

Editorial

France and Holland Say “NO” to a Europe of the Monopolies

French and Dutch citizens voted overwhelmingly against the draft European Union (EU) constitution in referenda held in France on May 29 and in Belgium on June 1. The rejection of the draft constitution has sent shockwaves through Europe and thrown European politics into turmoil. Britain has called off its referendum on the draft constitution for fear that its people would also reject the document.

The proposed EU constitution was drafted by an appointed committee of political elites headed by former French President Giscard d’Estaing. It consisted of 480 pages of neo-liberal policies designed to transform all of Europe along American lines, with the “market” reigning supreme and social programs being drastically cut back or eliminated. The proposed constitution would also have further

established the EU parliament as a supranational governing body, while entrenching the militarization of Europe and strengthening NATO as the agency of European collective security. Meanwhile, clauses concerning fundamental rights were retrogressive compared to the current French constitution and other constitutions that have been written since the eighteenth century. Since any proposed amendments to the constitution would require a triple unanimity of an amending convention, heads of government and member parliaments in 25 countries, for all intents and purposes the constitution, if adopted, would be written in stone. Therefore, any national government in Europe which wished to opt out of neo-liberalism at some time in the future would find itself in violation of the EU constitution.

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Commentary

What is Behind Canada’s Political Crisis?

The political crisis that has gripped Canada since the early 1990s has many aspects. It is a crisis of the parliamentary system, a crisis of representative democracy and a constitutional crisis. Each aspect of this crisis has its own specific features and causes, but it is the deep divisions within the ruling monopoly capitalist class which are fuelling the crisis and preventing the political and economic elites from dealing with any aspect of it.

There are those who claim that the differences between the various sections of the monopoly capitalist class are ideological, while the Liberals, themselves, claim that they represent a different vision of the direction that Canada should go. However, such claims are really not convincing. While the Conservative Party is promoting “social

conservatism” to differentiate itself from the Liberals, the core social and economic policies of the two parties are virtually identical. Furthermore, as Marx pointed out, ideas are a reflection of social practice. In other words, ideological differences reflect underlying economic realities.

If one looks beyond the ideological superficialities, it is clear that there are three main sections of the monopoly capitalist class in Canada. There is the old, established section which is centred in Ontario, the newer section based on oil which is centred in Alberta and a section within Quebec which emerged out of the “Quiet Revolution” of the 1950s and 1960s. Of course, competition and conflict are constant features of monopoly capital and divisions exist within these

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For Your Information

British MP and Anti-war Activist Fights Back Against American Smear Campaign

Modern Communism is publishing excerpts from the May 18 testimony of George Galloway, the former Labour party and now independent British Member of Parliament and outspoken critic of the Iraqi war and occupation, to the U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Permanent Investigations Subcommittee. Mr. Galloway was summoned to appear before the committee on charges of profiting through fraud and kickbacks under the UN Oil for Food program. While the U.S. Senate had no legal means to enforce the summons, Mr. Galloway testified voluntarily in order to clear his name. Prior to his testimony, documents alleging he took millions in kickbacks were leaked to the U.S. media, despite the fact that these documents had already been proven conclusively to be forgeries. His remarks are addressed to Minnesota Senator Norm Coleman.

“Senator, I am not now, nor have I ever been, an oil trader, and neither has anyone on my behalf. I have never seen a barrel of oil, owned one, bought one, sold one - and neither has anyone on my behalf. ...

I have had two meetings with Saddam Hussein, once in 1994 and once in August of 2002. ... As a matter of fact, I have met Saddam Hussein exactly the same number of times as Donald Rumsfeld met him. The difference is Donald Rumsfeld met him to sell him guns and to give him maps the better to target those guns. I met him to try and bring about an end to sanctions, suffering and war, and on the second of the two occasions, I met him to try and persuade him to let Dr Hans Blix and the United Nations weapons inspectors back into the country - a rather better use of two meetings with Saddam Hussein than your own Secretary of State for Defence made of his.

I was an opponent of Saddam Hussein when British and American governments and businessmen were selling him guns and gas. I used to demonstrate outside the Iraqi embassy when British and American officials were going in and doing commerce.

You will see from the official [UK] parliamentary record, Hansard, from the 15th March 1990 onwards, voluminous evidence that I have a rather

better record of opposition to Saddam Hussein than you do and than any other member of the British or American governments do. ...

And if you had any evidence that I had ever engaged in any actual oil transaction, if you had any evidence that anybody ever gave me any money, it would be before the public and before this committee today because I agreed with your Mr Greenblatt [Mark Greenblatt, legal counsel on the committee].

Your Mr Greenblatt was absolutely correct. What counts is not the names on the paper, what counts is where's the money. Senator? Who paid me hundreds of thousands of dollars of money? The answer to that is nobody. And if you had anybody who ever paid me a penny, you would have produced them today. ...

Now, Senator, I gave my heart and soul to oppose the policy that you promoted. I gave my political life's blood to try to stop the mass killing of Iraqis by the sanctions on Iraq which killed one million Iraqis, most of them children, most of them died before they even knew that they were Iraqis, but they died for no other reason other than that they were Iraqis with the misfortune to be born at that time. I gave my heart and soul to stop you committing the disaster that you did commit in invading Iraq. And I told the world that your case for the war was a pack of lies.

I told the world that Iraq, contrary to your claims, did not have weapons of mass destruction. I told the world, contrary to your claims, that Iraq had no connection to al-Qaeda. I told the world, contrary to your claims, that Iraq had no connection to the atrocity on 9/11 2001. I told the world, contrary to your claims, that the Iraqi people would resist a British and American invasion of their country and that the fall of Baghdad would not be the beginning of the end, but merely the end of the beginning.

Senator, in everything I said about Iraq, I turned out to be right and you turned out to be wrong and 100,000 people paid with their lives; 1600 of them American soldiers sent to their deaths on a pack of lies; 15,000 of them wounded, many of them disabled forever on a pack of lies.

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If the world had listened to Kofi Annan, whose dismissal you demanded, if the world had listened to President Chirac who you want to paint as some kind of corrupt traitor, if the world had listened to me and the anti-war movement in Britain, we would not be in the disaster that we are in today. Senator, this is the mother of all smokescreens. You are trying to divert attention from the crimes that you supported, from the theft of billions of dollars of Iraq's wealth.

Have a look at the real Oil-for-Food scandal. Have a look at the 14 months you were in charge of Baghdad, the first 14 months when \$8.8 billion of Iraq's wealth went missing on your watch. Have a look at Haliburton and other American corporations that stole not only Iraq's money, but the money of the American taxpayer.

Have a look at the oil that you didn't even meter, that you were shipping out of the country and selling,

the proceeds of which went who knows where? Have a look at the \$800 million you gave to American military commanders to hand out around the country without even counting it or weighing it.

Have a look at the real scandal breaking in the newspapers today, revealed in the earlier testimony in this committee, that the biggest sanctions busters were not me or Russian politicians or French politicians. The real sanctions busters were your own companies with the connivance of your own government."

It was clear from their facial expressions that the members of the Senate subcommittee were shocked by Galloway's testimony, with some expressing outrage, presumably as they are not used to being challenged so openly. Senators on the committee tried several times to cut off or limit Galloway's testimony, asking him to provide yes or no answers to leading and inflammatory questions. He refused.

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The draft constitution was supported by almost all of the mainstream political parties in France and Holland, as well as by the entire economic elite. It was opposed by large sections of the Left and sections of the non-mainstream Right, and also, it turns out, by a majority of the citizens – 54 percent in France and 62 percent in Holland. Such a decisive defeat for the entire Establishment of a country has not been witnessed since Canadians rejected the Charlottetown Accord in 1992.

While some circles in Washington hailed the defeat of the French Establishment, the Bush administration was actually hoping for the adoption of the constitution. While a stronger Europe could emerge as a major counter-balance to U.S. imperialism in an emerging multi-polar world, the U.S. also sees possibilities for greater economic penetration in a uniformly neo-liberal Europe. In addition, by emphasizing the role of NATO in European collective security, the proposed EU constitution would have entrenched the current U.S. military domination of Europe. U.S. imperialism has never opposed a united Europe dominated by French and German monopolies so long as the Americans retain overall control through NATO. On the other hand, the U.S. has reacted harshly to any suggestion

that Europe establish its own, independent military capability.

At this time, it is unclear what precise effect the referenda results will have on the European Union. It will undoubtedly slow the process of EU expansion in Eastern Europe and Turkey and may somewhat impede the growing influence of the EU in the international arena. This, in turn, may force the big powers in Europe – Germany, France and Britain – to pursue bi-lateral arrangements with other countries, such as Russia and China, in order to advance their imperialist interests. After all, while the EU is an economic and political bloc of European monopoly capital with the aim of world domination, the big powers, especially Britain and France, have not hesitated to act outside of the context of the EU to advance their interests. This political setback, while a significant blow to the European monopolies, will not stop them from using other means to impose their agenda on the people of Europe. However, regardless of how things unfold in the short term, the defeat of the EU constitution demonstrates beyond a shadow of a doubt the growing rift between the policies of the European economic and political elites and the aspirations of the peoples for democracy, sovereignty, an economy which serves their interests and a true fraternity of the peoples of Europe.

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broad sections, as well. However, these are the main divisions contributing to Canada's political crisis.

The conflict between these competing monopoly capitalist blocs is based on control of the federal state and its use to maximize the profits of one bloc at the expense of the others. The bloc centred in Ontario has controlled the Canadian state since its inception and has used that control to keep the rest of the country in a subordinate, almost colonial position. However, the uneven development of capitalism has given rise to the other, very powerful monopoly capitalist groups which resent this control and want to eliminate it.

The Alberta-based section of monopoly capital is attempting to duplicate the experience of the "religious right" in the United States to create an electoral base which it can use to seize control of the federal state. In order to achieve this, it is promoting a "social conservative" agenda of bigotry, religious obscurantism and the culture of individualism. This is not surprising, given that virtually everywhere in the world oil capital has allied itself with the most backward, reactionary and medievalist forces. It has spent billions of dollars to create the "religious right" in the United States, Saudi Arabia and various other countries. It has also been the main proponent of the aggressive, militaristic imperialism of the U.S. since the Second World War.

The section of the monopoly capitalist class based in Quebec has its own sharp internal divisions. A section grouped around Paul Demarais and his Power Corporation sees its fortunes linked closely with Ontario monopoly capital. This section is represented by the Liberal Party. The other main section, centred around Hydro Quebec, would like to establish its own autonomous state which it can use to enhance its competitive position within Canada and internationally. This section, which is represented by the Parti Quebecois and the Bloc Quebecois, is hoping to exploit the sentiment of the people of Quebec for recognition of their nation and for sovereignty and democracy in order to wrest a section of the state out of the hands of the Ontario-based monopoly capitalists. The current sponsorship scandal is a reflection of the sharp conflict between these two groups of monopoly capital, each of which needs to line up the people of Quebec behind itself in order to legitimate its rule.

Prior to the 1990s, the dominance of Ontario-based capital was overwhelming and both the Alberta and Quebec-based groups were forced to pursue their aims through temporary alliances with

that section of monopoly capital. However, Ontario capital was always in the driver's seat, at one time forming an alliance with Alberta capital to suppress Quebec capital and at another time forming an alliance with Quebec capital to suppress Alberta capital. By the late 1980s, as a result of rapidly rising energy prices, the balance of forces had shifted to the point where Ontario capital, while still the most powerful, was no longer supreme. During this period, Brian Mulroney arrived on the scene with an ambitious plan to unite all three warring factions of Canadian monopoly capital in a power-sharing arrangement represented first by the Meech Lake Accord and later by the Charlottetown Accord. When this plan failed, Canadian federalism was plunged into a crisis from which it is yet to emerge. In turn, this crisis of federalism – the inability of the monopoly capitalist class to overcome its internal divisions – has fuelled the constitutional crisis, the parliamentary crisis and the crisis of representative democracy.

While the crisis of representative democracy and, to some extent, the constitutional crisis would exist independent of the deep divisions within the monopoly capitalist class, a united ruling class could find ways to divert and overcome those crises, at least for a time. However, the disunity of the ruling class not only prevents it from dealing with these crises, but the attempts of the various sections to manipulate the situation to their own advantage results in all of the various political crises being exacerbated. Barring the financial collapse of one or another of these sections of monopoly capital, there appears to be no way for the capitalist ruling class to solve this problem and the political crisis can only worsen.

Modern Communism

**Bulletin of the Manitoba Regional Committee
of the Communist Party of Canada
(Marxist-Leninist)**

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