

Postscript to the English Edition

9 November 1989: the joy of liberation in Eastern Europe, the end of East–West confrontation.

27 February 1991: the horror of a war waged with a clear conscience, a war of the overwhelming superiority of advanced countries against a Third World country led by a dictator.

Between these two dates, the world was knocked off course. The twentieth century finally came to an end. The blueprint for the future, which this book originally was, became a matter of absolute urgency.

A new dawn?

On 9 November 1989, Europe became once more the focal point of history. Not, as too often in the twentieth century, to shake the world with its quarrels, covering it in blood with its conflicts, or astounding it by the enormity of its crimes; but, for once, as a symbol of peace, reconciliation and liberation. The end of the Berlin Wall meant the end of forty-five years of tensions and hatreds, of mourning and despair, of powerlessness and humiliation. The spontaneous rejoicing at the Brandenburg Gate gave a meaning, forty-five years on, to the handshakes of American and Soviet soldiers over the dead body of Nazi Germany. But the symmetry had already been broken, when crowds of East Germans, smiling or fearful, broke out to overwhelm

their Western relatives with hugs and kisses. The end of the divisions of Yalta was also the complete capitulation of Stalinist state capitalism to the blandishments of the Western mix of neo-liberalism and social democracy. Not just the Cold War cycle, but the cycle started by the October Revolution, was closing on the bitter taste of widespread disarray.

This cloud of bitterness, for those who had believed in Communism, was soon thickened by sickening smells emanating from the ruins of Eastern Europe (anti-semitism, populism, unbridled materialism coming face to face with reactionary spiritualisms), and by the renewed arrogance of Kohl's Germany. However, what we must first recall is the series of celebrations which, just after the Bicentenary of the French Revolution, greeted the overthrow of 'Communist' dictatorships, from Poland to Romania. What collapsed during these glorious days was a totalitarian system in the East, and the basis of the Soviet-American condominium over Europe. We owe this double liberation primarily to the East European peoples themselves, who since 1953, in Berlin, Budapest, Warsaw and Prague, had never given up hope; to the underground activists of many decades, and to the crowds who year after year learned how to challenge the army and the militias, right up to the non-violent East German revolution of autumn 1989.

We owe it also to people in the West who in the 1980s, from Sicily to Ireland, united in their hundreds of thousands to reject Euro-missiles and the Satanization of Eastern Europe. By highlighting the crisis of the consensus on NATO nuclear defence, and in showing Soviet leaders that, because there were pacifists in the West as well as the East, the Soviet Union no longer needed an expensive buffer zone, West European peace movements did infinitely more for the liberation of their East European brothers than the thousands of megatons in Polaris submarines, or on the

Plateau d'Albion in southern France.

This must be the first conclusion to be drawn from what has happened: the final condemnation of nuclear blackmail, of the ignoble slogan of supporters of nuclear deterrence 'Better dead than red.' The Polish people were right not to commit suicide in 1981. The emergence from 'totalitarianism' was just as difficult, but just as certain, as the end of Franco- or Pinochet-style 'authoritarianism'. The struggle for freedom will never be based on the annihilation of humanity. The modernization of nuclear weapons is henceforth unjustifiable. The French defence budget in particular should immediately have been frozen, and the money directed to more pressing needs, while defence policies were being reviewed.

It is, after all, the whole global geo-strategic framework which has been recast. East-West polarization is a thing of the past, surviving only because of limited imagination. All the institutions of the Cold War – NATO and the Warsaw Pact – as well as the European Community, need to be looked at again. This is the major focus of the 1990s, after the shake-up of 1989.

When the Berlin Wall was breached, I was in a small town in Greece, at a study group on a progressive approach to North-South relations, attended each year by intellectuals, politicians and leaders of non-governmental organizations from Europe and the Third World. The Africans there noted with amusement how shattered the Europeans were. For them, it showed that their dictatorships and single parties propped up by West European governments, such as Houphouët-Boigny in the Ivory Coast and Mobutu in Zaire, would also disappear one day. But the Yugoslav member did not hide his anxiety, warning that the German right was planning a Fourth Reich, and already trying to recover Slovenia. Hope and anxiety: Berlin has again become the umbilical cord of Europe.

The economic consequences of the end of the Cold War

The consequences of the current upheavals are in fact impossible to calculate, even just in the economic field. We are reminded of the youthful Keynes writing his first major work after the First World War, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. Nobody today is as talented as he was, and the problems are infinitely more complex. Let us, however, at least try to put the problems.

Applying literally the title of Keynes's book, the speeding up of the arms race played an important part in the 1980s. It ruined the Soviet Union and the United States, while providing a stable and predictable market for high-tech industries. This was the cause of the American 'double deficit' – in its budget and its trade balance. The deficit created a natural outlet for Europe and the 'Japanese co-prosperity sphere'; and it caused no trade balance problems, as a domestic boom would have done. American debt, however, pushed up interest rates and, together with Third World debt, threatened world financial stability.

There is no longer any reason for the arms race today. Thousands of billions of dollars are potentially available to boost welfare growth, settle debts and fight against the world ecological crisis. France, for example, would have huge fiscal reserves to finance the renewal of its education system and its research. But let us not get carried away. Geo-strategic conservatism is still powerful. It has the support of military-industrial lobbies stressing the loss of jobs by cutting military levels, and overestimating the difficulties of a planned reconversion of the arms industry; it is also fed by (or even provokes) new tensions arising from the break-up of the Soviet empire. This is what the Gulf War and tensions in Eastern Europe have shown. After all, the disappearance of one kind of tension does not eliminate all tensions; the end of a nightmare does not

prevent death spasms. In the disoriented Europe which is groping for a new order, ethnic tensions and national ambitions will again be centre stage.

Ethnic tensions mean a grave danger that the economic crisis in Eastern Europe cannot be solved, including that in countries such as Poland and Hungary, which might have chosen the path of liberal-productivism. Already, after initial democratic euphoria, the old demons of authoritarian populism are again rearing their heads, in alliances (unthinkable yesterday, but so logical tomorrow) between bureaucratic conservatisms and national, even religious, chauvinisms – an alliance between the right wings of the Communist apparatus and former opposition groups. The danger is that new powerful states will assert themselves in this way, and direct hostility on to 'outsiders' – Romanians against Hungarians, Balts against Russians, Serbs against Croats, and everybody against resilient Jews. The fading of the nuclear apocalypse will begin a new age of 'small wars' against a background of suffering, such as are endemic in Northern Ireland or the Spanish Basque country.

National ambitions lead one to think of a Germany of 80 million people. From economic giant and political pygmy, Germany has suddenly become economic superpower and political giant. In recent times, its strength was threatened by demographic decline. Suddenly, it could contemplate gathering under its wing not only East Germany, but also Austria, no longer ruled out by its neutrality, and all remaining ethnic Germans from the other side of the former Iron Curtain, providing markets and skilled or cheap workers beyond its needs.

The new German Question

We can see here the lack of perception of those French writers of the 1980s who, raising fears of German he-

gemony, rejected an enlarged neutralist Europe in favour of an Atlanticist one. From now on, this fear can be dissipated only by the counterbalance of a Europe stretching beyond Germany to the small nations of *Mitteleuropa*. Beginning in autumn 1989, meetings between Italy, Yugoslavia, Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia heralded the return of the pre-war 'Little Entente' between nations springing from the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the ancient barrier to the ambitions of Prussian Germany.

It is true that in 1989 Germany struck fear into people's hearts. In Poland, Solidarity called on the Red Army for protection; France found a certain attraction in Margaret Thatcher. At that level, a subjective feeling becomes an objective fact. The underlying causes of this need to be understood.

It is not enough to be frightened of a unified Germany. What is crucial is to understand why West Germany was so strong on its own. Although 1989 saw the final victory of Western market capitalism over Eastern state capitalism, forty-five years after their joint defeat of Nazism, there was also a more subtle victory – by one kind of market capitalism over another. Ten years after the ultra-liberal offensive in the former masters of the world (the United States and Britain), the debate over the share-out of the spoils of 'socialism in being' reveal one crucial fact: these two countries plus France, despite their nuclear weapons, have no contribution to make because they are weak and debt-ridden. The new division of the world is between the poles of Japan and Germany.

With 65 million people, West Germany had half the population of Japan. In 1989, its exports were worth \$382 billion, giving a trade surplus of \$81 billion, compared with Japan's \$77 billion. This was achieved, as everyone knows, with a standard of living for wage-earners which is incomparably higher, and without any particular specialization

in new technologies. Germany comes off best without electronic chips, and with a labour force among the most expensive in the world!

What Japan and West Germany realized first and foremost (and before them Volvo in Sweden, at its Kalmar plant) was that workers need to be involved in the productivity learning process, in the search for quality, and in the management of production flows. 'Kanban' was superior to 'material requirement planning' because 'negotiated involvement' was superior to neo-liberal 'flexibility'.¹ And behind this was the victory not only of a particular conception of unionism, but of the intelligence of a certain kind of employer. Germany's superiority lay in the fact that the 'Kalmarian' capital-labour compromise was more widespread there than in Japan.

German superiority is based on a wide network of collective sector agreements, drawn up at regional level, then decentralized down to co-management committees. As in the United States, German unions in the 1970s at first resisted, to protect jobs. But in the 1980s, with unemployment at 10 per cent, they mounted a counter-offensive: subjective involvement by workers in return for shorter hours. This was an approach with a long pedigree – in 1925, the DGB (German Labour Union Confederation) was already saying that 'high wages, short hours, rational methods of production and rational organization of the economy are the prerequisites of German economic progress and competitiveness'.

This industrial sector unionism has extracted the promise of a 35-hour week from 1995, but it has certain drawbacks: it excludes 'poor' sectors such as services, and it favours a dualism to the detriment of women, Turks and future 'brothers from the East', just as '*Untermenschen*' were excluded in the past. The Swedish union movement has gone this stage further, and extends its protection to all sectors of society (at the risk of 'overheating').²

Germany is not an alternative model, and Japan even less so, even though Germany is socially more 'advanced'. These countries have shown the productive *possibility* of development models based on negotiated involvement. Everything will depend on the level of *solidarity* towards which social pressure will lead them. For without solidarity, of course, negotiated involvement leads to a *wage-earning aristocracy* sustaining a new imperialism.

It is for this reason that there is a new fear of Germany, just as in Asia there is a fear of Japan. It is not that the Germans have a Nazi chromosome in their make-up. They are simply rich and powerful, like the United States. Germany needs to be feared as Mexico and Canada fear the United States – no more and no less. Except on one point! The United States does not lay claim to Lower California or British Columbia. Helmut Kohl, however, to gain extreme-right support, refused for some months to recognize the Oder-Neisse line as the Polish-German frontier, and became the most unpopular man in Europe. Brandt's Germany was a beacon for Eastern Europe; Kohl's Germany was a nightmare. It is not that Kohl was like Hitler, but that he was like Reagan, ignoring his West European partners, humiliating his East European clients, and sacrificing the external image of his country to the demagogic manipulation of support from the most reactionary part of his electorate.

The way in which he imposed German unification is significant. In December 1989, the democratic revolution in East Germany was still hoping to recreate the Eastern *Länder* on a different model from Western materialism. The hesitations of the Communist Prime Minister Mōdrow disheartened the East Germans, and they resigned themselves to unity at any price, which is their right. However, Kohl added fuel to the flames by saying 'Stay where you are and I'll buy you out. In the meantime, don't do anything excessive!'. If this was the case, they might as well emigrate immediately. Moreover, monetary unification

changed nothing. The sudden linking of such divergent price systems and levels of productivity raised tensions even more, ruined thousands of industrial concerns in the East and sent the unemployed fleeing westwards.

When the United States under Truman helped the economic recovery of Europe and Japan, it set up 'air locks' consisting of a right to protectionism, currency non-convertibility, and gifts and loans under the Marshall Plan. Kohl did the exact opposite – no help for economic recovery, but scooping up the remnants.

This absurd situation cannot last. The eastern part of Germany will have to be rebuilt as it stands, with living standards and investment financed from the West. Germany can find the money either by raising taxes in the West (on capital, for example, which is taxed at a very low rate), though Kohl's voters would not like this, or by issuing money at low interest rates, which would fuel inflation, and the Bundesbank would not like that. In effect, Kohl bought out East Germany without putting money up front, like a Wall Street raider with junk bonds. Since everyone can see that it has to be paid for at some time in the future, interest rates will go on rising to the detriment of the whole of Europe, from Italian investors to young French couples.

This is the German problem. The Single Act unified the European economy, but no provision was made for European democratic unification. Because of this, economic policy and the daily life of Europeans is determined in the dominant state – Germany. It is not the fault of a people who wanted to be unified; it is primarily the fault of those who wanted to build Europe exclusively through the power of money.

The premature crisis of the European Community

Beyond this, it is the very structure of Western Europe which is challenged by any move towards a 'Big Europe'

including 'Middle Europe'; that is, all of Eastern Europe except the former Soviet Union. The break-up of the Soviet empire happened in 1991, though it is unlikely that its peoples, except for the Balts, could join Europe in the foreseeable future. However, the predictable crisis of the European Community became clear throughout 1989, quite independently of events in the East.

This book has made the point that the project for a large single market in 1993 contained a major contradiction. A single market for capital and goods without common fiscal, social and ecological policies could not fail to set off a downward competition between member states, each needing to bring its trade into balance. To deal with the threat of 'social dumping', Jacques Delors counted on a push *after the event* by unions in peripheral and social democratic countries to impose common statutory or contractual bases throughout the Community.

This has not happened, despite the (half-hearted) protestations of the European Parliament. We have seen in this book how attempts to harmonize VAT failed; how France saw to it that there are still customs barriers in Europe after 1992. However, lack of harmonization on capital taxation is much more serious. To provide for the free movement of capital from July 1990, the European Commission proposed in February 1989 a 15 per cent levy at source on investment income. Not much, but better than nothing. On 1 June 1989, Germany abolished its own tax! The result was, to quote Michel Charasse, the French budget minister, that 'France reacted by slightly reducing its withholding taxes on saving.' In effect, in France after 1 January 1990, income from open-end investment companies are free of tax up to 25,000 frs. a month, more than most wage-earners receive! We are therefore moving towards a Europe where only wage-earners and consumers will be taxed . . .

Even more serious was the surrender over social Europe.

In September 1989, the European Commission proposed an insipid Social Charter. On 22 November 1989, the European Parliament, the only representative body of European peoples, voted for 'a minimum base below which the Council would not go'.³ This was a synthesis of everything that wage-earners had achieved in Europe, including the right to a minimum wage, 'the gradual harmonization of social welfare benefits at the highest level', the participation of workers in technological decisions and in the organization of work . . . However, in December 1989, the European summit leaders (apart from Thatcher) adopted the Commission's Charter, even further diluted – and the press did not even publish it! The Parliament, which had stated that if this zero-charter were adopted it would block the single market, did not react. The 39 Green members prepared a motion of censure against the Commission, which could have been passed if the left - Social Democrats and Communists – had voted for it. But the plan came to nothing.

In December 1991, at Maastricht, the twelve governments of the European Community agreed on how political Europe would be structured. However, the Maastricht agreement did not address itself to the real problems. There was no serious move towards democratic control by elected Parliaments. On the contrary, Maastricht gave rise to a legal monstrosity – legislative power in Europe was handed over to coordination by national governments, a state apparatus on auto-pilot. Social Europe was of course once more sacrificed, and reduced to a 'zero Charter', with Britain opting out. The final point is that areas vital for an ecologically sustainable development were not included in the agreement. In a referendum in June 1992, Denmark, the 'good boy of Europe', the most advanced in social and ecological terms, rejected the Maastricht agreement.

In essence, as it is at present emerging, Europe will be unified only for the sake of capital, to allow it to escape

from state control; that is, from the tax authorities and from social legislation. We cannot say that this Europe is 'apolitical'. It has a policy – that of Bonn, with a few concessions. And it may be that the Monetary Union will confer all power in monetary matters on the Bundesbank. What this Europe lacks is the democratic control which alone would allow the interests of the vast majority of Europeans to be represented, and therefore the Community desired by Europe to coalesce round a grand compromise. Today, only 'social matters' mould community consciousness, as was seen in the debate on German unification.

The danger of a two-speed Europe in social matters has become great, with the rich regions of northern Europe keeping advanced Kalmarian-type social compromises (negotiated involvement, high wages) thanks to their technological supremacy, and 'neo-Taylorist' ordinary industries with temporary and low-paid workforces migrating to the periphery – the British Isles or the Iberian peninsula.⁴

Four circles of expansion

The arrival of Eastern Europe on the scene upset this scheme of things, positively and negatively. A positive effect was that West Germany, by absorbing East Germany, became a young nation with significant reconstruction needs. It is bound to become once more a driving force for the rest of Europe – even France, Britain and Portugal will pick up new markets in the old East Germany. In the medium term, the question is much more complex, and everything will depend on the new structure for Europe. What circles were already there round Europe?

First, there is the European Free Trade Area – Switzerland, Austria and Scandinavia. These countries

were as wealthy and socially advanced as the Federal Republic, if not more so, and they refused to join the EEC in order to safeguard their neutrality and their internal compromises, which were inspired more by 'Kalmarism' than by liberal-productivism. They already have free access to the EEC, but fear the protectionism of the post-1993 single market. With the disappearance of the military dimension, they will be tempted to force an entry into the EEC, which would strengthen the hand of those who favour a social Europe.

The second circle is formed by the southern rim of the Mediterranean – the semi-developed countries of the Preferential Interest Agreement, from Morocco to Turkey. Already hurt by privileged access to northern European markets on the part of the periphery countries of the EEC (Spain, Portugal, Greece), they are trying to become more closely associated with the Community, and would be the big losers from an incursion by Eastern Europe, which is ethnically more 'acceptable'. These Mediterranean countries are in an often terrifying economic and ecological crisis (in Algeria and Egypt), made worse by demographic explosion. The irresistible upsurge of Muslim fundamentalism in these countries is a sign of the failure of Western-style productivist and statist models. The European Commission, conscious of this 'time bomb', proposed a doubling of EEC financial aid to these countries, bringing it to 50p per EEC citizen per year, and £2 for every person in receipt of this aid. This is a derisory sum indicating the emergence of a new 'hostile frontier' on the southern flank of Europe; we will come back to this later.

Then, beyond the seas and south of the Sahel, there are the African-Caribbean-Pacific countries. The renewal in December 1989 of the Lomé Agreement between them and the European Community was a tremendous disappointment. The EEC, in being mean with economic support to these countries, chose not to be the driving force

of world development. This is worrying... for Eastern Europe.

It is these Eastern European countries which form the fourth circle, divided into three categories. With a per capita gross product equal to that of Spain (\$7,800), the former East Germany (\$7,200) and Czechoslovakia (\$6,000) have only their bureaucratic chaos, lack of internal consensus, and isolation to blame for the fact that they have wasted their pre-war industrial and cultural heritage, but they could easily catch up again. The second group, however, are on a par with Algeria and South Korea (\$2,500 per capita per year) – Hungary, Yugoslavia (\$2,300) and Poland (\$1,900 per capita, ten times less than the former Federal Republic). Moreover, these countries are burdened with debt (respectively \$20, \$23, and \$39 billion) and crippled by inflation. In the third group are Bulgaria, Romania, most of the former Yugoslavia and Albania. In many economic and cultural aspects, these countries are close to the second circle of non-EEC countries. They are a kind of greater 'Turkey in Europe', and in fact they were once part of the Turkish Empire (as was Greece, though it is now of course an EEC member).

The scenario of the unacceptable

Faced with this European Third World appearing in the East, moderate social democrats in the EEC, particularly Jacques Delors and François Mitterrand, saw the danger – that the trap of the Single Act was being sprung for them. They had set up a Europe of traders and capital, thinking that the rest would follow as Europe unified politically; but now there appeared the spectre of an enlarged free-trade zone amenable to no supra-national social regulation. So they tried to force matters by consolidating the Europe of the Twelve and collectively managing relations with the

East. Unfortunately they threw away their trump cards by signing the Single Act in 1985, and Kohl's Germany won the game. The Maastricht agreement improved nothing.

The opposite position was that of financial circles and neo-liberal politicians, led by Thatcher. They wanted to extend to Eastern Europe free-trade relations under firm control, of the Preferential Interest Agreement kind, and block attempts by the Delors Commission to move to a social Europe. The implacable mechanism of a multi-speed Europe in social matters would then apply to Eastern Europe as well, leaving Africa and even Ireland, Portugal and Greece to their sad fate. Under the pressure of debt, and at the cost of a few billion dollars of emergency aid, a huge free zone of low wage and virtually non-unionized subcontracting would open up in the East, for labour-intensive industries to serve the financial and technical centres of north-west Europe.

The strength of this scenario is that it offers Germany the royal road of à la carte satellization of central Europe. In return for five years of economic liberalization, West Germany acting with Austria could absorb the markets and skilled labour of East Germany, solving its demographic problem for a generation. Czechoslovakia and the northern ex-Yugoslav republic of Slovenia could play the role of Spain outside the EEC, with heavy industry and engineering. Hungary, Poland (with governments which are already ultra-liberal) and the rest of Yugoslavia would become, in the style of Tunisia or Morocco, devoted to textiles, neo-Taylorist assembly industries and growing potatoes . . . but in return for import quotas – subcontracting yes, invasion no. This economic 'Fourth Reich', resembling the Japanese sphere, would no doubt on its outer fringes be prey to nationalist 'small wars', such as those in Northern Ireland or the Spanish Basque country, and even a 'serious war' as in Yugoslavia. It is a scenario which is not very attractive,

but initially it is economically dynamic. And it is the most likely one.

This scenario, the most likely one, is unacceptable. Not only would it hasten the split within Western Europe between 'Kalmarian' regions and 'neo-Taylorist' ones, but it would set the latter in direct competition with the 'second circle' – the countries of the southern rim of the Mediterranean. It would no longer be a matter of subsidizing their standard of living, and their membership of the European Community would be in doubt. Within Europe, there would be a new frontier – that of poverty, of the mafia, of Third-Worlding. This frontier would no longer be the Mediterranean and the Iron Curtain. It would exclude the Iberian peninsula (except Catalonia), perhaps Corsica, certainly Sicily and Italy south of Rome; it would include Slovenia but not Kosovo, Transylvania but not Moldavia, the Baltic republics but certainly not the Soviet Muslim republics. In short, 'legitimate Europe' would have the frontier which it once had with the Arab and Turkish empires.

This new apartheid would clearly be based on racism directed against a Muslim world embracing fundamentalism; a world which could without difficulty be accused of violating human rights and especially women's rights, and rejected as 'barbarian'.⁵ But there would also be racism within Europe – rich regions against poor ones, West Germans against their 'Eastern brothers' and all Slavs, northern Italians against southern Italians, and so on.

North-west Europe would become more than ever a rich people's club, barricaded against demographic and religious threat from the South. To economic imperialism and cultural contempt could well be added 'eco-imperialism', whereby north-west Europe would reject polluting industries not by questioning its own overconsumption but by sending them to its southern frontier.

The new frontier, again

A third scenario is possible – hold up the free-market parts of the Single Act until there is a parallel ecological and social section in place; and make Eastern Europe, associated with the EEC in ways already tried and tested for southern Europe, into a kind of test-bed for a move towards a confederate Europe – an ecological and social Europe, but made up of nations or regions with a certain socio-cultural autonomy. This would mean massive aid, and writing off debt by a reform of the international financial system to include the Third World, as this book proposes. This grand confederal Europe would reduce the danger of German hegemony and ‘small wars’.

It may be a dream scenario, but there are hopeful signs: pressure within the EEC from unions, social movements and most MEPs for an ecological and social Europe in solidarity with other peoples; resistance by East Germans to the dismantling of their welfare state; the emergence of a civil society in Poland and Hungary with reservations about IMF ‘recipes’ and the free-market approach of their governments; solid and flourishing markets in the East to offset any instability in the countries of the former Soviet Union. In the course of history, reason sometimes wins out. This is called progress.

A different Europe is possible – ecological, social and democratic in its overall decisions, but regionally diverse in its life-styles; taming blind market forces through a common base of social rights and ecological duties; mobilizing its financial and technical resources to make standards of living equal in different regions. This can be the ideological cement and the mobilizing vision of European unification in the conquest of a new frontier – a new frontier in the East, and especially a new internal frontier. A new frontier of solidarity with the Third World.

This was (and still is) the project of European Greens and a section of the 'Euro-left', which together mobilized against the second Gulf War.

The world after the Gulf War

On 28 February 1991 the second Gulf War ended, and the masks slipped.

Men and women of good faith who until January 1991 had believed in a just war, and who even after 15 January were in favour to a war for the liberation of Kuwait and for democracy, had to accept, their eyes opened by the 'slaughter of the innocents' of 15–23 February when Iraq tried in vain to surrender, that what was happening was nothing less than the destruction of a state and the crushing of a people. The pretext, of course, was an excellent one – Saddam Hussein's crazy aggression, his crass obstinacy, his threat of further crimes, even if not carried out... But as soon as the criminal looked as if he was surrendering, the dispensers of justice, reluctant to lose a single minute's bombing, cried 'Wait! There are still a few bridges standing, factories working, water supplies intact!'

Even more shameful, if that is possible, was the peace (or is it already the third Gulf War?). As soon as the Al-Sabah dynasty returned to Kuwait, it tried to re-establish its hereditary dictatorship, ignoring the democratic forces of the Kuwaiti resistance. The approach adopted to the insurrection in northern and southern Iraq by the Forces of Righteousness, to the disgust of their own officers (their commander George Bush had just called on the Iraqi people to rise up against Saddam), was that of Bismarck to the Paris Commune of 1870–1: give the defeated regime the means for the bloody suppression of popular insurrection. Violating a ceasefire which had only just been signed, Saddam's helicopters took off again to asphyxiate Kurds

and Shiites, as they had done three years earlier. The Allies were faced with an outcry from Western public opinion horrified by this kind of realpolitik, that of millions of Kurdish refugees hounded by this 'new Hitler', set up again by Bush as the butcher of the Iraqi people; and the Allies resigned themselves to a very belated humanitarian operation . . . but only after the Kurds had been 'Palestinized'. Powerful nations like peoples only when they are down, especially if their suffering is photogenic.⁶

A new world is rising from the ruins of Iraq, unlike the one which the fall of the Berlin Wall promised. It is a world once more divided into two, but this time between the North (together with its honourable correspondents in the palaces of the South) and the South (together with its ambassadors in the suburbs of the North).

The case of Saddam

It must be said that at the beginning everything went well. The condemnation of Iraq, after so many of its crimes had gone unpunished, was for the first time accompanied by immediate sanctions. At last, the United Nations was becoming both the architect and the enforcer of a world of law. There was not too much concern over this confusion of judicial and executive functions – wrongly, since by ignoring the International Court at The Hague, a choice had already been made not to go for a solution based on law. Very quickly there came a barrage of protests: these 'dispensers of justice' had covered up the Iraqi Baathists' crimes (aggression against Iran in 1980, gassing the Kurds in 1988) and ignored many equivalent ones. But they were silenced: 'We have to begin somewhere, so let's start with Saddam, and then see about the others.'

Was this approach credible? After the liberation of Kuwait, would sanctions be imposed to force Israel to obey

UN resolutions, Turkey to evacuate Cyprus, Syria to leave Lebanon? These can merely be guesses. It is true that there were never such categorical statements from governments as after this war: 'This time we must do something to help the Palestinians, assist Lebanon, tackle the Cyprus problem.'⁷ It seems that a debt has been contracted to the Idea of Law. Will it be honoured? I sincerely hope so, but it is not just the past (before the 2 August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait) or the present (the Kurdish problem) that worries me. As I see it, the setting up of the anti-Saddam alliance, *after* 2 August and not before, is as bad a sign for the future as the more distant past. After all, it was *after* 2 August and Resolution 660 that President Mubarak took Egyptian democracy a giant step backwards; after 2 August that Syrian control over Lebanon was acknowledged; after the Al-Aqsa massacre (8 October) that Israel ignored a further Security Council resolution; on 6 November that Saudi Arabia, host to a UN army, cynically breached the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by suppressing a demonstration of women trying to assert their rights; on 14 January that the Soviets intervened in Lithuania; on 15 January, before any Scud attack, that Israel imposed a precautionary curfew on a permanent basis in the Occupied Territories.

How could the defenders of the Just Crusade forget that the basic characteristic of law is universality? That a law applying only to rich Kuwaitis, and ignored in the case of Palestinians in their ghetto, not only does not deserve to be called a law, but makes the whole idea of law absurd?

The basic truth about the Gulf War was immediately apparent for anybody able to read – no more and no less than the destruction and dismantling of Iraq as a country. If the aim had been merely to free Kuwait, sanctions would have been enough. Did the South Africans have less to lose by ending apartheid than Saddam by giving up a Kuwait rendered valueless by those very sanctions? Even the leaky

sanctions against South Africa had a decisive effect after four years. The problem with sanctions against Iraq was that they were likely to be effective more quickly – the ‘catastrophe scenario’ fully admitted in February 1991 (as opposed to the hesitations after August 1990) was that Saddam would leave Kuwait with his military-industrial complex intact.

Here is a real problem which opponents of the war (and those who therefore supported sanctions – we can call them pacifists) did not highlight enough. Iraqi military power, to which all coalition countries, including the former Soviet Union, had contributed during the Iran–Iraq war, together with the imperialist stance of the Iraqi Baathists, constituted a permanent threat to the region. Sanctions should have been extended (by a specific resolution) to the non-conventional disarming of Iraq, to a redirection of its conventional weapons. Let us not forget that it was ‘pacifists’ who (to the deafening silence of the media) had for ten years denounced the sale of arms to an Iraq which had attacked Iran.

Why then did the West turn against its former ally? The reasons are the usual ones – first, to rub out the traces of collusion. There is something of the ‘killing of Frankenstein’s monster’ in what happened, to which the Noriega case can be seen as a dress rehearsal. Nasser always maintained that Saddam Hussein was another CIA agent. In any event, he loyally served the West’s interests until the West grew alarmed at the growing autonomy of the little monster. He had to be destroyed, by exploiting his first mistake, or even setting a trap for him.⁸

However, like Noriega, this former ally immediately managed to gather round him the latent hatred of the masses against ‘Zionism and the Americans’. In all Arab countries where for some time there had been the beginnings of democracy (Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, Yemen), mobilization by the people determined the position of