western thought and culture, and a deepening ecological crisis threatening the destruction of the ecosystem.

We have to be cautious, however. The period in which we are now living is not so much defined by these new trends that are beginning to develop than by their coexistence with those of the recent past. So, the crisis of the previous period- Taylorism, Fordism, multinationals founded on national capital and national markets, linked to imperialist blocs, the domination of two superpowers- determines the present and stops us from determining if we are on the brink of a new world order with established and stable ways of functioning, or if we are entering a long period of permanent crisis and of general disorder.

THE END OF THE TWO SUPERPOWERS

The politics of the 2 superpowers(Cold War then peaceful coexistence) were based on a tacit agreement-economic imperialism operated by both the blocs and conflict between the blocs acted out in the countries of the Third World. At the same time most Third World elites came to power on the backs of the national liberation movements, playing on the rivalry between the 2 blocs, to realise their dreams of "national independence" and to create post-colonial States.

The competition between the 2 superpowers over military and technological superiority came to a head when the Reagan administration gained the upper hand with its Star Wars programme, contributing to the collapse of the Soviet bloc. The USSR could not compete.

In the aftermath, the Gulf War, the Israeli-Arab accords, and to a certain extent the new arrangement in South Africa, would not have been possible without the end of the USSR as a superpower. Everywhere, The USA under the cover of international peacekeeping, imposes its solutions. The new period which we are now entering is still in birth and its outlines are still vague. A number of questions have to be asked: is the economic decline of the USA permanent? When and how can the new European bloc establish itself? How far will the CIS disintegrate and become Third Worldised? Will the collapse of the "equilibrium" in Central Asia lead to problems for India, Pakistan, and China? And for Japan and the Newly Industrialised Nations? Will there be a new world order based on three blocs or on one?

CRISIS IN THE WEST

The victory of the West over State capitalism was won at a high cost. A long lasting deep structural crisis menaces other equilibriums and threatens to destabilise all economies. One of the structural contradictions of capitalism now is between the tendency to establish a world economy and market, and the maintenance of national States as the only instruments of regulation, that is between the establishment of an international market and national economies. The nation-States of the developed world, under pressure from the multinationals are consciously putting in place the free flow of international capital. They are deprived of the means of controlling speculation and robbed of an important part of their power. A national economic strategy can today function only where they match the interests of the world financial markets. *

But the globalisation of the economy does not necessarily lead to uniform economic order. The GATT negotiations show economic war, the lowering of costs of production etc. leading to the accumulation of capital remain the driving force of the world economy.

The economic leadership of the USA is going deeper and deeper into decline and the last decade has seen the emergence of the strong economic blocs of the EC and Japan. The GATT negotiations show

that the US is ready to counter-attack at the level of trade limitations in an attempt to grab back its lost markets.

THE "THIRD WORLD"

This term disguises a number of countries at different levels. the Four Dragons-Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong- are nearer certain countries of the EC-Portugal, Greece, Ireland- than the poorest countries of the South-Ethiopia, Somalia, Bangladesh. This is a minority of countries however. The tendency is for the gap between the rich countries and the poor countries to widen. 40% of the world population must share 3.3% of world revenue. Each day, 40,000 children die from poverty and there are more people suffering from hunger worldwide than there have ever been in human history and their number is increasing.

Apart from the pillage of raw materials, and the superexploitation of manual labour, the countries of the South are controlled by the international financial institutions, like the IMF and the World Bank. The Third World debt has risen to \$1355 billion dollars by 1990 . Credit on these debts is higher than aid given, which is systematically in the form of loans. In exchange for these loans, The IMF imposes its shock therapy on the debtor

nations. This consists of devaluation, abolishing price controls and wage guarantees, and the "rationalisation" of State enterprises-sackings, closures. Once rationalised these enterprises are bought by the big companies of the North and the revenues obtained from "privatisation" are used to pay off some of the debt. Double benefit for the international capitalists.

Finally, the State banks subject to a quarterly investigation by the IMF lose all control of the national monetary policies. The rates of interest fixed by the market provoke speculation leading to credit rates rising , accelerating the ruin of the national economies.

COLLAPSE OF THE "COMMUNIST" BLOC

The Star Wars triumph of Reagan was the straw that broke the back of the Soviet camel. From the 60s the Soviet economy was opened up to Western capitalism and this penetration of Western capital increased during the 70s. The development of the international division of labour in the 60s, the increase of international exchanges, helped influence certain sectors of the bureaucracy to push for "reforms", to a "liberalisation" of the economy. If Gorbachev did not exist, it would have been necessary to invent him.

Already integrated within the world economy, the Soviet countries suffered the full consequences of the monetarist direction taken by the West. The countries of Eastern Europe are now suffering a recession worse than that of the West in the 30s. Under the "structural adjustment" policies of the IMF these countries that believed they were being incorporated into the economy of the West will suffer the disasters faced by the South- increasing poverty, mass unemployment, privatisation and savage restructuring, adjustment of prices with the world economy, brutal lowering of the standard of living and of industrial production. The most profitable sectors of the economy are sold to the Western multinationals and the "aid" offered in thousands of dollars buys the political personnel and the various Mafias which control the channels of distribution and commerce, that is to say a good part of the "real economy" which has become a street market economy. A process of Third Worldisation is taking place.

CAPITALISM IN PROFOUND TRANSFORMATION

The capitalist crisis in the 70s and 80s led to a great change in the system's characteristics. 1975-1990 saw restructuration and reorganisation at every level.

The questioning of the Keynesian model.

Growth in the 30 years after the World War in the developed countries rested on a particular form of capitalist development.

1. The wages of the population, including that of the working class had to be adequate and stable. Various social compromises took place with the increase of collective bargaining, further institutionalisation of the unions, social security measures.
2. Increase in production meant greater productivity which lowered the cost of production. The buying power of the working class increased at the same time as profits did, better, this increase of buying power became the source of a growth in profits.

x develop forms of
self-managed
way of transports

(TAXISTOPS)
shared cars

3. this could not happen without the condition that the capitalists had full control over the organisation of production, of investment and of work conditions, to increase productivity. The unions by and large agreed to this dropping negotiation over work conditions for wage increases.
4. The State was the guarantor of this social consensus. But it also played a very important economic role-public markets, direct financing of investment, help with exports. In several Western countries this led to State development of transport systems, telecommunications, aeroplane industry, energy, nuclear power, road systems, and the financing of research in these areas. The new modifications of automation, concentration of capital, the increased parcelling of work and the internationalisation of the productive process led to huge transformations in the working class. The traditional base of capitalism was in full mutation. The norm of capitalism developed in the 19th century was now disappearing. The States and ruling classes attempted to pay for the debts they had contracted from finance capital by passing more serious austerity measures, wage freezes, reduction of unemployment benefits, cutting back on other social security benefits including those of pensioners. The process of production was qualitatively changed. There was increased robotisation, dispersion of work outside of the factories, containerisation, homework etc. There was increased development of advertising, publicity, specialised advisory companies etc. The market became paramount and with it the increased trumpeting of the freedom to exploit. Work flexibility, weekend work, night work, overtime, partial unemployment were pushed as were short-term contracts and attacks on holidays and conditions. Restructuring has led to mass unemployment, early retirement, and calls for women to return to the home. It has led to pay freezes, attacks on guaranteed minimum wages where they exist (as in France) and general temporary work and low pay among the young.

x In production the number of part-time workers has increased as has the black economy. ^{Quito} Tied to this is the development of increasing numbers engaged in crime-burglary, car thefts, etc. On the international level restructuration has effected the old-style imperialist exploitation where it was primarily raw materials that were plundered. It is no longer exclusively this. The countries of the South and now of Eastern and Central Europe have passed from unequal exchange to subordination to the West, primarily through the control of debts and the international control of the workforce. Alongside this has been a mutation of the multinationals. These were first founded on a "national" base (US, Japan, France, Germany) but were impelled to increase their cooperation. There is a tendency to international concentration of multinationals (commercial agreements, technological partnerships, cooperation of all sorts, creation of common affiliates etc.)

COLLAPSE OF "SOCIALISM" AKA STATE CAPITALISM

The end of "communism" (the terms "State socialism", "State capitalism" and "communism" are here used interchangeably) meant in the short term the ideological triumph of capitalism- the market economy, individualism. But at the same time capitalism lost its mirror image, its certitudes, and is in constant search of new demons.

The end of "communism" has also meant the collapse of a "workers" movement linked to this model in the rest of the world and to its "double"- the collapse of Leninism and "historic" social-democracy. Not only in the West, but in the Third World as well. This process is still in progress. The victory of capitalism is based on one of the great lies of this century-the belief that the USSR, China, the countries of Eastern Europe, and Cuba were socialist (or communist) countries and that they represented an enemy and a menace. For the apologists of capitalism the Soviet form of "socialism" was used as an example that those who wished to change the system would face eternal damnation!

The collapse of state capitalism was a political and ideological disaster. The West showed that it was undeniably superior and that the original was still much better than the copy. And the rush to attempt to integrate with the West has shown what these societies were about societies of consumption without anything to consume, an imperfect deadened capitalism, with hideous malformations and paralysing dysfunction's, coupled with a mode of exploitation of the workforce that was no longer effective, and with a mode of domination and administration dating from the 30s, archaic with regard to Western modernity.

The end of "State socialism" means neither a defeat nor a victory for revolutionaries. If it is full of potential dangers created by the re-emergence of movements that had been suppressed and concealed by it, it also marks the end of a theoretical Ice Age, where one could not think beyond the State, and of the endless development of the productive forces.

The disappearance of State Capitalism must be the occasion to speed up the task of revolutionary reappraisal, and to develop a movement and ideas rooted in the present.

ON THE RUINS OF STATE CAPITALISM AND OF THE WORLD CRISIS

THE RISE OF NATIONALISM AND RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

In the South, the last decade has seen the rise of mass religious fundamentalist currents (Moslem, Hindu). These movements were encouraged by the West to counter the lay movements that opposed their interests. These new movements are not anticapitalist, they merely criticise the consequences of domination by the developed countries- cultural uniformity above all. The undeniable popular support they have is for deep reasons. For these populations it is an "ideological" means of facing societies in perpetual transformation with the traditional economies in the process of being dismantled, where the State functions only as a brutal means of repression and in defence of a corrupt order, where the frontiers, inherited from colonialism, are not really recognised, where social rules are hardly established, or different nations cohabit in the same space, in a period when the old beliefs no longer function, when they fail to make sense of reality. The development of fundamentalist movements is because a reply is needed to societies in disintegration. Excluded from mass consumerism, the dominated peoples find in traditional religion the "holy" and the supernatural that the West has for a long-time transferred into its founding myths ((Science and Progress), its fetishisation of the market and the sacrament of property.

In the East, armed conflicts have multiplied since the fall of the Wall. The ideological disorientation that has struck in the East is not just due to the collapse of State "socialism" but to a huge disenchantment with capitalism which failed to keep its promises, which functions only for corrupt minorities-ex-Party men, factory managers converting themselves into "bosses", black marketers, gangsters etc. In this there is very little difference between the rise of nationalism in the East and in the West. By their simultaneous emergence, they are the mark of a period of deep crisis, not just economic, which transcends nationality and different historic and political traditions-the crisis of capitalist civilisation.

THE CRISIS OF HUMANIST THOUGHT IN THE WEST

THE crisis of humanist thought- Nature as organisation of the world rather than God, of rational organisation, at the centre of which is Man, born with the Renaissance, formalised with the Enlightenment, spread throughout society under triumphant capitalism (19th Century Positivism) which is coming to a close with the official end of utopias.

This crisis of Western thought has 2 distinct origins, both linked to the crisis of civilisation. They are the relationship of humans to Nature and the relations between humans. The ecological crisis is the result of a planetary economy where the rhythm of exploitation imposed by the world market is incompatible with the natural rhythms of renewing of water, lakes, forests, soils. Even more the world ecological crisis is the death-knell for the school of thought which sees the world as made for Man, for his exclusive happiness, pleasure and delectation.

The Enlightenment and Democracy announced the Age of Man, who would create a rational world based on Liberty and Equality. We are far from this. Humanist thought, instrument of war against obscurantism, the entrenched and reactionary ideas of the old regime, has created its own myths of Science and Progress. Become dominant philosophy, it acts as a veil to hide the violence of domination in all its aspects of everyday life, from artificial births, to death itself (the disposal of the dead has not escaped the laws of supply and demand). The ideology of human rights, one of the cornerstones of humanism, present throughout the medias, amongst intellectuals and politicians is now soft-pedalled via humanitarianism. This does not seek to dispense with the horrors of the wars and famines, but to make them more supportable. It is no surprise that the multinationals sponsor the charity programmes. The media circus from Band Aid to televised on the spot doling out of foodstuffs is not innocent. It's not about the Third World and the causes of its underdevelopment, but the good conscience, the symbolic profit that the West gets from its charitable interventions, where the poverty of others becomes a world of adventure.

In the North, social decay, the fear of growing poverty, the lack of perspectives, lead to the growth of a new totalitarianism founded on irrationality and obscurantism- tribalism, ethnocentricity, (the superiority of one's own race) religious fundamentalism, but also in our rich metropolises to the

modern religions of workaholicism, of sacrifice, and also of spiritualism, fortune-telling, astrology, sects, as well as a loss of purpose-alcoholism, drug addiction, mental illness, suicide.

Finally, the crisis of humanist thought and general confusion favours attempts to reintroduce a reactionary moral order. The attempts by the New Right to grow again for example. The crisis of thought which can only see the future as the present continued or as a catastrophe lead to a curious phenomenon where elements of the past are recycled in the present. It all appears as if society is advancing in order to retreat: fashion, style, looks, art, are all revisited and revived to occupy the frightful void in life and the agony which it brings.

BUT HOLD IT!

Under whatever social order, a moment always arrives when the dominant opinions fail to supply answers anymore and leave the way open for critical opinions, to the organisation of new oppositions, to the putting in place of resistance (intellectual, social, artistic) to the invention of Another Possibility.

Failures of capitalism

1. Social. Sackings, jobs with no security, poverty, unemployment
2. Ecological. The sacking and plundering of the planet.
3. Economic. International division of work, industrial decline, local economies destroyed, still born economies under the blows of Western domination.
4. Human. famines, wars, repression.
5. Relations. Collapse of community spirit and solidarity, the false cult of individualism as opposed to individuality, law of the jungle as the rule of life.
6. Intellectual. Poverty of real thought, the reign of images and of the Spectacle, (e.g. consumerism, wars and famines as televised "entertainment", the whole of life as a commercialised show) crisis of artistic creation and recycling of old recipes in the market of culture and spectacle, disenchantment and melancholy, cynicism. But capitalism is not eternal, no more than the existence of humans on the planet. Never has a civilisation manufactured so many means for its own disappearance. To stop this path to suicide, change the world order, and invent a new way of organising social life becomes each day more urgent, because at the end of that road, lies perhaps the end of humanity and the real "end of history".

In the face of this we have to focus our concentration, and explore new ways to social liberation. In short to create a project of anarchist communism, and the invention of a new civilisation to replace this one.

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THE ALTERNATIVE

The old workers movement is dead. In the assault led by the ruling class started in the early 70s, the unions and the social democratic parties passed more than ever over to the camp of the bosses. Workers lost their jobs en masse, and the old shock battalions of our class, the miners, the dockers, the steel workers, were decimated. At the same time an ideological assault was led by the servants of the boss class, the intellectuals, who advanced the idea that the working class was dead. These intellectuals were to be found as much among the Left as the Right. Both within the social-democratic parties and the Euro-Communist wing of the Communist Parties were intellectuals willing to defend this myth. Some anarchists have fallen for this nonsense as well.

A NEW WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

It is not our intention to wallow in nostalgia and pine for the great industrial centres, the "workers fortresses", the mines, where millions of women, men and children had their lives mutilated and where sense could be brought to life only from the struggle, against the whims of the bosses, to work less, in better conditions and to earn more. These struggles usually accepted the capitalist work system, where wages were the due of the workers. For some socialists/communists the proletariat became the subject of history ready to overthrow the bourgeoisie as they had overthrown the nobility, whether through a vanguard party or through a revolutionary union. These struggles were to be based primarily on the workplace.

If we as anarchist-communists still see the working class movement as decisive it is not because of its supposed capacities as emancipatory class but because workers are those who produce the wealth and

are at the heart of the mechanism of production of capital. In the countries of the capitalist heartland, the numbers of the class remain the same as they were about 20 years ago, especially if we include all those wage earners in contemporary capitalism. But our class has lost importance in the capitalist heartlands because it has weakened its capacity to produce capital, and hence to hold capitalism to hostage, and to destroy it. In Europe the old workers movement is still strong in Germany. This is the sole capitalist country here to preserve its industrial base (like Japan) and to not have seriously broken with Keynesianism with the boss class redistributing some of its profits to ensure social peace and consumerism.

But the burden of reunification may change all this. Thoroughly integrated into capitalism, as a recognised and consulted mediator, trade unionism lost its importance when the rules of the game changed. Its sole role now is to sabotage struggle as much as possible.

CAPITALISM HAS CHANGED- THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT MUST CHANGE

For the worker of the sixties, the class struggle was within the walls of the workplace and unless the struggle became wildcat, through the trade union.

Nowadays the working class, who always faced problems outside of work, has to put up with the general aggravation of life the landlord, taxes, social security, transport, the health service for the young, the education system, the workfare schemes etc., the difficulty of finding a job, the near impossibility of finding a home for women, the double day of work, in the workplace and at home aggravated by the attack on women going out to work. for ethnic minorities and immigrants, the increasing racist attacks and discrimination.

The multiple aspects of the class struggle are directly political in the sense where they oppose the political positions advanced by the boss class, in the public space of the towns, and of society in general, rather than in the private space of the workplaces. A new working class movement has to have as its strategy the urgent need to organise in all spheres of society. There will be no recomposition of the class without the unity of struggles, without re-creating the sense of a class in opposition to the social order. Revolutionaries must not just adopt simple voluntarism and participate in these struggles, they must advance alternative perspectives. Otherwise these struggles risk the danger of, for example, taking nationalist forms of defending the standard of living and lead to forms of recuperation like "Buying British" etc. The new movement we are talking about must go beyond defending wages and jobs, (although it must do these as well) it must question the legitimacy of the capitalist system, of production for production's sake (productivism). It must question the logic of work under capitalism. For many the need to work has become impossible because the economic system has no need or has no regular need of their capacity to work. To give cohesion to a new movement, we have to pose all the needs of social liberation.

UTOPIAN? GUILTY YOUR HONOUR

"A map of the world that does not include Utopia, is not even worth glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing...Progress is the realisation of utopias".

Revolutionaries are often reproached for being utopian, of being dreamers. Yes, we are dreamers, because like children, we don't like nightmares. Yes, we are utopian. This utopia is not a heavenly paradise come to earth. Neither is it a return to a mythical Golden Age. This other "place" is a symbolic territory, based on our revolutionary refusal to put up with a world founded on the violence of class and sexual domination, of the exploitation of labour and the body, of alienation. This utopia is a reply to the crisis of humanist thought. It is the place thanks to which it will be possible to organise the resistance and revolutionise the revolution.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACF

The recomposition of the revolutionary movement is a perspective that is a long way off and the ACF remains the PRINCIPAL grouping where authentic revolutionary militants unite and act. There is a huge gap in the present between the level of the ACF's pretensions and that of its effective capacities. The integration of new militants, the work of politicisation for the collective working out of strategy, the widest possible circulation of Organise! and other propaganda must be the central preoccupation of each ACF militant.

The hour for regroupment is now. Outside of the ACF there are other, smaller revolutionary groupings. There are also various militants scattered in local groups around the UK, within Solidarity Groups, the remains of the Poll Tax network. We have initiated work with Subversion already and this needs to continue. Amongst some revolutionaries there remains the problem of localism and this needs to be debated. We need to initiate unity talks with these comrades. Above all, excessive group pride, which exists in all these organisations, not least the ACF, must be jettisoned. There are real differences between all these people, but the convergence of opinion is greater than the differences. We need to establish a place for debate, through unity conferences and/or a discussion bulletin.

Outside of these very small groups of revolutionaries, there are militants within the workplace, the squatting groups, the anti-Criminal Justice groups, the Earth First! groups, the radical fringes of the Greens, the anti-road campaigns, who are developing revolutionary/semi-revolutionary positions.

We need to unite with other revolutionaries to create an effective revolutionary force.

Unity does not mean rigid unanimity. Differences exist because they are produced by the complexities of the present situation. They are even necessary because they create a richness and quality to a movement, and they must be allowed freedom in a debate which is the embryo of a revolutionary "democracy" (for want of a better word).

But equally important is the search for common ground and common positions. The ability to reach common agreement is a measure of the maturity of a movement, of its capacity to decide what is important and what is secondary.

The militants of the ACF are ready to debate with all those who recognise the need for an anti-capitalist alternative for the end of the century.

Strategic unity does not just consist in numerically uniting the small and isolated groups of revolutionaries but in relating the struggles of the present to the vision of a future society, to introduce the concepts of revolution and utopia, even if only in a fragmentary way, into the present social struggles and into everyday life.

A REVOLUTIONARY PROJECT, A REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAMME

The revolutionary alternative that we are talking about means that we must have a revolutionary project- a vision of a future society- and a strategy- a revolutionary programme. We have to go beyond practical unity over a few issues at certain times (like opposition to the Gulf War for example) and move towards unity on a more permanent and continuous basis.

The strategy of the ACF must consist of anti-capitalist answers to the crisis and the recreation of a revolutionary movement. This means that wherever ACF militants are struggling, whether in social movements or in the workplace, they have the perspectives of fighting against cooption and integration by the system and advance their own propositions, for the creation of a mass movement, for autonomy of struggles, for unity of struggles, for positions that break with reformism and are clearly anti-capitalist, and for a bold and clear vision of social liberation.

THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION

We do not think that the liberation of humanity will come about on a purely spontaneous level. The road to revolution starting at the internal contradictions of capitalism has not yet been built. It will be created in struggle, in moving forward, and that means the development and application of strategies, even if every facet of each strategy is not proven effective.

This struggle cannot be delegated to a party. The revolution does not mean-it never has meant- the centralisation of struggles and the concentration of all the revolutionary forces in a single vanguard party. It means the development of a mass movement, with various coordinations of the subversive forces, in an offensive and globalising process.

That does not remove the need for a specific anarchist communist organisation. The role it has to play is not one of making the revolution on behalf of the masses, of being the single and centralised instrument of the revolution.

The role of the revolutionary organisation can be briefly be summed up in three points.

1) It acts as a liaison for its militants, conveying information both here and abroad.

2) It acts as a place for debate for militants, where ideas and experiences can be synthesised. What propositions to formulate? What activity to develop anti-capitalist positions in the area of activity of each militant? By offering this place for debate, it counters localism, and fixation on single issues.

3) It puts into practice its own strategy. It struggles for the independence of struggles, for their self-organisation, against their cooption by reformism and electoralism. It struggles for the recomposition of a revolutionary movement, for an anti-capitalist solution to the crisis within an international perspective. It puts forward initiatives for practical unity and for debate wherever possible.

By its practice, by its manner of acting, by the intransigence of its positions and its refusal of compromise, the revolutionary organisation must be an immediate reference point for the radicalised sectors who are facing the most brutal consequences of the crisis. This revolutionary organisation, yet to be developed, must synthesise the need for immediate reply to capitalist attacks, possible and practicable solutions, and aspirations for a radical change in society.

A New Manifesto for Anarchist Communism

(The movement toward economic, monetary and political union in Europe often appears from the British point of view to be one of stop-go, with rapid lurches forward followed by harsh braking and reversal. However, the perspective which the UK people have is very different from that on the European continent, where the overall, long-term momentum is clearly towards a closer integration of both the European market and the European state.)

One of the structural contradictions of capitalism now is between the tendency to establish a world economy and market, and the maintenance of national States as the only instruments of regulation, that is between the establishment of an international market and national economies. The nation-States of the developed world, under pressure from the multinationals are consciously putting in place the free flow of international capital. They are deprived of the means of controlling speculation and robbed of an important part of their power. A national economic strategy can today function only where they match the interests of the world financial markets.

Within this canvas of larger-scale and longer-term changes, the 1992 integration of the economic, monetary market and the political union between 15 of the European member states, and the rapid growth in activity by the European Commission, Council of Ministers and Parliament, is having major repercussion for national economic and social policies and for national parliament sovereignties. The European Union, and all that goes with it, is fundamentally changing the economic, social and political context for national state democracies, and the structures, cultures and processes within which governmental policy is made and decisions are implemented at national, regional and local levels. A vigorous battle of interests and ideologies is waged about technical rules, for example the subsidiarity principle, to balance powers within the European community. The subsidiarity principle was made for giving to national governments a political tool in making decisions on which affair concern either national and European competencies. Now this principle is strengthening a constitutional European rule empowering local sub-national levels of policy-making. The protagonist in this battle about the direction, the value, and the balance of power include not only employers and trade unions, bankers and financiers, national and local governments, European Council of Ministers and Parliament, national and European political parties, but also voluntary and community organisations, pressure groups and popular movements.

According, around the subsidiarity principle interest and ideology groups attempt to use the integration of the European market for shifting the locus of policy-making away from the national level and towards Brussels on the one hand, and the regions and localities on the other. This has been described as a 'hollowing out' of the nation state.

"For some problems the nation state is too large to operate effectively; for others it is too small. In consequence, there are pressures for a relocation of authority both upward and downward, creating structures that might better respond to today's and tomorrow's forces for change"¹

¹ P. Kennedy, *Preparing for 21st Century*, Harper Collins 1993.