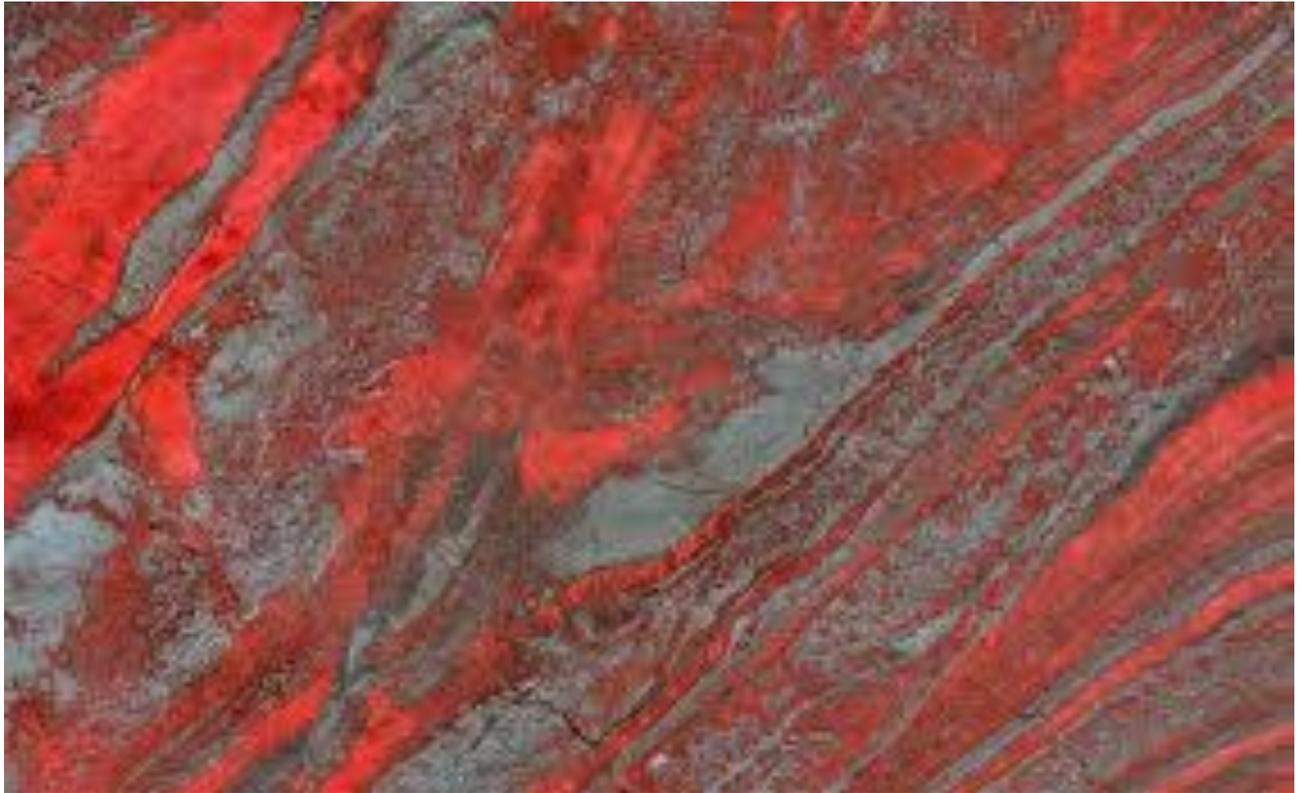


FROM GREY TO RED GRANITE



**VIEWING THE LEFT, THE SCOTTISH
QUESTION AND THE NATURE OF THE
UK STATE THROUGH THE LENS OF
NEIL DAVIDSON'S WRITINGS AND
POLITICAL WORK**



Neil Davidson in Athens and Allan Armstrong in Edinburgh

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1. Introduction

Neil Davidson died tragically early on May 3rd this year. Neil bridged the gap between Left academia and political activism. His reputation in Left academia was highlighted by the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize he won in 2003 for *The Discovery of the Scottish Revolution, 1692-1740*.¹ Unlike many such books (including some which are also well worth reading), Neil's book made an immediate impact on the Left and beyond, and not only in Scotland. This is because the National Question in Scotland had become very politicised and the Left was long in the process of trying to address this issue. It still is.

In 2012 Neil wrote *How Revolutionary were the Bourgeois Revolutions*,² which further contributed to his global reputation in Left circles. Neil's last public commitment was the organisation of a conference in September 2019, under the auspices of the University of Glasgow's Socialist Theory and Movements Research Network. The theme of the conference was Combined and Uneven Development. Characteristically, Neil organised this for both Left academia and for political activists from around the world and locally. Socialists who engaged with Neil's works, associated conferences and book launches always learned a lot.

Whilst Neil's writings are likely to continue to make a major contribution to Socialist theory globally, they should also be seen as contributing to the still very relevant Scottish Question in 2020 and beyond. I would argue that Neil's later writings continued themes he took up in *The Discovery of the Scottish Revolution*, but there would also be some modifications today. One significant difference was already apparent by 2012. Neil had shifted from being opposed to the immediate exercise of Scottish self-determination in 2003 to supporting this in 2010 - much to the consternation of some Left British unionists who had taken some succour from Neil's earlier work. The tension that existed between an earlier Left British unionism and an emergent Scottish internationalism reappeared more recently in the tension between his support for a Lexit Brexit (Left British unionism in a new guise) and his internationalist and anti-racist research and political activities.

I became politically active in 1968, when I was a student at Aberdeen University. This was a decade before Neil joined the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). ‘Grey Granite’ Aberdeen had a considerable impact on both our personal and political lives. Our growing attention to the Scottish Question represented a continued shared interest. However, our politics were refracted both through shared political organisations – the SWP (1978-82 - although we did not meet up then), the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) (2000-06) and the Radical Independence Campaign (RIC) (2012 onwards) and the Scottish Left Project/Respect, Independence, Socialism, Environmentalism - Scotland’s Left Alliance (RISE) (2015-6) and through different political organisations - for Neil, the SWP (1982-2014), Solidarity (2006-?), rs21/International Socialism Scotland (2015 onwards) and *Conter* (2017 onwards); and for myself, the International Socialists/SWP (1972-82), the Revolutionary Democratic Group (1982-89), the Republican Workers Tendency (1989-99), Scottish Socialist Alliance then/SSP (from 1996 and continuing after the split from 2006–2016), and the Republican Communist Network (1999 onwards).

Unlike Neil, I have never been part of Left academia, but like Neil I have been a political activist. Neil treated people and their ideas seriously, whichever of these two backgrounds they came from. He would probably have agreed with me that Edinburgh’s James Connolly, a member of the most downtrodden section of the manual working class, and an all-round political activist, wrote work of considerably greater political importance than anyone in academia, whilst also respecting the better work that such people could produce. Indeed, I believe that James Connolly was of greater political significance than the college-educated teacher, John Maclean, another great Socialist produced in Scotland.

I first became actively engaged in debating with Neil in the SSP. The SSP organised the well-attended meeting on the October 18th, 2003, in Glasgow’s Caledonian University. This was entitled *Revolution in the 17th century*. On November 24th, 2012, Neil and I also debated at the Radical Independence conference (which led to the formation of RIC)

organised in Glasgow's Radisson Blu, in a session entitled, *The Scottish Republic – What is Real Democracy?* On Feb 20th, 2016, I debated again with Neil at the fourth RIC Conference in Edinburgh's Assembly Rooms over *EU - In or Out?*

In all of these debates, Neil and I were on opposing sides. But it was always a pleasure debating with Neil. First his approach was genuinely non-sectarian, wanting to advance political ideas not score political points. And some of the best discussions continued in the pub afterwards.

I have tried to limit my main narrative in this article to public events that those on the Scottish Left interested in the topic can recognise, even if they are not directly familiar with them. And hopefully that will include young people for whom 1968 is in the even more distant past, than the 1916-21/3 International Revolutionary Wave was for me in my youth. However, I have also provided extensive footnotes, both as an account of my own and others' experiences and to address related and not so directly related issues and events. Some of these could act as a contribution to a history of the Scottish Left. This has not really been attempted since Neil Williamson wrote *Ten Years After – the Revolutionary Left in Scotland* in 1979.³

My article is very much a personal one. There are many others who looking at the same events, or participating in the same organisations as me, could add a lot more. They might also differ quite fundamentally with my analysis. I hope this article provides a prompt to them, so that a more rounded account of the period covered can be made. However, it's not just for the historical record that I have written this. It is a contribution on the Left to encourage a Scottish internationalist, republican socialist, 'break-up of the UK and British empire road to communism' - or emancipation, liberation and self-determination (in its widest sense).

In other words, it seeks to move from the locally rooted but still outward looking 'Grey Granite' of Neil's and my (for a 5 year period) Aberdeen, to a 'Red Granite' in Scotland today, hard enough to withstand all

challenges and provide a bedrock to enable it to make its own contribution to a new global commune – ‘Freedom Come all Ye!’⁴

2. Neil Davidson and Allan Armstrong - overlapping political lives starting in Aberdeen.

I didn't meet Neil Davidson until sometime after the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) joined the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) as a platform in 2000. However, we had long been pursuing parallel lives and interests. These began in Aberdeen, where Neil's family and political life started, and where my political life began in 1968, when I was a student at Aberdeen University.

Neil's friend and comrade, Jamie Allinson,⁵ has said that whilst Neil was still in Aberdeen, he was initially torn between SWP and Solidarity, a libertarian socialist organisation.⁶ The International Socialists (IS) (SWP's predecessor) and Solidarity were the two organisations in Aberdeen that attracted me when I lived there, although I joined neither. Indeed, I became chair of the Aberdeen Revolutionary Socialist Student Federation (then the largest political organisation on campus - a sign of the post-'68 times) because neither IS nor Solidarity would accept someone from the other organisation for the post. Sectarianism was hardwired in the Left, and not just between the official CP ('Stalinists' to the rest of us then), Trotskyists, Maoists and Anarchists, but often just as strongly within these groupings.

When I moved back to my home city of Edinburgh to teach in 1972,⁷ I joined IS in the context of the Miners' Strike. Edinburgh IS had miners and a student teacher comrade from a mining family in Fife in its membership.⁸ I was in IS/SWP for almost eleven years, considerably less than Neil's 36 year's membership. The only position I ever held was convenor of the SWP Scottish Teachers' Fraction⁹. I was never a delegate to party conferences. I did go to Scottish and All-Britain Teacher Fraction and Local Government members' meetings.¹⁰ I was, though, an enthusiastic attender at the SWP's Easter events at Skegness and the summer Marxism events in London.¹¹

Thus, my participation in the structures of the SWP was quite different from Neil's. He took a key part in SWP conferences. When Neil became a more dissenting member from about 2008, his intellect, good humour and widely recognised position as a leading Marxist historian provided him with some protection from the central committee and their appointed local full-timers. They always saw it as their first job to marginalise then stamp out dissent.

I was initially seen as a reliable party member with a good trade union record (essential in the IS/SWP¹²), with dissenting views only on Ireland. But I was not attracted to the factions¹³ which made Ireland a major issue. I later became concerned, though, about the Anti-Nazi League's failure to recognise the main British face of fascism - Loyalism. This had a much grimmer record of violence, including killings, than the National Front, and had a strong presence in Scotland. Nevertheless, I remained a loyal SWP member. I also enjoyed the Rock Against Racism events, which finally attracted the young punk, Neil Davidson to the SWP in Aberdeen in 1978.¹⁴

3. A shared interest in the Scottish Question – my encounter with three versions of Left British unionism in the International Socialists /Socialist Workers Party.

Neil and my paths were to develop and later cross because of our shared interest in the Scottish Question, which then widened to other issues. The Scottish Question had fascinated me from my days at Aberdeen University. It was further fed by my geographical, historical and musical interests. Ray Burnett, another Edinburgh-Aberdonian when a student, was a big influence on me when it came to Scottish politics and culture. Neil has acknowledged Ray as being one of the first to apply Gramscian concepts to Scottish history.¹⁵ Ray was also very influenced by the Civil Rights Movement in Derry, in which he actively participated. He helped to bring Bernadette Devlin (now McAliskey) across to a barnstorming meeting at the university. This helped to politicise my own interest in Ireland, which I had first visited in 1964.¹⁶

Ray later, when living in Dornie in Wester Ross, worked with John McGrath, helping him research the background to 7:84's *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*. They both made contributions to the influential *The Red Paper on Scotland*, edited by Edinburgh University's first elected student rector, Gordon Brown (remember him!). The *Red Paper*¹⁷ provided much of the intellectual underpinning for Labour's adoption of Devolution in 1977. Ray went on to publish *Calgacus*, which only made three issues, mainly because of opposition to his linking of Scottish and Irish politics.¹⁸ By this time Irish Republicanism had replaced the initial state reform approach of the Civil Rights Movement (equal rights with the rest of the UK), after being gunned off the streets of Derry by the Parachute Regiment on Bloody Sunday, January 30th, 1972.¹⁹

IS/SWP were slow to become involved in specifically Scottish politics. The field on the Left was dominated by the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). They produced the political, historical and cultural magazine, *Scottish Marxist*. In the cultural sphere, *Scottish Internationalist*, edited by Bob Tait,²⁰ lecturer at Aberdeen University, was also influential.

If I were to characterise the version of Left British unionism I adopted at the time, it would be a Luxemburgist²¹ 'plague on both your camps' opposition to British Unionism and to Scottish Nationalism. This was at a time when Norman Irons was the archetypical super-royalist 'Tartan Tory' and sole SNP councillor in Edinburgh, and Douglas Henderson, SNP MP for East Aberdeenshire, had been a former supporter of the United Party in apartheid South Africa.

A crucial debate over IS's attitude towards possible Scottish Devolution took place at a Scottish aggregate meeting held on May 15th, 1975. This followed the SNP winning 7 MPs in the February 1974 and 11 MPs in the October 1974 Westminster general elections. There were three positions at the Glasgow aggregate. Mick Napier and I argued for Abstention, or not taking sides. Leading Glasgow IS shop stewards, Peter Bain and Jimmy McCallum opposed Devolution arguing, in effect,

that the UK state provided the framework which united the British working class. Tony Cliff came up to Glasgow arguing in favour of Devolution, saying that now that Right wing, Margaret Thatcher had just become the new Tory leader, supporting Devolution was the anti-Tory position.

Despite Cliff being the leader of IS, he knew he was up against the very well-regarded industrial militants in IS's Glasgow Scottish heartland. To improve Cliff's chances, he invited Harry McShane to second him. McShane's reputation was so legendary that nobody raised the fact that he was not even a member of IS! However, this was to no avail. The vote taken was for a resounding rejection of Devolution. However, the Glasgow comrades' feeling of triumph was short lived, after they learned in the pub afterwards of England's crushing 5-1 defeat of Scotland at Wembley! Grief stricken, they put their arms around each other, not at all mollified by the suggestion that as a gesture of internationalism, they should be welcoming England's victory! Left British unionists though they might be, the Scottish prefix of their Scottish-Britishness was very important to them.

Nevertheless, when IS, now renamed the SWP, decided to publish a pamphlet on the Scottish Question in 1977, I was asked to do this under the supervision of Duncan Hallas.²² Without realising it at the time, I was probably chosen because I was seen to have been on the SWP leadership's side in arguing for Rank & File against Broad Left approach to industrial politics. This was one of the arguments that underpinned the raging internal debate about IS changing to the SWP.²³

The pamphlet was titled *Nationalism or Socialism – The SNP and SLP exposed*.²⁴ It is said that after Labour's Tom Johnson²⁵ joined the UK government as Scottish Secretary in 1941, he went around second-hand bookshops trying to buy up all the copies of *Our Noble Families*. This book had exposed the ill-gotten wealth of those major landowners he now worked with. There would later have been a strong temptation for me to do the same with the SWP pamphlet I wrote – it is a (bad) textbook example²⁶ of Left British unionism!²⁷

However, in my tacit support for a Left British unionist political approach, I was still in the company of others, not only in the SWP,²⁸ but also in the CPGB and the International Marxist Group (IMG), even if our chosen solutions to address the Scottish Question differed.²⁹ The Scottish prefix to our hybrid Scottish-Britishness was not only important, but a means to celebrate Scotland's/Red Clydeside's vanguard role in the British working class.

Others however, including Ray Burnett, drew attention to Edinburgh's own revolutionary history.³⁰ Much later, whenever I was asked to speak at meetings in Glasgow on James Connolly, I always started by saying that Edinburgh produced Scotland's and these islands' greatest Socialist!

There were Left unionists among the Welsh-British, who were then highlighting South Wales.³¹ The leading role of Clydeside and South Wales in working class struggles was something that tended to be downplayed in London headquartered political organisations.

4. Becoming an SWP dissident and adopting a new version of Left British unionism – federal republicanism

At the Conference of Socialist Economists held in Glasgow on January 21st, 1978, I went on to considerably modify the arguments I had made in *Nationalism or Socialism*.³² I soon became a critical 'Yes' supporter of Devolution and voted 'Yes' on March 1st, 1979. I had become an open SWP dissident. In the process I met up with Steve Freeman, and along with Harry Tait³³, Henry Maitles,³⁴ and others we formed the Republican Faction (RF) and contributed to the SWP pre-conference bulletins.³⁵ Steve and another comrade managed to get delegated to a couple of SWP annual conferences. Here they were treated with the leadership-organised scorn all dissidents face in the SWP.

After the 'No' vote, which precipitated an election and led to Thatcher's Tory government, we kept the RF going. We were joined by Brian Higgins,³⁶ the secretary of the rank and file, Building Worker Group

(BWG), and ‘exiled’ Glasgow brickie living in Northampton. The RF developed an analysis of the UK state as a declining imperial power, with its ruling class falling back on its anti-democratic Crown Powers, the state’s unionist features and its alliance with the US to maintain its position. To counter this, we campaigned for a republican federation of England, Scotland and Wales and for Irish reunification.

However, when the RF split from the SWP, the motivation came from another source. In 1981 the SWP had closed down the Anti-Nazi League, now that the streets were safe again for white paper sellers.³⁷ In 1982 Cliff moved to close down *Women’s Voice*, which had been open to socialist and radical feminists.³⁸ The next year he persuaded the SWP conference to vote for closing down the Rank and File trade union groups. The SWP leadership wanted the ‘party’ to turn in on itself, and not have members exposed to other arguments that working in wider movements led to. The SWP’s ‘Downturn Theory’ became the left face to the growing ‘New Realism’ in the Labour Party. It encouraged doubts about the wider struggles of the working class, substituting internal organisational activity and abstract propagandist external ‘interventions.’ The SWP had given up on trying to become a party to replace the CPGB and, in effect, opted for being a ‘party’ sect.

The SWP’s ability to close down particular Rank & File groups was a direct reflection of the degree to which they had already become ‘party’ front organisations. Only two survived. The SR&FT included teachers from the IMG, as well as other socialists not in any political organisation. We successfully resisted closure. The BWG, also had a wider range of militant building workers, including Irish republican socialists and socialists not in any political organisation. It successfully resisted closure too. Scottish teachers in the SWP faced a choice of abandoning the SR&FT if we wanted to continue membership of the SWP. Most of those in Lothian resigned from the SWP instead. Brian Higgins of BWG however, was expelled from the SWP.³⁹

From this point onwards Brian and myself developed a specifically industrial republican politics (the term was first used by Brian). We saw sovereignty in the trade unions as lying with members in their

workplaces and not in union HQs. We argued that any action workers initiate themselves is ‘independent’ and not ‘unofficial’ as designated by union HQs. We also placed more emphasis on raising wider political issues within the trade unions.

The RF became the Revolutionary Democracy Group (RDG) in 1983. We initially operated as an External Faction of the SWP. We continued to develop an understanding of republican politics, looking to the distinctive and sometimes interacting traditions in England – the Levellers; in Scotland – the revolutionary wing of the Covenanters; in Ireland – the United Irishmen:⁴⁰ and in Wales – the 1830 Merthyr Republicans and the Chartists.

My own earlier research into the Covenanters hadn’t been done so much to enquire into Scotland’s revolutionary history, but more to show the striking parallels with the rise of Bolsheviks, beginning in 1912, followed by their take-off in the International Revolutionary Wave from 1917, before the negative consequences took over when that wave ebbed between 1921-3. In both cases, either from 1680-1707 and then beyond, or from 1912-23 and then beyond, these ‘parties’ became first an effective force through principled revolutionary differentiation, then became central to a revolutionary climax (initially successfully so in the Bolsheviks’ case), before either being absorbed by the new unionist state (post-1707 UK or post-1922 USSR), or breaking up into small sects. Both the revolutionary wing of the Covenanters and the Trotskyists, each with their own dogma and anathemas,⁴¹ were particularly prone to this.

After joining the RF though, I began to locate the Covenanters in Scotland and the UK’s oppositional revolutionary traditions, developing an ‘internationalism from below’ politics. This was influenced by my experience of being chair of the Lothian Anti-Poll Tax Union (A-PTU).⁴² In 1989, the Tories tested out the poll tax a year early in Scotland. This was a classic example of how the British ruling class is able to use the unionist form of the UK state to aid their beleaguered class cousins in one of its constituent units – in this case, the Tories and their upper and middle class supporters in Scotland. The

idea that the Labour Party protected the interests of workers across Great Britain was also given a severe mauling, as Labour councils deployed sheriff officers (and later bailiffs in England and Wales) to impose the Tories' hated tax. To counter this, the Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation (A-PTF) mounted a major non-payment campaign⁴³ and took this on an 'internationalism from below' basis into England and Wales.⁴⁴

The experience of the Anti-Poll Tax movement was to be the trigger for a wider questioning on the Left in Scotland concerning the practicality of a 'British road to socialism'. RDG produced regular well-received bulletins for the Lothians A-PTU.⁴⁵ These first raised the possibility of a new republican socialist party linked to others on these islands on an 'internationalism from below' basis. However, it was to take until 1996 before support for a new political organisation in Scotland broadened sufficiently to bring people together in the Scottish Socialist Alliance.

Meanwhile, the SWP had abandoned the Anti-Poll Tax struggle in Scotland, once the STUC had ditched it. The SWP argued, according to its 'Downturn Theory', that this struggle was bound to go down to defeat. SWP called instead for 'Kinnock and Willis' {Labour and TUC leaders} to get off their knees and fight!' But the RDG was still formally an External Faction of the SWP. But we needed a politics that went beyond calling for 'Tony Cliff and the SWP to get off their knees and fight'!

The A-PTF was a mass movement, with larger local bases of active support at the time than the Labour Party. So, the RDG in Scotland, with Brian Higgin's support, turned to directly organising amongst this opposition. We also continued our work alongside rank and file trade unionists. However, both Brian and I very much appreciated the need for political organisation but found the political culture in the 'party' sects of the 1980s and 90s unattractive. So, we went on to work in a number of small political organisations. These took the need for a democratic culture and strategic thinking with regard to the UK state seriously. And this also meant continuing to challenge both Labour and

trade union bureaucrats, and the ‘party’ sects which, each in their own way, undermined independent working class activity and organisation.

This experience also led to our deepened understanding of earlier republican traditions in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. They had been linked historically through ‘internationalism from below’ challenges to the UK state. The first precocious instance of this was the mutiny of the Burford Levellers in 1649 when they refused to serve in Oliver Cromwell’s army in Ireland.⁴⁶ During the 1790s, there was the alliance of the United Irishmen, United Scotsmen, the London Corresponding Society and US republican Democrats. In 1820 there was the solidarity action of a mass strike and the Scottish Radical Rising, following the Peterloo Massacre the year before. The 1830 Merthyr Rising and the 1839 Newport Rising saw the emergence of Welsh working class republicans and their centrality to wider resistance in the UK. 1848 saw the link between the Chartists, particularly the Fraternal Democrats, and the Irish Confederation. From the early 1880s Irish, Highland and Welsh Land Leagues were linked, and their actions contributed to growing demands for Home Rule for Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The electoral impact of the Highland Land League also contributed to the foundation of the first independent labour party in these islands – the Scottish Labour Party in 1888.

The 1913-14 Dublin Lock Out, with its international solidarity action, preceded James Connolly’s participation in the 1916 Easter Rising. This triggered the 1916-21/3 International Revolutionary Wave. Connolly’s actions were based on a ‘break-up of the UK and British empire road to socialism’. The impact of the ‘Russian’ Revolution and the First Irish Republic contributed to John Maclean’s extension of Connolly’s thinking to a ‘break-up of the UK and British empire road to communism’. Maclean’s new advocacy of a Scottish Workers’ Republic was added to Connolly’s advocacy of an Irish Workers’/Socialist Republic.

5. A break with Left British unionism and the adoption of a socialist republican, ‘internationalism from below’ ‘break-up of the UK state and British empire road to communism’.

Some SWP members had originally argued that once Devolution had been defeated in 1979, ‘normal’ class politics would resume - Labour versus the Tories. And an indication of how removed the SWP had become from any understanding of the Scottish Question was shown when their teachers and FE lecturers were forced back into joint work with others in the Scottish Federation of Socialist Teachers (SFST) ⁴⁷ When the proposed SFST Charter was discussed, the issue of Scotland’s right to self-determination was debated in Lothian R&F Teachers, ⁴⁸ one of the SFST’s affiliated organisations. This issue was dismissed by an SWP further education lecturer as “heedrum-hodrum nonsense”!

Although the period following the failed 1979 Devolution Referendum in 1979, then Thatcher’s defeat of the Miners’ Strike in 1985, was bleak, this was partly offset by the defeat of the Tories’ poll tax, and of their attempt, after Irish Republican electoral successes following the 1981 Hunger Strikes, to marginalise this movement through the Anglo-Irish Agreement. And beneath all the political retreats from ‘New Realism’ (Labour), ‘New Times’ (Eurocommunists) and the ‘Downturn Theory’ (SWP) on to New Labour, there were a number of other significant developments.

There was a renewed Scottish Cultural Renaissance which began to reconfigure culture and frame Scotland within both a Scottish and wider international setting. ⁴⁹ This renaissance often bypassed London and undermined Scottish-Britishness. Scottish literature, drama, art, music, and magazines were produced which crossed this cultural political divide. Some of the major names associated with these cultural developments were Alistair Gray, Jackie Kay, James Kelman, Tom Leonard, Liz Lochhead, Edwin Morgan and Irving Welsh.

In 1990, the *Self-determination and Power* event was organised between 10-11th January in the Pearce Institute, Govan. ⁵⁰ Noam Chomsky was a key speaker. This event provided a good example of Scottish internationalism. ⁵¹ One of the event’s participating organisations, Workers City, ⁵² was also challenging the city council’s attempted yuppification of Glasgow, when it was made the European

City of Culture that year. This was Labour's deliberate attempt to jettison the memories and traditions of Red Clydeside. Others participating included campaigners against the poll tax, and the organisers of the International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books (IBFRBTWB).⁵³

In Edinburgh the cultural scene was also vibrant. In 1992, Kevin Williamson launched *Rebel Inc.*⁵⁴ Its contributors had a considerable impact on the Scottish cultural scene. Kevin was also influential in Scottish Militant Labour's (SML) turn from Left British unionism over the next few years. Elaine Hendry opened Word Power Books in Edinburgh in 1994 with James Kelman at its launch.⁵⁵ And from 1996 Word Power organised the annual Radical Book Fair in Edinburgh then Leith, partly inspired by IBFRBTWB, but also involving Scottish, Irish and many other international writers.

Cencrastus, edited by Raymond Ross, was another cultural expression of a growing Scottish internationalism, which extended into the world of politics. Launched in 1979 and lasting until 2006, it restarted at a higher level, from where the earlier *Scottish International* (1969-74) had left off. *Radical Scotland (RS)*⁵⁶ was also launched in 1982. If the 1975 *Red Paper* provided much of the intellectual basis on the Left for the 1979 Scottish Devolution referendum, then *RS* provided a similar if longer term intellectual basis for the Scottish Constitutional Convention (SCC), established in 1989.⁵⁷ The SCC paved the way for the Scottish Devolution referendum in 1997.

There were other important political developments too. The Edinburgh-based James Connolly Society (JCS)⁵⁸ challenged the Loyalists, Edinburgh City Council and the state for the right to march in Connolly's home city. Significantly, during the Edinburgh local council election of 1992, Jim Slaven of the JCS stood on a platform which included the demand for a Scottish Republic, the first to do so since John Maclean.

The SWP declined to organise support for the JCS marches under threat from British Loyalists⁵⁹ and the BNP. In 1993, the SWP front organisation, the Anti-Nazi League, opted to protest instead against a

memorial to German Nazi, Rudolf Hess in Lanarkshire. This was consistent with the SWP view that fascism was some nasty foreign import – ‘It’s just not British you know!’ That far more Irish have been killed within the UK by Loyalist paramilitaries, than Black or other ethnic minorities by British neo-fascists, just does not register with the SWP, with its alternative British patriotic appeals – ANL then, and its Lexit Brexit later. The SWP’s approach also gives the impression that it is fascists and others on the Right who are mainly responsible for racism, not the UK state.

This was the wider political contest, which led Brian Higgins to the persuade the RDG majority to a ditch federal republican, ‘British road to socialism’. Instead, we adopted a ‘break-up of the UK road to communism.’ Renaming ourselves the Republican Workers Tendency (RWT)⁶⁰ we looked to others to work with. In London, Brian, along with Terry Liddle,⁶¹ and some Irish republican socialists living in the city, formed the Workers’ Republican Forum. In Scotland, the RWT worked over a number of years in the Scottish Republican Forum (SRF).⁶², which Brian also attended when visiting Glasgow. This included the Scottish Republican Socialist Movement (SRSM) and others. We also participated in the John Maclean Society (JMCLS), and with members of *Liberation*, the magazine for republican socialists in the SNP. Together we tried to win Scottish republican socialist support for the JCS marches and for opposition to UK state repression in Ireland, whilst also encouraging Irish-Scottish republicans to see the importance of the Scottish Question.

And at a meeting in Glasgow, organised by the JMCLS, Gerry Cairns⁶³ (SRSM and SRF) and I (RWT and SRF) argued for a republican socialist strategy in a debate with Tommy Sheridan and Alan McCombes (both in the SML). They were still wedded to a Left British unionist strategy. They saw the 1926 defensive British General Strike as more important than the combined Irish Republican and working class offensive of 1919. However, having rejected British Labourism, following their experience in the Anti-Poll Tax campaign, they were already looking for a way beyond Left British unionism.

In Edinburgh, a higher level of agreement had already been reached amongst non-SML members about the need for a new political organisation in Scotland, following the experience of the Lothians A-PTU. The RWT joined the wider Red Republicans.⁶⁴ It took a number of years, learning from the A-PTF experience, before SML, following its break with the Labour Party, gained a greater appreciation of the political significance of the Scottish Question. As it did so, SML, which had greater numbers, approached other political organisations in Scotland and initiated the Scottish Socialist Alliance (SSA) in 1996.⁶⁵

Furthermore, in a politically enlightened move, the SSA was opened up to other platforms, with specific rights recognised in its constitution.⁶⁶ Although one arena in which the still anti-republican SML held up further political advance was in relation to Irish-Scottish republican socialists.⁶⁷ SML became the International Socialist Movement (ISM), the largest platform in the SSA.⁶⁸ Red Republicans and *Liberation* joined the Editorial Board of the new SSA journal *Red*.⁶⁹ This magazine was designed both to encourage fraternal debate between the participating organisations and to address a broad range of national and international issues.

The SSA was immediately plunged into the 1997 Scottish Devolution debate. The Glasgow based SML leadership tried to sign up to the official Labour backed ‘Scotland Forward’ campaign. The Red Republicans argued that the British ruling class was actively seeking a ‘Devolution-all-round’ settlement to derail the impact of the national democratic movements, particularly in Ireland and Scotland. Therefore, despite some opposition from Tory diehards, there was little chance that they could hold back Devolution, especially after the 1997 general election wiped out their MPs in Scotland. Indeed the ‘No’ campaign had to keep Thatcher out of Scotland. It was completely outgunned by the ‘Yes’ campaign. Therefore, the Red Republicans organised an active Abstention campaign in Scotland.⁷⁰

The Scottish Devolution referendum was the first to be held because it was central to the British ruling class’s islands-wide strategy. This was where the greatest support for political devolution existed, and a good

vote could spread the precedent to other areas. New Labour adopted a modified version of the Spanish state's method of dealing with the national democratic challenges in Euskadi and Catalunya. This involved the promotion of asymmetrical devolution. Under this, the Spanish and UK states remained in overall control, but the degree of devolution depended on the extent of the democratic challenges in the constituent nations (e.g. Euskadi and Catalunya or Scotland and Wales), in the partitioned territories (Navarre and Northern Ireland), and also upon the number of devolved regional bodies which could be created to dilute the significance of the national democratic challenge. In 1978, Spain created 17 Autonomous Communities, which ranged from Euskadi and Catalunya, through Galicia, Andalucia and Madrid to 2 Autonomous Cities, Ceuta and Melilla (on the North African coast).⁷¹ New Labour's initial ambition was to duplicate this, with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland at one end and 8 regions⁷² at the other.

The decisive Scottish Devolution victory on September 11th, 1997, contributed to the narrow Welsh devolution victory a week later on September 18th. Wales was very much a subordinate part of New Labour's 'Devolution-all-round' project. However, in opting to give full political recognition to the Welsh nation, which would help to overcome the previous state-promoted, English/Welsh language cultural divide, devolution in Wales had a positive impact.

On May 7th, 1998, a further referendum voted to create a Greater London Authority (GLA). Thatcher had abolished the Left Labour-led Greater London Council in 1986 and replaced it with 32 Borough Councils, and the City of London (a privileged global tax haven.⁷³). The proposed GLA was based on the US model. This had an elected mayor, who, along with appointed officials, could largely bypass democratic scrutiny and work directly with and in the interests of corporate business. There was to be a subordinate 25 member London Assembly, which has a similar relationship to the mayor, that medieval parliaments had with monarchs.⁷⁴

After these three referenda successes, New Labour turned to Northern Ireland, which had always been the main target of 'Devolution-all-

round’, since this is where the Irish Republicans had made the greatest challenge to the UK state. In Northern Ireland the promise of peace for both Nationalists and Unionists was supplemented by the ‘Devolution-all-round’ reassurance to Unionists that they were being treated like the other constituent parts of the UK. The simultaneous referendum in the Republic of Ireland, giving up its constitutional claim to the Six Counties, was also meant to be reassuring to Unionists. These factors, along with the previous well-prepared UK state outreach through the Northern Ireland Peace Forum,⁷⁵ helped to disguise the nature of the Good Friday Agreement. In effect, it was a reformed and now bi-sectarian Stormont, which placed the UK state in position as arbiter.

On May 22nd, 1998, there was decisive vote in favour of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA). However, the continued opposition of the DUP ensured that, unlike the UK’s other devolved institutions, the future trajectory was to dilute promised devolved powers, at the same time as drawing Sinn Fein into active policing of the ‘communities of resistance’, in which the Republican Movement had developed.⁷⁶ It took a further eight years before the St. Andrews Agreement brought about the actual implementation of a watered down GFA.

Blair moved tentatively to try to install the final element of the ‘Devolution-all-round’ settlement, a further seven Regional Assemblies. His deputy, John Prescott, was given the job of testing support first in north-east England. But the referendum, held on November 4th, 2004, overwhelmingly rejected regional devolution, and the project was quietly buried.

However, the Local Government Act of 2000 had already revealed New Labour’s growing preference, following on from the example of the GLA. This was directly elected mayors who could bypass any effective local accountability and work directly with corporate business. Old Labour town hall corruption, with the appointment of family and friends to local council jobs and giving contracts to their cronies in local businesses, was replaced by New Labour city hall corruption with lavish corporate entertainment becoming the order of the day to buy local council support for big business projects.⁷⁷

Therefore, New Labour's original asymmetrical 'Devolution-all-round' plans in England were not so comprehensive as Spain's, with no lower-level Regional Assemblies except the GLA.⁷⁸ This then was the outcome of the British ruling class-backed 'New Unionist' strategy which Socialists confronted in 1997. The Republic of Ireland was a key part of the combined 'Devolution-all-round' and 'Peace Process' strategy. Furthermore, because of its greater intractability, the Northern Ireland/ Republic of Ireland element was underpinned by an international treaty backed by the EU and USA. By this time, the UK, USA and EU were all committed to a neoliberalism designed to maximise corporate profitability throughout these islands.

Very few Socialists looked at the overall British ruling class strategy, confining themselves to coming up with a policy for each constituent unit of the UK, where they were organised. The SML, which had come out of the British-wide Militant Labour (ML) had viewed the UK as an adequate political framework to unite the working class, and hence something to be defended against any national democratic challenges which threatened to break this state.

However, this approach created problems for the SML. The SML became a poster boy for the new Socialist Party (an all-Britain organisation) which had been formed in 1998. But now the SML had come to the conclusion that the majority of the more politicised working class in Scotland, especially amongst the young, were being drawn increasingly to the idea of Scottish independence. However, the old Militant had not appreciated that the unionist nature of the UK state is a significant component of the British ruling class's armoury. This also includes its anti-democratic Crown Powers. The SML inherited this lack of understanding.

A republican socialist understanding of the UK state would have been able to predict the increasing tensions within this unionist state set-up, as the British empire declined, and the British economy's global ranking fell. Thus, it was left to the nationalists in Ireland, Scotland

and Wales to make the political running, with more Socialists tail-ending them on constitutional issues.

In 1998, the SML and the SP gave their support to Scottish independence.⁷⁹ But despite a shared agreement over this, the SML's successor organisation, the International Socialist Movement (ISM) broke away from the all-Britain SP and its sect 'international'- the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) in January 2001.⁸⁰ The ISM began to publish *Frontline*. This growing independence came about partly in response to the political stranglehold exerted by the CWI, which asserted its British 'internationalism-from above' top-down control. This was a reflection of the SP's continued support for the maintenance of the rest of the UK as a means to unite a 'British' working class.

However, even the trade unions, which are seen by the SP/CWI as the main organisations of working class struggle, do not necessarily reflect the UK state set-up. There are all-islands, unions, e.g. UNITE; all-UK unions, e.g. UNISON, FBU, UCU; all-Britain unions, e.g. PCS, NUM; all-Ireland unions, e.g. INTO, IWU; an English & Welsh union - NEU; a Scottish union - EIS; a Welsh union - UCAC; and a Northern Irish union, NIPSA. The answer to this diversity of territorial organisational forms is to see sovereignty lying, not in a particular 'national' union HQ, but in the membership in their workplaces, able to take their own action and campaign for solidarity at whatever level is required - local, regional, national or international. This is the industrial republican approach.

6. The British Left, the UK state and the issue of national democratic self-determination in Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Socialists in Ireland remain detached from national democratic challenges to the unionist state set-up in Scotland and Wales.

But it wasn't only the ML/SP that long held on to an all-Britain political orientation. With England being the largest component unit of the UK, all British Left organisations have their headquarters in London, e.g.

the SWP, SP and CPB. These Left British organisations have had a strong tendency to equate ‘internationalism’ with support for maintaining the unity of British⁸¹ state against what they see as petty Scottish, Welsh (and in some cases Irish) nationalist challenges. They can though acknowledge specific Scottish-British (Red Clydeside) and Welsh-British (South Wales) contributions⁸² to their united British working class struggles.

Yet, their British ‘internationalism’ remains a reflection of the top-down internationalism of the UK state and its administratively and politically devolved institutions. Here sovereignty lies with the Crown-in-Westminster. The British Labour Party also reflects this with real sovereignty lying in its parliamentary inner cabinet. This has direct ties to the British ruling class, through Labour privy councillors. Similarly, the all-Britain TUC, the STUC, WTUC and ICTU(NIC) also reflect the organisation of the unionist state. They are based on a recognition of the sovereignty of their constituent trade union HQs and their general secretaries, and certainly not that of their memberships.

The ability of Labour and trade union representatives and officials to advance their careers at Westminster and through the UK state institutions provides a powerful incentive for them to promote ‘Britishness’, especially in Scotland and Wales. Yet, the British Left, whether in the Labour Party or in the ‘party’-sects, often disguise this. They claim that the British Labour Party, for all its faults, is maintaining the unity of the ‘British’ working class by upholding the unity of the UK or British state. In doing so, their organisations often act as political outriders for British unionism.

Furthermore, the main ‘party’ sects have often formed front organisations, e.g. the SWP’s Anti-Nazi League relaunched in 1992 and rebranded as Stand Up to Racism in 2003; and the SP’s Campaign for a New Workers Party in 2007, rebranded as the Trade Union & Socialist Coalition in 2009. In the process, the ‘party’ sects have formed a symbiotic relationship with trade union officials and Left Labour politicians. The front organisations give these officials and politicians some Left cover, particularly useful when they are being

criticised by rank and file members. In return, these trade union officials and Labour politicians leave control of the fronts in the hands of the central committees of the ‘party’ sects. They are able to decide upon the front’s main activities, their ‘national’ committees’ composition, and the main focus and timing of their activities. However, their rank and file membership and supporters have even less control of the ‘party’ fronts than they do of any trade union they may also be in.

In England, the moves to set up Socialist alliances began earlier than in Scotland. As early as 1992, Militant Labour (ML), following its leading role in the all-Britain APTF,⁸³ joined with others to form the Network of Socialist Alliances.⁸⁴ However, when ML became the Socialist Party (SP) in 1998, it was less keen than its SML autonomous component to shift from supporting a Socialist alliance to forming a new wider Socialist party. The SP was not in the same dominant position on the non-Labour Left in England that it had achieved in Scotland.⁸⁵ Therefore little further progress was made at an England (and Wales) level, although local Socialist alliances continued.

However, Tommy Sheridan’s election as an SSP MSP in May 1999 contributed to the revival of a Socialist Alliance (SA) in England. The SA stood in the EU election the following month. The SWP, having come out of its ‘Downturn Theory’ doldrums, was the largest participant in the renewed SA. But the SP remained a significant member organisation, along with a wide variety of smaller Socialist sects and independent Socialists.

Some on the Left in England, who do not belong to any of the three larger British ‘party’ sects, or the smaller sects, are not necessarily hostile to Irish, Scottish or Welsh national self-determination. However, Socialists in England are often ill-informed about the history, events and political situation in Ireland/Northern Ireland,⁸⁶ Scotland⁸⁷ and Wales, as indeed are many Socialists in the last three places, who have been ‘educated’ in British Left organisations. The UK state, particularly through its education system, along with the British media,

also does much to contribute to this state of affairs amongst the wider working class.

The introduction of Welsh Devolution and the creation of the Welsh Assembly in 1999⁸⁸ raised the issue of national democracy in another of the UK's constituent nations. This also created problems for the ex-ML Socialist Party, which did though add 'Wales' to its name - SP(E&W) - in a partial acknowledgement of the UK's territorial unionist set-up. But this just added confusion to SP(E&W)'s relationship with the ISM in Scotland and their CWI comrades in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Before the lead-up to the Welsh devolution referendum in 1997, the dominant form of politics on the Left in Wales had been Left unionist and regionalist in character. The Communist Party of Britain (CPB), drawing on a long historical tradition established by the CPGB, had seen South Wales as being in the vanguard of the British working class. It enjoyed a closer relationship with the Left in the British TUC and the British Labour Party than with organisations in other parts of Wales. These were usually seen as belonging to other British regions – North-east Wales, North Wales, Mid-Wales and the Welsh Borders. They tended to see these as being more politically backward.⁸⁹ Where there were devolved bodies, such as the Welsh Regional Labour Party and Welsh TUC, the demographic and political domination of South Wales tended to lead to the marginalisation of these other regions, particularly where Welsh speakers were concerned.

The split in Labour ranks (both Right and Left) over the desirability of Welsh political devolution created problems for the CPB and the ML/SP(E&W). However, their growing acknowledgement of the existence of a Welsh nation led them to support Welsh political devolution. They backed the demand for a Welsh parliament which could address general economic and social issues as they presented themselves in Wales, and also for specific cultural issues. This went along with supporting the unity of UK state, which they equated with the maintenance of the unity of the British working class.⁹⁰

However, there was still considerable hostility to Welsh Devolution amongst conservative unionist sections of Labour in South Wales and North-east Wales. Here many on the Left as well as the Right were little interested in other parts of Wales and were often hostile to the Welsh language. These people saw Westminster, the UK state administration and trade union HQs in London as the focus for politics and careers. This view has been epitomised historically by such figures as Jimmy Thomas, Aneurin Bevan, Cliff Prothero and Neil Kinnock.

It was only by the narrowest of margins that Welsh Devolution was passed in 1997. The strongest support for 'Yes' was in Welsh-speaking North and Mid-Wales, and the strongest support for 'No' was in English-speaking North-east Wales and the Welsh Borders. Labour dominated South Wales was divided on a west 'Yes' and east 'No' axis. The 'Yes'/'No' divide here highlighted the liberal and conservative unionist divisions in the party.

The Welsh Republican Movement represented another socialist tradition in Wales. From 1978-2003. Cymru Goch published *Y Faner Goch* (the *Red Banner*). *Y Faner Goch* tried to link Welsh and English speakers in the creation of a new Welsh Republic. In this it challenged cultural nationalism based on the Welsh language, largely confined to Y Fro Gymraeg, or Welsh speaking Wales, and the Left British unionism of the Labour Party and the British 'party'-sects, largely confined to English speaking, South and North-east Wales. *Y Faner Goch* also championed migrants in Wales who (as in Northern Ireland) tended to be marginalised when debates became polarised around British and Welsh nationality. Cymru Goch was also aware of the need to create a wider Welsh republican socialist culture and produced *The Red Poets*, which has continued to this day.⁹¹ Cymru Goch also supported the Republican struggle in Ireland and *Y Faner Goch* provided some coverage to the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP).

The 'Yes' vote for a Welsh Assembly in 1998 opened up the possibility of a political space for a less divided and more inclusive Wales of English and Welsh language speakers, and the recognition of migrants from outside the UK. At the time, the political basis for this new Welsh settlement lay primarily in the liberal unionist wing of the Labour Party,

supported by the Lib-Dems, and also by the constitutional nationalist Plaid Cymru.

In Wales, SP(E&W) developed no immediate constitutional or democratic policies for Wales beyond the offerings of the Labour Party or CPB. It distinguished itself by an abstract propagandist commitment to a future socialism, and support for economic struggles in the here and now. SP(E&W) was unable to relate to the issue of the Welsh language, except in a tokenistic fashion, or to effectively challenge the UK state-promoted English/Welsh language divide-and-rule politics, backed by many within the mainstream unionist parties. These have been central to maintaining British ruling class control in Wales.

Before the creation of the Welsh Assembly, participation in elections for Westminster and the Local Council elections had presented little problem for the CPGB/CPB or for the ML, since the issue of Welsh self-determination could be evaded or downplayed in these political arenas. Their activities had been largely confined to the South Wales region. However, with a Welsh Assembly, the issue of Welsh self-determination had to be addressed. The SP(E&W) could look to the Scottish Socialist Alliance in Scotland, which the SML had initiated, and which now enjoyed some electoral success. The SP(E&W), aware of its weakness outside South Wales, saw the need to create a wider alliance. Therefore, keen to duplicate the ISM's success, the SP(E&W) made overtures to others so there could be an all-Wales electoral challenge in the Welsh Assembly elections in 1999.

This drew the SP(E&W) and Cymru Goch together, along with others, to create a Welsh Socialist Alliance (WSA) on November 7th, 1998, in the Central Hotel in Cardiff. SP(E&W)'s immediate aim was focussed on the forthcoming election. It was keener on a looser alliance, like the SSA had been until recently. Cymru Goch wanted a more open, democratic, membership organisation like the SSP had recently become. Furthermore, Cymru Goch called for the WSA to adopt an overtly Welsh republican strategy.⁹² But the SP(E&W) had no notion of the UK being a unionist and constitutional monarchist state, based on the sovereignty of the Crown-in-Westminster. The SP(E&W) decided to play it safe and voted down support for a Welsh republic.

Unable to develop an alternative democratic republican, 'break-up of the UK' political strategy, the SP(E&W) confined its political activity to abstract propaganda for a socialist federation. In Scotland, abstract propagandism left the immediate political field to competing British and Scottish nationalisms ('Devo-Max' and 'Indy-Lite'). In Wales this meant tail-ending the liberal unionists (Welsh Labour backed by the Lib-Dems and the CPB) and the constitutional nationalist Plaid Cymru. They were both looking for greater devolutionary powers and constitutional parity with Scotland.

The WSA's weakness was highlighted in the Welsh Assembly elections in 1999, where it performed poorly. Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party was able to win the anti-New Labour, Left Welsh-British unionist vote, although without any electoral breakthrough. Whilst the much larger Plaid Cymru won the anti-New Labour vote of those most wanting greater Welsh self-determination. Plaid gained 17 MLAs and became the second-placed party in the Welsh Assembly. This is not to suggest that any major breakthrough could have been made by the WSA in the prevailing political circumstances had it adopted an overt republican strategy. However, in the longer term, without this, there was no sound political basis upon which to challenge both Left Welsh-British unionism and Welsh constitutional nationalism.

Yet, it was in another constituent unit of the UK state - Northern Ireland - that the political weaknesses of the ML tradition were highlighted most glaringly. Northern Ireland is the rump of the old British Ireland, which had been violently partitioned by British armed forces and their Loyalist allies in 1922, to undermine the challenge of the First Irish Republic. And ever since the Civil Rights Movement of 1969, the ML had viewed the Irish Republicans, not the UK state, as the main enemy of the working class. As a consequence, they also tended to become apologists for working class Loyalism and trimmed their politics accordingly.

The ML's successor organisation in Ireland, the Socialist Party (Ireland) - SP(I) - operated in a partitionist manner. In effect, it continued to operate as the ML in Northern Ireland, sometimes donning the clothes of the Labour and Trade Union Group, seeing itself as being in the tradition of the unionist Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP) (which had dissolved in 1987). The ML largely accepted the UK state. In the run-up to the Good Friday Agreement, it took part in the UK state's preparations for a new bi-sectarian Stormont by signing up to the Northern Ireland Peace Forum. The ML had been prepared to compromise with almost anyone adopting a Labour label.⁹³ Once the Good Friday Agreement was in place, its successor organisation in Northern Ireland made overtures to the Loyalists in the Progressive Unionist Party.

However, in the Irish Republic, the ML broke away from the Irish Labour Party (ILP) as early as 1989 forming the SP(I) (2 years before Scottish Militant Labour broke away from the British Labour Party). But just as the NILP had worked in the slipstream of the Ulster Unionist Party,⁹⁴ so the ILP had subordinated itself to Fine Gael (1948-51, 1954-57, 1973-77, 1981-87, 1994-9) (and was briefly to do so with Fianna Fail, from 1993-94) to win office. The one thing that united those from a ML background, North and South, was the anti-Republicanism they inherited from Labour and an acceptance that the set-up of their existing states provided an adequate vehicle for their proposed, essentially Left social democratic politics. The role of British imperialism in creating and backing these state set-ups was very much downplayed by the ML, again something inherited from Labour.

The SP(I) also benefitted from the collapse of the Workers Party of Ireland (WPI) which, although it came out of the old Republican Official Sinn Fein,⁹⁵ had rejected this legacy. The WPI competed electorally with the ILP (winning 7 TDs and 1 MEP in 1989 and 24 councillors in 1991). However, following the collapse of the USSR, which the WPI had previously supported, it moved Right. The majority followed the party leader into the Democratic Left (DL). The DL made deals with the ultra-neoliberal Progressive Democrats before entering a Fine Gael/Labour/DL/coalition in 1994. (The DL went on to

amalgamate with the ILP in 1999). The electoral collapse of the WPI created a Left social democratic political space which the SP(I) was now in a good position to occupy.⁹⁶

Irish ML leader, Joe Higgins, won a Dublin County council seat in 1991 (SML held 2 council seats in Glasgow between 1992-5 but fell back to 1 councillor in the new 1995 Glasgow City council elections). Higgins went on to win a seat in the Dail in 1997 for ML's successor, the SPI (it wasn't until 1999 that former SML member, Tommy Sheridan won a seat at Holyrood, but now standing as a member of the broader based SSP). The Irish Socialist Workers Party preceded the British SWP in standing in the Dail and local council elections in 1997. But as a Johnny-come-lately participant, the Irish SWP had much less success than the SPI. (The Irish SWP also operated in a partitionist manner up until 2005,⁹⁷ before it created its 32 Counties front organisation, People before Profit.)

In 1999, the SPI stood in the EU elections, although its Northern Irish section did not. Nor was there any coordinated campaign with the ISM candidate standing for the SSP, nor for the SP(E&W) candidates standing for the Socialist Alliance in England. (There were no Welsh SA candidates in the 1999 EU elections since priority had been given to the Welsh Assembly elections.) This lack of a shared all-Ireland, all-islands, all-UK and EU perspective revealed the weaknesses of the CWI's internationalism.

However, if the large 'party' sects, SP(E&W) and the SWP loomed large over attempts to organise possible republican socialist alliances in England, Wales and to a lesser extent in Scotland, then those trying to set up a new republican socialist organisation in Ireland faced a considerably bigger challenge. The former leaders of the Republican Movement, now concentrated in the leadership of 'New' Sinn Fein, were eager to become the official voice of Irish Nationalism under the UK state's bi-sectarian, post-Good Friday Agreement. They policed the former 'communities of resistance' and tried to marginalise any opposition. And with key 'New' Sinn Fein leaders having a recent record of struggle and personal sacrifice, they provided a significant

barrier to organising a wider republican socialist organisation in Ireland, especially in the North.

Furthermore, ‘New’ Sinn Fein, with its prioritisation of a political constitutional nationalist road, was opposed by those who had always represented the Republican Movement’s flip side – those dissidents who prioritised an armed struggle road.⁹⁸ In Great Britain (mainly England), these dissidents had a political counterpart in the smaller Socialist sects,⁹⁹ but the latter didn’t have guns and bombs or a record of being prepared to use them to intimidate those who disagreed with them.

Thus, squeezed between those in ‘New’ Sinn Fein following an Irish constitutional nationalist road (supplemented sometimes with populist rhetoric), and those dissident Republicans prioritising military action, others, who tried to develop a political alternative, faced a particularly difficult job. In addition, they also faced the ‘party’-sects, especially SPI (in the South) and later Irish SWP (North and South), who together provided what was, in effect, a Left social democratic alternative.

In the face of this, Republicans looking to a political alternative to ‘New’ Sinn Fein, including some influenced by the Communist Party of Ireland, and the trotskyist, Socialist Democracy (Ireland) produced the new magazine *Fourthwrite* from Spring 2000, in the aftermath of the Good Friday Agreement.¹⁰⁰

However, although critical of the SPI¹⁰¹ and the Irish SWP, *Fourthwrite* contributors also did not outline what they actually meant by socialism/communism. Just having the word ‘Socialist’ usually amounts to little more than abstract propaganda, or sometimes the promotion of the old USSR or of Cuba as models to follow. This stance was unable to connect the immediate working class struggles in Ireland with a strategy which increased working class self-organisation and the political independence necessary for a future socialist transition, or to further develop an immediate practical internationalism (e.g, to unite republican socialists against the UK state and EU bureaucracy) as opposed to a sentimental internationalism (e.g. for conferences).

Most *Fourthwrite* contributors initially shared a view common to many Irish Socialists. This displays the flip side of the British Left's marginalisation of politics and events in Northern Ireland, but with its tacit Irish exceptionalism and acceptance of Ireland's (in the past) and Northern Ireland's semi-detached constitutional status. Socialists in Ireland have tended to see Unionism and the Union as flowing from a particular Ireland/Northern Ireland relationship with the UK and have not related this to the state's wider unionist nature. This wider Unionism, which forms an integral part of the anti-democratic UK's Crown-in-Westminster set-up, has enabled the constituent sections of the British ruling class, whether they have been English-, Scottish-, Welsh-, Irish- or 'Ulster'-British, to get support from their class cousins whenever their interests have been threatened. Today, Unionism is the politics shared by all those who wish to maintain this 'three and a bit' nations UK state, or in the case of many Left British unionists, three of them – England, Scotland and Wales.

Another factor contributing to Irish Socialists' view of the Union was that, for a long time, Northern Ireland's relationship with the UK state was indeed different from that of Scotland or Wales. This had been mediated through a devolved Orange Stormont regime from 1922-72),¹⁰² an attempted bi-sectarian Sunningdale Agreement Stormont from 1973-4, and then by Direct Rule under UK military and security forces control from 1974-98. Up until 1998, Scotland and Wales had no political devolution, only administrative devolution. However, this form of Direct Rule was mediated by all-Britain parties, which operated in England, Scotland and Wales – the Conservatives, Liberals (later the Lib-Dems) and Labour – but not in Northern Ireland.¹⁰³

Furthermore, amongst the Irish and Irish Scots, Scotland still had a reputation for Protestant sectarianism. To Irish Nationalists, the Scottish regiments serving in Northern Ireland often seemed to have the most brutal record.¹⁰⁴ So, it is not surprising that Republicans or Socialists in Ireland did not look to Scotland (other than the Irish-Scots) for support.

However, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and 'Peace Process', with its bi-sectarian Stormont set-up, formed part of the wider 'Devolution-

all-round' settlement which also included Scotland and Wales. The British ruling class was having to manage imperial decline, and this impacted directly on the whole of the Union, which had been created for British imperial purposes. There was also a wider Irish dimension involving the Republic of Ireland and the British-Irish Council. From this point, republican socialists needed to counter the British ruling class all-islands unionist offensive with an all-islands, anti-unionist, 'internationalism from below' strategy.

As British imperialism continued to decline, the glue which had held together the constituent nations – England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and later, the province of Northern Ireland – continued to dissolve. In the process the National Question emerged, with the Hard and Far Right, beginning in Northern Ireland, mounting a rear-guard reactionary unionist defence of Union and Empire. Liberal unionists and constitutional nationalists (SNP, Plaid Cymru, SDLP and 'New' Sinn Fein) took a keen part though in the running of the 'Devolution-all-round' UK. The constitutional nationalists hoped that this would provide a long term road to a 'Scottish Free State', a 'Devo-Max' Wales, or unification with the Republic of Ireland. Again, these illusions would be best countered by an 'internationalism from below' alliance, which included Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England.

7. The initial success of the SSP unites most of the Left in Scotland and provides inspiration for Socialist alliances in England, Wales, Ireland and for Socialists in Europe. A marked shift in the SSP towards support for a social Republican approach, highlighted by the Declaration of Calton Hill on October 9th, 2004.

The formation of the SSP reshaped politics, not only on the Left in Scotland, but in England, Wales and Ireland,¹⁰⁵ as well as influencing the Left in Europe. By 2000 the majority of the non-Labour Left in Scotland had joined the SSP. This included the SRSM¹⁰⁶ in 1998, and the SWP in 2000. But it was to take a number of years before the SSP adopted a Scottish republican road¹⁰⁷ and also developed alternative international links beyond those the Committee for a Workers

International (CWI) provided for the ML, or the International Socialist Tendency (IST) provided for the SWP.

The RCN was to the forefront of those advocating a republican strategy. This was also supported by others, including ex-*Liberation* members. Those from the old SML tradition had initially vehemently opposed the SSA adopting republican politics. They equated this with support for the “terrorist IRA” on one hand¹⁰⁸ and the conservative US and French Republicans on the other. In contrast, the RCN argued that republicanism amounted to recognising the sovereignty of the people. This could be linked to national democratic opposition to the UK state with an ‘internationalism from below’ strategy to challenge the state’s anti-democratic Crown Powers. These would inevitably be used to marginalise or crush any bid for meaningful Scottish self-determination.

And a specifically socialist republican industrial strategy meant ensuring that all workers’ organisations of struggle, e.g. trade unions, parties and campaigns were based on the sovereignty of their members in their workplaces or branches, with the fullest democracy and regular election and recallability of office bearers.

Some former SML members¹⁰⁹ began to appreciate that there was already widespread support for a Scottish Republic in working class circles, despite the attempts by both the Labour Party and the SNP to marginalise this and uphold the monarchy. This change took place over time, but the switch could sometimes be quite dramatic. Sheridan ditched his recent Loyalist working class apologetic politics, and publicly declared his republicanism. However, it became clearer over time that by republicanism he meant a more nationalist version of independent Scotland than the SNP leadership. One of the biggest flips came from Edinburgh former SML members Kevin Williamson and Eddie Truman, who had been the most vehement anti-republicans.¹¹⁰ But in ditching Left British unionism, they also became ardent Left Scottish nationalists, with their newfound support for republicanism seen as underpinning their new commitment to Scotland. Colin Fox became a British republican before switching to becoming a Scottish republican.

In truth, their politics and others in the SSP were in flux. This was the political atmosphere which contributed to the social republican and internationalist Declaration of Calton Hill.¹¹¹ This and the associated demonstration to protest against the royal opening of the new Holyrood parliament building, on October 9th, 2004,¹¹² represented the political highpoint for the SSP. Speakers at the well-attended and reported rally included Colin Fox, Rosie Kane and Tommy Sheridan (SSP MSPs) and Campbell Martin (independent ex-SNP MSP), with actor and playwright, Tam Dean Burn doing an anti-royalist performance.

However, when it came to elections, the SSP tended to trim its politics, concentrating more on ‘bread and butter’ issues (something it shared with much of the British Left and which the SSP leadership had inherited from the ML). Therefore, when the SSP declared that it stood for a “modern democratic republic”, this was a ‘Clause 4’ type, anti-monarchist republicanism for the future. It was not an immediate republicanism upholding ‘the sovereignty of the people’ against the UK state’s sovereignty of the Crown-in-Westminster and its anti-democratic Crown Powers.

In electoral terms, the SSP’s highpoint was the 2003 Holyrood and local council elections, when it gained 6 MSPs and 2 councillors.¹¹³ This situation can be compared with that of the Socialist Alliance in England, where the ‘party’-sect squabbling between the SWP and the SP(E&W) already ensured that the brief post-1999 Socialist Alliance unity had broken down. This led to the departure of the SP(E&W) in 2001. However, neither the SWP nor the SP(E&W) had wanted a Socialist alliance as a precursor to a new Socialist party. They saw support for an alliance either as an additional means to recruit members and supporters, or to win votes in Westminster and local elections for their own organisations. The SWP dominated SA stood in the 2003 English local elections, but only gained 1 councillor. Taking into consideration the 10:1 population differential between England and Scotland, this was a poor performance. And there was a more direct comparison in the 2002 Westminster general election. The SSP stood in all 72 Scottish seats receiving 72,516 votes, whilst the SA stood in 98 English seats, but only received 57,553 votes.¹¹⁴

Meanwhile in Wales, the Welsh Socialist Alliance broke up after the SWP decided to join and try to take it over too.¹¹⁵ Both the SP(E&W) and Cymru Goch left in 2001. Both now organised independently. Cymru Goch had its own republican highpoint, the Welsh republican three day, ‘Stuff the Monarchy’ festival, held at the Clwb y Bont in Pontypridd in June 2002.¹¹⁶ This preceded the SSP’s Calton Hill event by a year. The international speakers included Alan McCombes (SSP and now republican) and Terry Harkin (IRSP).

A month after this, the IRSP, in a self-critical article, based on its long experience in the wider Republican struggle, put forward the case for a Republican Forum in Ireland. Meanwhile, Socialist Democracy (Ireland) - SD(I) and the International Socialists set up a Belfast Socialist Forum.¹¹⁷ *Fourthwrite* continued to publish, and the SD(I) continued to contribute.

In Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein was on its march to take the leadership of the Nationalists – overtaking the SDLP at Stormont in 2003, in the local elections in 2005 and replacing the SDLP’s MEP in 2004. Many in the Nationalist communities were still looking for the post-GFA ‘Peace Dividend’. In the Irish Republic, Sinn Fein picked up 5 TDs in 2002, and 125 local councillors and their first MEP in 2004.

The SPI also gained a TD in 2002 and doubled its local councillors to 4 in 2004. However, the 2004 EU elections once more highlighted the lack of any genuine internationalism in either the SP dominated CWI or the SWP dominated IST sect ‘internationals.’ The SPI stood a candidate in the Irish Republic, but not in Northern Ireland. SP(E&W) had no candidates in England and Wales, nor in Scotland (where it was part of the SSP, which did stand). The SWP stood candidates in England and Wales as part of Respect, a hybrid anti-Iraq War/Islamic communalist alliance, headed by George Galloway. The Irish SWP also stood in Northern Ireland as the main political organisation within the partitionist Socialist Environmental Alliance, but not in the Irish Republic. And like the CWI/IS in Scotland, the SWP had no candidates as part of the SSP slate. There appears to have been a non-aggression pact between the CWI and IST affiliated organisations for the EU

election, but in neither case was there a coordinated all-Britain, all-UK, all Ireland, all islands or wider EU strategy and campaign.

The leadership of the SSP, no longer having the sect 'international' links provided by the CWI, looked elsewhere. The SSP became a central partner in the European Anti-Capitalist Left (EACL), which was formed in 2000. However, the EACL was largely confined to acting as an alliance of existing national parties and sect 'internationals' (USEC,¹¹⁸ IST and CWI), and wasn't really able to rise above these limitations and develop a coherent strategy challenging the EU bureaucracy and the member states which run it. The sect 'internationals' were more concerned with divvying out speakers at anti-G8 summits. And each national organisation wanted little more than a diplomatic 'internationalism' to ensure non-aggression pacts in elections.

The RCN had won unanimous support at the 2003 SSP conference for the party to call on the EACL to mount a coordinated 2004 EU elections campaign.¹¹⁹ A meeting of the EACL in Brussels agreed, but there was no real international campaign with rallies and visiting speakers from other member organisations. Each EACL member organisation, including the SSP, ran its own campaign.

But the SSP had shifted its politics over republicanism, so there were still possibilities of further moves over European internationalism. (And indeed, further advances were to be made for the 2009 EU election.) The EACL was not exclusively based on organisations from existing states, as was shown by the affiliation of the SSP, the United Left of Catalunya and Zutik (Euskadi). This meant the EACL could recognise the significance of national democratic struggles within the existing member states of the EU. The much-vaunted, post-Second World War, long-term peace between former rival European states, which had been attributed to the ECSC, EEC then EU, had not extended to subordinate nations within the existing member states of the UK and Spain. These states had been allowed to use armed repression, including the use of death squads, without the EU ever invoking its Charter of Rights to challenge them.

Sadly though, 2004 was the last time a united SSP was able to take part in the EACL. A few months after the Brussels EACL meeting, and one month after the Calton Hill Declaration, ‘Tommygate’ broke out, following which the SSP’s wider influence rapidly declined.

However, the rise of the SSP coincided with a wider challenge in Scottish politics and culture. The 2003 Holyrood election witnessed the election of what was called a ‘rainbow coalition’ in opposition to the four main parties, Labour, Conservative, Lib-Dems and SNP. The mainstream parties all lost seats, whilst the Scottish Greens took 7, the SSP 6, Scottish Senior Citizens 1 and the independent Left nationalist, Margo Macdonald another.¹²⁰ There wasn’t really any political basis for this ‘rainbow coalition’ to develop into a future Scottish government. The Scottish Greens’ MSPs included (Robin Harper (Right), Patrick Harvie (Centre) and Mark Ballard (Left)). However, the fall in the unionist and constitutional nationalist parties’ vote in 2003 had still been seen as a possible harbinger for the future, with the SSP poised to do even better.

Furthermore, the Scottish cultural renaissance, which had developed in the 1980s and 1990s, expanded to include many new writers and musicians, adding to those who had already made their mark. The great Scottish internationalist, Hamish Henderson died in 2002. This provided the impetus for the relaunch of the Scottish Peoples Festival.¹²¹ Word Power organised the 2007 Radical Book Fair in Leith where *bella caledonia* (independence, autonomy and self-determination) was launched by Mike Small and Kevin Williamson.¹²²

8. The SWP attempts to break out of political isolation and joins the Scottish Socialist Party. Neil Davidson takes the political lead for the SWP in addressing the Scottish Question and makes a wider political impact.

It was during the period of SSA/SSP growth that the SWP came to reassess its political position. By 1999, with the outbreak of the Seattle ‘globalisation from below’ protests, the SWP was forced to finally dump its politically debilitating ‘Downturn Theory’. In Scotland and

the Irish Republic, they could look around and see that Militant Labour and its successors now dominated the non-Labour Left, and if they didn't change, the SWP could lose its dominant position in England too. The SWP tested out support by standing in the 1999 Holyrood elections (in a non-aggression deal which also suited the SSP leadership at the time). However, the SWP could see that its candidates would have gained considerably more votes if it had been officially part of the SSP.

In 2000, the SWP decided 'to bite the bullet' and became a platform of the SSP. Although the SWP was then a Left British unionist organisation, it supported Scotland's right to self-determination, as expressed in its support for Devolution. This represented a change from the time of 1979 Scottish Devolution referendum. The SWP had recommended a 'Yes' vote in the 1997 referendum but in 1979 it was 'No' to Devolution.

The SSP majority's thinking, in getting the SWP to join the now independence supporting party, was that if the ex-ML, Labour entrant, SML (and others such as the ex-CPGB CPS) had already come to see the need for Scottish independence, then the logic of the developing political situation was that the SWP would follow in adopting this policy. In the longer term, this is what happened.¹²³

However, there also was some hope in the SSP that the SWP, in the process of engaging with others, would abandon its own sectarian practices, in the way that some coming from the old SML were beginning to do.¹²⁴ However, the SW platform (SWp) was not in the SSP long enough for others to see if enough members could mutate into something less sectarian, although some individual members did change their behaviour.

Unfortunately, the nature of the SSP leadership/SWP deal, which brought the SWP in, encouraged the SWp to behave as a 'party' sect within the SSP. SWp members did not have to pay individual membership subscriptions (although some did). They were given a full-timer position, but he acted primarily for the benefit of the SWP not the

SSP. The SWp also wanted the SSP to sign up to their ‘party’ front organisations, e.g. the Anti-Nazi League and Globalise Resistance.

In continuing their sectarian behaviour, the SW and the IS (the post-ISM split still supporting the CWI) platforms both treated SSP members to their ‘sermons’. Those they lectured were given the ‘gospel truth’ and as ‘sinners’ it was hoped we would come to see the ‘error of our ways’. However, these two sects were even more convinced of the falsity of each other’s beliefs, so other SSP members had to witness their acrimonious, often dogma-based squabbles.

In contrast to the behaviour of the SW and IS platforms, the positive purpose behind platforms in a party is to introduce new arguments and then come to a new higher-level synthesis of understanding.¹²⁵ But organisations, be they parties or platforms, also need to need to operate to a clear Code of Conduct to ensure a non-sectarian practice. Platforms, working in this democratic spirit, can also help to marginalise sect behaviour, hinder any secret factions, and just as importantly, prevent the ossification of a self-perpetuating ‘leadership faction’.

It was within the context of the SWP’s growing engagement with the SSP that Socialists outside the SWP became more aware of Neil Davidson’s writings on Scotland.¹²⁶ In 2000, Neil’s book, *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood* was published. In these early years the SSP’s ex-SML leadership was aware that it had received little education in Scottish history, and others were looked to fill this gap. I was asked to write a review of Neil’s book in *Scottish Socialist Voice* (17.11.02). I wrote this in a critical but fraternal manner and was pleasantly surprised when Neil agreed to speak to the Edinburgh Marxist Forum.¹²⁷ I could see that Neil enjoyed discussion and indeed this was one way, in addition to his prodigious research, that he developed his arguments.

However, it wasn’t until Neil’s prize-winning *Discovering the Scottish Revolution 1692-1746* was published in 2003, that I personally got to know Neil better. First, Neil set down a challenge to the SSP. “Two ideas about Scottish history dominate in the SSP. One is that Scotland is oppressed by England and has been since 1296. The second is that popular movements in Scotland going back to William Wallace have

all been linked to the struggle for national independence. There is barely a shred of evidence for these claims. There is, however, plenty of evidence for Scotland's disproportionately large role in the British Empire and the way in which the British working class always consisted of both Scottish and English workers.”¹²⁸

This certainly caused consternation amongst the more Left nationalist members in the SSP. By now these included Kevin Williamson. He took his lead from the SRSM platform. They quickly attacked Neil in the Letters pages of *Scottish Socialist Voice*. However, the fact that the book's significance was recognised by Paul Scott¹²⁹ of the Saltire Society and given the Fletcher of Saltoun Award, and commented on favourably by former SNP leader, James Halliday,¹³⁰ showed such sentiments were confined to a fringe beyond more thoughtful nationalist circles.¹³¹ And the well-known Scottish cultural figure, Angus Calder,¹³² then in the SSP, wrote a very favourable review.¹³³

The quality of Neil's work meant that he was also able to displace the previously dominant version of Left British Unionist history in Scotland. This had been associated with the Scottish members of the old CPGB in *Scottish Marxist* and its contributors to *Scottish Capitalism – Class, State and Nation before the Union to the Present*, published in 1980.¹³⁴

9. Neil's *Discovering the Scottish Revolution 1692-1746* contested. The SSP organises a debate and *Emancipation & Liberation* becomes a focus for the developing historical discussion.

However, the part of Neil's extended quote in section 8) above, which reads, “the British working class always consisted of both Scottish and English workers” needs qualification. The British working class has not only consisted of “both Scottish and English workers”, but of Welsh, and Irish workers, including leading Chartists, Fergus O'Connor and Bronterre O'Brien, and black workers too, including 1820 Cato Street conspirator, William Davidson and the Chartist organiser, William Cuffay.

In missing out other sections of the British class, Neil was skipping over something fundamental. The British ruling class and its UK state has created specific hybrid British unionist identities – e.g. Scottish-British, Irish-British and Welsh-British. Before they became firmly established, this had been contested by those pursuing ‘universalism from below’, ‘citizen of the world’ and later republican democratic visions, and once British hybrid identities had become established, these were still class contested.

The strength of any British identity, including hybrid British identities, has been directly related to the strength of the British Empire, and the role that the leaders of each constituent nation played within it. British unionism and British imperialism are intimately linked. The 1707 and 1801 unions preserved class privileges (e.g. the Scottish ecclesiastical and legal systems and the Irish Yeomanry). Administrative devolution had initially been enough to hold together a UK state, with its narrow class and gender restricted franchise. But in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, liberal unionists representing the rising national middle classes, taking advantage of the extended franchise, looked for their place under the imperial sun. They pushed for political devolution or Home Rule within the Union and/or Empire.¹³⁵

But later, as the Empire weakened, the ‘lower orders’, who had been the last to adopt these hybrid British identities, became the first to abandon the British suffix. This was first shown by the ending of Irish-Britishness as Irish Republicans fought to overthrow British rule from 1916-23. The imperial link was demonstrated by the determination of those former Irish-British opponents in the Six Counties to adopt a new ‘Ulster’-British identity, in which defence of the Empire, played a central role, e.g. at the 1916 Battle of the Somme. And more recently, the now more tenuous hold of a specifically Scottish-British identity, amongst many of the Scottish working class, was shown in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. But Scottish-British Loyalists continue to celebrate not only the Union but British imperialism.

In Neil’s earlier book, *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood*, which took his arguments beyond 1746, and addressed the impact of the 1789-98 International Revolutionary Wave in Scotland, he downplayed the

developing ‘internationalism from below’ alliance of the United Irishmen, and the revolutionary republican wing of the Scottish Friends of the People, led by Thomas Muir. They looked to the Society of United Irishmen to take a lead. Instead, Neil highlighted the more moderate and constitutional wing of the Scottish Friends of the People (SFotP), led by Lord Daer, who argued “for a closer Union”.¹³⁶

However, Thomas Muir backed William Drennan, whose United Irishmen address to the SFotP drew upon Scotland’s radical Covenanting traditions. The moderates prevented this address from being taken. In linking with the United Irishmen, Muir was looking for an ‘internationalism from below’ alliance of revolutionary Republicans in Ireland, Scotland, England, Ireland and France. This was to be a continuing feature of Muir’s politics. Living in revolutionary exile outside Paris in late 1798, he also wrote an appeal to the Directory for armed French support. He invoked the “70,000 presbyterian republicans {an exaggeration} killed {resisting Stewart despotism} and bitterly attacked those historians in the pay of the English court who had portrayed the noble efforts of the covenanters to secure their country’s independence and liberty as nothing more than the furious expression of fanaticism.”¹³⁷

And going to the last phase of this prolonged International Revolutionary Wave, from 1815-20, Neil downplayed the significance of the Scottish Radicals’ resort to revolutionary Covenanting history and their organisational forms (e.g. unions and corresponding societies) and overplayed the significance of their use of English history and symbols. This flowed from Neil only seeing two contending political forces - Scottish nationalism and British unionism (from which Neil then wanted to tease out a Left British unionist component) in 2002, and only conservative and liberal British unionism between 1815-20.

Neil missed out any reference to the banner, *Scotland Free or a Desert* (sic), carried by the Strathaven contingent in the Radical Rising of 1820. They were led by James ‘Purlie’ Wilson, a veteran revolutionary Republican from the Scottish Friends of the People (SFotP). The point here isn’t to highlight a Scottish nationalist element - the revolutionary Republican wing of the SFotP and the United Scotsmen had been

Scottish internationalists. The 1820 Radical Rising initially arose as a solidarity movement following the Peterloo Massacre in Manchester in 1819. But many Scottish Radicals, like Socialists today, were motivated by ‘internationalism from below’ principles. And when Neil highlighted the singing of the revolutionary anthem, *Scots Wha Hae* in England,¹³⁸ this shows that such ‘internationalism from below’ could be reciprocated. Much later, Socialists outside Italy could go on to sing *Bandiera Rossa* without this meaning they had become conscious Europeans.

Nor is this to claim that revolutionary Republican, ‘internationalism from below’ ‘party’ was the dominant force in the Radical movement. This was indeed contested by others, including those who looked to a greater union of ‘Britons’. This increasingly came to mean support for the reform of the Union not its overthrow. The defeat of the 1820 Radical Rising and its associated general strike, the largest working class rising up to that date, did lead to the consolidation of Scottish support for reform within the UK. The revolutionary baton passed to Wales and Ireland.

But perhaps today we can better understand such shifts in the national focus of hopes for change. We saw this amongst some Labours voters who had supported Scottish independence in 2014, with its challenge to the UK state, but then switched in 2017 and 2019 to supporting Jeremy Corbyn who looked for change using the UK state. But many are shifting back again after Labour’s historic defeat on December 12th, 2019.

However, the SWP’s promotional piece for *Discovering the Scottish Revolution 1692-1746*, also challenged the Scottish internationalist politics which the RCN platform had been arguing for in the SSP. “A more serious debate has been over the lack of popular involvement in the Scottish Revolution. Some SSP members believe that it is more important to celebrate the religious revolutions from below of the 17th century, which did not transform Scottish society, than the revolution from above which did.”¹³⁹ Neil devoted part of the conclusion of his book to a critique of my championing of the revolutionary wing of the Covenanters politics.¹⁴⁰ This criticism was made in a fraternal manner.

I wrote an extended reply, *Beyond Broadwords and Bayonets*¹⁴¹ defending Neil against the SSP's historical Jacobite supporters, but also taking on Neil's dismissive criticisms of the Covenanters.

A debate was organised at the SSP's Fourth Annual School held in Glasgow Caledonian University on October 18th, 2003. This was entitled *Revolution in the 17th century*. Neil argued that the only revolution in Scotland had been the 1692-1745 'revolution from above' enforced by the new British state. I agreed that this was the only successful revolution in Scotland. However, its 'from above' nature led to significant differences and outcomes not associated with 'revolutions from below'. These had occurred in seventeenth century England, which had different limitations associated with its leading advocates' (e.g. Oliver Cromwell) Greater England and colonial aspirations; and in late eighteenth century France, where 'internationalism' became equated with support for the Jacobins and the French Revolution, disregarding the more fundamental 'universalism from below' challenge of the 'Black Jacobins' in Haiti.¹⁴²

But I also argued that seventeenth century Scotland had witnessed two revolutionary periods, both associated with the Covenanters. The first occurred from 1638 and had triggered off the wider 'Revolution in the Three Kingdoms' – in Scotland, Ireland and England. The highpoint for the revolutionary wing of Covenanters took place in 1649. They were threatened by the Right wing of the Covenanters, in alliance with the new Charles II (then of Scotland only). Cromwell, also threatened by this alliance, invaded Scotland, and after trying to make an alliance with the radical Covenanting regime, which they rejected, imposed the first 'revolution from above'. This took the form, in effect, of a Greater English military republic.

The second revolutionary period began during Charles II's and James II's 'Killing Time' (1680-88), when the revolutionary wing of the Covenanters, the United Societies, became overtly republican, following the production of the Queensferry Paper in 1680. Furthermore, the revolutionary Covenanters were decidedly internationalist in their outlook, looking to events and offering solidarity to others in England, the Dutch Netherlands, France and

elsewhere in Europe. The United Societies made a bid for state power in 1689 Scotland after William of Orange invaded England. As a consequence, the Glorious Revolution took on a more radical form in Scotland.

However, as with Neil's emphasis upon the leader of the more moderate wing of the Scottish Friends of the People (Lord Daer in the early 1790s), but now in relation to events in 1689, he opted for the conservative wing of the opposition to the government of the day. He looked to the deliberations of the "packed parliaments of {England and Scotland} and compared them unfavourably with the "democratic members of the first national assembly of France"¹⁴³ in 1789, a hundred years later. One reply to this is that you could make a similar dismissive comparison between "the first national assembly of France" and the Paris Commune only 82 years later. However, I pointed out that in 1689 the Scottish parliament sat under a Watching Committee of radical Covenanters, checking its every move. These Covenanters also went on to organise their own independent Cameronian regiment which, in a strongly contested battle at Dunkeld, prevented Jacobite counter-revolution overwhelming Scotland.

Yes, the Scottish feudal lords were able to regain control after each revolutionary attempt had been defeated or stalled. Yet the revolutionary Covenanters had left their mark on the post-1689 constitutional set-up in Scotland, the 1707 Union settlement and were only finally marginalised by the 1712 Toleration Act ¹⁴⁴ and the 1724 defeat of the Galloway Levellers in their Covenanting heartland.¹⁴⁵ It took several years of royal politicking, famine and economic hardship before the new combined English and Scottish ruling class could roll back this independent challenge.

I was sure that Neil knew this as well as I did. It was only when he dismissed my positive estimation of the revolutionary wing of the Covenanters, saying that it was historically impossible for them to bring about a socialist revolution in seventeenth century Scotland, that I could understand where Neil was coming from. Of course, I was making no claim that the United Societies were Socialists. I was arguing that there wasn't a single unilinear road to a capitalist future, which had to follow

the English/British-led road. The radical Covenanters were a key part of Scotland's revolutionary tradition, recognised by the artisans and infant working class during the 1789-1815 International Revolutionary Wave and its aftermath, until the crushing of the Radical Rising in 1820.

Neil, however, demanded that Marxists (and all communists/socialists) should recognise the tragic historical necessity for slave, feudal and capitalist societies, because only they had developed the productive forces, which were a precondition of socialism. The emergence of capitalist UK/Britain had been to the forefront of this historical development and should therefore be supported. This meant that Neil dismissed Socialist appeals to celebrate those such as Spartacus, William Wallace, Peter de Comminck, William Tell, Wat Tyler, Jan Hus, Thomas Munzer, Gerrard Winstanley, Richard Cameron, Thomas Muir, Anne Devlin, Ann McCracken, Betsy Gray, and James Wilson and countless others as merely romantic.

But if all these people had stood back then there would have been no traditions of resistance. The memory of the struggles of those who defied their rulers were passed down, sometimes orally, by generations of the exploited and oppressed. For Socialists these are just as important as recognising the reality of increased productive forces. Indeed, without these traditions of resistance, there would be little possibility of the exploited and oppressed ever taking control of these productive forces.

But in his book, Neil also wrote off the Covenanters because they expressed their opposition to the ruling class in theological terms. The revolution they looked for would have led to theocratic republics in a wider covenanted federation. But the Covenanters' theocratic republicanism and their ministers to the Covenanter military forces in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries had their secularised equivalents in the one-party USSR and the Bolshevik commissars in the Red Army in the twentieth century. Their proposed covenanted federation anticipated the soviet federation. Furthermore, prior to the rise of Enlightenment philosophy and materialist science, most people thought in religious terms. Frederick Engels had praised Thomas

Munzer and other Anabaptist Christian leaders during the early sixteenth century Peasants Revolt in Germany.¹⁴⁶

When the next International Revolutionary Wave occurred in Scotland, between 1791-97, it was to the revolutionary wing of the Covenanters that James Callender and Thomas Muir looked. And when the International Revolutionary Wave re-emerged, between 1815-20, the artisan weavers and the infant working class in Scotland looked to the United Societies' organisational methods and were inspired by their historical example.

The pages of the RCN's *Emancipation & Liberation* were opened to those who wanted to participate in this debate. First, this included two supporters of the Jacobites.¹⁴⁷ Although I knew Neil was reluctant to respond, because of the personalised vilification he had experienced in the SSV Letters page, he agreed and provided historical evidence for the counter-revolutionary role of the Jacobites.¹⁴⁸ He also criticised my own defence of the Covenanters. This also led to a deeper debate on the meaning of 'Progress' to Socialists.¹⁴⁹ I was very pleased that these debates were conducted in a much less heated and personalised manner to the way they had started in the SSP. Furthermore, others contributed to this debate. This lifted its quality to a higher level.¹⁵⁰ This is what I have always thought should be the purpose of debate amongst Socialists.

One of the best things about engaging in debate with Neil is you learned a lot, and this opened up whole new avenues. Following my attendance at the Saltire Award gathering for Neil's *Discovering the Scottish Revolution 1692-1746* at Saltoun Church in East Lothian, we were to talk and drink together after this and other events. I also began to learn of the wider work which eventually led to Neil's path-breaking work, *How Revolutionary were the Bourgeois Revolutions*, published in 2012. This book, which is global in its scope, does not adopt a unilinear model of capitalist development. I was also trying to locate historical events in Scotland in a global context. I was in the process of writing *Internationalism from Below – Reclaiming a hidden communist tradition to challenge the nation-state and capitalist empire*.¹⁵¹

Yet at this time, despite Neil's personal non-sectarianism, he did not appear to question the SWP's sectarian mode of operation and its resort to front organisations within the SSP. And despite the SWP having its own sect 'international', the IST made no attempt to formulate a shared strategy or mount a coordinated campaign against the UK state and its role in Ireland, or against the EU bureaucracy. However, interestingly, Neil maintained contact with the International Socialist Organisation (ISO) in the USA, which broke away from the IST in 2001. ISO was less gung-ho than the post 'Downturn Theory' SWP, where every demonstration and strike was now "brilliant". ISO also made a serious attempt to develop Marxist theory. Neil published his *How Revolutionary were the Bourgeois Revolutions* through Haymarket Books, which was closely associated with ISO.

By 2004, neither the SWP nor Neil had moved beyond Left British unionism and furthermore, like the IS/CWI, they had no immediate republican strategy. Neither the SW nor the IS platforms provided speakers for the Calton Hill demonstration¹⁵² The SWp did not support Scottish independence, even in its republican form which challenged the UK state. The ISp opposed support for the Declaration because it didn't call for a Socialist Scotland.

The shared economism of the SWp and the ISp parent organisations, the SWP and SP(E&W), led to their rejection of immediate democratic demands, at the same time as they upheld the necessity for immediate economic demands. Neither the SWP nor the SP(E&W) reject support for economic reforms, or strikes, on the grounds that they aren't socialist and don't oppose the wages system. Yet they refuse to initiate immediate democratic demands because these don't amount to socialism. But the SWP/SWp and the SP/ISp still ended up advocating a vote for the more conservative versions of national democratic proposals made by others, to which they had provided no immediate political alternative, e.g. in New Labour's Devolution referendum in 1997 and the SNP initiated IndyRef1 in 2014.

10. Tommy Sheridan's Solidarity and George Galloway's Respect prove to be a political dead-ends for Socialist politics. The RCN finds a new arena for communist politics and wins support in the SSP for a republican socialist, internationalism from below' strategy. Neil becomes an SWP dissident.

However, in November 2004, only one month after the Declaration of Calton Hill, the 'Tommygate' scandal broke out.¹⁵³ When the split in SSP came in 2006, following the court case, the SWP joined Sheridan's vanity party – Solidarity. The ISp also joined.

The SWP was allowed to reconstitute itself as a party (albeit in effect a 'party' sect) within Solidarity. The SWP had already had a role in creating what turned out to be another vanity party, Respect, this time for George Galloway. Behind Galloway's façade, the SWP had hoped to use Respect as a recruiting arena. There was the added advantage that their members received no competition inside Respect from the SP(E&W) which did not sign up. The SWP hoped to benefit from being the largest Left organisation in the Stop the War Coalition, which had mobilised hundreds of thousands in 2003, and from its front organisations, Globalise Resistance and Unite Against Fascism. The other political pole of Respect was the communalist, Muslim Association of Britain. Later, as the political consequences of the Left's failure to stop the Iraq War made their effects felt, Respect's prime base remained in the Muslim communities of East London, Birmingham and Bradford. It became more and more subordinated to their intra-communitarian squabbles. But above all, as in the case of Sheridan's Solidarity, so with Galloway's Respect, personal loyalty to the leader, along with a tacit acceptance of their veto, proved to be the dominant characteristic of both organisations.

Whereas the one-time Left unionist, Scottish-British Sheridan had changed into a Left Scottish nationalist, the Left unionist Galloway remained and became ever more stridently British unionist. This was accentuated by the demise of his favourite unionist state, the USSR. From an early stage, Galloway revealed British unionist prejudices, belittling the Welsh language at a Respect meeting in Wales.¹⁵⁴ However, in the 2004 EU election, which gave Respect its highest vote,

and which exceeded that of any previous non-Labour Left organisation in England, it was easily outperformed in Wales by the Left, Forward Wales by 17,280 to 5,427 votes.¹⁵⁵ But Respect became even more of a vanity party for Galloway, when in the 2005 Westminster general election, he was the only one on the non-Labour Left to be elected as an MP. This was the first time this had happened since Bernadette Devlin (1969-74). (The CPGB had 2 MPs between 1945-50.)

Inside Solidarity, the SWP and the IS though, vied with each other in pushing their front organisations, the SWP's Unite Against Fascism¹⁵⁶ and the SP(E&W)/IS's No2EU. But Sheridan humoured both and played each off against the other. Sheridan was shameless, even courting the ultra-British, Left populist, George Galloway before the 2011 Holyrood election. Whilst Galloway's political activities in Scotland were designed to gain readmittance into the Labour Party, it became clear that Sheridan was hoping to be admitted to the SNP.¹⁵⁷

The SSP/Solidarity split had followed the international Left's inability to prevent the Second Iraq War, despite the largest international anti-war demonstrations ever seen. Therefore, when the 2007 Holyrood election took place, it is likely that the SSP would have lost MSPs anyhow, even without the split, just as the Left in most EU member countries suffered a setback. The SPI lost its TD in the 2007 Dail election. The Scottish Greens, seen as part of the Scottish rainbow opposition, also suffered a setback in the 2007 Holyrood election (falling from 7 to 2 MSPs). But the SSP, and its Solidarity breakaway, experienced Holyrood wipe-out (losing all 6 MSPs).

SNP leader, Alex Salmond had astutely related to the anti-war sentiment. SNP emerged as the largest party in Holyrood, recovering from its setback in the 2003 election. Salmond was able to form a Scottish government coalition with the Lib-Dems. This provided Salmond with the additional excuse that any independence referendum would have to wait. Above all else, the SNP leadership wanted to show the Scottish business class that it represented 'a safe pair of hands.' Salmond tried to outbid New Labour in the neo-liberal stakes, and courted Robert Murdoch and Donald Trump. He also championed the Royal Bank of Scotland. In 2008, he revealed his own social

conservatism by flying to Westminster to vote (unsuccessfully) to cut the abortion limit from 24 to 20 weeks.

But, following the 2008 Crisis, Salmond's north-east Atlantic 'arc of prosperity' stretching from Ireland to Iceland (and on to mainland Scandinavia) turned to an 'arc of insolvency'. But there was no Socialist voice in Holyrood. However, the SSP had never made clear what it understood by socialism. Many of its leaders (trained in the old ML) tended to equate socialism with state nationalisation. This is essentially a Left social democratic view.¹⁵⁸

Social democratic thinking has created many illusions, especially when George Bush's US government undertook the biggest nationalisations in history,¹⁵⁹ whilst Gordon Brown and Alistair Darling also pursued a neo-Keynesian course of pump priming. Left social democracy thought its time had come, and that the various ruling classes, having seen the crisis precipitated by neoliberalism, would be compelled to turn to greater state intervention and neo-Keynesian policies to save capitalism. Left social democrats argued that they could push this process further.

And this was another case when trotskyist groups could dress up essentially social democratic measures, which capitalists facing an immediate crisis might resort to as an unwanted transition back to 'business as usual', as transitional policies on the road to 'socialism'. The only time when any transitional programme is relevant is when independent workers' committees and militias have the power to impose such demands.

For the neo-liberals, both nationalisation and Keynesian pump priming were short term measures to stabilise a crisis-ridden capitalism. And since they remained in control of their states, so they decided the purpose behind these measures. These were to be paid for by massive Austerity borne by the working class and others. Left social democrats now had to argue for neo-Keynesian alternatives to Austerity. If elected they would still save capitalism so it could be reformed. However, no ruling class in the increasingly competitive post-2008 world was prepared to consider measures which would increase national labour

costs. Instead, in an attempt to facedown the global competition, each ruling class wanted to undercut the other.

So, those social democratic parties which initially promised to implement a neo-Keynesian alternative to Austerity, e.g. George Papandreou's PASOK in Greece in 2009, and Francois Hollande's Parti Socialiste in France in 2012, were soon forced to back down after they took office, in the face of employer resistance. Taking office wasn't the same as taking control of the state. Furthermore, much of their 'national' economies were integrated into and subjected to pressure by global capital and its political backers.

But it wasn't the Left social democrats in the EU, nor in IST or CWI and their front organisations,¹⁶⁰ who best understood the real political weaknesses of the neo-liberal order. It was the rising national Right Populists. They were quite prepared to jettison large parts of the existing political order so the ruling class and corporate capital could 'take back control' and ramp up competition. This approach was backed by national chauvinist and racist appeals.

In contrast to the social democratic neo-Keynesians and Left Populists, the Right Populists linked their economic and social counter-reforms with demands to restructure the state. In the UK they understood that the already draconian Crown Powers needed reinforcing. 'Take back control' meant downgrading those formally democratic elements, e.g. the House of Commons, devolved assemblies and local government. But one of the advantages of the UK's unwritten constitution is that it gives the British ruling class the scope to change the rules as they see fit.

The departure of the SW and the IS platforms from the SSP led to the removal of the restraints which their politics and sectarian behaviour had placed upon the party.¹⁶¹ However, any discussions about the differences between a social democratic and a socialist approach to the post-2008 Crisis were still ignored by the SSP leadership. They hung on to old ML thinking, which claimed that having 'Socialist' in a party or front's title was enough to ensure their socialist credentials. If asked what the difference between socialism and social democracy is, it was

reduced to socialists supporting more state intervention, especially nationalisations, than social democrats (a difference between Left and Right social democrats), and to socialists wanting workers' control, which they equated with trade union control (largely disregarding the degree to which unions are controlled by privileged bureaucrats with many ties to the employers and state).

However, the RCN, which remained an affiliated SSP platform, became involved in *the commune*, which also included marxist autonomists and dissident trotskyists.¹⁶² Here a vibrant debate took place over what is meant by communism and how this relates to immediate struggles.¹⁶³ The RCN hosted the first Global Commune day school in Edinburgh on January 16th, 2010, to address this issue.¹⁶⁴ It then hosted the second Global Commune day school¹⁶⁵ on May 22nd, which included a session, entitled 'Internationalism from Below'. Finally, it hosted the third Global Commune day school on January 29th, 2011 entitled 'Trade Unions – Are Fit for Purpose?'¹⁶⁶

Whilst there was considerable overlap in the agreed approaches to immediate economic and social issues, the marxist autonomists in *the commune* tended to be agnostic over the relevance of immediate political struggles, whilst the dissident trotskyists rejected these, preferring an abstract propagandist approach. Nevertheless, the debate on 'Internationalism from Below' was conducted as a genuine contesting of ideas, in an attempt to reach a new higher political synthesis.¹⁶⁷ The RCN benefitted from this, deepening our own theoretical understanding, which proved to be particularly useful in the context of 'IndyRef1' campaign the next year.

Furthermore, the departure of the SWP and the SP from the SSP contributed to the lessening of the sectarianism which these organisations had brought with them. This opened up new possibilities. Thus, the 2007 SSP Arran conference, gave its support to 'No One is Illegal',¹⁶⁸ a campaign for solidarity with migrant workers. Both the SWP and the SP(E&W) had rejected opposition to migration controls as an immediate policy for the various Socialist alliances they were involved in.

This SSP conference also agreed to take up an ‘internationalism from below’ based opposition to the UK state. It gave the International Committee (IC) ¹⁶⁹ the powers to organise a republican socialist convention¹⁷⁰ in Edinburgh on November 29th, 2008. This was chaired by Mary MacGregor (SSP and RCN) and brought together speakers, from Scotland, Frances Curran (SSP); from Ireland, Tommy McKearney (*Fourthwrite* and Independent Workers Union - IWU); from Wales, Mike Davies (ex-Welsh Socialist Alliance); and from England, Declan O’Neill (Convention of the Left).¹⁷¹

This led to an invite to a second republican socialist convention in London on February 13th, 2010.¹⁷² Unfortunately, there were no speakers from Ireland or Wales. But there was a range of speakers from a number of Scottish, English, British and other organisations, including Colin Fox (SSP co-chair), Allan Armstrong (SSP IC and RCN) and Peter Hain (Labour Party republican). As well as English socialist republicans, the meeting also included some London Scots and London Irish.¹⁷³

RCN had played an important role in the accelerating shift in the SSP, to an immediate social republican, Scottish internationalist politics in the lead up to the Declaration of Calton Hill, but others were involved too. This was now also the case when the SSP gave its backing to a wider republican socialist, ‘internationalism from below’ politics, following the split. A continuing interaction between different groups and individuals further contributed to these political developments. And these took place as part of a wider challenge to bureaucratic Labourism and trade unionism and to the ‘party’-sects. However, the impact of the split in the SSP continued to have a negative effect.¹⁷⁴

But on the positive side, the SSP backed the hybrid Rank & File/Broad Left group and magazine, *Solidarity - The Trade Union Magazine (T-TTUM)* and its successor *Trade Union Solidarity (TUS)*.¹⁷⁵ These took an ‘internationalism from below’ approach to trade unionism across the four nations in these islands. The magazine viewed the SSP’s 2003 electoral success as the most advanced political development for workers in these islands so far.¹⁷⁶ Then after the split in the SSP, editor Martin Wicks explained the underlying politics for the benefit of those

outside Scotland.¹⁷⁷ And when IndyRef1 was organised, *TUS* opened its pages to promote a non-sectarian discussion.¹⁷⁸ Tommy McKearney of IWU from Ireland was also interviewed.¹⁷⁹

In the run-up to the 2009 EU election, the SSP made a considerably greater commitment to the European Anti-Capitalist Left, than it had in 2004. Joaquim Roland, a French car worker (member of the New Anti-Capitalist Party), was brought over to Scotland as part of the election campaign. This very much contrasted with Solidarity, which signed up to the Left EU-phobic No2/EU and campaigned on an all-Great Britain (not all-UK) basis which did not make any link with the SPI campaign. Overall, this was another indication of the lack of a shared CWI strategy to confront the UK and Irish states or the EU bureaucracy. The SPI campaigned, not on the ‘withdraw from the EU’ basis of its sister organisation, the SP(E&W), but in opposition to the neo-liberal Lisbon Treaty. The SPI gained 1 MEP.

More worrying was the failure, at this early stage, to appreciate the likely political trajectory of any future EU withdrawal campaign. The three overtly Hard and Far Right parties (UKIP, BNP, English Democrat) got 23.8% of the vote and 13 MEPs (11 UKIP, 2 BNP). The two non-Labour Left ‘parties’ (SLP and No2EU) got 2.1% of the vote and 0 MEPs.¹⁸⁰ The balance of forces between Right and Left over what later became Brexit only got worse, especially once a significant section of the British ruling class began to give its backing.

In Wales, the hopes invested in Forward Wales (FW) were shattered. The republican socialist, Cymru Goch and independent Socialist-backed, John Marek Independent Party (JMIP) was soon joined by former Welsh Labour First Minister, Ron Davies. With Marek and Davies becoming the two principal FW office bearers this created a top-heavy organisation, subject to the whims of these two individuals. And, although FW’s founding conference had considerably radicalised JMIP’s electoral platform, and the SSP had provided political support, FW did not adopt a republican socialist platform. Those pushing for this (especially Cymru Goch) were organised around the paper *SEREN*.

However, a combination of the split in the SSP, and the impact of the wider Left's failure to stop the Iraq War, had a profoundly negative effect on FW. Marek lost his Welsh Assembly seat to Labour in 2007, whilst Davies failed in his bid to become a MEP in 2004 and a Welsh Assembly member in 2007. But by then, both Marek and Davies were acting more as independents than FW members. In 2010 Marek joined the Welsh Conservatives¹⁸¹ whilst Davies joined Plaid Cymru.¹⁸²

FW was formally disbanded in 2010. *SEREN* had folded and the majority in Cymru Goch joined Plaid, encouraged by the emergence of the openly republican Leanne Wood,¹⁸³ elected to the Welsh Assembly in 2003. She became party leader in 2012. However, Plaid has no provision for distinctive platforms (which means, as in other parties, there is behind-the-scenes factionalism), and no equivalent of *SEREN* was ever published.

From May 2009 to Spring 2011, a magazine *Celyn* was produced, giving coverage to Leanne Wood and Labour MP Paul Flynn. However, *Celyn's* constitutional politics seemed to be limited to providing Left support for the 2011 Welsh Devolution bill and referendum, promoted by the Labour/Plaid coalition in the Welsh Assembly, but also backed by the liberal unionist Lib-Dems and Conservatives. Once this had been achieved *Celyn* ceased any hard copy publication.¹⁸⁴

Meanwhile in Ireland, the journal *Fourthwrite* took a keen interest in developments in Scotland. In 2008, editor Tommy McKearney had already raised questions following the split in the SSP.¹⁸⁵ Following Tommy's address to the SSP IC's first republican socialist convention in Edinburgh, *Fourthwrite* published a critical article putting the IC case.¹⁸⁶ The Independent Workers Union also arranged for an SSP IC speaker at its annual conference in Dublin on April 6th, 2009, which I attended.¹⁸⁷

Red Banner had been also published as a Socialist discussion journal ever since November 1997. It invited a range of writers and activists from the trotskyist 'party' sects, independent socialists to republican socialists. *Red Banner* continued up to March 2016. It criticised the

Left social democrat policies pursued by the three largest ‘party’ sects in Ireland - the SWP, SP and CPI (and sometimes their weakness in supporting migrants)¹⁸⁸ (It also included historical reviews of relevance to socialists in Scotland.¹⁸⁹ *Red Banner* also appreciated the significance of cultural celebration and struggle in Wales.¹⁹⁰

There was also some cross-fertilisation between *Red Banner* and *Fourthwrite*,¹⁹¹ and with the SSP. I contributed a number of articles, highlighting the ‘internationalism from below’ connections between Scotland and Ireland¹⁹² and the significance of the Anti-Poll Tax movement¹⁹³ in the formation of the SSA and SSP.¹⁹⁴

Some of the *Red Banner* contributors, influenced by the SSP, e.g. Colm Breathnach and Dan Finn, wanted to unite the Irish Left in a principled, democratic, membership organisation, which recognised platforms, in a similar manner to the SSP. They organised the Irish Socialist Network (ISN) in 2007. ISN produced 12 issues of the attractive campaigning bulletin *Resistance* from July/August 2007 until the autumn of 2010. Colm¹⁹⁵ later moved from Ireland to Scotland, and from the ISN to the SSP. He helped to encourage the SSP’s growing republican socialist and ‘internationalism from below’ politics in the process. Dan spoke at an SSP rally in 2010.¹⁹⁶

However, in the face of the split in SSP, and the rise of SPI and Irish SWP, the ISN ceased to operate. This stymied the emergence of an open Socialist alliance, leading to a democratic individual membership based, republican socialist party in a new wider ‘internationalism from below’ alliance. However, some political connections had already been made. They were seen again during the IndyRef1 campaign.

Due to a combination of the severity of the post-2008 Crisis in Ireland, following the Irish government’s acceptance of the draconian Austerity package demanded by the EU bureaucracy, and the low threshold required in parliamentary elections to the Dial and Stormont, the two largest Irish ‘party’ sects, the SPI and the SWP made electoral breakthroughs on a narrower national, Left social democratic basis. The SPI was able to hold on to its 4 councillors in the 2009 local elections, win a MEP in the simultaneous EU election, and regain a TD

in the 2011 Dail election. The SWP's front organisation, People before Profit was able to win 5 councillors in the 2009 local elections.¹⁹⁷ But whilst both the SP and the SWP were members of 'party'-sect 'internationals' (the CWI and the IST respectively), still neither considered a shared political strategy, involving their other sections, to challenge the UK state or the EU bureaucracy.

The CWI/IS platform got Sheridan's and the Solidarity majority's support (not including the SWP) for the Left EU-phobic No2EU in the 2009 EU election. Under SP(E&W) and IS pressure, No2EU reconstituted itself as the all-Britain, Trade Union & Socialist Coalition (TUSC), in preparation for 2010 Westminster general election.¹⁹⁸ The CPB did not sign up, but the SWP now did, badly burned during its time in Galloway's vanity party, Respect. In the post-1999 Socialist Alliances in England and Wales, the SP(E&W) had to play second fiddle to the SWP, and in the 2005 Westminster general election, the SP(E&W) had been completely outgunned by the SWP backed Respect.¹⁹⁹ But by 2009, the SWP was forced to join the SP(E&W)'s front organisation, TUSC. But to keep the Sheridan wing of Solidarity on board, it was given the lead place on Scottish TUSC's 2010 Westminster slate.²⁰⁰

The anti-Scottish independence SWP had not made much impact in a Solidarity, which had attracted the most overtly Scottish nationalist wing of the SSP. Stepping up the pressure on the SWP, the CWI/IS platform reconstituted itself as the Socialist Party Scotland (SPS) in 2010. Then in 2011, the SWP witnessed Sheridan approaching Galloway (who had lost his seat in the 2010 Westminster election) for a joint slate in the 2011 Holyrood elections. But the SWP had split from Galloway's Respect in 2007. "The SWP attributed the split to a shift to the Right by Galloway and his allies, motivated by electoralism (seeking to gain Muslim votes) and attacks on the left"²⁰¹ – in other words doing the same as the SWP but more effectively! In neither of its attempts to back celebrity politicians, Galloway or Sheridan, had the SWP made any longer-term political gains. But the self-perpetuating central committee always found fall-guys to take the blame for its political mistakes.²⁰²

Neil Davidson was becoming less happy with the SWP's practice. At the 2008 SWP conference he pushed for a Democracy Commission.²⁰³ After being accepted, this got little further in remedying things than the Royal Commissions on the UK constitution. For the SWP leadership the purpose was the same – to kick an issue into the long grass and to proceed as usual.

11. The SWP adopts Scottish independence, but through a series of internal crisis, finds itself marginalised during IndyRef1 and in the Radical Independence Campaign.

In 2010, the SWP finally made the jump to supporting Scottish independence. Neil, who had provided the earlier theory to back the SWP's Left unionism, was central to this change of line. This had been predicted seven years earlier in *Beyond Broadwords and Bayonet*.²⁰⁴ The SWP had given itself a get-out clause, if its Left British unionism could no longer hold the line. "If Scotland broke away from the state, it would be a major blow to the British ruling class, and socialists should support independence for that reason."²⁰⁵ However, the SWP gave no explanation how such a situation could come about, or why such a move would necessarily be progressive, if Socialists in Scotland had been either agnostic or hostile to the issue of Scottish self-determination prior to such a development.

In justifying the SWP's previous lack of concern with constitutional issues, Neil argued that "There were infinitely more pressing issues requiring our involvement, such as the alter-globalization... and the anti-war movements."²⁰⁶ But a change of line was now necessary, because "the SNP gained a majority at Holyrood in the Scottish elections of 2011... This meant that 'the actuality of the referendum' could not be long delayed."²⁰⁷

Throughout the previous years, the SWP had left the constitutional argument (as in 1979 and 1997) to be fought out between unionists (Labour, Lib-Dem and Tories, divided between conservative upholders

of the constitutional status quo and liberal promoters of further political devolution) and the SNP, constitutional nationalist promoters of ‘Indy-Lite’. Furthermore, as long as Labour (even New Labour), the party of the trade unions (read trade union bureaucrats), was in office at Westminster, Labour’s ‘working class credentials’ would be defended by the SWP against the ‘petty bourgeois’, independence supporting SNP. It took the election of a Tory (coalition) government in 2010 to change the terms of this debate. This led to a return to Tony Cliff’s way of thinking back in 1975, at the IS meeting in Glasgow, to decide the attitude to adopt towards Scottish Devolution. Support for Scottish independence was again now anti-Tory.

To avoid the charge by other Left British unionist supporters, that the SWP had capitulated to nationalism, Neil argued, “The main impetus for the Yes campaign was not nationalism, but a desire for social change expressed through the demand for self-determination... one which might offer better opportunities for equality and social justice in the current conditions of neoliberal austerity.”

This would be analogous to those Socialists who might have argued that, in giving their backing to the Allies in World War 2, they were not supporting imperialism, but all those who fought to reject the misery of the pre-war Depression, the betrayal of Republican Spain and the abandonment of the Jews in Nazi Germany. But of course, if these Socialists’ desirable aims were to be fulfilled, they needed to develop an independent policy for the outcome of the war itself. This would mean challenging the Churchill-led UK government’s determination to restore the pre-war position of British imperialism, and the Stalin-led Communist Parties’ demand for redivision of the imperial spoils. This meant openly supporting those resistance and anti-imperialist forces in their struggles against these two possible outcomes. There was more than one outcome and leaving it to others to decide would close off other possibilities. Similarly, if Socialists adopt independence for Scotland, they also have to advocate their own immediate political strategy and actively campaign for it.

In the 2014 IndyRef1, the vote on any referendum ballot paper would clearly be taken as a mandate by the SNP government to go into ‘Indy Lite’ negotiations with the UK government. It would not be a vote to bring about “equality and social justice”, which would not be on the ballot paper. It was only if all those autonomous ‘Yes’ groups and campaigns remained in place and campaigned for Constituent Assembly in the event of a ‘Yes’ vote, that there would be “better opportunities for equality and social justice.” But for Neil, it was not the job of Socialists to raise such constitutional issues, since these would be solved in a future socialist revolution - meanwhile concentrate on economic and social issues.

Once the SNP had won an absolute majority at Holyrood in 2011, Neil was forced to come off the fence by the “actuality of the referendum”. He now argued that for “socialists, as opposed to British unionists or Scottish nationalists, support or opposition to Scottish independence is essentially a tactical question.”²⁰⁸ Thus, in the absence of support for any independent Socialist or working class constitutional strategy, Neil’s newfound support for Scottish independence was reduced to a question of tactics. However, if Socialists want to challenge the British ruling class or wannabe Scottish ruling class, they need have a long-term strategy and advance immediate political as well as economic and social demands.

Therefore, for Socialists, as opposed to British unionists or Scottish nationalists, support or opposition to Scottish independence is essentially a **democratic** question.²⁰⁹ And when you examine the nature of the imperialist and unionist UK state, based on the sovereignty of the Crown-in-Westminster, with its formidable armoury of anti-democratic Crown Powers, and with a franchise based on British subjects selected on an ethnic (cultural basis), it is not hard to see on which side greater democracy lies.

For Neil, the SWP’s predictable turn to supporting Scottish independence on a Left populist, anti-Tory basis, was not enough to provide a Marxist underpinning. So, he pointed to “the possibility of breaking up the British imperialist state... and the British state’s

subordinate alliance with the American empire.”²¹⁰ Strangely though, this was only after the SNP leadership, leading the ‘Yes’ campaign, moved in the opposite direction. This was shown by the overthrow of the party’s longstanding opposition to NATO in 2012. Again, the answer to this is not to avoid or tail-end others on the constitution, but to constantly raise democratic issues which highlight the major difficulties in promoting basic economic, social and anti-war demands under the existing political order, particularly in a period when the ruling class faces multifaceted crises.

The SNP was itself divided over the constitutional future, with a crypto-republican, anti-monarchist rank and file, an ‘Independence-Lite’ dominated party leadership, and supporters of ‘Devo-Max’, especially influential business figures, e.g. Sir Tom Farmer. However, the Labour Party made a spectacularly bad decision in not backing the liberal unionist ‘Devo-Max’ option. But Labour’s main aim was to crush the SNP and reassert itself as the holders of Scottish government patronage. After all, following the 2010 Westminster general election, Labour had 41 MPs, the SNP a mere 6, whilst the Tories only had 1. And in the 2011 Holyrood election, although the SNP had won 69 MSPs, Labour still had 37 (down 7) and the Tories only 15 (down 2). Since Cameron’s Con-Dem government was prepared to leave the running of any ‘No’ campaign in Scotland to Alistair Darling, surely Scottish Labour would be the main beneficiaries when ‘No’ utterly trounced ‘Yes’ and pricked the SNP balloon.

However, under New Labour, the party had lost whole swathes of its support, with very low voter turnouts for elections in many working class urban areas. Far from ‘things could only get better’, for many things had got a lot worse, with the expansion of short term contract work, mounting personal debts, or the death and injuries of economic conscripts in New Labour’s wars.²¹¹ This was seen as being of little consequence by New Labour leaders, as long as they could hold on to the vote of better-off sections of the working class and to the middle class, especially since the Tories appeared to be a marginal force in Scotland. Cameron’s government, viewing the polls, which put support for independence at 28-32%, went along with Labour in ensuring that

there would only be a 2 option independence referendum – ‘Yes’ or ‘No’. But it was the Tories in office at Westminster who would determine what happened after any ‘No’ vote, whatever empty promises Scottish Labour might make.

Alex Salmond, although prepared to take up the UK government’s Yes/No referendum challenge, misread the political situation in a different way. The SNP leadership was determined to run a conservative ‘little will change’ ‘Yes’ campaign. This meant continuing to reassure Scottish business that its interests would be prioritised in the SNP’s ‘Indy-Lite’ Scotland. This amounted to little more than looking for a junior managerial buyout of the Scottish branch of UK plc. It meant reassuring the City of London that it would still have a determining role in the running of the Scottish economy through the continued use of sterling. It meant reassuring the wider British (and the would-be Scottish) ruling class that the long reach of the Crown Powers would still be available to them when needed, under the guise of the retention of the monarchy. It meant reassuring the military top brass that Scottish armed forces would remain under the control of the British High Command.

And it also meant a full acceptance of the existing corporate world order, policed by the US. To highlight its moderate intentions, the SNP leadership used its annual conference in 2012 to jettison the party’s longstanding opposition to NATO. This had already been flagged up by a leading figure on the SNP ‘Left’ – Jim Sillars.²¹² Two other figures on the SNP ‘Left’, Kenny MacAskill and Alex Neil, were prominent in the overthrow this policy at the conference. The SNP leadership gave a clear indication that it wanted a low key, ‘don’t frighten the horses’, independence referendum campaign.

The SNP leadership controlled the official ‘Yes’ campaign, with Dennis Canavan, Scottish Greens and the SSP added for decorative purposes. David Cameron was not alone in cynically giving those from other parties a public platform, to reach out to sections of the electorate their party could not reach. Both the Tory controllers of ‘Better Together’ and the SNP controllers of ‘Yes Scotland’ wanted their campaigns to

be temporary affairs, in which they set the limits.²¹³ They both knew full well that their respective campaigns would be wound up after IndyRef1.

However, many more SNP members were against the leadership's conservative approach than it anticipated. The ditching of opposition to NATO led to the resignation of 2 MSPs and many party activists. It soon became clear that popular support for political independence was linked to opposition to Scotland's participation in continuing wars, to the overblown UK state, to neo-liberalism and to Austerity. This popular support was based on a vision of a civic political Scotland, often linked to a somewhat hazy and sentimental Left social democratic economic vision which New Labour had abandoned.

Many local 'Yes' groups rejected the limitations imposed by the official campaign and organised quite independently of its leadership. Public meetings, many other gatherings, street campaigns and 'Yes' shops were all organised. A vibrant online 'Yes' movement countered the overwhelmingly unionist media whether it was the BBC or the mainstream press. Common Weal was created as a think tank and pressure group advocating a Scandinavian-style, social democratic future for Scotland. It received invites from many 'Yes' groups and had a growing influence upon the SNP rank and file. The magazine and website *bella caledonia*.²¹⁴ (independence, autonomy, self-determination) also provided an important Left voice in the independence campaign.

The National Collective²¹⁵ organised cultural events throughout Scotland, including the travelling Yestival. 100 Artists for Independence²¹⁶ had an impressive list of people. This built on the work done during the earlier Scottish Renaissance, in the dark post-1979 Devolution days, and by those unimpressed by New Labour's post-1997 Devolution settlement.²¹⁷ Word Power Books published *Unstated, Writers on Scottish Independence*.²¹⁸

And a significant component of this wider autonomous 'Yes' campaign was provided by the Radical Independence Campaign (RIC.) This had

been planned from June 2012, shortly after the official ‘Yes Scotland’ campaign was launched. The initiative for RIC came from the International Socialists Group (Scotland) - ISG(S), which had broken from the SWP in 2011.²¹⁹ The RCN (amongst others)²²⁰ declared its support for this initiative in *The ‘Independence-Lite’ Referendum and the Tale of Two Campaigns* in June 2012.²²¹ We were pleased that the ISG(S), hardly touched by ‘Tommygate’ because of its members’ youth, had been able to partly overcome the SSP/Solidarity split that had done so much to blight the Left in Scotland. Members of both organisations participated in RIC.

However, the SWP, after two recent breakaways, Counterfire, and now the ISG(S), and with other simmering opposition within its ranks, was in a particularly poor position to make much political impact. Neil Davidson was still in the SWP, but also a dissident. So, it was left to Glasgow SWP full-timer, Keir McKechnie to write the official and evasive IndyRef1 pamphlet, *Scotland, Yes to independence, No to nationalism*.²²² It neglected to mention SWP’s recent Left British unionist past!

Through his work as a lecturer at Glasgow University, though, Neil had inspired the young comrades in the ISG(S). But neither Neil nor the ISG(S), with their SWP inherited opposition to taking an independent class stance on constitutional issues, were able to appreciate the real significance of republicanism. When it came to RIC’s 5 Principles, the ISG(S) settled instead for the SSP’s proposal of a ‘modern democratic republic’. This is based on a ‘Clause Four’ type sentimental, anti-monarchist, republicanism sometime in the future, not on a militant democratic ‘sovereignty of the people’, anti-UK Crown Powers republicanism in the here and now.

At the first 800 strong RIC conference, held in Glasgow’s Radisson Blu on November 24th, 2012, a session was entitled *The Scottish Republic – What is Real Democracy?*²²³ It wasn’t a member of the ISG(S), but Neil who presented the case for relegating republicanism to sometime in the future, when the monarchy would disappear through a socialist revolution. Neil’s ambiguity over the role of the UK’s unionist and

constitutional monarchist state with its anti-democratic Crown Powers in the here and now was apparent. I was the RCN speaker arguing for an immediate republican alternative.

The RCN provided an assessment of ISG(S)'s role after RIC conference, in *Radisson Blu or Post-Radisson Red?*²²⁴ The ISG(S) went on to produce *Britain Must Break*.²²⁵ In many ways this represented a Left social democratic attempt to locate the ISG(S) in the tradition of an imagined real Scottish Labour Party of the past, which New Labour had ditched.²²⁶ The RCN wrote a fraternal critique of the pamphlet, entitled '*Britain Must Break*' to defend 'Real Labour' or the '*The Break-up of the UK*' to advance Republican Socialism.²²⁷

The ISG(S) pamphlet's title also revealed a lingering confusion passed on by Neil. In Neil's *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood*, he had offered a critique of Tom Nairn (a contributor to *The Red Paper* in 1975), a major Scottish intellectual who inspired a broad section of the Scottish nationalist movement and sections of the Left with his *Break-up of Britain Crisis* in 1977.²²⁸ However, Neil retained Nairn's 'break-up of Britain' concept, transmitting it to the SWP and its breakaways in Scotland.

What this again revealed was the haziness of Neil and many of the Left when it came to the unionist nature of the United Kingdom of Great Britain **and** Northern Ireland. They had not undertaken any analysis of the British ruling class's promotion of 'Devolution-all-round' and the 'Peace Process' since 1997, and the contradictions these produced. This would have led to an appreciation that, in a period of growing crises particularly after the 2008 Financial Crash, the most pressing economic and social issues present themselves in political or constitutional terms.

The Britain in '*Britain Must Break*' is a geographical area made up of England, Scotland and Wales. It could only be broken up by millions of years of geological tectonic activity. This would amount to an evolutionary socialism, which would make the Labour Party leadership look like reckless revolutionaries! The entity which needs to be broken up is the UK state, which includes the nations of England, Scotland and

Wales **and** the province of Northern Ireland. This requires political not tectonic action.

Neil had made a valid historical comparison showing the differences between the socio-economic trajectories of Ireland and Scotland under the Union. However, Neil never got to grips with the political effects of the UK's unionist state, and its hybrid British ruling class promotion of subordinate hybrid-British identities – Scottish-British, Irish-(later 'Ulster'-) British and Welsh-British. Thus, although the British ruling class maintained an imperial economic relationship with Ireland (which took a different form in north-east Ulster), this was modified politically by the unionist form of the state. This unionism allowed people from the subordinate nations within the UK to rise to the top rungs of the political ladder, e.g. the Irish Lord Castlereagh (senior government minister, 1812-22) and Sir Edward Carson (war cabinet. 1915-18), the Welsh David Lloyd George (PM, 1916-22) and the Scottish Ramsay Macdonald (PM, 1924 and 1929-35). This was not usually possible for anyone from the white colonies,²²⁹ and unthinkable for any non-white in the colonies, even where they formed the overwhelming majority of the population.

Furthermore, the unionist nature of the state allowed the national hybrid-sections of the British ruling class to use both the House of Lords and the House of Commons to help out their beleaguered class cousins in the other constituent units of the UK, whenever they faced significant opposition. This happened over the massive land struggles in Ireland, Scotland and Wales from 1879, the Irish Home Rule Bills of 1885, 1892 and 1913, the poll tax in Scotland in 1989 and foundation hospitals in England in 2003.²³⁰

But Neil was facing an additional problem. Although an SWP dissident, he remained loyal to the party. First, he saw a significant section, led by John Rees and Lindsay German, expelled. But they were still able to retain many of the contacts they had made through holding leading positions as SWP members in the Anti-War campaign. They formed Counterfire, duplicating and competing with much of the SWP's work. They had an even closer connection to CPB and some trade union bureaucrats, and their favoured organisations – the National

Assemblies.²³¹ In 2011, the ISG(S) broke from the SWP whilst Neil remained. Then the ‘Comrade Delta’ rape accusation scandal began to overwhelm the SWP, precipitating the International Socialist Network breakaway in March 2013, along with hundreds of others who just left.²³² However, it wasn’t until the SWP conference in December of that year, that Neil finally left and helped to form the latest breakaway, rs21,²³³ which joined with other SWP dissidents in Scotland to form International Socialism Scotland (ISS). Through Neil, the politics of the SWP had some indirect bearing on RIC, and both the breakaway ISG(S), which Neil had very much influenced, and rs21/ISS, which Neil had helped to found.

12. The politics of ‘Movementism’ and ‘Think Tankism’ contribute to the decline of RIC as a national organisation after 2015. What is a socialist/communist political party and how can it be created?

The SWP had long maintained itself as one of the larger British ‘party’ sects under a self-perpetuating central committee. It claimed the mantle of Lenin and Trotsky, but broke with both these figures, and indeed with the whole Second, Third and Fourth International tradition, in denying the need for programme. A programme was seen as tying down the SWP leadership and making it too accountable for its abrupt changes in line. In some ways, the absence of a programme in the SWP performs a similar role for its leadership as the lack of a written UK constitution does for the British ruling class – they can both make it up as they go along.

A programme is essentially a democratic and educational tool where the party membership can help devise a strategy. Tactics are subordinate to strategy, not a substitute. It is the absence of a programme which accounts for the SWP’s lack of any political strategy, and its concentration on ‘tactics, tactics, tactics’. This is one reason why those schooled in the SWP tradition have left it to others to set the political agenda (e.g. over devolution, independence and Brexit) which requires longer term strategic thinking.

The SWP leadership believes it is the best body on the Left at discerning the political ‘mood music’ of the working class. This places a heavy emphasis on the immediate or ‘spontaneous’, which is seen as the main indicator of working class consciousness. To prevent the SWP from becoming a small abstract propagandist sect, the central committee identifies a particular arena, which it thinks to be important at a particular time, e.g. rank and file (trade union), right to work, anti-nazi/fascist, anti-racist, anti-corporate globalisation. The central committee then sets up a ‘party’ front organisation, to give the SWP some wider influence and to create an arena for recruitment. The purpose is to maintain and advance the SWP as embodied in the central committee and its current supporters – the latter a changeable group with quite a high turnover.

The SWP breakaways have retained many aspects of its politics. In particular, they remain largely anti-programme and hence anti-strategy. They look instead to the immediate and spontaneous. They claim that workers are not interested in constitutional matters, or if they develop such an interest, it means they are really thinking only in economic or social not in directly political terms. This leaves the different sections of the ruling class and its wannabe contenders to frame the immediate political options at a time of growing constitutional crisis.

However, the previous bad experiences of many former SWP members have provoked two particular responses in their breakaway organisations. First there is ‘Movementism’ which denies or downplays the need for open democratic political organisation. This means following the SWP in elevating and tail-ending the immediate and ‘spontaneous’, but rejects its promotion of a ‘party’ sect. Then there is ‘Think-Tankism’, which retains some notion of a leadership, but rejects the SWP central committee’s ‘democratic centralism’. ‘Think Tankism’ involves opting for a more disguised leadership organised around a journal or a blog.

The ISG(S) represented the most ‘Movementist’ pole amongst the SWP breakaways. It did not affiliate to RIC. Its members used the holding of RIC office bearer posts to exert their influence. Any consistent wider democratic accountability was seen to be unnecessary. During the

IndyRef1 campaign, the main impact of ISG(S) politics was felt in Glasgow. There were no regular, functioning, democratic local groups in many areas of the city, despite their existence in much less populated areas, e.g. Angus & Mearns, Dumfries & Galloway and Inverness. Meetings were only organised for activities, which had already been decided elsewhere. Participants became foot soldiers.

The ISG(S) was able to make a positive contribution within the context of an immediate large-scale movement. It was Glasgow ISG(S) members who came up with the idea of the mass voter registration campaign, which was taken up by many local autonomous ‘Yes’ groups. The level of voter registration and elector participation contributed to a ‘democratic revolution’ in 2014, and RIC nationally played a major part in this. However, reliance on a movement, or upon what is immediate, is unable to sustain an organisation on a longer-term basis (something that had already been seen in the anti-corporate globalisation, anti-war and Occupy movements). And this proved to be the case with RIC at a national level from 2015, wherever the politics of ‘Movementism’²³⁴ dominated.

‘Think Tankism’ though also acts a barrier to open, democratic, accountable political organisation. Advocates of the think tank approach claim such forums are places where ideas can be discussed. They hope these will be absorbed in an osmotic manner by the movements. Ironically, whilst it’s not hard to discern and hence challenge the ‘line’ coming from a ‘party’ sect like the SWP in any wider non-front movements, this is harder with think tanks, which are less visible and claim not to impose any ‘line’.

Now just as movements can bring about some real changes, think tanks and conferences with a variety of speakers, can also perform a useful function. They can air new ideas and theories, and participants can learn from other activists’ direct experiences. But what think tanks cannot do is develop a programme, strategy and policies which can be tested democratically in wider autonomous bodies, campaigns and movements. This requires open, democratic, accountable political organisation, prepared to discuss and debate all issues facing the exploited and oppressed.

The creation of a socialist political party does not come about as a direct reflection of the movement/s. The ruling class does not suspend its political activities when things are going well for it, nor indeed when faced with crises. Different sections of the ruling class offer their own solutions about how their class can best maintain its control in changed circumstances. This may start with think tanks and new media outlets, but it then takes on a more openly political form, either challenging existing party leaderships or forming new parties. We have seen all of these as the British ruling class has switched from the social market, welfare state economy (inspired by social democratic Labour) from 1945-79 to 'free' market neo-liberalism from 1979 – 2019 and again as sections have moved to authoritarian Right populism since 2019.

Thus, active movement or no active movement, Socialists need to come together to analyse the nature of the society we live in (capitalism based on exploitation, oppression and alienation); the current state of the global economy (multifaceted crises and the relative decline of US imperialism); the forms this takes within particular states (whether they are imperialist, sub-imperialist, or dominated by external imperial powers); the current state of their particular economy (e.g. the UK's continuing decline and subordination to the financial sector); their historical constitutional arrangements (e.g. the UK as a British imperial, unionist, constitutional monarchy); and the current dominant form of politics (e.g. Right populism in the USA and UK, reinforcing reactionary unionism in the latter).

This provides the basis for an examination of the contradictions and struggles flowing from all these contributory factors. And that understanding creates the basis for an independent socialist organisation. This organisation only becomes a party when it is rooted in a politically conscious working class and draws in other members of the exploited and oppressed, who can challenge the ruling class. Furthermore, breaking free from the national constraints enforced by global capital needs a wider internationalist organisation to transcend the existing world order and replace it with a global commune based on emancipation, liberation and self-determination (in its widest sense).

To achieve this, the development of a programme is vital. This involves formulating immediate national and international aims and demands, designed to create the conditions for independent working class organisation. These form the basis for the creation of a party, which is prepared to test out and, when necessary, amend its programme through engagement with the movement/s (or more accurately with democratic and autonomous organisations, e.g. trade unions and campaigning coalitions, such as RIC).

Today, the maximum part of any programme can only be based on the most advanced socialist/communist thinking achieved historically. Clearly, as with the appearance of the Commune in 1871 and soviets in 1917, it is more than likely that any future international revolutionary wave will see new and unforeseen developments. So, the purpose in going back to these earlier socialist/communist forms isn't to insist on their replication, but to ensure that such highpoints are recognised, and later retreats (e.g. adapting to social parliamentarianism) are acknowledged. Furthermore, the development of a more rounded maximum programme can only occur in an international socialist/communist organisation.

The key to moving from the immediate to the maximum does not lie in the need for some necessary stage of economic development to have been reached. Global capital already links the world's economy and threatens humankind's future. The precondition for any transition to socialism lies in the formation and development of organisations of struggle, which are under full working class democratic control and have a wide enough presence in society. Then these can challenge the capitalist class for power and the replacement of their states with our own class institutions. In the here and now, this means challenging those who think what is required is to take the leadership of the existing institutions of the state - Left social democrats - or of organisations such as the bureaucratised trade unions controlled by privileged senior officials in union HQs. i.e. Broad Leftism, and with no vision beyond this.

Bringing together activists, with wider aims in mind, can help to avoid the situation where theory is left to 'party'-sect leaderships or to Left

academics in think tanks. Creating a democratic culture with meaningful programmatic debate means paying considerable attention to providing a shared education. This involves overcoming the attitudes of ‘party’ sect leaderships and some Left academics, who train people what to think rather than educate people in how to think. James Connolly showed that advanced socialist thinking can come from the most exploited and oppressed without the benefit of much formal ‘education’.

Just relying on unaccountable think tanks or waiting for the movement/s to create the conditions for a party in the future, undermines the type of political organisation which can build an independent working class party – one that is open,²³⁵ democratic and accountable and has a clear strategy. ‘Think Tankism’ and ‘Movementism’ are not up to this job.

‘Think Tankism’ and ‘Movementism’ are not always necessarily counterposed. Some proponents of ‘Think Tankism’ argue that it will be the movements that create the conditions for a new party, which will then look to them to provide leadership. This helps to explain why Neil and rs21/ISS never challenged the lack of a democratic and accountable RIC in Glasgow. They wanted to encourage the ISG(S) ‘Movementists’, hoping they will eventually create a big enough movement to provide the conditions for the ‘party’ to emerge, which Neil and rs21 still claimed to be needed in the future.

Following the IndyRef1 campaign, some ex-ISG(S) members began to argue that a new hybrid movement/party was indeed required. They launched the Scottish Left Project (SLP).²³⁶ The hybrid ‘Movementist’/Partyist Syriza in Greece and the more ‘Movementist’ Podemos in Spain were their inspirations. However, even as the SLP was going ahead, the weaknesses of an essentially national Left social democratic strategy to fight Austerity became evident. Syriza capitulated to the Troika, despite getting a mandate from the Greek people to fight. Later Podemos was to be split over its attitude to the Catalan self-determination and eventually entered a Spanish social democrat government in a state that still holds Catalan politicians and activists as political prisoners.

With the 2016 Holyrood election looming, the SLP soon gave way to a somewhat unseemly rush to create an electoral stitch-up with the SSP²³⁷ – Respect, Independence, Socialism. Environmentalism – Scotland’s Left Alliance (RISE). Issues such as adopting an independent class position on the constitution (a republican approach) or having an attitude towards a possible EU membership referendum, were brushed under the carpet. Instead, public agreement was sought over a limited number of economic and social issues. But behind-the-scenes manoeuvring was going on to promote RISE’s real purpose - making a deal for electoral candidates in the 2016 Holyrood election.

By not having an independent position on the political issues, which dominated the 2015 election, RISE found itself rendered largely irrelevant. RISE was easily dismissed by many Scottish independence activists, who also wanted economic and social reforms. They could say, “Yes, we want these too, but we can only get them after a successful IndyRef2, which only the SNP can deliver.” However, the SNP needed challenging precisely on its ‘ability’ to deliver IndyRef2, since it was now clear that the British ruling class was not going to concede this. Extra-constitutional methods would need to be considered. This meant winning support for the sovereignty of the people against the sovereignty of the Crown-in-Westminster, and its devolved assemblies that have to follow Westminster’s anti-democratic rules.

A republican approach should have been central to the 2016 Holyrood electoral challenge, not because it would have won more votes (although it might have been more appealing to those who were already questioning the existing constitutional set-up), but because it would have made it clear there was a political alternative when the SNP governments strategy stalled. It was RISE, and RIC’s failure to do this that created the space for ‘All Under One Banner’, and it is to its credit that it took up the mantle.²³⁸

Promises of a proper founding conference for RISE after the Holyrood election had been made by leading members but were dropped after the election. But Neil had argued against the creation of platforms,²³⁹ which could have offered an alternative way forward after RISE’s poor election showing. The behaviour of the SW platform in the SSP and in

Solidarity may have been a factor in Neil's thinking. But the denial of open platform rights, as opposed to off-stage 'think tanks', just leads to control by an undeclared behind-the-scenes leadership faction. The way to deal with the behaviour of 'party' sects like the SWP, which abused platform rights, is to have Code of Conduct which is enforced.

However, at the same time, despite Neil's unwillingness to challenge the ISG(S) over its failure to promote local groups in Glasgow, rs21/ISS has played a very positive role in Edinburgh RIC. Pete Cannell and Pat Smith, in particular, have been tireless in their support. The RIC Edinburgh group, though, has continued to act as an open, democratic and accountable coalition. rs21/ISS, RCN, Left Green and non-aligned members have remained central throughout, whilst others from the Left SNP, Left (independence supporting) Scottish Labour and the SSP have also contributed. RIC Edinburgh has also been involved in supporting strikes, demonstrations and other activities in Edinburgh and beyond.

Neil worked in Glasgow, lived in West Lothian and was a member of Edinburgh RIC. This geographical spread made it difficult for Neil to be a mainstay of RIC, when there were no regular meetings in Glasgow, and when coming to Edinburgh from work involved a doubling back to West Lothian to reach home. Therefore, Neil, was not involved in the organisation of Edinburgh RIC nor the RIC National Forums.²⁴⁰ But Neil spoke, when invited, at both RIC Edinburgh assemblies and national conferences, in a similar way to Maggie Chapman (Scottish Greens), Tommy Shephard and George Kerevan (Left SNP) and Lesley Riddoch (independence supporting journalist and former broadcaster).

If Neil's direct and indirect legacy in RIC can be criticised, he worked hard to ensure Socialists elsewhere, including England, Ireland and the USA, were better informed of the political situation in Scotland. As an SWP dissident, Neil had cultivated contacts, through the International Socialist Organisation in the USA. Some ISO members became involved in the Democratic Socialists of America and its influential magazine *Jacobin*. The May/June 2014 issue published Neil's *Why Scotland Should Vote Yes*.²⁴¹ This is an informative but essentially descriptive article for a non-Scottish audience. It could be compared to *Up to and Beyond the September 18th Independence Referendum – A*

socialist republican response,²⁴² in which I offered a more programmatic vision for RIC.

13. The SWP and its breakaways go down the Lexit Brexit rabbit hole.

Neil's downplaying of the particular nature of the UK state became far more apparent during the 2015-6 EU referendum campaign and the Right populists' Brexit offensive. The likely political trajectory of any future Brexit campaign was first highlighted when the SP(E&W) and the CPB joined up in No2EU for the 2009 EU elections. UKIP and the BNP also contested this election. They too attacked the neo-liberal Centre (at that time led by New Labour) and the political establishment which then backed them. The poor showing of the Left in this election has already been pointed out in section 10 of this article. But No2EU had five years in which to alter the balance of forces. So, No2EU stood again in the June 2014 EU elections, in the middle of the IndyRef1 campaign.

However, in 2014, No2EU's vote fell from 1.0% in 2009 to 0.2% in 2014, an 80% drop! UKIP got 26.6% (up from 16%) whilst its breakaway, An Independence from Europe got a further 1.4% of the vote. The Far Right, BNP's vote was five times that of No2EU, whilst one of its breakaways, the English Democrats, got four times No2EU's vote. These election results, which also don't account for the significant but at the time still disguised Tory Europhobic vote, should have shown that there was no prospect of a Left-led Brexit under the prevailing political conditions.

Following the 2014 EU election, I wrote an analysis of the possible impact of the rise of UKIP on UK politics. "The results of the Euro-elections and UKIP's major breakthrough point to another possibility. There could be mounting pressure on the British ruling class to retreat from its current 'New Unionist' approach. They are already retreating in Northern Ireland, in the face of the combined Loyalist and Unionist offensive there. In Wales, UKIP remains openly contemptuous of the

Welsh Assembly.”²⁴³ “UKIP’s rise will give succour to those in Scotland, who see the possibility of a ‘No’ vote, not as an opportunity to introduce ‘Better Together’s ambiguous ‘Devolution-Plus’ ‘promises’, but to undermine the current ‘New Unionist’ settlement here.”²⁴⁴

The SWP and its breakaways are part of that British Left tradition which, having little appreciation of the wider unionist nature of the UK state, looks at each case in isolation, when forced to address national democratic challenges. Therefore, they did not make any link between what was happening in the IndyRef1 campaign, and the growing cross-UK Right wing pressure highlighted in the EU election results. As yet, the SWP and its breakaways in the UK showed little interest in membership of the EU, either for or against. The Irish SWP’s front organisation, People before Profit (PbP), like the British SWP, declined to stand in the EU’s UK constituency/ies where it is based (Northern Ireland in PbP’s case).

Yet PbP stood in the Irish Republic. But neither PbP nor the SPI, which also stood in the EU election, campaigned on an Ireland ‘Leave’ or Irexit platform, despite the SPI’s sister organisation in Great Britain, SP(E&W) standing on a Brexit platform as part of No2EU. And neither PbP nor the SPI mounted any wider international campaign, either through their sect ‘internationals’, the IST and CWI, or through the wider international alliance, the European Anti-Capitalist Left.²⁴⁵ PbP and the SPIs’ now competing campaigns followed the predictable collapse of their top-down marriage of convenience, the United Left Alliance, cobbled together for the 2011 Dail elections.²⁴⁶

By 2014, PbP was becoming increasingly estranged from the British SWP leadership and maintained relationships with some SWP breakaways, including rs21. Since the Belfast Flag Protests in 2011, reactionary unionism had been in the frontline of attempts to undermine the Good Friday Agreement component of the ‘Devolution-all-round’ settlement. Farage and UKIP were much more astute than the CWI or the IST in forming an all-UK, or all-British (including ‘Ulster’-British) alliance. Opposition to the EU was central. In Northern Ireland, UKIP

also made electoral deals with Traditional Unionist Voice, a further right(!) Loyalist breakaway from the DUP and the Far Right, Loyalist, Popular Unionist Party (which is linked to Ulster Volunteer Force).

Needless to say, the Loyalists (whether in the DUP, TUV, PUP or Orange Order) were also totally opposed to Scottish independence. On September 12th, 2014, the weekend before the Scottish independence referendum, 20,000 Orange Order members, many from Northern Ireland, marched in Edinburgh as ‘Britain Together’.²⁴⁷ ‘Better Together’, which had to maintain a Labour liberal unionist façade to cover its Tory conservative unionist intentions for Scotland, kept these reactionary unionist forces at arms’ length. But as soon as the referendum was over, both Scottish Labour and Tories, shocked at the closeness of the result, dropped their previous ‘social distancing’ of Loyalism and sections in each party competed with each other in making overtures to the Orange Order.

Therefore, the growing penetration of mainstream politics by Right populism and its associated reactionary unionism was already apparent in 2014. For many, the success of the IndyRef1 ‘democratic revolution’ disguised an increasing political polarisation. It wasn’t only Gordon Brown’s promised liberal unionist, ‘Devo-Max’ ‘vow’ which disappeared after the ‘No’ vote. The conservative unionist defence of the ‘Devolution-all-round’ settlement began to be challenged from further Right.

The SWP and PbPs’ inability to make these political connections partly stemmed from their failure to develop an analysis of the nature of the UK state and hence an all-islands political strategy. This was needed to counter the strategy of a then still neo-liberal, conservative unionist, British ruling class. But already sections were beginning to consider a resort to Right populism and reactionary unionism. And they too had an all-UK strategy to assert more centralised state power, downgrade or abolish liberal unionism’s devolved institutions and to promote ethnic ‘Britishness’. They worked in alliance with US Right populists – including the then online Hard Right and the Protestant supremacists, later to be given a political voice by Donald Trump. This was the Hard

Right's response to the multifaceted crises and increased global competition and wars, which the British (and US) ruling class was facing. This became very clear during the EU referendum campaign.

In complete disregard for the Hard Right political forces, which had successfully pushed Cameron to back an EU referendum, the SWP made another 'Johnny-come-lately' move. It backed 'Leave' once Cameron had won his 2015 general election victory. He had been assisted in this by Miliband's 'One Nation' {read 'One State'} Labour, with its major concessions to the Right over refusing to work with the SNP to implement Labour's own manifesto. Labour also made its infamous concession to racism with its *Controls on Immigration, I'm Voting Labour* mugs. The SWP had already thrown its weight behind another SP(E&W) initiative, the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) for this general election. TUSC had been designed as a broader political vehicle to directly challenge the Tories and Labour, in the face of their continued cooperation particularly over Austerity. This, of course, had been initiated under Gordon Brown and Alistair Darling.

TUSC had first stood in the 2010 Westminster general election, where it fielded 44 candidates. It gained 1% of the vote. However, by the 2015 general election, with the SWP now giving its backing, TUSC was able to field 128 candidates. But TUSC's vote fell from 1% to 0.1%! After seeing that election result in which UKIP received 12.6% of the vote, it should have by now been clear that the Hard Right would dominate any non-Tory 'Leave' campaign.

But the SWP now tried to promote its own Lexit Brexit, which received no significant support outside its own ranks. The SWP's Lexit arguments pointed to some particularly unpleasant EU policies. These include the Schengen Agreement, which has closed the EU's external border to many thousands of asylum seekers and migrants seeking work. This has led to the horrific deaths of thousands by drowning in the Mediterranean. They also pointed to the 2008 EU Viking and Laval rulings, which allow employers to bring labour from one member state to another, but on the pay and conditions of their state of origin. And

then they highlighted the Troika's draconian imposition of Economic Adjustment Programmes upon the Irish Republic in 2010 and Greece in 2015.

But the much more widely supported Right Brexiteers had their own answers for all these. The UK government had not signed up to the Schengen Agreement, claiming its walls weren't high enough to keep out migrants. But the Right Brexiteers wanted to go much further with the English Channel becoming a highly fortified moat. Instead of the Viking and Laval rulings, which allowed non-UK employers to bring in cheaper labour from certain EU member countries, key Right Brexiteers wanted new gastarbeiter/Australian-type migration legislation which would allow British employers to bring in much cheaper labour from wherever they decided, but with far fewer rights, for strictly proscribed periods of time, and whenever they saw fit. And Austerity would not be imposed by the EU. Instead, the UK government would mount its own attacks on its domestic working class. Under the auspices of either 'Empire 2' or more realistically 'America First'/'Britain Second', bureaucratic 'red tape' (i.e. protective labour, consumer and environmental regulations) would be shredded.

And given the balance of political forces within the Brexit camp, it should have been fairly obvious which of these two scenarios – Lexit or Right Brexiteer would flow from any 'Leave' vote. I debated the issue of 'Remain' or 'Leave' with Neil at a well-attended session, *EU - In or Out?*²⁴⁸ during the fourth RIC Conference held in Edinburgh's Assembly Rooms on February 20th, 2016. I was taken aback at one of the arguments used by Neil during the discussion. He claimed that for all its faults, the UK is more democratic than the EU. This is like trying to compare fishes with bicycles. The 'fishes' are states such as the UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland and Hungary. The 'bicycles' are trading organisations like the EU, World Trade Organisation, the lapsed Transatlantic Trade and Partnership Agreement and now the secret trade talks between Trump's and Johnson's administrations.

The UK is a state with a 400 years' long imperial record and an anti-democratic political system (even by normal parliamentary standards)

based on the Crown-in-Westminster. This provides the British ruling class with its armoury of Crown Powers. It gives a constitutionally privileged position to the City of London which is allowed to maintain offshore tax havens. The UK has an army, navy and air force, security agencies (MI5 and MI6), a national police force and a judiciary unconstrained by any written constitution.

The EU, as a non-state organisation, has the equivalent of none of these. The EU is a treaty organisation made up of existing states, which are the main driving force behind its politics. It is not a state itself. It remains essentially an economic institution laying down the rules for wider trade, investment and profit transfers to enhance business profitability. In today's political conditions, the alternative to the EU isn't a socialist or a Left social democratic Britain operating in a friendly or even neutral world economy, but an even closer alliance with Corporate America in a crisis ridden world leading to constant wars. Brexit means the ending of most EU regulations protecting workers, consumers and the environment, and an even more direct subordination to corporate capital. Corporate America, with a longstanding record of crushing democracy abroad has now greatly accelerated the hollowing out of those limited remaining democratic institutions in the USA too.

Therefore, trying to claim the UK is more democratic is to give credence to one of the most undemocratic states in the western part of the EU (semi-Francoist Castilian Spain is another). It also ignored the US Hard Right financing of the Brexit campaign. This was seen as dry run for the Right populist takeover of the US state, Corporate America's attempted replacement of the EU in the UK, and for an even greater commitment to US foreign policy.

The other argument used by the Lexiters was that the EU was hardwired to neo-liberalism. Certainly, the EU has always been committed to capitalism. Historically, however, for much of the 1950s, 60s, 70s and 80s, the EU was committed to the social market, backed by Social Democrats and Christian Democrats, in a similar way that Butskellism dominated UK politics. In this it also reflected the politics of its

member states. However, from 1979 social market policies were ditched by Thatcher in the UK. From then on, the Tories and New Labour used the UK state's power, in alliance with successive Republican and Democrat US governments, to push the EU to drop its social market policies and adopt neo-liberalism. This was finally achieved in the 1993 Maastricht Treaty. But this still had too many social democratic concessions (e.g. workers' rights) for both the Tories and New Labour.

The battle between the Eurosceptic Remainers and the Europhobic Leavers was about the best way to further attack asylum seekers and migrants and undercut worker' rights – from within or outside the EU. The ground was also shifting in the USA, as the EU became an obstacle to much greater Corporate American dominance and to an increasingly bellicose US foreign policy, of which the UK was also the keenest advocate (e.g. during the Iraq War).

After the 2008 Financial Crisis and the 2011 challenges to US power in the Middle East and Latin America, growing sections of US corporate capital and more US military leaders abandoned the 'subvert the EU from within' strategy in alliance with the UK and through NATO. They began to move to undermining the EU by adopting a strategy to break it up, or by backing Right populist regimes in the eastern EU, which were fully committed to a bellicose NATO policy, and which ignored the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Given the balance of political forces, Right and Left, behind Brexit, it should have been very obvious that the only role for Left Brexiteers would be to provide some cover for the growth of the Right populism in the UK. This subordination to the Right would be much greater than that of the Red Paper Collective and George Galloway, who provided cover to the Tories' 'No' campaign in the 'IndyRef1' campaign. Even Galloway could see the different balance of forces. He made no effort to mount his own 'Just Say Naw to the EU' campaign, but signed up directly, along with Kate Hoey, for Farage's British chauvinist and racist 'Grassroots Out' campaign.

Meanwhile, that section of the ruling class, which was turning increasingly Europhobic, founded 'Vote Leave', with the assistance of Dominic Cummings. 'Vote Leave' was chaired at the UK level by Gisela Stuart, one of Labour's most Right-wing MPs²⁴⁹ and in Scotland by the another its most Right-wing figures, ex-MP, Tom Harris. Even amongst Labour Leavers, the Right was the dominant force during the campaign. The Left populist 'British jobs for British workers' wing of the 'Leave' campaign came a poor third behind the Right populist, 'Grassroots Out' and the Right Tory-led 'Vote Leave' campaigns. The Brexit 'Left' pretended it was leading the working class against the Tory and neo-Blairite neo-liberals and was oblivious to the fact that it was merely acting as an outrider for the Hard Right. Lexit mounted no major public meetings in 'Leave' areas or any major public demonstrations. Yet such actions had been key hallmarks of any past SWP front organisations.

What should internationalist socialists have been doing to counter the European ruling classes' bureaucratic 'internationalism from above' offensive? This was being undertaken to maximise corporate profitability. But the main threat was now coming from those sections of the national ruling classes which were turning to Right populism and the authoritarian restructuring of their states to maximise profitability. Any effective opposition to both these forces needed an 'internationalism from below' response based on the multi-national workforce which had grown under the EU. This would go along with championing the 'multiculturalism from below', which had already been achieved. Many people now live in mixed nationality marriages or in other mixed personal relationships. There has been a growing cultural diversity, e.g. arts (especially music), food, dress. And there is a shared membership of organisations of struggle, e.g. trade unions and campaigning bodies. Migrant workers include some of the most militant workers, e.g. the London cleaners.

A major focus for internationalist socialists' work should have been opposition to the mounting state racism, highlighted by the two draconian Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016, and the exclusion of EU residents from voting in the 2016 referendum. However, the SWP

prefers to promote the idea that racism is the product of Far Right activity. Yet, migrant workers and asylum seekers face far greater day to day threats at the hands of the state. Thus, even where the SWP has done some good work, e.g. over asylum seekers in Scotland, this is politically undermined by its failure to highlight Labour complicity, including that of the Labour and trade union Left, in the state's chauvinist and racist activities. This is so that they can be kept on board the SWP's front organisations.

The fact that, after the 2008 Crisis, various European ruling classes had abandoned any pretence that they were running the EU for the benefit of the majority, meant that international socialists should have been promoting their own defence of the 'internationalism from below' already achieved in the UK and EU by both migrant and many domestic workers. Instead of a Left 'Leave', for which it turned out there were few social forces, this required a Left 'Remain', which called for solidarity with those EU residents and asylum seekers under the most immediate attack from the ascendant Hard Right and highlighting the Right's wider designs on workers' pay and conditions.

But this also required an independent political or constitutional alternative, something not recognised by the SWP as being of interest to the working class. This has meant that whenever the constitution becomes a central issue, the SWP tail-ends somebody else's options – e.g. the SNP's 'Indy-Lite' or the Brexiteers' 'take back control' of the UK state. During the EU referendum, the two competing ruling class constitutional options were the Remainers' acceptance of the EU leaders' attempts to maintain the post-Maastricht order, or the Brexiteers' further centralisation of anti-democratic and bureaucratic power in the UK state.

During IndyRef1, it had been vital to raise the issue of a Scottish Republic, based on the sovereignty of the people. This meant looking to the massive expansion of autonomous 'Yes' groups to push for a post-independence Constituent Assembly (as RIC agreed in its May 2014 National Forum).²⁵⁰ During the EU membership campaign, it was important to raise the prospect of a European federal, social

republic,²⁵¹ the human basis of which had already been created in the EU's multinational workforce with its multinational culture.

If the electoral fortunes of No2EU in the 2014 EU elections and of TUSC in the 2015 general election had not alerted the SWP and the SP(E&W) to the likely political direction of any Brexit campaign, then as the referendum date grew nearer and passed, its Right wing trajectory presented itself starkly. Jo Cox MP was murdered by a fascist just before the referendum, whilst soon after the 'Leave' victory, Arkadiusz Jozwik, a Polish worker was killed in Essex and Dagmara Przybysz, a Polish schoolgirl, committed suicide after racist bullying in Cornwall. Other racist attacks increased. And from this time the Far Right was able to mount larger demonstrations, which could outnumber the anti-fascist protestors.

The 'Leave' vote, far from irreparably damaging the British ruling class and the Tories, and opening up better political opportunities for the Left, led to a fairly seamless transition from David Cameron to Theresa May. And from this time on, all the effective opposition to May came from the further Right, bolstered by Donald 'Brexit plus, plus plus' Trump, once he was elected US president in November 2016. His supporters had channelled dark money into the Brexit campaign through UKIP and the DUP.²⁵²

But, when May called a general election in 2017, here was a chance for TUSC/No2EU/Lexit to stand and campaign for its own version of Brexit. For despite May standing on a clear 'No Brexit is Better than a Bad Brexit' platform, the Hard Right still continued to mount its own challenge, with UKIP and the BNP receiving 598,648 votes. TUSC, however, wasn't prepared to campaign for its own Left Populist Brexit, so rather than 128 candidates in 2015, it fielded no candidates at all in 2017!

In Northern Ireland though, PbP did stand on its newly adopted Lexit platform. It received 5509 votes, a 29% drop from the 2015 Westminster election, when it did not have a 'Leave' policy. Here there were also Hard Right Brexit parties standing - the DUP and TUV,

which got 295,598 votes. PbP's Lexit vote was 1.8% of the Hard Right Brexit vote. PbP was badly damaged by its perceived association with Loyalists wanting a return to Unionist supremacy and a policed border, and with dissident Republican militarists looking forward to attack post-Brexit border posts.²⁵³ TUSC would very likely have fared even worse in Great Britain if it had stood in 2017. The one thing the PbP shared with the SWP and the SP(E&W), was they all completely misread the likely political consequences of any 'Leave' vote.

Instead of campaigning for its own version of Brexit, TUSC decided to give its backing to Jeremy Corbyn in the 2017 election. In this election Corbyn chose not to make too much of Brexit, showing traditional Labour Left disdain for constitutional issues. He concentrated his attention on neo-Keynesian economic and social reforms highlighted by the title of Labour's *For the Many, Not the Few* election manifesto.

However, on key points, Corbyn's election manifesto was a continuation of Miliband's 2015 manifesto. In the section entitled, *Immigration*, it stated, "Freedom of movement will end when we leave the European Union,"²⁵⁴ an updated Labour adaptation to British racism. And in the section entitled *Extending Democracy*, under a prominent Union Jack, it was stated that "Labour opposes a second referendum... we will campaign tirelessly to ensure that Scotland remains part of the UK."²⁵⁵ Again this was no different to the Tories. And in the section entitled *Negotiating Brexit*, it stated that "Labour accepts the referendum result,"²⁵⁶ based on an ethnically based franchise, which excluded EU residents and also excluded 16-18 year olds. Yet Labour had accepted these two groups in the other referendum that Cameron had facilitated just two years before – IndyRef1.²⁵⁷

For the Many, Not the Few did enable Labour to make electoral advances in Remain voting areas where, at this stage, few thought the ruling class would permit a hard Brexit. Yet even Labour's electoral commitment to Brexit was not enough to prevent the loss of seven seats in 2017 to the Tories in Brexit supporting 'Red Wall' constituencies. Labour's complicity in hollowing out industries, local communities

and working class organisations had broken up collective traditions. Labour's promotion of anti-migrant and asylum seeker politics, Islamophobia, rampant British chauvinism and continuous wars provided the opening to those who would take such politics much further – the Hard and the Far Right.

From then on, given the choice, many Labour Leavers were prepared to abandon the party for UKIP (later the Brexit Party) or the Tories. TUSC, which was meant to provide an alternative Brexit, totally vacated the scene, asking people to vote Labour instead. A few of its candidates were on the Left but the majority were on the Right and Centre. As sitting MPs, they had supported the Con-Dem government's Austerity offensive and their 'Better Together' alliance.

Despite Labour's partial advance in the 2017 general election, which deprived May's Tories of their overall majority, the government felt no need to soften its Brexit position to accommodate this. Instead, the Tories went into coalition with the furthest right-wing party in the UK, the Right populist and reactionary unionist DUP, sometimes only half-jokingly dubbed the provisional wing of the seventeenth century! Corbyn had already demonstrated, as early as February 2017 that he was quite happy to facilitate a harder Brexit by voting with Tories and the DUP for an Article 50 order without any preconditions.

After the 2017 general election Chuku Umanna proposed an amendment to the Queen's Speech ruling out withdrawal from the EU without a deal. Corbyn sacked three front benchers for supporting this amendment, saying that it conflicted with Labour's manifesto commitment to end freedom of movement!²⁵⁸ Corbyn was to sink lower still when he took no action against many Labour MPs who absented themselves on January, 29th 2019, and enabled the easy passing through Westminster of the second reading May's draconian new Immigration Bill. Immigration control were always a centrepiece of Brexit.²⁵⁹ Two Conservative MPs were more principled in voting against this than the many Labour absentees, some claiming to be on the 'Left'!

Despite all the evidence of Corbyn's complicity with the Tories over Brexit (and John McDonnell looking to make a deal win the DUP²⁶⁰), the SWP, its breakaways and the SP(E&W) fell in behind Corbyn's inner 4M coterie's²⁶¹ portrayal of the struggle in the Labour Party being between neo-Blairite Right Remainers and Corbynista Left Leavers. In reality there were four groups - Right and 'Left' Leavers and Right and Left Remainers. What united Right Leavers, e.g. Kate Hoey, John Mann and Graham Stringer, 'Left' Leavers, e.g. Jeremy Corbyn and his 4M backers, and Right Remainers, e.g. Chukku Umanna and Sir Keir Starmer, was their opposition to the free movement of labour from the EU.

The Right Remainers organised The Peoples Vote marches to support second EU referendum. However, on these they were challenged by Left Remainers, who were able to organise sizeable contingents on the marches.²⁶² The Left Remainers, opposed the racism associated with Brexit. But instead of a rerun of the EU referendum many wanted a ratification referendum on any deal. The Left Remainers also had the backing of some trade union leaders e.g. Manuel Cortes of TSSA (significantly a migrant himself) and the late Dave Hopper of the Durham Miners' Association. Most impressively, the influx of young Labour Left Remainers ensured that a motion was passed at the party's 2019 annual conference which proposed to extend the free movement of people, the closure of all detention centres and equal voting rights for all UK residents.²⁶³

The Left Remainers were opposed by Right Remainers, Right Leavers and 'Left' Leavers alike. But it was McCluskey who ensured that the 2019 Labour conference motions never made it into the election manifesto. Meanwhile, the Lexiters made no attempt to push their politics on the Brexit marches or rallies, leaving these to the Hard Right.

Yet, an opportunity had already occurred in 2017 for a genuine Left to challenge McCluskey. He had stood again for UNITE general secretary in anticipation of being in office under a future Corbyn government. He looked forward to forming a trade union leaders' 'prosecco and canapes' relationship with 10, Downing Street.²⁶⁴ As

well as the usual Broad Left and Right full-timers' careerist election competition, there was a principled rank and file Grassroots Left candidate - Ian Allinson a shop steward, who is also a member of rs21. He attacked McCluskey's pandering to racism²⁶⁵ and his capitulation before the Zionist and Rights' bogus antisemitism campaign.²⁶⁶ Yet many on the Left from the SP(E&W) to the CPGB/WW²⁶⁷ backed McCluskey, either because they supported his Left populist Brexit, or in the mistaken belief that the Labour Party is not really a post-1914-type social democratic party, stretching from Right to Left, wedded to its existing state, but a 'united front' which revolutionary socialists/communists can take the leadership of.

The SWP, which had backed Jerry Hicks, an earlier Grassroots Left candidate in 2013, with a tour around the UK, only gave paper support Allinson. It offered completely unwarranted apologetics for McCluskey. "McCluskey is a towering figure on the Labour left" and "has to his credit put Unite's support behind anti-racist initiatives and backed anti-racist demonstrations,"²⁶⁸ i.e. he has supported SWP front organisations like Unite Against Fascism and Stand Up to Racism. These ignore the UK state's promotion of racism and British chauvinism under Tory, Con-Dem and Labour governments, preferring to attribute these to the Far Right.

Sadly, rs21/ISS did not take Allinson's campaign to Scotland, where he could have challenged McCluskey's abject climbdown at Grangemouth²⁶⁹ and lack of support for a second Scottish referendum. Nor did rs21 use its links with PbP to take Allinson's campaign to Ireland, where he could have challenged McCluskey's support for the post-GFA agreements and for the social partnership deals North and South.

And the SWP and the SP(E&W) remained silent over McCluskey's attacks on the Left Remainers. McCluskey was making these attacks to appease the Right. The SWP and the SP(E&W) were appeasing McCluskey. McCluskey had also helped to derail the traditional Left demand for the compulsory re-selection of parliamentary candidates at the 2018 Labour conference.²⁷⁰ And back in 2015, just after Corbyn

had been elected leader, McCluskey had joined with Right trade union leaders to prevent Labour adopting a ‘Scrap Trident’ policy.²⁷¹

The SWP and the SP(E&W) claimed that any concessions to Remainers would only lead to further defections in Labour’s ‘Red Wall’ constituencies. They argued that not all those voting for Brexit were racists. This was undoubtedly true, even if all the most virulent racists on the Hard Right and Far Right did vote for Brexit. But the issue was not what was in workers’ heads when they voted but the openly declared British chauvinist and racist policies of those parties they voted for. It wasn’t any well-meaning workers who were empowered in these elections, but the most reactionary section of the British ruling class. Back in 1997, many had once thought that ‘things could only get better’ under Tony Blair. But for huge numbers, things got a lot worse. This is why, for example, in Scotland, the SSA put up candidates in 1997 to challenge these illusions to build for the future. But the SWP and the SP(E&W) vacated the electoral arena in the 2017 general election and again in the 2019 Euro-election. And after the ‘Leave’ vote things were getting a whole lot worse.

Those Labour Remainers, who had voted for Corbyn-led Labour in the 2017 general election, had become appalled at Corbyn’s inability to prevent an increasingly hard Brexit. In many ways he had facilitated the shift to a hard Brexit. But this still did not satisfy large numbers of demoralised Labour Leavers who were increasingly prepared to vote for Right wing parties. During the June 2019 EU election, the Brexit Party emerged as easily the first party in every EU constituency in the UK (including those declining industrial areas that had once voted Labour), except for London, Scotland and Northern Ireland. But now Labour Remainers, who had supported Corbyn in 2017 also deserted in droves, but to the Lib-Dems, Greens, SNP and Plaid Cymru.²⁷² The ‘Left’ Leavers’ strategy of shifting further to accommodate the Right Brexiteers lay in shreds. Furthermore, just as the ‘Left’ Leavers had remained silent over the ethnic nationalist based, 2016 EU referendum franchise, so they had nothing to say over the UK state’s manipulated exclusion of many EU residents from voting, in the 2019 EU election, despite having a legal right to do so.²⁷³

But the SWP and its breakaways, and the SP(E&W) had one other argument, and that was that the British ruling class was overwhelmingly opposed to Brexit and would go to any lengths to prevent this from happening. Although Farage's 'Grassroots Out' campaign had acted as a conduit for influence and dark money from the formidable and rising Right populist section of the US ruling class led by Donald Trump, the Hard Right sections of the British ruling class were not prepared to abandon the Tory Party for UKIP.

Instead, they had created 'Vote Leave', which had the backing of the very ruling class Boris Johnson and Baron Nigel Lawson, as well as key hedge fund and other major business owners.²⁷⁴ Its backers were quite happy to have a symbiotic relationship with Farage, UKIP and later the Brexit Party and the DUP, using them for their own purposes in moving UK politics to the Hard Right. However, the aim, even of Dominic Cummings, who is no orthodox Tory, was to win over the majority of the ruling class and convert the Tory Party to Hard Right politics. This became even clearer, in November 2016, after Trump had shown how to take over the Republican Party, and to shove aside any old-style ruling class, neo-liberal supporters of the constitutional status quo.

We were also told by 'Left' Brexiters that the British ruling class, desperate to stop Brexit, would give its backing to a new Macron-style party, especially in the lead up to the 2019 EU elections. Perhaps people like Chuku Umanna who helped to form Change UK, with breakaway Right Labour and liberal Conservatives, thought this might indeed happen. They were left high and dry by the ruling class. The Remainer, Change UK got 3.3% and its ally the Lib-Dems got 19.6% of the vote. (This contrasted with Right populist, Brexit Party's 30.5% and the Right Tory Brexiters 8.8% of the vote.) It was then suggested that the City of London would create financial instability, maybe a run on the pound to derail Brexit. On 18th October 2019 Mark Carney, chair of the Bank of London, announced his support for the Johnson's proposed Brexit deal.²⁷⁵ By this time, the majority of the British ruling class had been won over to Brexit. Two of the City's offshore tax

havens, Jersey and Guernsey, have already made their own deals with the EU to protect their financial sector.²⁷⁶

But just prior to this, on September 24th, the Supreme Court had ruled Johnson's proroguing of parliament to force through his Brexit deal illegal. Corbyn gave his thumbs up to McCluskey at the Labour Party conference then going on.²⁷⁷ He believed that the British ruling class was about to ditch Johnson. The Labour Left's naivety about the nature of the UK constitution and the majority of the British ruling class's commitment to upholding anything other than its own interests was soon to receive a very sharp knock. The ruling class took no further action, other than making Johnson apologise to the queen. It then allowed him to proceed with his plan B, a general election, without any further impediment. Johnson, having cleared out any last Remainers or even soft Brexiteers, had a united party. He soon forced Farage and the Brexit Party to stand aside in Tory held constituencies. The Tory Hard Right could see that their party held a significant lead in every poll. They upfronted the constitutional issue - 'Get Brexit Done' - whilst making it perfectly clear to the ruling class that this was to be accompanied by major attacks on the working class and a bonanza of lucrative contracts for those who contributed to party coffers.

This approach completely confounded Corbyn and other Left social democrats. They wanted to upfront economic and social issues, believing that the UK constitution was quite adequate for their purposes. Despite the constitution's massive ruling class privileges and all the anti-democratic weapons which it places in ruling class hands, that would be used against Corbyn's neo-Keynesian programme, it was the Right who were demanding radical political changes. They wanted even more centralised power.

The June EU election showed that Corbyn could no longer depend on holding both 'Leave' (a much-diminished prospect even in 2017) and 'Remain' supporters. Corbyn's party was completely divided, and he and his allies had succumbed to the combined Right Labour, Tory and Zionist/Israeli state offensive. He had suspended or pushed out more Left Labour figures than Tony Blair. The Right wing press talked up

the ‘Marxist threat’ but the British ruling class was already relishing the prospects of a Hard Right victory, following Corbyn’s headlong retreat. With no Plan B, and hardly a Plan A, Corbyn and his allies walked right into Johnson’s baited December 12th general election trap.

14. The contradiction between Neil still hanging on to the SWP’s ‘British road’ over Brexit, and his internationalist Left academic and activist work on racism and the trajectory of global capitalism, still needs to be resolved.

Soon after the June 2016 ‘Leave’ vote, Neil wrote *Scotland After Brexit* for *Jacobin*.²⁷⁸ He could see that the SNP leadership now had an argument to justify pushing for IndyRef2. There had been a majority ‘Remain’ vote in every Scottish seat, a remarkable result (unmatched by Leavers or Remainers in England, Wales or Northern Ireland). Neil argued that despite this, somehow the Left should remain orientated on Brexit.

Neil pointed to the narrowness of the ‘Remain’ vote in Moray (50.1%). He put this down to the “fact that the fishing industry had been devastated by the {EU’s} Common Fisheries Policy.”²⁷⁹ The main person leading the local campaign was the then chief executive of the Scottish Fishermen’s Federation (SFF), Bertie Armstrong, an Orange bigot, British chauvinist and racist. Those deep-sea fishermen, dependent on their jobs, supported Right wing Brexiteers for much the same reason that many workers at Faslane and its nearby communities dependent on the jobs provided there, vote for Labour Right winger, Jackie Baillie. However, one thing is sure. If the SFF can get the EU’s Common Fisheries Policy scrapped in UK waters, it will pursue a short term ‘boom then bust’ fishing bonanza, until the stocks are depleted. After this, the owners will demand massive public sums of money to decommission their fishing vessels, and concerns of for their former workforce will vanish.

In the Central Belt, there is also a section of the working class, which voted ‘Leave’ in 2016. Some of this is based on the shrinking Orange

communities, which not surprisingly also voted ‘No’ in 2014. But Neil also suggested that “majority of the missing voters were the most financially insecure, working-class ‘yes’ supporters, who if they had voted, would likely have voted for Leave”.²⁸⁰ It is every bit as likely, that compared to 2014, when they had voted en masse for ‘Yes’, they were uninspired either way by the EU, which is why they did not vote.

And there was also a small reactionary ethnic Scottish nationalist element to the ‘Yes’ vote in 2014 who might have supported ‘Leave’ in 2016. But its Rightist promoters had been marginalised by both the official SNP and unofficial, civic national ‘Yes’ campaigns. Brexit or Scoxit just provided them with a new opportunity to push their ethnic nationalist politics, with a call for stronger controls on immigration and a restricted franchise in any future independence referendum.

But you have to ask two things. What about all the missing ‘Remain’ votes, which would have come from EU migrant workers and 16-18 year olds denied the right to vote? And if Neil’s marginalised former ‘Yes’ voters were also ‘Leave’ voters, why did the Lexiters not draw on RIC’s earlier registration, canvassing and voter mobilisation experience, and go back to the same communities in 2016.²⁸¹

Neil had to concede that, “There {was} a ... pro-Remain demonstration following the referendum results in ... Edinburgh {where} their main focus {was} solidarity with migrants from both the European Union and elsewhere.”²⁸² This demonstration, held on June 14th, 2016, organised by the Migrant Solidarity Network (MSN), consisted primarily of migrant workers, to which RIC Edinburgh and RISE Edinburgh provided the main support.²⁸³ RIC Edinburgh took part in subsequent MSN meetings and organised its own local meeting on 31.8.16.²⁸⁴ It was from this that a new RIC Edinburgh banner was made, *Defend Migrant Rights, No One Is Illegal, People Before Profit, Let People Move Freely*. And beneath these, the banner reads, *Another Scotland, Another Europe, Another World is Possible – RIC at its Scottish internationalist best*. This banner has been present on several pro-migrant and anti-racist demonstrations and events since then.

Since the ‘No’ result in September 2014, the SNP leadership had been eager to keep conservative Scottish businesses on board. They argued, in the 2015 Westminster general election and beyond, that the UK government should implement the ‘federal {‘Devo-Max’} UK vow’ made by Gordon Brown for ‘Better Together’. However, the unionist reversal of the 2011 SNP gains in the 2016 Holyrood general election saw the Tories increase their MSPs by 16 to 31 and overtake Labour’s 24, whilst the SNP fell back by 6 to 63 MSPs. This was followed by a bigger reversal for the SNP when it lost 21 MPs in the 2017 Westminster general election, although it still had a majority, with 35 SNP MPs to the Tories’ 13, Labour’s 7 and the Lib-Dems’ 3.

Election setbacks soon dampened the SNP leadership’s initial talk of a post-Brexit UK now justifying IndyRef2. Instead, they argued that it was the duty of the party’s rank and file to go out and canvass support for Scottish independence until 60% support is registered in a series of opinion polls. Meanwhile the leadership would get on with its real job of building up a Scottish wannabe ruling class, courting them with Sustainable Growth Commission, courting them with Sustainable Growth Commission, set up in September 2016, and reporting in May 2018. For the SNP leadership, building this support involves controlling patronage at Holyrood and the Scottish local councils and trying to thwart Westminster intervention in Scotland by having a majority of the Scottish MPs there.

The SNP leadership was probably quite genuine in wanting an all-UK ‘Remain’ vote. It knew that, unlike 2014, arguing to break from a UK outside the EU would necessitate a controlled border between England and Scotland. Scottish businesses, in particular, were not going to be keen on this. It was the ‘Independista’ wing of the SNP who relished the prospects for Scottish ‘Remain’/England ‘Leave’ vote to maximise the differences on nationalist grounds.

Initially the unionist parties thought the SNP’s electoral setbacks in 2016 and 2017 marked the end of the SNP/Scottish independence ‘bubble’. The unionist dominated media salivated over the prospect of a Ruth Davidson-led, Scottish Tory government after the next general

election in 2021 (assuming, probably quite rightly, that Scottish Labour and the Lib-Dems would support it). This prospect was illusionary even then, but in the Tories' gallop to the Hard Right, they left Ruth Davidson behind. She began to look for other lucrative sources of income. But she was rewarded with a baronetcy to continue her obstructive work in a less central political arena. And with the descending political darkness following the 'Brexit' vote, the British ruling class began to resort more and more to the anti-democratic and bureaucratic features of the UK state to retain its control over Scotland.

But, as in earlier periods of political retreat over Scottish self-determination, the unionists have not been winning over people on the important cultural front. A combination of the authors, the Tory Alan Massie, and Gordon Brown supporter, J. K. Rowling, Tory composer, James Macmillan and the uber-unionist historian Neil Oliver are not leading any major cultural counter-offensive to give unionism a more popular basis.

Yet there continues to be a significant expansion of independence supporting artists. Kevin Williamson's former *Rebel Inc* has been superseded by three issues of *Neu Reekie*, which he edits with Michael Pederson. These showcase many, especially younger, artists, who are widely supported. The recent anthology *A Kist of Thistles*,²⁸⁵ edited by Jim Aitken, shows some overlap, but introduces other poets as well. There is also the playwright, David Greig, and the authors and playwrights, Alan Bissett and Kirstin Innes, and author Jenni Fagan amongst many others. On the musical front, Biffy Clyro, Glasvegas, Mogwai, The View and others have joined the older Scottish independence-supporting groups Belle and Sebastian, Franz Ferdinand and the Proclaimers. And even Scotland's premier historian, Sir Tom Devine has switched from Labour unionism to supporting an independent Scotland (and become a bit more radical in the process, highlighting Scotland's unionist and imperial past in the promotion of chattel slavery).²⁸⁶

This was also a period in which the impact of Ireland on Scotland's revolutionary and radical traditions became clearer to a greater number

of Socialists in Scotland. The centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising led to a number of new books, including *Scotland and the Easter Rising, Fresh Perspectives*, edited by Willy Maley.²⁸⁷ On March 16th, 2016, rs21 organised a meeting in Edinburgh entitled, *The 1916 Easter Rising: Learning from Revolutions Past*²⁸⁸, to which Shaun Harkin²⁸⁹ of the Irish SWP and the Derry branch PbP gave the opening. Neil and I also contributed.

Edinburgh rs21 had invited me because my own recent book, *The Ghost of James Connolly*,²⁹⁰ had been the first to emphasise the wider political significance of Connolly's Edinburgh years up to 1896, before he left for Ireland. Shaun's contribution placed its emphasis on the neglected class struggle within Ireland during the period immediately before and after the Easter Rising. However, he made no Irish connection with John Maclean (although recognising his role in the struggle against the First World War). Yet it was Maclean who did so much to place the Irish Republican struggle at the centre of socialist/communist activities, when the International Revolutionary Wave impacted on the UK from early 1919.

Henry Bell's book, *John Maclean, Hero of Red Clydeside*,²⁹¹ published in 2018, was another product of Scotland's 2014 'democratic revolution'. It did much to overcome earlier Left British unionist attempts (including by the old CPGB, Militant Labour and SWP) to dig a deep moat between John Maclean, the great working class educator, principled anti-war fighter and hero, and the post-1919 John Maclean, a 'demoralised and marginalised' advocate of a Scottish Workers' Republic. Bell shows that Maclean remained central to the revolutionary struggle until his death in 1923.

Maclean's battles within the infant communist movement were based on revolutionary principle. He had a better understanding of the centrality of the Irish Republican struggle against the UK state. The British ruling class was able to contain the wave of mainly economically motivated working class struggles, with the support of leading trade union and Labour figures, all strong adherents of the national Labourism they promoted in the First World War.²⁹² In

Ireland, the UK state had to resort to brutal official regular and irregular military forces, supplemented by fascist Loyalist paramilitaries.²⁹³ Maclean was very aware that the anti-imperialist and anti-unionist struggle against the UK state was its most politically revolutionary element. He linked this, though, with working class struggles throughout the British Empire. He was also always at the centre of solidarity with the ‘Russian’ Revolution and the with the Bolsheviks, although not uncritical in his support. He opposed those who resorted to attention-seeking adulation of Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

Gerry Cairns has also written, *The Red and The Green – A Portrait of John Maclean*.²⁹⁴ This has done much more to uncover Maclean’s links with the Irish Republicans.²⁹⁵ I used Gerry’s work when highlighting the nature and significance of Maclean’s struggles to set up a principled communist party in Scotland, as part of the new Communist International.²⁹⁶ I had been doing this research as part of my planned follow up to *From Davitt to Connolly*, to be entitled *From Connolly to Maclean*.

However, all this new work, coming from an increasing number of Socialist activists, writers and historians, still needs to be linked to the current political situation. This has been highlighted positively by the 2014 ‘democratic revolution’ and its challenge to the UK state; and negatively by the slide to Right populism (and potentially worse) through the linked 2016 Brexit vote and election of Donald Trump.

But with Glasgow ex-ISG(S) and current ISS members having abandoned RIC (and RISE too), the political space opened up for ‘All Under One Banner’ (AUOB). I made the case for the political significance of this development for the Left.²⁹⁷ Edinburgh RIC hosted the wider Left contingent on the large march in the city on October 6th, 2018.²⁹⁸ Furthermore, with the May government, backed by the DUP, being increasingly challenged not from the Left, but from the Right, the importance of having a republican perspective, that did not depend on Westminster’s willingness to grant a Section 30 Order, was becoming more evident. RIC had the potential to grow again, if it could organise nationally. This also meant joining the AUOB marches.

Meanwhile, in Ireland, PbP had followed the SWP and its breakaways in advocating Brexit and Irexit. It cost PbP in the 2017 Westminster election. In practice, though, PbP soon fell in behind Sinn Fein's 'No hard border' instead of a full-blooded Lexit Brexit/Irexit. Sinn Fein's complicity in the running of post-GFA Northern Ireland, did lead to a revival of PbP's fortunes at a local level in the 2019 local council elections, when it gained an extra 4 councillors. PbP was also able to claw back some of its lost 2017 votes in the 2019 Westminster general election. But, perhaps not surprisingly, it gave the 2019 EU elections a miss.

However, in the Republic of Ireland where Sinn Fein switched to putting on a Left Populist face, PbP's vote fell in the 2020 Dail elections (and would have fallen considerably further if Sinn Fein had contested more seats). This followed a poor showing by PbP (down 7 seats) and Solidarity (the SP(I)'s front organisation) (down 10 seats) in the 2019 Irish local elections.²⁹⁹

The divergent trajectories of Sinn Fein, South and North, have tended to disguise the nature of its Irish reunification project. This accepts the existing constitutional frameworks in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland as the vehicles for its reunification plans. Since Sinn Fein's big gains in the February 2020 Dail election, PbP has fallen behind its call for Irish reunification referenda, North and South. This represents a change from PbP's recent stance in Northern Ireland, where it had been to the forefront of attempts to get the Stormont government re-established³⁰⁰ (something now implemented by Boris Johnson).

There has been an increased questioning of the role of the British SWP by Irish SWP. The Irish SWP, particularly its PbP members in Northern Ireland, have maintained contacts with SWP breakaway organisations, highlighted by its willingness to address rs21-initiated meetings. The Irish SWP has gone down the 'Think Tank' road. In 2018 it converted itself into the Socialist Workers Network within PbP, which it sees as a movement.³⁰¹ However, there had already been

defections from PbP in the Republic of Ireland to the United Left, later Independents4Change³⁰² and now Right2Change.³⁰³

The alternative to ‘party’ sects, and sect fronts are not think-tanks. These may turn out to be no more accountable, and sometimes just provide a cover for the political ambitions of individuals or for a more localist political practice.³⁰⁴ There is clearly an immediate need for an all-islands, republican socialist, ‘internationalism from below’ alliance, which is prepared to challenge the Trump/Johnson, ‘America First’/‘Britain Second’, Right populist and reactionary unionist offensive across these islands. And defence of migrant workers and asylum seekers is key to fighting against any hard border and developing a socialist republican alternative 32 counties movement for Irish reunification.

Some, including Sinn Fein, have looked to the EU bureaucracy and the US Democrats to protect ‘Irish interests.’ But Joe Biden has his own plans to reinforce the US state and to attack workers, ethnic and other minorities. Like Sir Keir Starmer, he seeks ruling class approval, hoping that the current Hard Right government incumbent will lose support. Looking to the liberal wing of either the US or British ruling class for support is neither going to defend Irish workers nor lead to Irish reunification. And socialist republicans also need to challenge trade union bureaucrats, including the Left talkers, but Right walkers, who seek closer relationships with governments, and are unwilling to challenge the various and government and employer partnership deals and anti-trade union laws.

In an article, *Socialism after the United Kingdom*, which Neil wrote for *Jacobin*³⁰⁵ in September 2019, he conjectured that, “in the event of a possible yes pro-independence vote in Scotland... {this} would likely trigger similar moves in Wales and for the reunification of Ireland.” This is as far as Neil had gone in linking the fortunes of the Scottish, Welsh and Irish nations and the impact on the current UK state of the struggles for self-determination. This though was a welcome development in Neil’s thought. To make more of this, an analysis of the unionist nature of the UK state and the forms the national struggles

have taken in Ireland, Scotland and Wales would need to be taken; as well as an account of the ruling class's previous combined Peace Process and 'Devolution-all-round' strategy with its contradictions.³⁰⁶

Neil also wrote that, "simply raising slogans like "Bring down the Tories ... is less than helpful."³⁰⁷ This is an implied criticism of the SWP, which seems unable to get beyond 'Tories out, out, out' - either to be replaced by Labour or SNP. However, Neil's solution to the SWP's limited "Bring down the Tories" is to ask "how?". Although this is important, it still avoids an immediate constitutional alternative, such as the call for a Scottish Republic. This would represent a political challenge to Labour and SNP too.

In his article, Neil was still hampered by his attempts to justify Brexit, long after its political trajectory as part of the America First'/ 'Britain Second', Right populist offensive had become clear. He recognised that that Brexit hadn't quite panned out in the way that the Lexiters anticipated. "Sadly, the Brexit crisis has strengthened the EU against any dissenters."³⁰⁸ This is a moot point, as the Right populist governments in Eastern Europe await the further growth of Right populists in Western Europe. They are looking to overthrow the social neo-liberalism and internal freedom of movement (for non-White, non-Christians) of post Maastricht EU, just as Maastricht marked the end of the earlier Social and Christian Democrat, social market-based EEC/EC. The Tories are members of the European Conservatives and Reformists, the same international political alliance, as the Law and Justice Party in Poland and Vox in Spain.³⁰⁹ If the Tories weren't so wedded to illusions in Empire, or more likely becoming even more subordinate to Corporate America, they might have joined with other Hard Right parties in the EU, just as Thatcher and Blair ensured that the UK acted in as a trojan horse for US-style neoliberalism in the EEC/EU.

Neil highlighted the consequences of the Tories opting instead for Brexit. "Look at the mess Britain finds itself in... no one is going to imitate Britain now." The conclusion Neil draws from this though is, "Even some of the right-wing parties that are hostile to the EU... are no longer talking about leaving."³¹⁰ This is dangerously close to

pleading for a Red-Brown anti-EU alliance. Everywhere, the forces leading the break-up of the EU are from the Right, be they Golden Dawn in Greece or the DUP and other Loyalists in Northern Ireland. Their international allies, be they Trump or Putin, are also Right populists. Socialists would not be the beneficiaries of any state breakaways from the EU.

I don't think Neil would have followed the logic of where this type of argument was taking him. Neil looked to a Corbyn Labour victory over Johnson's Tories in a general election. Despite the evidence provided in the June 2019 EU election, that large sections of the working class were prepared to vote for the Right, Neil wrote that "the truth is Johnson's base is not the working class north, south, east or west." Taking comfort from the fact that Johnson, unlike Farage, "is too much an obvious product of the English ruling class, the very model of a bumbling public schoolboy", he thought that not many Labour votes were unlikely to transfer from Farage's Brexit Party to Johnson's Tories. Neil was also certain that Johnson's "persona... will be the kiss of death in...Wales." But, in December, Johnson's Tories massively breached Labour's 'Red Wall' constituencies in the deindustrialised North and Midlands. In Wales Labour lost 6 seats leaving them with 22 on 41% of the vote, whilst the Tories gained 6 seats giving them 14 on 36% of the vote.³¹¹

Trump, a political outsider with no American establishment graces (albeit still a member the US ruling class), won 46% of the vote on a 55% turnout in the 2016 presidential election; whilst Johnson's Tories won 44% (and the Tories weren't standing in Northern Ireland) of the vote on a 67% turnout in the December 12th, 2019 general election. Despite Neil's claims, many Labour Brexiteers, including those in Wales, were prepared to vote for a Tory party led by "an obvious product of the ruling class".

Neil predicted that the Corbyn-led Labour Party "will probably argue for another referendum and support Remain." Instead, Labour went on to enter the December general election committed to negotiating a better Brexit and then putting that to a referendum against Remain. In

this Corbyn and his inner coterie hoped to hold on to both Leavers and Remainers. They still thought that traditional Labour voters would not be so interested in constitutional issues. They produced another manifesto with some new Left social democratic economic and social policies, *Its Time for Real Change*, believing this would do the same trick as the 2017 manifesto, *For the Many not the Few*.

Neil still argued that it was possible that, “Corbyn and Labour could win a general election and form a government with the support of the SNP.” But the Labour manifesto constitutional proposals were closer to the Tories, just as in 2015 and 2017. “In the early years of the UK government we will not agree to a Section 30 order request if it comes from the Scottish government”.³¹² This ruled out any post-election deal with the SNP, which since 2015 had a better voting record at Westminster than Labour. The Centre SNP leadership was able to rein in its Right wing. Corbyn was not able to rein in the Labour Right. And there were times when SNP MPs were better than the Labour Left, e.g. over migration.

By the time of Labour’s ‘historic defeat’ on December 12th, 2019, followed in early 2020, by the collapse of the Left as Sir Keir Starmer reasserted full neo-Blairite control over the party, Neil was sadly too ill to make a new assessment. This could have led to a re-evaluation of his political predictions. I argued earlier that Neil’s *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood* and *Discovering the Scottish Revolution, 1692-1746* originally designed to buttress the case against Scottish independence, already contained arguments which anticipated a possible switch to supporting the exercise of Scottish self-determination (see section 8).

At the same time that Neil was giving his political support to Lexit, his academic work (which always took on a political characteristic) was taking him into two arenas which, in the light of Labour’s ‘historic defeat’ on the December 12th and the victory of Right populism, suggest the need for a reassessment of the political situation as significant as that he made in 2010, when he switched to supporting Scottish independence.

One of these arenas was Neil's work on racism in Scotland. As an example of Neil's non-sectarianism, I was invited in 2018 to contribute to the book *No Problem Here: Racism in Scotland*,³¹³ at a time we differed quite profoundly over Brexit. Neil had already introduced me to Satnam Virdee, whose *Racism, Class and the Racialised Outsider* very much influenced my own contribution.³¹⁴ I don't think that my article, which examined the rise and fall of Scottish-Britishness, would have been considered for such a book without the political situation created by IndyRef1. This put a question mark over Scottish-British subjecthood, whilst also raising the issue of who, given Scotland's deep involvement in the UK's imperial past and with British racism, would be included in any new post-independence Scottish citizenship.

Furthermore, it had already become abundantly obvious, following the Brexit vote and May's government, that further major attacks on migrants (extended to the 3 million EU residents) and asylum seekers were being prepared, and that Corbyn-led Labour was doing little to oppose these. Nor did Labour put up any more resistance once Johnson took office. A spirited defence of the 'internationalism from below' legacy of the EU is required. In immediate terms this means defending all those threatened with deportation. It also means supporting the campaign for all EU residents to be given the vote.³¹⁵ From February 20th, 2020, in a further extension of the anti-Brexit, Scottish government's civic national approach, the Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation), election rights "and candidacy rights will be extended to foreign nationals with indefinite leave to remain and to those with pre-settled status."³¹⁶

Meanwhile another pro-Brexit British government, building on the ethnic nationalist franchise for the 2016 referendum, and the illegal denial of voting for many EU residents in the 2019 Euro-election, is now planning new voter registration rules designed to make it harder for the most marginalised in the UK to vote.³¹⁷ "First they came for the asylum seekers, then they came for the migrants, then they came for the...."

The other arena in which Neil was working was the development of Uneven and Combined Development Theory. Neil had been making a major contribution to reviving and applying this theory to global history. It was at the conference entitled, ‘Uneven and Combined Development for the 21st Century’, held in Glasgow between September 5-7th, 2019, which Neil took a central part in organising, that he took ill, following its opening event.

Alexander Anievas, who had been inspired by Neil’s work, addressed this conference. He is also the co-author, along with Kerem Nisancioglu, of *How the West Came to Rule*. I was reading this book, anticipating discussions with Neil, when, thinking he was recovering, I was shocked to learn of his death. I wrote an article, *The West No Better than All the Rest*,³¹⁸ inspired by *How the West Came to Rule*.

This article concluded that, “Corporate capital’s drive to maintain global hegemony is producing its own ‘internationalism from below’ opposition. And this extends far further than Academia. This has been highlighted in these islands by significant struggles, e.g. of Turkish GAMA workers in Ireland and the Latin American Workers Association-led London cleaners’ strikes. Such developments enable those of us with longer-standing domestic Scottish connections to develop a shared political practice, which can overcome Brexit provincialisation, or Scotland’s subordination within a corporate capital dominated global order.

Neil Davidson is a very good example of the potential for such links. He came from the opposite social direction to those in Academia {such as Anievas and Nisancioglu} with a recent migrant background. He had longstanding Scottish roots in Buchan and Aberdeen. But Neil went out from his job in Glasgow University to address academic and political meetings across the world.”³¹⁹

I started this extended article with the grey granite of Neil’s youth and my student years in Aberdeen. This grey granite gives the city a sombre look on poorly-lit winter days. However, on bright summer days, the quartz in the granite glistens. Neil’s work was rarely sombre and often glistened. It is the responsibility of other Socialists to create the

political heat that can add Neil's glistening 'quartz' to a 'feldspar' to form the 'red granite' bedrock for a future emancipated, liberated and self-determined world.

16.10.20

Endnotes

¹ Neil Davidson, *Discovering the Discovering the Scottish Revolution, 1692-1746*, Pluto Press, 2003

² Neil Davidson, *How Revolutionary Were the Bourgeois Revolutions*, Haymarket Books, 2012

³ Neil Williamson, a member of the International Marxist Group, wrote this for the *Scottish Government Yearbook* in 1979. This was a reflection of the confidence of the post-1968 generation (which I also very much felt part of) and that fact that official circles continued to feel the need to be informed about our activities! Tragically Neil died later that year.

⁴ Hamish Henderson's great Scottish internationalist anthem, up there with the Eugene Pottier's *Internationale*, Carlo Tuzzi's *Bandiera Rossa* and John Lennon's *Imagine*.

⁵ <https://www.rs21.org.uk/neil-davidson>

⁶ Solidarity was a British libertarian socialist organisation inspired by the Cornelius Castororiadis (Paul Cardan) led Socialisme ou Barbarie breakaway from Trotskyism in 1948.

⁷ I was born in 1949 in Edinburgh, my mother's home city, whilst my father worked as an engineer in the merchant navy. A year after I was born, my family moved to North Shields on Tyneside, where my father had been brought up. He had been an apprentice fitter in Smiths Docks before the war and became a fitter once again. By the mid-1950s the docks had fallen back on

a lot of short time working, so my father left going on to a number of jobs, before the family moved back to Edinburgh. in 1963. From 1967-72, I was in Aberdeen for 5 years as a student, doing a degree in geography, followed by a teacher training course. Since then, I moved back to and have lived continuously in Edinburgh. I worked as a geography and modern studies teacher for the old Midlothian County Council (1972-5), Lothian Regional Council (1975-1996) and City of Edinburgh Council (1996-2007).

⁸ This provided an opening to Oakley Miners' Welfare Club, where we sold 50 *Socialist Workers* in one evening. All the other miners' clubs in Fife were under tight Communist Party control and anyone trying to sell *Socialist Worker* would have been threatened!

⁹ Fractions are not to be confused with factions. The name 'fraction' was given to particular occupation/trade union groups officially constituted within IS/SWP.

¹⁰ It was at one of these, held in Labour's 'Red Belt' steel city constituency of Sheffield Brightside, where left winger, Joan Maynard was MP, that I first appreciated a significant difference between Scottish and English culture. The SWP meeting was held in late 1977, at the same time as the Golden Jubilee. Working class Brightside was festooned in union jacks and bunting, whilst even in many middle class never mind working class areas of Edinburgh, such open support for royalty was rare.

¹¹ I was asked to be an Edinburgh SWP full-timer. However, I had a low opinion of appointed full timers, whether party or trade union and declined. Working in Scottish Rank & File Teachers, with its own vibrant political and social life, was personally very rewarding.

¹² I had been in the leadership of the Scottish Rank & File Teachers' (SR&FT) initiated 3 months of independent (unofficial) strike action from 1974-5. This rocked Scottish education and led to the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) changing from being professional association to becoming a trade union. In many ways this followed the impact of the post-1968 generation at a time of expanding teacher and FE lecturer recruitment. The International Socialists (IS) and the International Marxist Group (IMG) were the two political organisations at the centre of SR&FT, but it included others. SR&FT became the Left in the EIS. A group of women teachers, who were so central to Lothian R&FT, are currently writing a pamphlet about this politically and socially significant rank and file group. They include Myra Galletly and Geraldine Gould (both ex-IS/SWP), Annie Macrae (ex SWP), Anne Darling and Elaine Murray (non-party). (And if Jane Colkett, ex-IMG and SWP, had still been alive she would have contributed too)

¹³ These included members of Workers Fight, Workers Power and what became the Revolutionary Communist Group. Their members in Edinburgh were more abstract propagandist in their political approach. Gordon Brewer, Scotland's Jeremy Paxman, was then a member.

¹⁴ <https://www.rs21.org.uk/2020/05/07/obituary-neil-davidson-1957-2020/>

¹⁵ <https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2017/04/10/antonio-gramscis-reception-in-scotland/>

¹⁶ With a friend we bought cheap 15 day rail and bus tickets but also hitchhiked the extensive gaps without public transport. We covered the whole of Ireland from Derry in the north, Cape Clear Island in the south, Killary Harbour in the west to Dublin in the east. We had no idea why we were questioned crossing the border into Derry (unbeknownst to us an IRA Border campaign had finished just 2 two years before) or the nature of an organisation, we picked up as 'Shin Fane', selling raffle tickets at a ceilidh we attended.

¹⁷ It is interesting to compare the political breadth of the *Red Paper's* contributors to its attempted emulator, *Class Nation and Socialism: The Red Paper on Scotland*, produced in 2014 (Murdo Ritchie - <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2014/03/15/on-how-the-vetigialleft-is-failing-to-understand-the-political-life-of-scotland-today/#more-6726>) and *Power for Scotland's People* produced in 2012 (Allan Armstrong <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2012/10/08/scottish-self-determination-and-the-actually-existing-labour-movement-2/>) The narrow political base of the later *Red Paper's* authors is a reflection of their greater political isolation and their inability to understand that a UK state in crisis is no longer going to sanction radical reform. Gordon Brown, editor of the first *Red Paper* didn't contribute to the second!

¹⁸ The striving by *Calgacus* for an all-islands internationalist perspective was indicated by the addition of Brian Trench (Ireland) and Ned Thomas (Wales) to an editorial board which included Ray Burnett, Hamish Henderson, John McGrath, Sorley Maclean, Harry McShane and Tom Nairn.

¹⁹ We now know that preparations for the paras' murderous shootings in Derry had already taken place in Ballymurphy in West Belfast. Callum Macrae, who had been a SR&FT member in Edinburgh, produced the film, *The Ballymurphy Precedent* (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/aug/28/bloody-sunday-ballymurphy-british-soldiers-belfast-derry/>). Callum had originally been a member of the IS breakaway, Workers Fight (WF), which later went on to

become the Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL). WF criticised IS for not fully supporting Republican and Palestinian struggles. Then WF joined the Labour Party. In the words of song writer and singer, Jonathon Kelly, “No one makes it through this wood, coming out as they went in”! (*Ballad of Cursed Anna*). The AWL emerged from the Labour Party as social unionists (giving support to the Loyalist veto) and social imperialists (defending Zionism). Fortunately, Callum did not follow them.

²⁰ Bob Tait was also instrumental in bringing leading IMG member Robin Blackburn to Aberdeen to stand as university rector, Blackburn was involved in *Red Mole*, along with Tariq Ali. After the 1968 Riots, following the large anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, London became the British epicentre for the revolutionary Left. The 1971-2 Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (UCS) Work-In was instrumental in allowing the CPGB, in particular, to reclaim the vanguard role of Red Clydeside in the British workers’ movement. This contributed to their activity around *Scottish Marxist*. However, the Trotskyist organisations in Scotland were so firmly excluded from UCS by the CPGB, that this tended to confirm their more London orientation at the time.

²¹ Although the Luxemburgist approach to Scottish self-determination was to have a brief life in the SWP, Howard Wollman, SWP member (who resigned in 1983), lecturer and SR&F lecturer member, was to later use this approach in *Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (2002), co-authored with Philip Spencer.

²² Duncan Hallas (1925-2002), a longstanding Trotskyist, joined IS in 1968 and became a writer and full timer for the IS/SWP.

²³ The IS Opposition (ISO) had arisen in 1975. Instead of the undiluted Rank & File line, which I, in my naivety, confidently put forward, the ISO argued for work within Broad Lefts, where they already organised a large proportion of the Left. Birmingham IS was at the centre of this opposition, because it was a stronghold of the Broad Left, Engineers’ Charter. My experience was based on the very different situation in the EIS, where the leading CPGBers allied with the Right in the union against the Left, and where the joint IS/IMG led Scottish Rank & File Teachers had been able to lead a three month long independent strike from 1974-5. I attended and spoke at the British Teachers Fraction Aggregate where Broad Left versus Rank & File was debated. I felt quite uncomfortable at how the majority treated the ISO supporting teachers, and spoke afterwards to one their members, a shell-shocked Mary Pearson, whom I respected. Mary was and remained a leading figure in the Troops Out Movement. After the split, top-down pressure was exerted to socially isolate the now ex-members. Again, this made me feel uncomfortable. I was to receive the same treatment when I left the SWP in 1983, culminating in

a threat of physical violence from a full-timer at an SWP fringe meeting at the EIS conference in 1987.

²⁴ The Scottish Labour Party was founded in January 1976 by Labour MPs, Jim Sillars and John Robertson, and Labour senior researcher, Alex Neil. It soon developed into a Jim Sillars vanity party, expelling various groups, including the IMG, before folding in 1979. This proved to be the first example of Scotland's negative contribution to Left politics, followed by George Galloway's Respect (2004-15) and Tommy Sheridan's Solidarity (2006 -?). The SWP cheered on Respect and Solidarity. But it wasn't until the SWP launched its Lexit Brexit campaign that they gave Scoxit-supporting Sillars a platform in Glasgow, where he argued for 'non-racist' immigration controls.

²⁵ Tom Johnson was co-founder of the ILP's ecumenical *Forward*, to which both John Maclean (British Socialist Party) and James Connolly (Socialist Party of Ireland). *Forward* supported Scottish and Irish Home Rule.

²⁶ IS in Wales had already circulated a document *Welsh Nationalism and International Socialism*. Plaid Cymru had just won 3 MPs in the October 1974 general election. The document counterposed an abstract propagandist international socialism to the exercise of Welsh self-determination, which was identified solely with Plaid. There was no analysis of the unionist nature of the UK state and how this created the basis for the National Question in Wales. (Robert Griffiths *International Socialists or Imperial Chauvinists?* in *Y Saeth*, no. 2 Summer 1976 and reply, Martin Robathan, *Socialism, Wales and the Plaid – An IS View* in *Y Saeth* no. 3 Autumn, 1976.) I don't know if an amended version of the document was ever published.

²⁷ And to be fair to Duncan Hallas, then living in Tooting, he had to rein in my decided Luxemburgist tendencies, whilst also trying to encourage a young comrade. He gently tried to shoehorn my writing into what he considered a more orthodox Marxist-Leninist framework. Hallas had worked in Scotland in the 1950s, but this was when the Conservative & Unionist Party had gained an absolute majority of the Westminster vote in 1955. On the political level, the 'National Question' had hardly figured at all.

²⁸ The SWP also published *We Shall Be All – recent chapters in the history of working class struggle in Scotland*, edited by Laurie Flynn. Four chapters were devoted to important workers struggles. It drew the conclusion that there was no Scottish Question, and that all-British unity was required to build a revolutionary socialist party – the Socialist Worker Party. This was the thinking which led to the SWP's slogan during the 1979 Devolution referendum – 'No to Devolution – Yes to Revolution! And they got their 'No to Devolution', but instead if devolution we got Margaret Thatcher! This sort of economic

thinking continues to underpin the SWP's politics. During the 2016 EU referendum, their position was 'No to the EU, Yes to Lexit'. And they got their 'No to the EU', but instead of Lexit, we got Theresa May then Boris Johnson!

²⁹ Neil Williamson was then the leading light in the Scottish IMG, and their main theoretician here before his death in October 1979. Earlier that year he had written an assessment – *Ten Years After – The Revolutionary Left in Scotland*. He worked quite closely with the SWP. The IMG's Queen Street office in Glasgow was next door. SR&FT was the SWP's and IMG's main arena of shared political activity. Mick Napier spoke for the SWP at Neil's well attended commemoration meeting in Edinburgh's Assembly Rooms.

³⁰ Ray Burnett, *In the Shadow of Calton Hill in Commemorating Ireland – History, Politics and Culture*, edited by Eberhard Bort (2004).

³¹ The best-known example was Gwyn A. Williams, (<https://biography.wales/article/s8-WILL-ALF-1925>) who made the transition from being a CPGB supporting Left Welsh-British unionist to becoming a Welsh internationalist supporter of independence. Like Hamish Henderson in Scotland, Williams was early influenced by Gramsci. William's book, *The Welsh in Their History* (1982) had a big influence on me, whilst the TV series, *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, which he made with establishment, Welsh historian Wynford Vaughan Thomas, was a model of how education should be conducted. I used it with my sixth year modern studies tutorials.

³² *Some Criticisms of the Left's Analysis of the SNP*. This led to an invite, from Des Tierney, another SR&FT member, to an IMG meeting, which included a discussion with Neil Williamson. This, along with my meeting Steve Freeman, a London SWP member, and initiator of the Republican Faction contributed to my change to critical support for Devolution.

³³ Harry Tait left the SWP. He later wrote *The Ballad of Sawney Bean* (1990) (https://littleprofessor.typepad.com/the_little_professor/2015/12/index.html.) He appeared again in the *Beyond Broadwords and Bayonets* debate (<http://republicancommunist.org/blog/?s=harry+tait#SectionOne>).

³⁴ Henry Maitles, who was then a member of SR&FT remained in the SWP and later became a Professor of Education at the West of Scotland University.

³⁵ The emergence of the Republican Faction on the Left was considered to be significant enough to be given the attention of a 5 page article by Norman Easton in *Radical Scotland*, no. 2.

³⁶ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2019/07/16/brian-higgins/>

³⁷ In the 1979 general election, Thatcher had successfully taken over the National Front's racist mantle, and their rise was brought to an end. Having separated fighting 'Nazis' from fighting racism, the SWP played little part in opposing the stepped-up state racist offensive, which produced the Brixton Riots in 1981.

³⁸ It is arguable that the SWP would have been better served by working with socialist feminists in the Working Women's Charter. However, the nearer you got to London, the stronger the sectarian divisions. WWC was closely associated with the IMG. It was for similar sectarian reasons that the SWP backed a Rank & File Teachers in England, separate from the IMG backed Socialist Teachers Association. The SWP and IMG, however, worked together in the Scottish Rank & File Teachers.

³⁹ The meeting which had been called to close down the Building Worker Group had invited Tony Cliff to make his case. Brian, still an SWP member opposed him. All but one other BWG member (another SWP member) voted to keep the BWG. After this affront to Cliff, it is not surprising that Brian was expelled.

⁴⁰ The United Irishmen also included women such as Ann Devlin, Betsy Gray and Mary Ann McCracken.

⁴¹ My annual trips to London for the SWP's Marxism events always took me to Colletts Political Bookshop at 66, Charing Cross Road that sold papers from a vast number of Trotskyist and Maoist sects. The further north you went, the fewer their number. Out of curiosity I usually bought some of their papers or pamphlets. When I came across late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries Covenanted tracts in a Wigtown second hand bookshop I was struck by their similarity.

⁴² <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2011/05/27/20-years-after-the-poll-tax-lessons-for-the-anti-cuts-movement/>

⁴³ The A-PTF's original intention had been to force Scotland's Labour controlled councils not to collect the poll tax and the STUC to ensure that the unions involved in its administration refused to cooperate. However, when both the Scottish Labour Party and the STUC backed down, a very successful non-payment campaign, which was extended to England and Wales, forced Thatcher's government to back down. This, along with the failure of her Anglo-Irish Agreement to break Irish Republicanism, led to her resignation in 1990.

⁴⁴ I was first introduced to the Welsh Socialist Republicans of Cymru Goch, when Marc Jones invited me to address the protestors burning their poll tax registration forms in the slate quarrying town of Blaenau Ffestiniog in Gwynedd. The organisers allowed me to speak in English, when I reassured them that I came from Edinburgh (Din Eidyn) where the Ancient British or proto-Welsh language had been spoken but died out 1200 years ago!

⁴⁵ Fred Crayk (an RDG and Lothian R&FT member), and later to become a well-regarded artist, provided the cartoons for these bulletins.

⁴⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burford#English_Civil_Wars_-_the_Banbury_Mutiny

⁴⁷ Although the majority had voted to retain the SR&FT organisation in 1982, the SWP was dominant in Glasgow and closed the local group down. There was clearly a big gap in the Left's national organisation. However, in 1985, the Scottish Federation of Socialist Teachers (SFST) was formed. This included Lothian R&FT, West Dunbartonshire and Lanarkshire Teacher Action Groups, the Campaign for a Fighting Union (a Broad Left group in Glasgow), and smaller groups of activists in Aberdeen, Argyll, Fife, Ayrshire and Dumfries, as well as college lecturers in Fightback (Strathclyde) and Lothian R&F Lecturers. The SWP constituted their own group within the SFST, although in practice this meant working within the local SFST groups. The biggest success of the SFST was organising the campaign, which killed off the Scottish Education Department/EIS leadership's Nineties Review. It took almost another decade before the government was able to impose its (anti) educational agenda through the McCrone Deal.

⁴⁸ When *An Education Charter for Schools* was finally agreed on 28.4.90 at an SFST conference, the Scottish Left was in a transitional phase over the significance of Scottish self-determination. Lothian R&FT's proposal to include Scotland's right of self-determination was diluted to "Recognition of self-determination for Scotland, expressed in national democratic control of education from nursery to higher level." But the *Charter* also recognised the recent cultural upsurge in Scotland, and the significance in the past of John Maclean's Scottish Labour College. The SFST's shorter *What is the Federation* (handed out at EIS conferences) placed it "in the tradition of the Scottish Socialist Teachers Society, which included John Maclean and John Maxton in its ranks". By the time of the 'IndyRef1' campaign, SFST was to affiliate to the Radical Independence Campaign.

⁴⁹ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2012/11/20/cultural-debates-and-struggles-over-the-wider-meaning-of-self-determination-in-scotland-2/>

⁵⁰ Elaine Murray and I, both Lothian R&FT members, were delegated at the last minute by the Edinburgh Local Executive of the EIS to attend this inspiring event.

⁵¹ <https://citystrolls.com/the-day-noam-chomsky-came-to-town/>

⁵² Farquhar McLay, *Workers City – The Real Glasgow Stands Up*

⁵³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Book_Fair_of_Radical_Black_and_Third_World_Books

⁵⁴ <https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2012/05/02/rebel-inc-20-years-on-ready-for-more/>. And, in its own way, several of the writers in *Rebel Inc*, especially Irving Welsh, contributed to the cultural/political renaissance of Leith. ⁵⁴ The Proclaimers (who later gave money to the SSP) were another big factor in this, with their album *Persevere* and their musical *Sunshine on Leith*. Bourgeois Edinburgh very much needed this shake-up! Before this, Leith had long been dominated by British unionism, with Loyalism having had considerable historical impact. A century earlier, James Connolly, from the ethnically mixed Cowgate, had recognised Leith's political underbelly. ⁵⁴ Connolly's ghost would have relished Hibs' Scottish cup victory in 2016 (on the centenary of the Easter Rising), 105 years after this was last achieved in 1902 when Connolly was still alive. Working class Leith went on to vote 'Yes' in the 2014 IndyRef1.

⁵⁵ *Word Power – An Interview with Elaine Henry*, Allan Armstrong *Emancipation & Liberation*, issue 19. pp. 40-43.

⁵⁶ I was in the editorial board of *Radical Scotland*, and contributed regular articles, until it threw its weight behind the Scottish Constitutional Convention (SCC) and the Claim of Right. In the SCC lay the origins of Labour's 1997 Devolution Bill, albeit considerably watered down. I also contributed to *Cencrastus*.

⁵⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_Constitutional_Convention#Scottish_Constitutional_Convention

⁵⁸ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/tag/interviewing-jim-slaven/>

⁵⁹ In 1991. Brian Higgins and I wrote *Communism – The Ever Present Spectre within Capitalism – Our Analysis and Draft Political Programme*. This marked a definitive break with the Marxist/Leninist/Trotskyist/IS tradition still upheld by the RDG minority. Instead, it placed us within the socialist republican 'internationalism from below' tradition represented in these islands

by James Connolly and John Maclean. To mark this break, we initially called ourselves The Communist Tendency (TCT). However, before the 2008 Crisis there was little consideration given on the Left to the idea of communism, so we soon opted to call ourselves the Republican Workers Tendency (RWT), based on the politics of the TCT's immediate programme. The RDG minority, remaining an External Faction of the SWP, reclaimed the RDG's name and became a decidedly social unionist grouping. When the Scottish Socialist Alliance and Scottish Socialist Party were formed, the RDG Mark 2 allied with the CPGB (*Weekly Worker*), Alliance for Workers Liberty and a few inveterate British Left unionists from Glasgow, to form the {British} Workers Unity platform).

⁵⁹ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2019/07/16/brian-higgins/>

⁶¹ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2012/11/28/terry-liddle-1948-2012-comrade/#more-4335>

⁶² It was my article in the SRF pamphlet, *Jacobites or Covenanters, Which Tradition?* which Neil first criticised in his *Scottish Revolution, 1692-1745*, p. 291. The SRF produced another pamphlet, *White Settlers or Jockbribs, Who is to Blame?*

⁶³ In one sense, although I don't know if Gerry would appreciate the comparison, I see him in some ways as the mirror image of Neil. Gerry a Left Scottish nationalist, and SRSM then SRSp member in the SSP, avoided the sectarianism, and the anti-English attitudes found in the SRSM. Gerry's contributions at wider gatherings are passionate and good humoured. He has conducted his own valuable, independent and path-breaking research into John Maclean, which I have certainly leaned much from (<http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2018/06/22/allan-armstrong-reviews-the-red-and-the-green-by-gerard-cairns/>).

⁶⁴ The Edinburgh Marxist Forum (EMF) contained a wide-ranging group of activists from the Lothians APTU, including republican socialists, autonomous marxists, and dissident trotskyists. Not all went on to give their support to the SSA. However, whilst the EMF existed, a wide range of marxists were invited, including Richie Venton (SML) on the Liverpool Dockers' Strike, and Neil Davidson (SWP) on his book *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood*.

⁶⁵ The groups which took part in this were the SML, especially Tommy Sheridan, Alan McCombes and Keith Baldassara in Glasgow, Colin Fox and Catriona Grant in Edinburgh and Phil Stott and in Dundee; the Scottish Socialist Movement (which had been in the Labour Party) especially Allan Green; some from the Communist Party of Scotland, especially Bill Bonnar; and some

feminists, especially Carolyn Leckie. They were all to hold leadership positions until the split in the SSP a decade later. SML went on to form their own platform in the SSA, the International Socialist Movement (ISM), which published *Frontline*. There was also an overlap with members from the Fourth Internationalist (USEC) British Section, which became Socialist Resistance. Gordon Morgan (USEC) became the SSA, then SSP Treasurer. USEC supporters never constituted themselves as an official platform.

⁶⁶ The Edinburgh based Red Republicans, which, included the RWT, Bob Goupillot (former Labour Party supporter then Anarchist) and Iain Robertson (former Labour activist and candidate) and others from the old Lothians Anti-Poll Tax Federation, joined up. In the process of affiliating to the SSA, the Red Republicans met the Federal Republicans, who included Mary Ward, later MacGregor and Nick Clarke (both ex-CPGB-WW and then RDG mark 2; whilst Mary had also once been the Dundee Labour leader) and we formed the Republican Communist Network (RCN), publishing the *Republican Communist* (5 issues). After the break with the RCN in England, the RCN in Scotland went on to publish 24 issues of *Emancipation & Liberation*, which continues as blog to this day (<http://republicancommunist.org/blog/>).

The Red Republicans (RR) and Federal Republicans both had fraternal organisations in England – the RR in the English Republican Forum (RR), and the FR in the CPGB/WW and RDG mark2. Some dissident trotskyists also joined the RCN. However, it became clear that neither the CPGB-WW nor RDG mark 2 were wanting to build the RCN in England, seeing it only as a vehicle for “missionary work” (the expression of Jack Conrad’ leader of the CPGB/WW) in Scotland. They were more interested in making overtures to the social unionist and social imperialist Alliance for Workers Liberty.

As a result of their inaction and unionist orientation in England, the RCN in Scotland decided to work independently. The Federal Republicans in Dundee broke with their former comrades in England. The RCN became united on the basis of a republican socialist, ‘internationalism from below’, ‘break-up of the UK and British Empire road to communism’ platform. We were also joined by USEC-supporting Deidre McCartan (who had once been active in their Irish section) and her partner Charlie Rees. Others, who had been in the SNP or in no party joined the RCN. The RCN developed its own contacts in England, Ireland and Wales.

⁶⁷ The SML worked to exclude the James Connolly Society. Even as the SML began to break with the Left British unionist tradition in Scotland, they still clung to it in relation to Northern Ireland where their parent organisation sometimes flirted with working class Loyalism. Despite the SML’s success in

excluding the JCS, the RCN and others, including ex-*Liberation* members, continued to work with the JCS.

⁶⁸ The ISM published *Frontline* from 2001-6. Some, once they gained leadership positions in the SSP, ceased being active in the ISM. They constituted themselves more as an inner undeclared leadership faction. Those still active in the ISM split in 2006 over ‘Tommygate.’

⁶⁹ *Red* ran to 5 issues from autumn 1996 to summer 1999. The editorial board had members from SML, the CPS, Scottish Socialist Movement, *Liberation*, Red Republicans (Edinburgh) and Federal Republicans (Dundee). The SML did not have a majority. As a consequence, *Red* was open to a wider debate than the SML leadership desired, particularly in relationship to Republicanism and Ireland. *Red* was able to get republican socialists, Jim Slaven of (James Connolly Society) and Daisy Mules (Sinn Fein, treasurer, Derry Trades Council, and ex-assistant secretary Edinburgh Trades Council and former member of SR&FT) to contribute. However, once Tommy Sheridan had been elected MSP in 1999 and the SSP has become more firmly grounded, the SSP leadership said they could no longer afford *Red*, and that the money was required for *Scottish Socialist Voice* and electoral campaigns. Financial backing was removed and *Red* was closed down. In later years, the Republican Communist Network’s *Emancipation & Liberation* tried to fill the gap, opening its pages to all members.

⁷⁰ However, others, not in the Glasgow SML section of the SSA leadership, e.g. Rosie Kane and Catriona Grant (Edinburgh SML) did not support the SSA throwing itself into the arms of ‘Scotland Forward’. Others supported an independent Socialist campaign for Devolution. The Red Republicans in Edinburgh SSA were able to win support for an active Abstentionist campaign. This involved the distribution of ‘Scottish Republic’ stickers for use on the referendum ballot forms. They were distributed from stalls, at ‘Yes’ meetings and at Hibernian FC’s Easter Road. The Red Republicans’ predictions about the result proved to be correct with a large Yes’ vote. There was a low voter turnout in many working class areas in Glasgow, in marked contrast to ‘IndyRef1’, in 2014.

⁷¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomous_communities_of_Spain

⁷² These include, East of England, East Midlands, South East, North East, North West, South West, West Midlands, Yorkshire & Humberside, and Greater London (which is more like a global city-state) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regions_of_England#List_of_regions)

⁷³ The City of London even has special officer at Westminster, the Remembrancer.

⁷⁴ Initially the GLA did not quite workout as Tony Blair wanted, since Ken Livingstone, standing as a Left Independent became mayor, beating both the New Labour and Conservative candidates. However, he didn't challenge the undemocratic basis of the GLA, but appointed trotskyist Socialist Action advisors, rather than New Labour's intended businessmen, but still on very lucrative salaries.

⁷⁵ The Northern Ireland Peace Forum, set up in 1996, involved the Unionist/ Loyalist parties - Ulster Unionists, DUP, UK Unionists, Progressive Unionist Party (for the Ulster Volunteer Force) and the Ulster Democratic Party (for the Ulster Defence Association); the Nationalist/Republican parties - SDLP and Sinn Fein (for the IRA); the liberal unionist, Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (which wanted to build a non-sectarian Northern Ireland within the UK state); and the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and local Labour groups. As soon as the bi-sectarian Good Friday Agreement was confirmed, the parties not falling into the two camps given privileged voting rights, came under increased pressure. The Labour Party of Northern Ireland failed to get elected in the 1998 Northern Ireland Assembly election and disappeared. The Women's Coalition failed to get elected in the 2003 election and also disappeared. APNI hung on at the margins, until it took an up a minister's job in 2010, providing a fig-leaf for the bi-sectarian Northern Ireland Executive

⁷⁶ The Republican Worker Tendency had already flagged this up in 1994 with the pamphlet, *The Downing Street Agreement – 'New Unionism' and the Communities of Resistance*.

⁷⁷ New Labour corruption wasn't just tied to local government, as shown by Scottish Labour leader Wendy Alexander's acceptance of money from a Jersey tax exile (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wendy_Alexander#Resignation_over_foreign_donation) and Peter Mandelson's numerous dodgy government/business dealings (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Mandelson).

⁷⁸ The GLA was designed to act more like a separate city-state run for the benefit of financial and property companies and thus also able to further subordinate Westminster to its interests.

⁷⁹ Following elections, in which Tommy Sheridan became the first SSP MSP, the first session was held in May 1999. The new parliament building at Holyrood was not opened until October 2004. To emphasise its subordinate position under the Crown-in-Westminster, Holyrood was opened by the queen.

⁸⁰ The minority International Socialist platform was left behind, and it remained a branch office of the SP(E&W).

⁸¹ This ‘British’ state is of course the UK state, which includes Northern Ireland. Many British Left organisations support the reunification of Ireland as a principle, but in practice treat Northern Ireland in the same manner as the British ruling class – a semi-detached region to be kept at arms’ length and, if possible, quietly forgotten.

⁸² In the past there could also be recognition of Irish-British working class struggles to the wider British working class. e.g. the 1907 Belfast Dock Strike and the 1913-14 Dublin Lock Out. But these passed out of a shared Irish-British working class memory, when the First Irish Republic, then the Irish Free State, severed its direct connection with the UK state and Northern Ireland was consigned to a semi-detached constitutional status under Stormont.

⁸³ Perhaps this is because SML retained a base longer in the Labour Party than Militant’s previous leading comrades in Liverpool, expelled in 1985.

⁸⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Alliance_\(England\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Alliance_(England))

⁸⁵ The ‘Downturn Theory’ had affected the SWP both in England and Scotland, but it was only in Scotland that SWP members had given up on the Anti-Poll Tax struggle. When one year later a riot broke out in Hackney, where Tony Cliff lived, following the imposition of the poll tax in England and Wales, he immediately saw the need to back the campaign south of the border. SWP members in Scotland somewhat shamefacedly began to join the campaign but lacked all credibility.

⁸⁶ During the so-called Troubles, there was extensive state censorship of events in Northern Ireland, including the BBC.

⁸⁷ During IndyRef1, the BBC fell back on a political defence of the existing political represented by its first initial. Its coverage was biased and in no way reflected the extent of support for Scottish independence or the relatively large organisations campaigning for it, compared to the tiny, albeit well-financed unionist campaigns, which it preferred to use.

⁸⁸ The new National Assembly of Wales building was completed at Cardiff Bay in 2006. To emphasise its subordinate position under the Crown-in-Westminster it was also opened by the queen, two years after Holyrood.

⁸⁸ There are also distinctive English-speaking ‘outliers’ in Pembrokeshire, and the holiday and retiral area along the north Welsh coastline, and middle class commuter area of the Gower abutting South Wales.

⁸⁹ Although most of the British Left had belatedly come to accept Irish independence, and even Irish reunification as desirable sometime in the future, British Left political practice with regard to Northern Ireland largely mirrored that of the UK state. It was left as a semi-detached devolved entity to be ignored as far as possible.

⁹⁰ <http://www.redpoets.org/our-history.html>

⁹² The RWT and Red Republicans had been working with Cymru Goch for a number of years, contributing to *Y Faner Goch*. I spoke at the founding conference of the WSA. I explained how the new SSP had developed out of a campaigning alliance and become an electoral force. I also made the Red Republican case for a Scottish internationalist and republican road to socialism in alliance with comrades from Wales, Ireland and England, hoping this would assist Tim Richards of Cymru Goch making the case for the WSA to adopt a Welsh republican platform. When Tim narrowly failed to convince the majority, to their credit, Cymru Goch continued to participate in the WSA. It is less clear how SP(E&W) would have behaved if the vote had gone the other way.

⁹³ Militant signed up for the Labour Coalition (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labour_coalition) for the 1996 Northern Ireland Forum elections. New Labour was pushing the UK state’s ‘New Unionist’ strategy and wanted to get as wide a representation as possible in the Forum to cover the essentially bi-sectarian nature of the planned Good Friday Agreement. Its leader, Malachi Curran was backed by the US state’s National Democratic Institute, whilst its other leading member, Hugh Casey accepted an MBE leading to his resignation from the SDLP, but acceptance by Labour Coalition!

⁹⁴ In 1971, the UUP Stormont prime minister, Brian Faulkner appointed NILP leader, David Bleakley to his cabinet as Minister of Community Relations.

⁹⁵ WPI also had an ambiguous relationship with the still non-commissioned Official IRA.

⁹⁶ In 1990 another anti-Republican Left, Labourist party, the Democratic Socialist Party led by Jim Kemmy, joined the Irish Labour Party, removing another potential electoral competitor.

⁹⁷ In the 2004 EU election in Northern Ireland the Irish SWP stood as part of the Socialist Environmental Alliance.

⁹⁸ In the absence of any wider Republican struggle, the two main dissident Republican organisations prioritising military activity, the Real IRA/New IRA/32 Counties Sovereignty Movement and Continuity IRA/Republican Sinn Fein have remained small. They have been penetrated by the security forces. The Real IRA was responsible for the Omagh Bombings which killed 29 people in 1999, and the New IRA was responsible for the killing of the award winning journalist, Laura McKee in Derry on 18.4.19 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Real_Irish_Republican_Army#Campaign)

⁹⁹ The small sects included the CPGB (*Weekly Worker*), the Alliance for Workers Liberty and Workers Power. Their sectarian attacks on others were confined to issuing anathemas in their press, and denunciations in their ‘interventions’ at meetings. However, as with SP and SWP they placed just as high a priority on attacking each other.

¹⁰⁰ Although first published by dissident political Republicans in Spring 2000, in response to the Irish Republican Movement’s shift from revolutionary to constitutional nationalism, or to ‘New’ Sinn Fein, *Fourthwrite* began to engage in wider developments in these islands, particularly Scotland. The last issue, no. 40 was published in Winter 2010/11.

¹⁰¹ In Northern Ireland, none of the partitionist SPI fronts ever adopted a Socialist label, despite the CWI elsewhere always insisting on this before entering any alliance, e.g. the SSA, SA, WSA and the later Trade Union & Socialist Coalition. In Northern Ireland as a concession to Loyalist political backwardness, Trade Union and Labour were sufficient.

¹⁰² Strictly speaking the new Stormont building only opened in 1932, but the Orange regime had been existence since 1922.

¹⁰³ The Ulster Unionist Party was affiliated to the Conservative and Unionist Part, but broke away in two stages, its MPs in 1972 and the whole party in 1985., However, none of its Westminster MPs were ever formed part of a British Conservative government

¹⁰⁴ There was also a time when Irish regiments loyally served the British Empire. Before the Irish War of Independence, the Connaught Rangers were a reliable enforcer of British rule in India. It took the disillusionment of the First World War and the rise of the First Irish Republic before they mutinied in 1920.

¹⁰⁵ However, not all those from the old SML were able to make the break from a sectarian approach, and when the ISM left the CWI (the old Militant, then Socialist Party dominated sect ‘international’) those remaining formed the International Socialists platform – ISp - in the SSP in 2002. They sold the all-Britain paper, *The Socialist*.

¹⁰⁶ SRSM was particularly wary of those who had come from a ‘Brit Left’ background, which initially included the SML and the Scottish Socialist Movement. (At this point SWP was outside the SSP.) Although SRSM had worked with RWT in the Scottish Republican Forum, to begin with they did not join SSA, and opposed RWT Red Republicans joining up and working with the Federal Republicans. RWT and Red Republicans, seeing how politics were developing on the wider Left in Scotland, thought that the most principled would adopt a socialist republican and ‘internationalism from below’ ‘break-up of the UK strategy’, taking up the traditions of John Maclean and James Connolly where they had left off.

¹⁰⁷ It took a number of years to overcome the considerable initial opposition from SML for the SSP to acknowledge it was a republican party. The RCN was the main group in promoting this change. In the process, one-time SML members, e.g. Tommy Sheridan, Alan McCombes and Kevin Williamson, who had strongly opposed the SSA being categorised as republican, now openly declared themselves to be republican (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_advocates_of_republicanism_in_the_United_Kingdom). The highpoint of the SSP’s republicanism was to be shown in the 1994 Declaration of Calton Hill (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_of_Calton_Hill).

¹⁰⁸ Irish Republican supporters were denigrated (sometimes termed Green fascists), whilst Loyalist supporters were indulged. This led to the invite of Billy Hutcheson (recent Loyalist paramilitary and Progressive Unionist Party member) to address an SSP conference in 2000. (A year later he was with Loyalist thugs attacking pupils and parents trying to go to Holy Cross primary school in the Ardoyne, north Belfast.) But what was new for those in the old SML, with their strongly anti-republican politics, was the invitation of a Sinn Fein member ‘to provide balance’. And, in a mirror image of the UK state’s post Good Friday Agreement arrangements, which places the British government in the role of ‘neutral arbitrator’, Tom Hadden, Northern Ireland Militant supporter was given the position of ‘socialist arbitrator’ between the Loyalist and Republicans speakers! The request to have a socialist republican speaker, either Bernadette McAliskey or John McNulty (Socialist Democracy (Ireland) (SD(I)) and former Peoples Democracy councillor in West Belfast) was refused. However, John attended the conference, speaking both from the

floor and at a fringe meeting organised by the RCN and others. This further cemented a political relationship between the RCN and SD(I) already initiated by Deidre McCartan (RCN and USEC supporter) through their Irish Labour historian, Rayner O'Connor Lysaght.

¹⁰⁹ Unlike in Northern Ireland, Militant's anti-republicanism did not come from having their main base in Unionist areas. Indeed, in Scotland's Central Belt there were no such clear-cut sectarian boundaries. However, SML's leading members came disproportionately from an Irish-Scottish Catholic background – e.g. Frances Curran, Colin Fox, Ann Lynch, Alan McCombes, Kevin McVey, Jim McVicar, Tommy Sheridan. In breaking away from the Catholic social conservative values they had been familiar with, they often 'bent the stick' to demonstrate this in a public fashion. For a period, Sheridan was even a Rangers supporter!

¹¹⁰ They went on the last Irish Republican march in 2006 organised by the James Connolly Society, which they had once denounced.

¹¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_of_Calton_Hill

¹¹² http://www.republicancommunist.org/articles/EL009/EL009_CaltonLeaflet.html

¹¹³ In 2003 Scottish local council elections were still conducted under the first-past-the-post voting system. whilst Holyrood elections are conducted under a form of proportional representation, hence the SSP's comparative under-representation in the local council elections.

¹¹⁴ Scargill's SLP stood in 114 seats across England, Wales and Scotland and received 57,553 votes. This was the highpoint for the SLP an essentially electoral party with very little public presence outside election campaigns. However, despite its continued decline, it was sometimes able to perform better than other 'party'-sects or their front organisations after they had peaked or disappeared. The SP stood two candidates as the Socialist Alternative (for legal reasons), receiving 1,454 votes, highlighting their marginalisation after leaving the SA. The SP took more care over their later electoral alliance, the Trade Union & Socialist Coalitions to ensure they retained political control. This was done by cultivating Left trade union general secretaries who in return for backing SP's electoral strategy could expect SP backing against rank and file union membership challenges.

¹¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh_Socialist_Alliance. The SWP published a pamphlet, *Wales - Class Struggle and Socialism* by Charlie Kimber in 1999 as part of their preparation for entering the WSA. It was rather a strange

publication. The nearer it got to the present day, the less it had to say. It ignored debates in the Labour Party and the CPGB/CPB over Welsh devolution, as well as the politics of the Welsh Socialist Republican, Cymru Goch, which was a significant current in the WSA. It finished off with a rather tortured chapter on the Welsh language, which after denigrating its right wing and middle class promoters, reluctantly concedes its right to exist! And you would certainly get no idea that there were also national democratic challenges to the UK state in Ireland and Scotland.

¹¹⁶ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2002/08/04/successful-republican-festival-and-victory-at-free-speech-trial/>

¹¹⁷ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2002/07/26/republican-forum-a-way-forward-for-republicanism/>

¹¹⁸ The United Secretariat of the Fourth International (UESC) was the main international trotskyist grouping, whose membership in these islands included the IMG and its successors (today Socialist Resistance) and Socialist Democracy (Ireland).

¹¹⁹ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2004/08/24/another-europe-is-possible/>

¹²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2003_Scottish_Parliament_election#Results

¹²¹ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2009/03/20/edinburgh-peoples-festival-inspirational-and-educational/>

¹²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bella_Caledonia

¹²³ However, the SWP only adopted Scottish independence in 2010. This was several years after the SW platform had left the SSP.

¹²⁴ As it turned out, even some from the old SML found this change difficult to make. They backpedalled, left the SML's new organisation the International Socialist Movement (ISM), and reverted to the old SML's sectarian style and constituting themselves as the International Socialist platform (ISp).

¹²⁵ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2004/08/24/the-role-of-platforms-in-the-ssp-why-have-the-rcn-platform/>

¹²⁶ A decade earlier, Neil had co-authored an article, *Nationalism and the Class Struggle* with Donny Gluckstein, in the SWP journal *Internationalism Socialism*. This anticipated some of the themes of this book, but the important

political point, common to British Left unionist critiques was to denigrate the last period of John Maclean's life, claiming his "final conversion to a brand of revolutionary Scottish republicanism was therefore the product of frustration on the part of a great revolutionary." (https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/isj_2/1990/isj2-048/davidgluck.html) However, the SWP's 'Downturn Theory' had put them on the margins of the Left, so few noticed.

¹²⁷ The Edinburgh Marxist Forum had been formed by activists from the Lothian Anti-Poll Tax Federation, which included the RWT and Red Republicans.

¹²⁸ <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr280/davidson.htm>

¹²⁹ <https://www.saltiresociety.org.uk/news/2019/03/18/paul-henderson-scott>

¹³⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jimmy_Halliday

¹³¹ Although the book's favourable promotion blurb on the inside page by Scottish Tory unionist, Alan Massie was perhaps a bridge too far!

¹³² <https://www.euppublishing.com/doi/pdfplus/10.3366/scot.2009.0058>

¹³³ <https://isj.org.uk/more-than-culloden/>

¹³⁴ George Kerevan, then a Scottish IMG member, over a decade earlier had written a convincing critique of *Scottish Capitalism* in his article, *Arguments within Scottish Marxism* in the *Bulletin of Scottish Politics* No.2, 1981. This was acknowledged by Neil in his *Origins of Scottish Nationhood*. However, the aftermath of the defeat of the 1979 Devolution Referendum, and 1984-5 Miners' Strike proved to be sparse ground for Socialist historical enquiry into Scottish history. George, following the IMG turn, joined the Labour Party and very much influenced by the 'New Times', moved further right. He left to join the SNP and supported of its openly neo-liberal wing. It took IndyRef1 to bring about a 'Damascus Road' reconversion. George moved to the Left of the SNP, becoming MP between 2015-7. He has worked with the Radical Independence Campaign. Chris Bambery, a former IMG comrade became Kerevan's parliamentary secretary. Before this Bambery became an SWP full-timer in the 1970s, then left with the International Socialist Group (Scotland`) in 2011.

¹³⁵ Allan Armstrong, *From Pre-Brit to Ex-Brit –The Forging and the Break-up of the UK and Britishness*, Parts Three and Four, <https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2020/12/internationalism-from-below-book-2-1.pdf> and <https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/internationalism-from-below-book-4a-3.pdf>

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- 136 Neil Davidson, *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood*, p. 188
- 137 John Brimms, *The Covenanting Tradition*, p. 57, in *Covenant, Charter and Party – Traditions of Revolt and Protest in Modern Scottish History*, edited by Terry Brotherstone.
- 138 Neil Davidson, *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood*, p.192.
- 139 <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/sr280/davidson.htm>
- 140 I don't consider myself to be a Marxist, Leninist or Trotskyist. This seems to me to represent an updated version of earlier theological modes of thought, e.g. Lutheranism, Calvinism, Zwinglianism. I would call myself a republican communist, with republican representing an immediate programme providing a road to a maximum programme, i.e. a global commune.
- 140 Neil Davidson, *Discovering the Scottish Revolution, 1692-1746*, pp. 289, 291-2, 299-300.
- 141 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2003/08/03/beyond-broadswords-and-bayonets-2/>
- 142 Allan Armstrong, *Internationalism from Below*. Vol. 1, *The historical development of nation-states and nationalism up to 1848*, <https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2019/08/internationalism-from-below-book-1.pdf> - Chapter 3Ai-vi, pp. 142-172 and Chapter 3Cvi, pp. 220-227.
- 143 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2003/08/03/beyond-broadswords-and-bayonets-2/#SectionFiveFive>
- 144 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2003/08/03/beyond-broadswords-and-bayonets-2/#SectionSix>
- 145 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/tag/galloway-levellers/>
- 146 <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/peasant-war-germany/index.htm>
- 147 Donald Anderson (SRSp) - <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2004/03/02/a-good-if-one-sided-account/> and Dave Douglass, well known NUM militant - <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2004/03/02/the-debate-continues-the-jacobites-strike-back/> and a more pro-Neil contribution by Gordon Morgan (<http://www.republicancommunist.org/articles/EL009/EL009Morgan.html>)

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¹⁴⁸ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2004/08/24/unionism-progress-and-the-socialist-tradition-in-scottish-history/>

¹⁴⁹ Neil noticed that I had written, *Back to the Future Part 1: 1688 and 1989 – Revolution, ‘Progress’ and Reaction in Cencrastus* 50.

¹⁵⁰ These included contributions by Alistair Livingston on the Galloway Levellers. (<http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2005/09/13/who-were-the-galloway-levellers/>) and poet John Manson and major Hugh MacDiarmid scholar (<http://republicancommunist.org/blog/tag/john-manson/>).

¹⁵¹ <https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2019/08/>

¹⁵² It became much easier for the RCN to advocate a specifically republican socialist, ‘internationalism from below’ politics. It was now the ISp and the newly joined SWp who became politically more marginalised, following their opposition to the Declaration of Calton Hill.

¹⁵³ <https://thecommune.wordpress.com/2011/01/03/the-sheridan-perjury-trial/>

¹⁵⁴ In 2012, Galloway was to later show his prejudices against the Gaelic language too (<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/gaelic-station-is-a-turn-off-for-viewers-967993>)

¹⁵⁵ After the collapse of the Welsh Socialist Alliance, Forward Wales had emerged out of the John Marek Independent Party with the backing of Cymru Goch and some independent Socialists. The SLP, which had outvoted the WSA in the 1999 EU election, did not stand in 2004. Plaid Cymru’s vote also fell back substantially. The Labour vote rose at a time when Welsh Labour was trying to place some clear red (or rather pink) water between themselves and Labour Westminster.

¹⁵⁶ Unite Against Fascism (UAF) was the SWP’s replacement organisation for the ANL. UAF was still not prepared to challenge Loyalism.

¹⁵⁷ <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/holyrood-hopefuls-george-galloway-gail-1092181>.

¹⁵⁸ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2009/03/20/well-the-crisis-of-capitalism-has-arrived---so-what-do-we-do-now/>

¹⁵⁹ https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004351035/B9789004351035_044.xml - p. 279.

¹⁶⁰ These included the Socialist Alliance mark 2, Respect and the Campaign for a New Workers Party, No2EU and the Trade Union & Socialist Alliance. They tried to take over the Left social democratic, neo-Keynesian mantle abandoned by New Labour.

¹⁶¹ Apart from the increasingly embarrassing celebrity politics associated with Sheridan (e.g. his participation in *Celebrity Big Brother*) another indication of Solidarity's rightwards trajectory was provided when its sole elected councillor in Glasgow deserted to the Labour administration and became closely involved with the corrupt Stephen Purcell. This was in marked contrast to the SSP's sole elected councillor in West Dunbartonshire, the principled and widely respected Jim Bollan.

¹⁶² After the trade union bureaucrats sabotaged the mass pensions strike on November 30th, 2011, workers' economic struggles fell back. Instead, political or democratic struggles came to the fore, which the dissident trotskyists weren't prepared to engage in. This combination of events contributed to the ending of *the commune*.

¹⁶³ Two of the RCN contributions were later posted on our blog at - <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2012/04/16/debating-the-possibility-of-communism/> - 1, Allan Armstrong, Bob Goupillot, Iain Robertson, *Is Communism Possible?* and 3. Allan Armstrong, *Why We Need a Truly Human and Democratic Communism*.

¹⁶⁴ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2009/11/25/global-commune-meeting/> and <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/category/capitalism-and-communism/how-we-organise/what-is-communism/page/3/>

¹⁶⁵ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2010/05/22/report-of-second-global-commune-meeting/>

¹⁶⁶ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2011/02/11/report-of-the-third-global-commune-event/>

¹⁶⁷ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2010/08/25/the-communist-case-for-internationalism-from-below/>

¹⁶⁸ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2007/09/27/no-one-is-illegal/> and [http://www.tacticalmediafiles.net/articles/3238/No-One-is-Illegal - Manifesto;jsessionid=7BF90D89B801E0BE84C525FEA7FAEF7F](http://www.tacticalmediafiles.net/articles/3238/No-One-is-Illegal-Manifesto;jsessionid=7BF90D89B801E0BE84C525FEA7FAEF7F)

¹⁶⁹ I was elected by conference to the International Committee (IC), mainly on the strength of my opposition to a sectarian attack by a member of the social imperialist and Zionist apologetic, Alliance for Workers Liberty. They are also social unionists, upholding the ‘rights’ of Loyalists and opposing Scottish independence. Being a member of the IC was the only official position I ever held in the SSP, although I was asked to draft party statements on education. (Other RCN members stood as SSP candidates in elections.)

¹⁷⁰ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2008/10/15/motion-passed-at-ssp-conference-in-october-2007> and <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2008/10/15/letter-agreed-1032008-at-ssp-international-committee-to-be-sent-out-to-organisations-in-ireland-wales-and-england/>

¹⁷¹ The SSP, whilst supporting and participating in all the sessions of the Convention of the Left in Manchester in September 2008, also arranged the session on Scottish self-determination, which the conference organisers, showing a sense of humour, arranged in the upstairs rooms of a pub called *The Briton’s Protection!*

¹⁷² <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2011/10/10/2nd-republican-socialist-convention-london-february-13th-2010/>

¹⁷³ This convention also brought the RCN back into contact with the CPGB/WW. Nick Rogers had abandoned the CPGB-WW’s earlier somewhat bizarre reactionary ethnic understanding of Scottishness, which denied the existence of a Scottish nation, but awarded the non-existent ‘Irish-British’ (who in reality are ‘Ulster’-British) 75% nationhood! Nick’s approach was more abstract propagandist. Alan Johnstone of the SPGB made a different abstract propagandist critique. Their contributions, along with the replies, can be read in the RCN pamphlet, *Getting over the Hee Bee GBs – An ‘Internationalist from Below’ critique of the British Left.*

¹⁷⁴ There were indeed important principles underlying the split, especially the choice between celebrity socialist led and membership led socialist organisation. However, the post-split SSP leadership had themselves very much promoted Sheridan. They used the extended period of court action as a reason not to make a full account of the emergence of the crisis and their full

role in this. This and many members' local branch loyalties, affected decisions either to remain in the SSP or to join Solidarity.

¹⁷⁵ *T-TTUM* ran for 29 issues (from autumn 1999 until spring, 2011) and its successor *Trade Union Solidarity* ran for 7 issues (from September 2011 until summer 2014). They involved a wide range of activists, covered many struggles, and discussed trade union democracy (promoting Jerry Hicks, the rank and file candidate in the 2010 UNITE general secretary election – *T-TTUM*, issue 29. p.13). They also discussed the issue of effective workers' political representation (*T-TUM*, issues 9, p.7 and 12, pp. 4-5). They were international in their approach, linked with *Labor Notes* in the USA and covered struggles of the oppressed, including migrant workers and Palestinians. Some of *T-TTUM*'s supporters participated in the SP front organisation, the National Shops Stewards Network, in good faith, but became disenchanted. With the SP's sectarian manoeuvring (*T-TTUM*, issue 29, p.12)

¹⁷⁶ Martin Wicks, *Scottish Socialist Party election success*, *Solidarity*, no 9, July/August, 2003.

¹⁷⁷ <https://martinwicks.org/2006/09/28/fact-and-fiction-whats-happened-in-the-ssp-th/amp/>

¹⁷⁸ Keir Snow, *Scottish Independence*, *Trade Union Solidarity (TUS)* no 7, Summer, 2014

¹⁷⁹ Tommy McKearney, *Independent Workers Union – Isolated or a catalyst?* *Solidarity*, no.22, Spring 2008.

¹⁸⁰ The SSP beat Solidarity/No2EU, but this was more a case of two bald men fighting over a comb, with 10,404 and 9,693 votes respectively. The EU-phobic SLP received 22,135 votes, but even combined with No2EU, the Left anti-EU 2.9% of the vote still compared unfavourably the anti-EU Hard Right UKIP's and Far Right BNP's combined 7.7% of the vote in Scotland. In Wales, the Left anti-EU vote of 3.1% compared with the anti-EU Hard and Far Right combined vote of 18.2%, In England, the Left anti-EU vote of 2.1% compared with the anti-EU Hard and Far Right combined vote of 22.7%. The prospect of the Left leading an anti-EU campaign did not look good, but they were going to get a lot worse.

¹⁸¹ Marek's political trajectory from Labour through Forward Wales to Conservative was more than matched in Scotland by Adam Tomkins. He had co-authored *How We Should Govern Ourselves* with Alasdair Gray, spoke at the SSP organised Calton Hill Rally in 2004, but joined the Scottish Tories in 2015

and became an MSP in 2016. Perhaps his decision to stand down in 2021 is a recognition of the British and Scottish Tories growing opposition to the post-1998 Devolution settlement, which the Tories had supported up until the 2016 EU referendum, has shifted them from conservative to reactionary unionism.

¹⁸² The then liberal unionist Welsh Conservatives and the constitutional nationalist Plaid Cymru represented the two outer wings of the Welsh Assembly alliance promoting devolutionary parity with Scotland. This was finally achieved in 2011, following the backing of the David Cameron-led Con-Dem coalition and a far more convincing referendum result than in 1997.

¹⁸³ Leanne Wood was the first AM to be ordered out the Welsh Assembly for referring to the queen as Mrs. Windsor. Ironically, she was ordered out by Lord Elis-Thomas, a former Welsh republican but who by 2004 was a Right-wing member of Plaid Cymru and presiding officer of the National Assembly.

¹⁸⁴ *Celyn* has continued as an online magazine with a post-Eurocommunists Democratic Left flavour, like *Perspectives* in Scotland. *Celyn* has no republican perspective and shows no fundamental questioning of the UK state. It appears to believe that the UK could have been further reformed into a Devo-Max or even federal Britain, under a Jeremy Corbyn led Labour Party.

¹⁸⁵ Tommy McKearney, *For or Against Sheridan, Fourthwrite*, 32, p. 3.

¹⁸⁶ Allan Armstrong, *The need for socialist unity, Fourthwrite* 36, pp. 124-6. This was followed by my report of the second Republican Socialist Convention in London I February 13th, 2010, *Republican Convention, Fourthwrite*. 38, pp. 14-5.

¹⁸⁷ Allan Armstrong spoke, placing emphasis on the republican socialist and Scottish internationalist political trajectory of the SSP. Allan's mention of SSP support for a 'No One Is Illegal', and support for the European Anti-Capitalist Alliance slate in the 2009 Euro-elections, produced some discussion afterwards. I was given an anti-EU Peoples Movement leaflet (with the give-away anti-migrant reference to 'social dumping') and a South Tyrone Empowerment Programme leaflet emphasising migrant rights.

¹⁸⁸ Maeve Connaughton, *A false economy* (a critique of the SWP and CPI), *Red Banner* 39, pp. 2-7, and Aindreas, O'Cathasaigh, *Gama, racism and class struggle* (a critique of the SPI) *Red Banner* 27, pp.

¹⁸⁹ Joe Conroy, Helen Macfarlane, *Lost in translation, Red Banner* 23, pp. 56-9.

¹⁹⁰ Henry Gibson, *Getting poetry red*, *Red Banner* 31, pp. 36-8.

¹⁹¹ One example was the interview with Tommy McKearney, *Socialism is the objective*, *Red Banner* 46, pp. 2-10.

¹⁹² Allan Armstrong, *The need for internationalism from below*, *Red Banner* 33, pp.22-27, with a reply from Tara O’Sullivan, Correspondence, *Red Banner* 34, pp. 38-40.

¹⁹² Allan Armstrong, *Twenty years after the poll tax*, *Red Banner* 40, pp.

¹⁹⁴ *Red Banner* also reviewed my book, *From Davitt to Connolly: ‘Internationalism from Below’ and the challenge to the UK state and British Empire, 1879-95*, Tara O’Sullivan, *Celtic soul brothers*, *Red Banner* 45, pp.24-9 and my reply, *Looking for a political soul sister*, *Red Banner* 46, pp. 35-40. I was also invited to speak about this book at the Connolly Bookshop and Irish Labour History Museum in Dublin, which led to a sympathetic but critical review in *Saothar*.

¹⁹⁵ Colm was the last contributor to rs21’s Neil Davidson memorial event (<https://www.rs21.org.uk/neil-davidson>). Colm spoke of the very different, non-trotskyist tradition he came from in the Irish Workers Party. He also emphasised Neil’s non-sectarianism and the exemplary role he played in the University of Glasgow UCU branch where he had been president, and Colm vice president.

¹⁹⁶ Dan later went onto join the *New Left Review* editorial board, and wrote *One Mans’s Terrorist – A Political History of the IRA* (<http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2020/06/13/one-mans-terrorist/>)

¹⁹⁷ The SWP launched the 32 counties, People before Profit (PbP) in 2005. The SPI ran under its own name and alone as late as 2009, winning an MEP in the EU election. However, it fought the 2011 Dail election with PbP as part of the United Left Alliance in 2011. Predictably, they soon fell out, and PbP sabotaged the SPI MEP’s re-election in 2014. By the time of the 2016 Dail election the SPI also ran as a front organisation, the Anti-Austerity Alliance. It formed an electoral non-aggression pact with SWP/PbP. However, both were mainly concerned that any Socialist alliances should not become a vehicle for creating a new wider democratic Socialist party in Ireland, as was favoured by the Irish Socialist Network. This duplicated the attitude of their sister parties had towards the Socialist Alliances and Respect in England and Wales.

¹⁹⁸ Both the SP(E&W) and SWP ensured that their front organisations included senior trade union officials and office bearers, They used this to deny the frontist nature of their nature of their ‘party’ fronts, e.g. the ANL, UAR for the SWP, and the Campaign for a New Workers Party and the TUSC for SP(E&W).

¹⁹⁹ SP(E&W) standing as Socialist Alternative had 19 candidates and won 9,398 votes. Respect had 26 candidates and won 68,094 votes.

²⁰⁰ Scottish TUSC’s slate consisted of 4 Solidarity, 3 IS, 2 SWP and 1 trade union candidate (<http://www.tusc.org.uk/candidates2010.php>). TUSC obtained 3,530 votes (of which 951 or 33% went to Tommy Sheridan). The SSP’s 10 candidates obtained a more evenly spread 3,157 votes. This time, though, in contrast to the 2009 EU election, they both received more than the SLP’s 5 candidates on 1,673 votes.

²⁰¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Respect_Party#Schism: 2007

²⁰² John Rees and Lindsay German were the highest-level members, both on the SWP central committee, to be blamed for the bad outcome to the Respect turn. However, they had developed many contacts, particularly in the CPB. They were able to form a new organisation, Counterfire, which, although still pursuing very similar politics, based on forming alliances with Left Labour and the CPB, undermined the SWP’s position in the Stop the War campaign.

²⁰³ Graham Campbell, <https://www.rs21.org.uk/neil-davidson>

²⁰³ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2003/08/03/beyond-broadwords-and-bayonets-2/#SectionOneOne>

²⁰⁴ Joe Hartney, SWP in *Scottish Socialist Voice*, no. 140 and <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2003/08/03/beyond-broadwords-and-bayonets-2/#SectionOneOne>

²⁰⁶ <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/04/davidson-scottish-national-party-uk-may-elections>

²⁰⁷ <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/04/davidson-scottish-national-party-uk-may-elections>

²⁰⁸ <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/09/why-scotland-should-vote-yes>

²⁰⁹ <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/09/why-scotland-should-vote-yes>

210 <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/09/why-scotland-should-vote-yes>

211 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose_Gentle

212 <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/jim-sillars-drops-bombshell-he-tells-snp-keep-trident-and-back-nato-2460692>

213 The SNP leadership of Scotland Yes was prepared to let non-SNP participants present their own policy wish lists at public meetings. But as soon as there was a challenge to the City of London and the continued use of sterling, it exerted its influence, and all of the non-SNP members on the Advisory Board, Colin Fox of the SSP included, fell into line.

214 <https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/about-us/>

215 <http://www.nationalcollective.com/2014/12/30/documenting-yes-year-review-2014/>

216 <http://www.nationalcollective.com/2014/01/26/100-artists-and-creatives-who-support-scottish-independence/>

217 It also included artists from England, Ken Loach and Billy Bragg, as well as Sigur Ros from Iceland and Marit Falt from Norway/Sweden.

218 *Unstated – Writers on Scottish Independence*, edited by Scott Hames included several of the 100 Artists for Independence, as well as other writers. Although an author of historical rather than specifically cultural writing, Tarlochan Gata-Aura of Word Power Books asked me to write a political contribution.

219 The ISG(S) included James Foley, David Jamieson, Pete Ramand, Jonathan Shafi and Ben Wray. Cat Boyd also became politically associated. They lived in Glasgow.

220 The SSP joined both the official ‘Yes’ campaign and RIC. One section led by Colin Fox was more favourable to the official ‘Yes’ campaign, because they thought this could form the basis for a popular front with the SNP, Scottish Greens in a future Holyrood election. SSP leadership hostility to autonomous campaigns meant that its ‘support’ for RIC was conditional on Colin being given a platform at meetings of his choosing. However, a wider range of SSP members were involved in RIC and given a platform on the basis of their work for RIC and for other campaigns.

220 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2012/06/20/the-independence-lite-referendum-and-a-tale-of-two-campaign/>

221 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2013/03/30/riding-two-horses-at-once-the-swp-and-scottish-independence/>

223 My own contribution was flagged up in bella caledonia <https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2012/11/20/radical-indy-conference-10-genuine-self-determination-means-acting-like-republicans-now/> Unfortunately, this is the one occasion on which I haven't been able to find Neil's written contribution, so my critique remains impressionistic.

224 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2012/12/20/radisson-blu-or-post-radisson-red/>

224 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2012/09/16/britain-must-break-to-defend-real-labour-or-the-break-up-of-the-uk-to-advance-republican-socialism/>

226 Later In 2017, Jeremy Corbyn, whose Left Labourism never broke from unionism, also provided an attraction for some former ISG(S) members.

226 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2012/12/20/radisson-blu-or-post-radisson-red/> This lead to interesting debate with ISG(S) member, David Jamieson (<http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2013/01/23/david-jamieson-of-the-the-isg-replies-to-allan-armstrong/> and <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2013/06/02/allan-armstrong-rcn-replies-to-david-jamieson-isg-part-2/>)

228 Tom Nairn, *The Breakup of Britain*, Verso, 1977, reprinted 1981

229 Bonar Law, who later became PM had worked in Canada for period, but returned to become a Glasgow MP before rising up the political ladder. The South African Jan Smuts, was co-opted to the Imperial War Cabinet in 1917, in the emergency situation of the First World War and returned to South Africa soon afterwards.

230 <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/11991831.scots-mps-help-beat-health-plan-rebellion-blair-limits-damage-over-foundation-hospitals-vote/>

231 In the 1970s and early '80s when I had been a member of IS/SWP, its characterisation of the USSR as party bureaucracy dominated state capitalism, was very much related to its opposition to Broad Left officials dominated trade unions. Hence its support for a Rank & File approach. However, the SWP's abandonment of a practical, as opposed to a rhetorical Rank and File approach,

and the demise of the USSR, led to a growing rapprochement with the CPB and Broad Left trade union bureaucrats. This sometime means adopting whole chunks of old CP style (and many trotsykists') thinking, especially apologetics for regimes. e.g. Iran, which challenged their position within the US/UK dominated imperialist world order, but with a vicious record of attacking their own working classes.

232 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Workers_Party_\(UK\)#Internal_crisis_in_2013–2014_over_allegations_of_rape](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Workers_Party_(UK)#Internal_crisis_in_2013–2014_over_allegations_of_rape)

233 <https://www.rs21.org.uk/2013/12/23/open-statement-resignation-from-the-swp/>

234 Aberdeen RIC was also based on the politics of Movementism, though in this case in its Anarchist form. With the backing of ex-ISG(S), Aberdeen RIC was able to get the 2015 RIC conference to agree to a Movementist constitution. This was not so attractive to other affiliated organisations which mainly moved back to their own concerns – e.g. Left SNP, most Left Greens, Left Labour Independents, SSP. However, now that RIC itself was no longer a major movement, Aberdeen RIC was no longer able to sustain itself, and last posted activity in December 2015. Edinburgh RIC did more than any other city RIC group to put the Movementist constitution into practice. After this proved untenable, Edinburgh RIC continued to operate, encouraging both discussion on a wide range of issues and working class, women's, BME, LBGT+ and international solidarity activities (and AUOB from 2018).

235 Openness is based on an assumption of legality. Illegality imposes high costs on political organisation, not least the greater ability for state disruption through implanted agents, the resultant paranoia and the embittered acrimonious squabbles of those living in exile, without the immediate political and social discipline of a wider legal party or movement.

236 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2015/03/23/the-scottish-left-project/>

237 The SSP had originally tried to retain the official 'Yes' campaign alliance, for the 2015 Westminster general election and beyond (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_Socialist_Party#After_the_referendum). Quite predictably, after the referendum, the SNP leadership abandoned the official 'Yes' campaign, almost as quickly as David Cameron abandoned Gordon Brown and 'Better Together'. After this setback for the SSP leadership, RISE was no more than a very temporary marriage of convenience to get Colin Cox elected to Holyrood. As soon as this tactic failed, the SSP retreated into a

‘party’ sect laager, losing successive groups of ‘IndyRef1’ recruits in the process.

238 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2018/09/11/edinburgh-october-6th-a-rallying-call-for-the-left/>

239 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2015/03/23/the-scottish-left-project/>- section c

240 Neil did though take part in RIC’s canvassing activities in in Leith

241 <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/09/why-scotland-should-vote-yes>

242 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2014/09/03/up-to-and-beyond-the-september-18th-independence-referendum-a-socialist-republican-perspective/>

243 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2014/06/26/making-plans-for-nigel/>-section 3.iii

244 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2014/06/26/making-plans-for-nigel/>- section 5.vii

245 PbP chose the EU election instead to conduct a sectarian bunfight with SPI, following the predictable collapse of their top-down marriage of convenience, the United Left Alliance, cobbled together for the 2011 Dail elections.²⁴⁵ In choosing to stand against SPI in the Dublin Euro-constituency, the PbP candidate cost the incumbent SPI MEP his seat.

246 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2012/04/06/the-silent-retreat-of-the-united-left-alliance/>

247 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2014/09/12/better-together-ukip-the-orange-order-and-the-uk-state-what-they-have-in-common/>

248 The essence of Neil’s contribution can be found in *The Socialist Case for Leave*, the article he wrote for *Jacobin* (<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/06/leave-european-union-brexite-ukip-corbbyn-cameron>). My own contribution was based on a further development of my debate in Edinburgh RIC with Donny Gluckstein of the SWP (<https://edinburghric.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/the-eu-referendum-8.6.15.pdf>) which was written up shortly before Neil’s. It is entitled *Remain in the EU: A Socialist Perspective*.

249 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vote_Leave

²⁵⁰ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2014/09/03/up-to-and-beyond-the-september-18th-independence-referendum-a-socialist-republican-perspective/> - After September 18th **and** <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2014/05/01/a-republican-perspective-is-important-for-scotlands-future/>

²⁵¹ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2016/06/10/european-democratic-revolution-a-statement-form-the-republican-socialist-alliance/>. This was later updated and extended to “a new federal, social and secular European republic, with a written constitution and a Bill of Rights based on the democratic principle that economic and political power shall be in the hands of the sovereign people of Europe. The constitution will include the democratic “right of nations to self-determination” including the right to leave.” (<http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2016/10/20/report-of-meeting-to-set-up-the-campaign-for-a-european-republican-socialist-party/>)

²⁵² One feature of the DUP was its increased links with the Right US Protestant fundamentalists who back Trump. They have sent activists across to Northern Ireland. The influential Caleb Foundation places more emphasis on controlling education and culture, e.g. backing creationist pseudo-science and denying rights for gays, lesbians and transgendered people than on traditional Orange, anti-Catholic street marching and physical intimidation. However, as well as supporting traditional Ulster Unionist Protestant supremacy it is also dismissive of other Protestants who are not born again, and who are hence due to be consigned to hell! (news/politics/caleb-foundation-the-creationist-bible-group-and-its-web-of-influence-at-stormont-28787760.html)

²⁵³ However, they did not go as far as the CP front organisation the Peoples Movement, which shared a Brexit rally platform with Labour ultra-unionist. MP Kate Hoey, the DUP’s prime bigot, Sammy Wilson MP, DUP right wing breakaway(!) TUV, Jim Allister MLA, UKIP’s Nigel Farage and David McNarry (also assistant grand master of the Orange Lodge) (<http://news/2016/03/04/news/brexit-nigel-farage-and-sammy-wilson-at-belfast-rally-438742/>)

²⁵⁴ *For the Many Not the Few*, p. 28

²⁵⁵ *For the Many Not the Few*, p. 104

²⁵⁶ *For the Many Not the Few*, p. 28

²⁵⁷ But sadly, it was not because the Labour Party was more progressive in 2012. It went along with giving EU residents the vote because Cameron and Miliband wanted to use the threat of Scotland being thrown out of the EU if it voted ‘Yes’ as a campaigning weapon. It is to the credit of the SNP leadership

that knowing this, it still stuck to the principle of civic rather than ethnic nationhood and agreed to EU residents' inclusion in the 'IndyRef1' franchise.

258

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuka_Umunna#Return_to_the_Bäckbenches

259

<http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2019/02/15/whats-wrong-with-the-immigration-bill/> and <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2019/01/31/12823/>

260

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/john-mcdonnell-interview-radical-we-re-boring-i-gave-jeremy-a-book-on-allotments-for-his-birthday-95q0g75r2>

261

The inner coterie, the 4Ms, consisted of Len McCluskey, Left-talking, Right walking, UNITE general secretary; his partner, Karie Murphy, another careerist union bureaucrat; Seamus Milne, one time supporter of the Straight Left wing of the old CPGB, along with Andrew Murray who later joined the CPB and Respect, before the Labour Party.

262

http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2019/01/25/another_europe_is_possible/

263

<https://labourlist.org/2019/09/labour-conference-approves-motion-to-extend-free-movement/>

264

This is an update of the 'beer and sandwiches' relationship which trade union leaders enjoyed under the Wilson and Callaghan Labour governments.

265

<http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2017/01/03/grassroots-unite-leadership-candidate-attacks-mccluskeys-and-coynes-capitulation-to-anti-migrant-politics/>

266

<http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2018/08/27/open-letter-and-peition-to-len-mccluskey/>

267

<https://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1137/yet-more-retreats/-union-election>

268

<https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/43901/Support+socialist+and+workplace+activist+Ian+Allinson+for+Unite+general+secretary>

269

<http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2013/10/28/after-grangemouth-what-now-for-the-left-in-scotland/>

270 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/sep/24/labours-left-divided-against-itself-over-reseLECTION-reforms>

271 <https://www.channel4.com/news/unions-come-out-against-scrapping-trident>

272 In London, Labour went down from 4 to 1 MEP, the Lib-Dems up from 0 to 3 MEPs. In the East of England, Labour went down from 1 to 0 MEP, the Lib-Dems up from 0 to 2 MEPs and the Greens up from 0 to 1 MEP. In North West England, Labour went down from 3 to 2 MEPs, the Lib-Dems up from 0 to 2 MEPs and Greens up from 0 to 1 MEP. In South East England, the Lib-Dems went up from 1 to 3 MEPs. In South West England, Labour went down from 1 to 0 MEP, the Lib-Dems up from 0 to 2 MEPs. In the West Midlands, Labour went down from 2 to 1 MEP, the Lib-Dems up from 0 to 1 MEP and the Greens up from 0 to 1. In Yorkshire and Humber, Labour went down from 2 to 1 MEP, the Lib-Dems up from 0 to 1 MEP, and the Greens up from 0 to 1 MEP. In Scotland Labour went down from 2 to 0 MEPs, the SNP up from 2 to 3 MEPs, and the Lib-Dems up from 0 to 1 MEP. In Wales, Plaid Cymru overtook the vote for Labour.

273 <https://www.democraticaudit.com/2019/05/30/deniedmyvote-why-many-eu-citizens-were-unable-to-vote-in-the-european-parliament-elections/>

274 *The Times* provides a list of 20 major Leave donors, the big majority of whom backed Vote leave. (<https://www.businessinsider.com/twenty-one-biggest-donors-to-the-leave-brexIt-campaign-2017-5?r=US&IR=T#2-peter-hargreaves-3200000-20>)

275 <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/oct/18/mark-carney-brexIt-deal-will-boost-flagging-global-economy>

276 <https://www.mondaq.com/jersey/financial-services/791606/jersey-guernsey-funds-are-future-proofed-for-uk-and-eu-access-however-brexIt-unfolds>

277 <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1181970/BrexIt-news-Supreme-Court-ruling-latest-Jeremy-Corbyn-Boris-Johnson-resign>

278 *Jacobin*, 25.7.16, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/07/scotland-independence-referendum-brexIt-nicola-sturgeon>

279 *Jacobin*, 25.7.16, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/07/scotland-independence-referendum-brexIt-nicola-sturgeon>

280 *Jacobin*, 25.7.16, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/07/scotland-independence-referendum-brexit-nicola-sturgeon>

281 There was also a reactionary ethnic element to the ‘Yes’ vote in 2014. However, those Scottish chauvinists voting ‘Yes’ had been marginalised by the civic national nature of the official and unofficial ‘Yes’ campaigns.

282 *Jacobin*, 25.7.16, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/07/scotland-independence-referendum-brexit-nicola-sturgeon>

283 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2016/07/04/june-24th-black-friday-or-red-friday/>

284 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2016/07/04/june-24th-black-friday-or-red-friday/>

285 Jim Aitken, editor, *A Kist of Thistles*, Culture Matters, 2020

286 T.M. Devine, *Recovering Scotland’s Slavery Past, The Caribbean Connexion*, Edinburgh University press, 2015

287 Willy Maley, editor, *Scotland and the Easter Rising: Fresh Perspectives on 1916*, Luath Press, 2016, to which I contributed, *To Shake the Union, the 1916 Rising, Scotland and the World Today*. This book also contained, *They will never know why I am here - The Irony of Connolly’s Irish Connections*, by my longstanding friend, Ray Burnett. Stephen Coyle & Mairtin O’Cathain, later edited *We Will Rise Again – Ireland, Scotland and the Easter Rising, 1916 Rising Centenary Committee*, 2018.

288 <https://www.rs21.org.uk/2016/03/16/conolly-socialism-irish-nationalism/>

289 Shaun Harkin was in the process of putting together *A James Connolly Reader*, which was published by Haymarket Press in 2017.

290 Allan Armstrong, *The Ghost of James Connolly - James Connolly and Edinburgh’s New Trade Union, Independent Labour and Socialist Movements (1890-96)*, Eleconmac paperbacks, 2016.

291 Henry Bell. *John Maclean, Hero of Red Clydeside*, Pluto Press, 2018.

291 The SWN has remained within the SWP’s International Socialist Tendency, but clearly sees this more as a diplomatic alliance, than a disciplined International.

²⁹² <https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/from-pre-brit-to-ex-brit-1-4.pdf> - Part Five, Chapter 2d

²⁹³ <https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/from-pre-brit-to-ex-brit-1-4.pdf> - Part Five, Chapter 2e

²⁹⁴ Gerard Cairns, *The Red and The Green – A Portrait of John Maclean*, self-published, 2018

²⁹⁵ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2018/06/22/allan-armstrong-reviews-the-red-and-the-green-by-gerard-cairns/> and Gerry's reply, <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2018/07/25/still-talking-about-john-maclean/>

²⁹⁶ Allan Armstrong, *From Pre Brit to Ex-Brit – The Forging and the Break-up of the UK and Britishness*, Part Four, Chapters 1 and 2, Part Five, Chapter 1.d,e,f, Chapter 2. (<https://allanarmstrong831930095.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/from-pre-brit-to-ex-brit-1-4.pdf>)

²⁹⁷ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2018/09/11/edinburgh-october-6th-a-rallying-call-for-the-left/>

²⁹⁸ <https://edinburghric.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/auob-6.10.18-photos.pdf>

²⁹⁹ Sinn Fein also did badly at a time when nationally it was still showing its Right face. In the 2019 Irish local elections it lost almost half its seats - down 78. The majority of these seats are not ones which PbP or Solidarity contest. The bad showing of the Left could perhaps be put down to their growing internal divisions, which had produced the breakaway Inds4Change (3 seats) and Independent Left (1 seat). Indeed, it could be argued that the main challenge to Sinn Fein came from its own Right wing breakaway, the socially conservative Aontu. It gained 3 councillors in the 2019 Irish local elections and has 2 in Northern Ireland. Following the 2020 Irish Dial elections it also has 1TD.

³⁰⁰ <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2019/01/22/failing-governments-in-ireland-south-and-north/-The#wedeservebetter> [fantasy](#)

³⁰² Independents 4 Change (I4C) did well in the 2019 EU elections winning 2 MEPs. In the 2019 Irish local elections, it held on to 3 councillors, previously elected under other colours. However, in the 2020 Irish Dail elections, I4C lost 3 of its 4 TDs, and its last TD has now left to form another organisation Right to Change.

³⁰³ The collapse of the SWP's sect 'international', the International Socialist Tendency, has been mirrored in the SP(E&W) (with its SPS branch office) CWI. Only in this case it is the SPI which has won out over the SP(E&W), which has lost control, and formed its own breakaway CWI! However, like PbP, the SPI had already lost a leading TD to Independents4Change, whilst another TD formed a new party RISE (Revolutionary, Internationalist, Socialist and Environmentalist) in September 2019, without clear international affiliations.

³⁰⁴ Localism leads to a break with national, and of course, international political organisation. In Scotland, with the SSP having retreated into a 'party' sect, it lost its principled councillor, Jim Bolland, who now sits for the West Dunbartonshire Community Party. In Ireland, localism can also reinforce Partition. The SPI has, in practice, remained a partitionist organisation, not operating openly in Northern Ireland. Here it stands as the Cross Community Labour Alliance, seeing itself as being in the tradition of the earlier partitionist Northern Ireland Labour Party, but in 2019, it also claimed to represent Corbynism in Northern Ireland. Up until the Irish SWP formed PbP in 2005, it had also acted as a partitionist organisation in Northern Ireland, standing as the Socialist Environmental Alliance in the 2004 EU election.

The divergent trajectories of Sinn Fein, South and North, could accentuate this problem for PbP. Sinn Fein accepts the existing constitutional frameworks, South and North, as being the vehicles for its Irish reunification proposals. PbP, instead of contesting this with an all-Ireland working class strategy, including defence of migrant workers' movement, has fallen in behind this.

³⁰⁵ *Jacobin*, 8.9.19, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/08/neil-davidson-boris-johnson-brexit-tory-leave-remain-prime-minister>

³⁰⁶ My own pre-election analysis of the December 12th election placed the unionist nature of the UK state, and the political responses in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland at its centre (<http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2019/12/09/the-continued-rise-of-right-populism-and-reactionary-unionism/>)

³⁰⁷ *Jacobin*, 8.9.19, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/08/neil-davidson-boris-johnson-brexit-tory-leave-remain-prime-minister>

³⁰⁸ *Jacobin*, 8.9.19, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/08/neil-davidson-boris-johnson-brexit-tory-leave-remain-prime-minister>

³⁰⁹ Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud is also a member!

310 *Jacobin*, 8.9.19, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/08/neil-davidson-boris-johnson-brexit-tory-leave-remain-prime-minister>

311 In 1997, Labour had 34 seats and 55% of the vote, the Tories had 0 seats and 20% of the vote

312 *It's Time for Real Change*, p. 81

313 Neil Davidson, Minaa Liinpaa. Maureen McBride and Satnam Virdee (editors), *No Racism Here – Understanding Racism in Scotland*, 2018

314 I was also invited to speak at the launch conference at Glasgow University on May 10th, 2018. This conference was attended by both Left academics and political activists.

315 <https://www.the3million.org.uk/let-us-vote-campaign>

316 https://www.holyrood.com/news/view,refugees-to-be-given-the-vote-in-scotland_15139.htm. Although the vote will also be extended to those in prison with sentences less than twelve months, SNP government did not accept the amendment from the Scottish Greens extending the vote to asylum seekers in Scotland.

317 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/oct/15/voter-fraud-government-id-plan>

318 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2020/07/02/in-memory-of-neil-davidson-the-west-no-better-than-all-the-rest/>

319 <http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2020/07/02/in-memory-of-neil-davidson-the-west-no-better-than-all-the-rest/>