

The EU reform treaty: what it is and how to fight it

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Part of the general attack by the imperialist bourgeoisie

What fundamentally is the purpose of the EU reform treaty? It is to take forward and strengthen the European Union as a common economic, political and military organisation of the imperialist ruling classes of Europe, that is, of European monopoly capital.

The EU reform treaty means the advance of turbo capitalism. ?An open market economy with free competition? is to be written in as a fundamental basis of the EU constitution that will facilitate the privatisation by the capitalists of state property and the dismantling of social gains.

The EU reform treaty means permanent rearmament and war. In its struggle with the USA for worldwide spheres of influence, the EU is using the means of ?Americanisation?: EU battle groups, under the hypocritical excuse of democracy and human rights will undertake wars to secure raw materials and geostrategic interests.

In order to achieve this, an EU state apparatus is to be built over and above the state apparatuses of the individual capitalist nation states and it will not be subject even to the minimal bourgeois democratic standards of parliamentarism in the individual states. The EU Commission President, Manuel Barroso has himself made clear the character of the future European Union: ?sometimes I compare the EU with the model of organisation of an empire. We have the scale of an empire.?1

The question of the EU reform treaty, therefore, is objectively of the greatest importance for the class struggle in Europe and in Austria because the treaty would mean the consolidation and strengthening of EU imperialism and its wars against the working class domestically and against the oppressed peoples externally.

The EU reform treaty: the EU Constitution in new packaging

That is why the rulers want to force this treaty through at any price. It is why they want to prevent any referendums that would threaten defeats as in France and Holland in the spring of 2005. In order to justify this to the population, they have formulated the text of the reform treaty in even less clear language than the draft constitution. The Belgian Foreign Minister Karel de Gucht admitted this openly: ?The aim with the constitution treaty was to make it more readable; the aim with this treaty is to make it unreadable. The constitution aimed at clarity while this treaty must be unclear. That is a success.?2

In fact, the EU reform treaty is simply a new edition of the defeated EU constitution. Thus it differs from the draft constitution in only 10 of the 250 proposals. In other words, 96 per cent of the text of the defeated constitutional treaty has been taken over.³ Leading representatives of European monopoly capital justify this. EU Parliamentary President Hans-Gert Poettering explained, ?the substance of the constitutional treaty has been successfully defended?.⁴ Even Giscard d'Estaing, the former President of France and, as

the EU Convention President, the architect of the EU constitution, compared the EU reform treaty with the defeated constitutional draft in the tone of an arrogant imperial ruler 'with regard to the content the proposal is largely unaltered, it has simply been presented differently. The reason is that the new text should not look too similar to the constitutional treaty'. The EU governments have agreed upon 'cosmetic changes so that the constitution can be more easily swallowed' in order to avoid the now risky referendums.⁵

The 'amending treaty' alters two existing treaties; the 'European Union Treaty' (EUT) and the treaty upon which the European Community was founded, now known as 'the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union' (TFEU).⁶

Free-market economy

One important function of the reform treaty is the justification of the dismantling of workers' rights and social gains and the extended privatisation of state property. Because of this the emphasis on the capitalist order runs like a red thread throughout the treaty with its various keywords such as 'open market economy' and 'free competition'. Thus, for example, article 119 says:

'The activities of the member states and the union in the meaning of article 3 of the Treaty on the European Union embraces in the terms of the treaty the introduction of an economic policy which aims at the closer coordination of economic policies of member states, the domestic market and the identification of common aims and they are subordinated to the fundamental rule of an open market economy with free competition. Parallel to this, under the terms of the treaty, these activities embrace the therein anticipated measures for a unified currency, the euro, as well as the formulation and introduction of a unified monetary and interest rate policy with the objective of achieving price stability and alongside this general economic policy of the union and the observation of the fundamental rules of an open market economy with free competition.'⁷

Equally, free trade, that is trade that benefits the strongest corporations, is promoted. It is to be a task of the EU 'to take forward the integration of all the countries in the world economy among other things through the step by step dismantling of all limits on international trade'.⁸ Similarly, adherence to the neoliberal Lisbon Strategy is explicitly written into the treaty with reference both to the 'Growth and Stability Pact' and the objective of achieving budgetary surpluses at time of economic growth.⁹

Thus we have here the treaty-based commitment of the states to advance neoliberal economic reforms and investments by corporations and, simultaneously, a commitment to massive savings in state expenditure, that is, above all, in social and health provision. Indeed, the policy is now to be made even sharper; according to Finance Minister Grasser it means not just a nil deficit in prosperous times but a budget surplus.

Privatisation of public services

In the same spirit, the EU reform treaty would mean subordinating public services to the rules of competition. Article 86 makes clear that it will be the EU commission alone that will decide over such matters.¹⁰

This establishes the danger that many service sectors that have for a long time been untouched by the 'blessings of the free market economy' will now be privatised, beginning with water, electricity and waste disposal through to public transport. It is no accident, for example, that the section dealing with transport policy has been amended. Previously, unanimity by all member states was required in order to implement measures over a common transport policy if their implementation endangered quality of life, or the functioning of means of transport. With the EU reform treaty such matters are now only to be noted. The

French anti-globalisation activist Pierre Khalfa rightly concluded that, 'a defence of public transport facilities is hereby removed.'¹¹ Similar measures of liberalisation of the energy sector are also anticipated.

Armaments and military interventions

The reform treaty confirms and accelerates the militarist armament and expansion plans of the EU. The 'common security and defence policy' will become an integral component of the union. The EU Defence Agency would now become treaty based. Equally, every member state would become obliged to develop their defence capabilities and involvement in European plans so that at the latest by 2010 they are able to provide armed units to participate as national contingents or as parts of a multinational unit in proposed missions.¹²

Armament and the formation of multinational troop units are obviously not ends in themselves but serve the military interests of EU imperialism. With interventionist units, the EU will be able to carry out military operations abroad. Chad, in which even Austrian troops are participating, is only the first taste of future colonial adventures by European imperialism.¹³

The justifications for leading such wars are consciously left broad and open. Thus, a case for war could be established even if just one single EU state were 'attacked': 'in the event of an armed attack on the territory of a member state the other member states will provide all possible help and support in their power.'¹⁴

However, it does not even need to be an attack, it is enough if the 'Values of the Union' are endangered: 'the Council can commission a group of member states to undertake a mission in order to defend the values of the Union and in service of its interests.'¹⁵

But the ruling classes are not only interested in fighting wars abroad. They also need an army for civil war domestically. The solidarity clause in Article 188r of the Lisbon Treaty specifies the conditions, such as terrorist attack, natural catastrophe or 'man-made catastrophe' in which the Union and 'member states will act together, using the military means available to them to defend democratic institutions or if requested to give support to a member state's political institutions.'¹⁶

It is not difficult to understand that behind these legalistic phrases is hidden the possible suppression of uprisings and unrest within the EU by a civil war intervention by EU armies. We have always emphasised that the central problem of the EU is that it is far weaker militarily than its competitor, the USA. Against a background of increasing rivalry between the USA and the EU, the ruling class of Europe needs a change of course:

'However to become a power on a similar scale to the USA, Europe needs a fundamental change in its military policy. Which is why it is written into the constitution that European imperialism has the ability to undertake wars around the world in order to defend its political and economic interests (Values).'

¹⁷

At first sight, the EU reform treaty appears to be contradictory. On the one hand it confirms close collaboration with NATO, which means that any powers within the EU that wanted to achieve any military policy independent from that of the US American competitors would not be able to carry this out fully. On the other hand, however, the powers around the German French block have opened the way to an independent military role, by the creation of their own confederation, the so-called 'permanently structured cooperation'.¹⁸

Who is the boss?

The EU reform treaty, like the constitution before it, anticipates that the EU will be seen as an independent

legal personality. The EU, or its representatives, could thus conclude treaties that would be binding on all members.¹⁹

In connection with this, the EU reform treaty foresees the formation of central state power structures. The ruling class sees in this the only possibility for building an effective central state apparatus that could overcome the conflicting interests between member states and force through measures against the working class. With this aim in mind, the number of decisions that can only be taken on the basis of unanimity has been greatly reduced, while the number that can be decided on the principle of 'qualified majority' has increased, from 137 to 181. There has been conflict over what weight the individual states should have in this. In the end, an amendment to the advantage of the big countries was adopted. From November 1, 2014, the qualified majority will be changed to one half of the member states and 55 per cent of the population, with complicated transitional rules that will be valid until 2017.

Even more important, however, is the fact that, alongside the EU Council, that is the common representative of the governments of the member states, the EU Commission will play the central role. This is set out in the following Article: Article 9d:

1. The Commission shall promote the general interest of the Union and take appropriate initiatives to that end. It shall ensure the application of the Treaties, and measures adopted by the institutions pursuant to them. It shall oversee the application of Union law under the control of the Court of Justice of the European Union. It shall execute the budget and manage programmes. It shall exercise coordinating, executive and management functions, as laid down in the Treaties. With the exception of the common foreign and security policy, and other cases provided for in the Treaties, it shall ensure the Union's external representation. It shall initiate the Union's annual and multi-annual programming with a view to achieving inter-institutional agreements.

2. Union legislative acts may be adopted only on the basis of a Commission proposal, except where the Treaties provide otherwise. Other acts shall be adopted on the basis of a Commission proposal where the Treaties so provide.²⁰

The rights of the EU Parliament, by contrast, are minimal and citizens' initiatives have only the right to make requests to the Commission.²¹

Reactionary ideology is written into the Constitution

Alongside the principle of the free market economy, the Constitution establishes further important ideological principles of the bourgeois order. The preamble to the 'Treaty of the European Union' has been amended by the introduction of the following paragraph: 'created out of the cultural, religious and humanist heritage of Europe from which the inalienable and inviolable human rights such as freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law have developed as universal values'.²²

The reference to the 'religious heritage of Europe', in other words Christianity, is noteworthy. This is a religion in whose name innumerable wars and mass murders have been committed throughout history. This means, as the Catholic Church and the conservative forces demand, nothing less than the elevation of Christianity to the status of the constitution. This apparently innocent choice of words could, if necessary, be used by the ruling class as an ideological justification for numerous attacks, for example, setting aside the separation between state and religion, and for actions against atheists, questioning the right to abortion, justification of military intervention in defence of Christianity, for example, against Islam, and so on.

Fundamental causes: the decline of capitalism

It is obvious that all progressive organisations and activists oppose the EU reform treaty. However there is very little clarity about its origins and what alternatives there are and with what strategy we can fight it.

The EU reform treaty is not the result of a sudden lust for power on the part of the bourgeoisie, as various left reformist currents believe. Even less is it a conspiracy by various bureaucrats in Brussels, as in the fantasies of the editorial offices of the Kronen newspaper or in the Freedom party.

The struggle against the EU reform treaty cannot possibly be won if it is based on illusory and utopian foundations. The basic mistake of many Lefts today is to believe that the policy of the ruling class, which people usually call neoliberalism or militarism, is simply one of several possible options for the capitalist system. It is generally argued that the bourgeois rulers really have a range of possibilities as to how to exercise their power. The programme of relentless attacks on the social and democratic achievements of the working class and the imperialist war offensive is therefore not seen as an unavoidable, and from their own point of view absolutely necessary, policy of the ruling class but rather as a 'mistaken policy' which could be replaced by a 'correct policy' such as the development of the social state, full employment, disarmament and peace, whilst at the same time maintaining capitalism.

In reality, the neoliberal militarist offensive of the ruling class is the necessary result of the decline of capitalism against a background of increased competition between the monopolies and the great powers. Since the 1970s, the world economy has been characterised by a tendency towards stagnation of the productive forces.²³ This development holds true for the period of globalisation even though here we can see that there has been an uneven development where the tendency to stagnation dominates in the imperialist metropolises and in broad areas of the so-called Third World, while at the same time there are important exceptions such as China or India.

The formation of the EU as an answer of the imperialist capitals of Western Europe

It is the crisis ridden developmental tendency of the capitalist global economy which drives monopoly capital to sharper attacks on the working class and the increased exploitation of the semi-colonial world and, simultaneously, sharpens the competitive struggle between the great powers - above all between the two most powerful blocks, the USA and the EU. This results, on the one hand, in a common approach by the great powers when it is a matter, for example, of opening the semi-colonial countries to the great corporations but, on the other, also leads to political and economic conflict between the two blocks when their interests conflict.

The formation of the European Union as not only an economic domestic market but also as a political and military power bloc is the answer of the ruling class of Europe, above all of the core states, Germany and France, to increased competition and the necessity to pursue their interests in an increasingly unstable world with all the means at their disposal. We had already made this clear in an analysis three years ago: 'the formation of a European capital and imperialism which can offer a rival to the USA as the leading world power is and remains a strategic aim of the German and French capitalist classes and their political executives.'²⁴

That is why it is no accident that, after the ruling classes of Europe suffered the defeat of the referendum on the constitutional treaty in 2005, they soon began a renewed attempt. 'The general attack on the workers will be maintained across the whole of Europe with unlimited, indeed increased, sharpness. Even if, in individual countries, there are short-term tactical retreats by the ruling class in response to mass mobilisations, these will lead quickly to even harsher attacks. The ruling classes will consciously take steps towards the formation of an imperialist bloc.'²⁵

This remains our position: the aggressive policy of the ruling classes of Europe in the direction of a

neoliberal dismantling of social services, militarisation and the building of the central EU state apparatus is the unavoidable result of the interests of capital in a time of stagnation, increased competition and instability. They have to pursue these policies otherwise the USA, and other powers, will in the long run degrade their European rivals from an advancing empire into a dwarf among the imperialist powers. Flowing from this, there will be rapidly developing sharp political crises up to the revolutionary situations. Any attempt to move the capitalist class to adopt different policies by negotiation or petitions is, therefore, nothing more than a reformist daydream.

That does not of course mean that absolutely no changes or modifications in the policy of the ruling class are possible without the immediate development of a revolutionary situation. It is possible to block this or that attack temporarily by hard class struggle or to reduce their impact. However, such changes are temporary defensive successes and, as long as the capitalist relations of exploitation remain, cannot lead to a fundamental and permanent improvement in the situation of the working class.

Reforming the EU in the interests of the oppressed?

A good proportion of the left holds a reformist politics that would like to change the EU and create a 'social, peaceful and democratic Europe'. Two examples can be dealt with here. ATTAC, for example, demands the election of a constitutional assembly in the EU from which a reformed EU could proceed.²⁶ The ATTAC founder in Austria, Christian Felber, hopes that through such democratic and social reforms a more effective EU can be created: 'the effectiveness of the EU in comparison to the present situation would be improved through such new structures.'²⁷

Similar hopes are held by the European Left Party whose Austrian component is the Kommunistische Partei Österreichs (KPO): 'we believe that the EU is in a position to disarm and should do this and that the military budgets of the member states should be reduced and they should give up thinking in military categories.'²⁸

It is noteworthy that the Socialist Party youth organisation has never brought itself to make a clear rejection of the EU reform treaty. In their one public position they did indeed demand a referendum but did not take a position. At the same time, they opened the columns of their newspaper to Socialist Party propagandists for the EU reform treaty and declined to offer any criticism. Once again this shows that the Socialist Youth, unlike their self-characterisation, are neither autonomous nor Marxist but rather the left reformist drummer boys of the Socialist Party apparatus in the ranks of the youth.

Despite differences of nuance, these positions have in common a deeply reformist petty bourgeois logic. Namely, that it is possible to create a 'democratic socially just and peaceful EU' without posing the question of property and power in Europe. How can a socially just Europe be possible as long as capitalist property relations are maintained, as long as a tiny minority of employers hold all the means of production in their hands? How can a peaceful Europe be possible as long as the corporations and the generals, who intend to further their interests globally by military means, exist? How can there be any real democracy so long as the ruling class is in power and is daily strengthening the police state?

Reformist politics have no clear class understanding that our society is divided between a ruling class, at whose head is monopoly capital and its professional politicians, and the working class, that is to say those dependent on wages and their families.

Naturally this lack of understanding is not accidental, it has a material basis. Behind the reformist view that neoliberalism is simply a 'mistaken policy' which can be resolved through 'another politics' with 'another government?', there is a political perspective. Namely, the hope by forces such as the European Left Party that they can become part of a government coalition in the capitalist EU member states and thereby get

their noses into the trough of power and its associated privileges. In Italy, this has already been carried out and the Rifondazione Comunista (PRC) played a substantial role in the neoliberal and militaristic government of Prodi (which, with the help of the PRC, raised the pension age, participated in the occupation of Afghanistan and built up the NATO military base in Vicenza). In Berlin, the Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (PDS) has been in a coalition with the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) for three years and undertaken dismantling of social provisions. Behind the reformists' phrases of a 'social and peaceful Europe' is hidden the reality of their desire to participate in capitalist power.

The League for Socialist Revolution (the Austrian section of the L5I) stands for a socialist Europe and rejects the slogan of a 'social Europe'. At best, this formulation leaves open which class should rule in such a Europe. But those who leave this question open are basically accepting that those who rule today shall also rule in the future. In other words, their 'social Europe' is nothing more than a social democratic, that is, a bourgeois and imperialist, Europe.

We do not want to reform the EU, we want to destroy it - but not in order to return to the nation state, the form of social organisation which corresponded to the level of development of the productive forces in the 19th century. We want to go forwards: to a European revolution over the corpse of the EU towards the United Socialist States of Europe.

Is an exit from the EU an alternative for the working class?

An apparent alternative to this is the strategy of various left organisations such as the KPO Steiermark and the Communist Initiative, which propose that Austria should leave the EU. This demand for a return to the old nation state is deeply illusory and dangerous. It is wrong to believe that Austria, if it were to free itself from the EU, would be any less reactionary, any less hostile to the working class, as a state. Austria is an imperialist state, it has not been led astray by the 'bad EU', rather, domestic capital sees its interests best served, for the moment, in the EU. The capitalists are not attacking the working class because of some 'dictat from Brussels' but out of their own basic interests in profit. It is therefore all the more damaging when various lefts strengthen this excuse from fractions of domestic small and medium-sized capital and echo the lies that are spread by the bourgeois media. The ideology of the 'good' old nation state would in reality mean the retreat of the working class from the stage of the class struggle by a united global proletariat and back to narrow, reactionary, national horizons. Austrian capital does not only exploit the working class here at home but also in numerous semi-colonies, above all in Eastern Europe, through its massive foreign investments from which it gains super profits. It was not for nothing that the ruling class of Austria was strongly in favour of the EU entry of the east European countries.

In the capitalist world, the individual capitalist states do not exist entirely independently of each other and neither could they. Rather, what we see is a constantly increasing involvement of individual countries within the global economy. Austria is one part of the global economy and cannot change this by leaving the EU. All of its involvements would continue to exist even if Austria were to leave the EU. The leader of the Russian October Revolution in 1917, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, characterised nationally limited politics such as those of the 'leave the EU' current very accurately:

'The petty-bourgeois desire to keep as far away as possible from the great battles of world history, to take advantage of one's relatively monopolistic position in order to remain in hidebound passivity-this is the objective social environment which may ensure the disarmament idea a certain degree of success and a certain degree of popularity in some small states. That striving is, of course, reactionary and is based entirely on illusions, for, in one way or another, imperialism draws the small states into the vortex of world economy and world politics.'

At heart, the 'leave the EU' perspective shares the same fundamental error as the left EU reformers, that is, they completely ignore the class question. Whose EU? Whose Austria? The EU that really exists is the EU of the corporations and the generals. And the Austria that really exists is equally the Austria of the corporations and the generals. As long as this class holds the power in the economy and the society there can be no long-lasting reforms. Only their overthrow will open the way to the future.

Revolutionary strategy

Today we are facing an all-embracing offensive by the ruling classes of Europe. They want to destroy the social and democratic gains of the working class, whatever the cost, and establish the EU as the second military superpower, alongside the USA.

Resistance to this can only be successful if we orient ourselves not towards appeals and petitions to the rulers or to the achievement of governmental posts but towards a Europe-wide organisation and struggle by the working class and youth. That is why we in the LSR, together with our international comrades in the League for the Fifth International, stand for mass demonstrations and strikes up to a general strike against the EU reform treaty and other attacks. This is necessary both in individual countries and across Europe.

We need an organisation of resistance from below at every level. That is why we call for the building of action committees, social forums and alliances at every level, local, regional and national. Equally, we need a European wide coordination of the struggles. This demand is directed at all organisations of the working class, all parties which are against the war and neoliberalism, all the groupings within the anti-globalisation movement, the antiwar movement, immigrant organisations, youth organisations and student representatives.

How can we stop the reform treaty?

The resistance against the EU reform treaty demands broad struggle both in Austria and across Europe. In this way we can build on a broad rejection of the EU reform treaty and popular demand for a referendum across the whole of Europe. Just in Austria, 70 per cent of those asked in the most recent opinion poll were in favour of a referendum and in another poll twice as many people saw a disadvantage in the treaty as those that saw an advantage, 39 per cent to 19 per cent.

The League of Socialist Revolution supports the demand for a referendum over the EU reform treaty as one form, although limited, of opposition. We are, therefore, active in the referendum campaign. The majority of organisations in this alliance see its priority as small media actions, press conferences, petitions and the winning of individual officials and sectors of the established parties, they hope for support from the Kronen newspaper and so on. We by no means reject such steps, in particular circumstances they could indeed play a subordinate but positive role. However, the centre of gravity of the resistance must lie in a working class, class struggle perspective in order to force a referendum. The whole campaign can only be successful if it concentrates itself on organising broad mass actions, meetings oriented towards the masses and the building of local committees rooted in the masses. In concrete terms we call for:

The trade unions as well as the student organisations and progressive immigrant organisations should be won to opposition to the reform treaty and a perspective of class struggle against it through strikes and demonstrations.

We propose coordinated interventions by the organisations participating in the campaign in the planned so-called 'information meetings' over the EU reform treaty to be organised by the government.

We are in favour of the organisation of local action committees in factories, schools and universities and also locally, following the example of the 900 local Committees for a No against the EU constitution in

France in 2005.

We propose the organisation of at least one major demonstration as well as further direct actions in the spring.

For a programme of struggle against the general offensive of EU capital

The struggle against the general offensive of capital cannot limit itself to the EU reform treaty but must include all fronts. For that it needs a clear programme of defensive struggles.

Stop the social attacks!

Unemployment, under employment and poverty affect millions and millions in Eastern and Western Europe. As unifying key demands in the struggle we propose:

? Europe-wide introduction of the 35 hour week with no loss of pay or jobs.

? A minimum wage established by the labour movement of each country.

? For a struggle against privatisation of public services and mass redundancies.

? For a programme of socially useful public works under the control of the workers, the unemployed and consumers.

? Progressive taxation of firms and the rich to finance these measures.

Fight racism

The division of the working class and the oppressed along national and ethnic lines is a central problem for any common struggle. The EU and the national bourgeoisies and governments are consciously deepening the divisions. Workers from Eastern Europe and from the semi-colonial countries outside the EU are excluded from the Western labour market, dealt with as second-class workers or forced into illegality where they have to work in the worst possible conditions.

Within the EU, national and ethnic minorities such as the Basques or the Roma are denied their democratic rights. Moslem, Turkish, Arabs and migrants from the Balkans or from Africa are subjected to systematic hate and oppression. Fascist and racist forces are spreading the poison of anti-semitism.

Against all this we fight for:

? Full and equal social and political rights for all who live in Europe.

? We are against immigration controls, for open borders.

? For self defence organisations of the racially or nationally oppressed against fascist or racist attacks.

? For a common struggle of migrant and indigenous workers against such attacks.

? Down with all reactionary ?anti-terror laws?

Against war and occupation

The EU and its member states are open or covert supporters of the occupation of Iraq, Afghanistan and of the US threats to Iran. Therefore we are:

? For the immediate withdrawal of all troops from Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon.

? Support the legitimate liberation struggle of the Iraqi and Afghan resistance against the occupiers and, likewise, the resistance of the Palestinians.

? EU states are not only passive supporters of the USA. Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia are practically colonies of the EU. Germany participates in the occupation of Afghanistan and France regularly intervenes in Africa. And now the EU and Austria are also sending troops into Chad.

? No to all EU interventions whether under US leadership, the EU or UN flags! Withdrawal of all troops stationed abroad!

No to the building of the police state

The ruling classes are consciously building a police state under the cover of security for citizens and the

?war against terror?. Democratic rights are being systematically hollowed out or even completely repealed.
? Against the permanent surveillance state. Down with all permanent surveillance cameras in public places. No online surveillance.
? Stop all dragnets and bugging operations. Against all security police authority. For self defence units to defend demonstrations against attacks by the police.
? Police out of the localities. Maintenance of public order by self defence units based on elections and control by mass meetings in the factories and housing estates.

For a constituent assembly

The question of the EU reform treaty is a democratic question. It is a matter of determining the constitution of a future federation. The ruling class has been trying to bring this about with either undemocratic or plebiscitary measures. All future attempts by the ruling class will have a similar character because of the internal contradictions within the national capitalist classes. The question of a constitution and of democracy can and must, under these circumstances, be made into a means of mobilising the masses but not for some ?other? bourgeois constitution as suggested in the reformist daydreams of groups like ATTAC. Instead, we need a consistent democratic form for the unification process, a constituent assembly elected by all the inhabitants of the EU as well as those countries that wish to join a united Europe.

Such a slogan has a revolutionary democratic character if it is understood as a means of mobilisation, a means of using bourgeois democratic hopes and illusions against the rulers in order to make it easier to take the steps necessary for the overthrow of the ruling class.

Through the European revolution?

A decisive, Europe-wide struggle by the working class, the youth and the migrants will, sooner or later, raise the question of power: who rules in Europe, the capitalists or the oppressed? In order to rid ourselves of social cuts, racism and war for good we must overthrow the power of the ruling class. For that, we need a Europe-wide socialist revolution. Such a revolution will not be brought about by proposals in Parliament or by peaceful pressure on the streets but only by the struggle and armed uprising of the mass of the working class. Only through such a revolution can we really build our Europe, a socialist Europe.

Already, 160 years ago, in the year 1848, working class and oppressed layers first rose up against their rulers. Such a revolution, but this time with a clear socialist perspective, is more necessary than ever today in Europe.

The European revolution will not be a spontaneous process that grows organically out of a steady broadening and expansion in class struggle beyond the limits of the national states to a European level. Equally, it will not be a matter of conspiratorial and simultaneous coups in all the main EU countries. A precise description of how European working class revolution would develop is, of course, impossible. We can, however, make the following observations: the economic unification of Europe by capitalism will inevitably develop a Europeanisation of the class struggle, even if it is delayed and distorted. The only progressive aspect of the development of the EU, an unintended side effect of the bourgeoisie?s policy, so to say, is an inevitable international linkage of struggles by workers, youth and migrants. We have already seen the first signs of this in Europe-wide strikes or the echoes in other countries of the rising by immigrant youth in the Parisian suburbs in 2005.

Against a background of a Europe-wide wave of class struggle, there will develop in this or that country, perhaps even across the continent, pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations. Against this background, in one or more countries, a revolutionary party based in the working class will lead the overthrow of the ruling class. If the revolution is victorious in one or more countries this will quickly have widespread effects across the rest of the European Union. It will have a dynamising and inspiring effect on other class

brothers and sisters as well as alarming the capitalist classes. It is therefore likely that a successful socialist workers' republic in one or more countries could not survive for very long, either it will extend itself across the whole continent to form the United Socialist States of Europe or it will be quickly destroyed by an armed counterrevolution.

It is obvious that a successful European revolution would have an enormous impact on the imperialist states, above all the USA, and in the rest of the world. In 1923, Trotsky made the following observations that, of course, cannot be applied directly today because of the changed historical situation. Nonetheless his observations summarise clearly and sharply the possible worldwide effects.

It must not be overlooked that the very danger arising from the United States of America (which is spurring the destruction of Europe, and is ready to step in subsequently as Europe's master) furnishes a very substantial bond for uniting the peoples of Europe who are ruining one another into a 'European United States of Workers and Peasants'. This opposition between Europe and the United States stems organically from the differences in the objective situations of the European countries and of the mighty transatlantic republic, and is not in any way directed against the international solidarity of the proletariat, or against the interests of the revolution in America. One of the reasons for the retarded development of the revolution throughout the world is the degrading European dependence on the rich American uncle (Wilsonism, the charitable feeding of the worst famine districts of Europe, American 'loans', etc., etc.). The sooner the popular masses of Europe regain the confidence in their own strength which was sapped by the war, and the more closely they rally around the slogan of 'United Workers', and Peasants', Republics of Europe', the more rapidly will the revolution develop on both sides of the Atlantic. For just as the triumph of the proletariat in Russia gave a mighty impetus to the development of the Communist parties of Europe so, and even to an incomparably greater degree, will the triumph of the revolution in Europe give an impetus to the revolution in America and in all parts of the world. Although, when we abstract ourselves from Europe, we are obliged to peer into the mists of decades to perceive the American revolution, yet we may safely assert that by the natural sequence of historical events the triumphant revolution in Europe will serve in a very few years to shatter the power of the American bourgeoisie.'³⁰

'to the United Socialist States of Europe

The alternative of the League for the Socialist Revolution and the League for the Fifth International to the EU reform treaty of an imperialist Europe is therefore neither a reactionary return to 'independent' national states and the reintroduction of schillings, Deutschmarks, French francs and other national currencies, nor a 'social' but, in reality, social chauvinist, Europe.

The capitalist unification of Europe, the development of European monopolies and corporate alliances cannot be fought via reactionary and utopian attempts to turn back the wheel of history.

On the contrary, the fight against the formation of a European imperialism and European monopolies needs the working class itself at all levels to give a political answer to the problem of European unification. That means fighting the attacks of the ruling class and fighting for the United Socialist States of Europe as a step toward world revolution.

This would create a basis for a complete reorganisation of the European and global economy on the basis of democratic planning. Central problems such as mass unemployment can only really be solved on this basis. Only on this basis can long lasting national and racist oppression really be overcome. A socialist Europe would, for example, implement the right of self-determination for the Basques and it would allow the possibility of overcoming the national divisions on the Balkans. Both these tasks would be possible if we recognised the rights of the various nations to self-determination, while at the same time creating the possibility of voluntary alliance without allowing the profit interests of the imperialist capitals and the

national bourgeoisies to intervene. The following declaration of the Marxist revolutionary and leader of the October revolution of 1917, Leon Trotsky, summarises our goals in the revolution for the United Socialist States of Europe:

?In the person of the Opposition the vanguard of the European proletariat tells its present rulers: In order to unify Europe it is first of all necessary to wrest power out of your hands. We will do it. We will unite Europe. We will unite it against the hostile capitalist world. We will turn it into a mighty drill-ground of militant socialism. We will make it the cornerstone of the world socialist federation. ?31

For new revolutionary parties, for the Fifth International

A revolutionary perspective remains an illusion if no fighting parties exist nationally or internationally. The League for the Socialist Revolution is under no illusions that the exploiting class will ever voluntarily and peacefully give up their rule. Only a socialist revolution in Austria and worldwide, only the armed insurrection of the working class, can open the door to the future of freedom and justice. Such an uprising will not come about spontaneously but demands systematic preparation and organisation of the revolution. For that it needs a party, an organisation in which the most conscious sections of the working class and the youth are organised under the banner of revolution. The creation of such a party of socialist revolution in Austria and worldwide, the Fifth International, is therefore the most urgent task of all workers and youth who wish to struggle for a socialist future with us. The building of such a party and international can accept no delay. We cannot wait until revolution is at the door. Then, as history shows us, it is already too late to begin serious political and organisational preparations.

Let us unite into an international party of the working class, in a Fifth International! Forward in struggle for socialist Europe! Forward in struggle for a socialist world!

Endnotes

1 See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/07/11weu111.xml> [1]

2 <http://www.free-europe.org/blog/?itemid=383> [2]

3 <http://www.openeurope.org.uk/media-centre/pressrelease.aspx?pressrelease...> [3]

4 <http://www.merkur-online.de/politik/art8808,869823> [4]

5 Reform treaty: cosmetic changes to avoid referendums, says Giscard d'Estaing, 17.7.2007, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/003-9201-197-07-29-90120070716IPR09200-16-07-2007-2007-false/default_de.htm 6

6 References to the Treaties signed in December 2007 are according to the version published on December 17, 2007 and published on <http://eurolex.europa.eu/> [5]

7 TEU Article 119

8 TEU Article 21e

9 See: Final Act Declaration: Nr.30. Clarification of Article 104 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU

10 Lisbon Treaty Article 86

11 Pierre Khalfa: EU Reform Treaty: Both Method and Content are Unacceptable (August 2007)

12 Protocol regarding permanently structured cooperation, according to Article 28a TEU, Article 13 ?Article 28 1. The tasks referred to in Article 27(1), in the course of which the Union may use civilian and military means, shall include joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilisation. All these tasks may contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories.2. The Council shall adopt decisions relating to the tasks referred to in paragraph 1, defining their objectives and scope and the general conditions for their implementation. The High Representative of the Union for

Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, acting under the authority of the Council and in close and constant contact with the Political and Security Committee, shall ensure coordination of the civilian and military aspects of such tasks. Lisbon Treaty on Changing?

14 *ibid*,

15 *ibid*

16 *ibid*. Article 188r

17 Translated for this article from, Michael Probsting: 'Amerikanisierung oder Niedergang?.

Widersprüche und ausforderungen für das imperialistische Projekt für Europäische Vereinigung. In Revolutionärer Marxismus Nr.35, Berlin, 2005 p.39

18 Article 28a of the Lisbon Treaty refers to those powers which 'have met the demanding criteria in respect of military abilities' forming this 'Structured Cooperation' within the framework of the Union

19 This is to be found in the Final Act, Declaration on Priority

20 Treaty of Lisbon

21 Article 8b, para 4: Not less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

The procedures and conditions required for such a citizens' initiative shall be determined in accordance with the first paragraph of Article 21 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

22 TBC

23 By 'productive forces' Marxists understand both the material means and the results of production, thus the term includes means of production (machinery etc) and produced goods and also the people who serve the means of production and, for this purpose, enter into particular forms of social division of labour. Obviously, means of production and people stand in a relationship to one another and, from the point of view of capital, the purpose of setting the worker to work on the means of production is to produce goods and, thereby, surplus value. Productive forces, therefore, are not simply a collection of things but include people and their living conditions. The point is discussed further in M Probsting: Die widersprüchliche Entwicklung der Produktivkräfte in Kapitalismus, in Revolutionärer Marxismus 37, Berlin, 2007

24 Martin Suchanek/Michael Probsting: EU in der Krise. Soziales oder sozialistisches Europa?; in: Revolutionärer Marxismus Nr.35, Berlin, 2005, p 6

25 *ibid*, p7

26 See: 'Attac 10 Prinzipien für einen demokratischen EU-Vertrag?,'

[http://www.attac.at/uploads/media/10 Prinzipien fuer einen demokratische...](http://www.attac.at/uploads/media/10_Prinzipien_fuer_einen_demokratische...) [6]

27 Christian Felber: Mein europäischer Traum; in: DER STANDARD, 5.12.2007 p28

28 ELP: In the name of a democratic and social Europe: 'THE GOVERNMENT'S TREATY MUST BE PUT TO REFERENDUM IN THE EU?', 19. October 2007,

http://www.europeanleft.org/nc/english/news/news_archive/news_archive/br... [7]

29 VI Lenin, Military Programme of Proletarian Revolution in Collected Works, Vol 23, Moscow, p.87

30 <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1923/06/europe.htm> [8]

31 L. Trotsky, Disarmament and the United States of Europe in Writings, 1929, New York, 1975, p 357

Source URL: <https://fifthinternational.org/content/eu-reform-treaty-what-it-and-how-fight-it>

Links:

[1] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/07/11weu111.xml>

[2] <http://www.free-europe.org/blog/?itemid=383>

[3] <http://www.openeurope.org.uk/media-centre/pressrelease.aspx?pressreleaseid=51>

[4] <http://www.merkur-online.de/politik/art8808,869823>

[5] <http://eurolex.europa.eu/>

[6] http://www.attac.at/uploads/media/10_Prinzipien_fuer_einen_demokratischen_EUVertrag_02.pdf

[7] http://www.europeanleft.org/nc/english/news/news_archive/news_archive/browse/1/zurueck/newsarchive/artikel/in-the-name-of-a-democratic-and-social-europe-the-governments-treatymust-be-put-to-referendu/

[8] <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1923/06/europe.htm>