

# **The Labour Party and Europe during the 1940s: the strange case of the Socialist Vanguard Group.\***

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## **Introduction**

The history, and subsequent historiography of the Labour Party in Britain, are littered with unofficial groups and sects predominantly in opposition to the leadership. Traditionally these sects, or 'ginger groups', are ascribed as being part of the Left of the political spectrum. A note of caution must be added as Eugene Meehan notes the terms 'left' or 'left-wing' are problematical. Often they were (and are) used as a result of 'self-election', or as a group encompassing all of the critics of the Labour leadership: individuals who have usually been popularly ascribed as 'the Left' of the Labour Party. For this study of the 1940s, the Left is used to signify personalities associated with the Left press - *Tribune*, *New Statesman and Nation*, *Glasgow Forward* and *Reynolds News*; left-wing intellectual critics such as G. D. H. Cole, Victor Gollancz, Harold Laski and Leonard Woolf; and MPs who were associated with the Left. For Jonathan Schneer the sum total of these disparate and 'ideologically heterogeneous' groups can be seen as the defenders of the 'socialist' roots of the Labour Party. Similarly, Donald Sassoon defines 'the Left' as the inheritors of the 'Republican' traditions from the French Revolution. Of course many historians have recognised, correctly, that the Party has always been a 'broad church', or coalition, of groups and individuals, but the debate has still remained fixed within the boundaries of left-right. <sup>1</sup>

As to what the 'Left' stood for during the 1940s, Schneer is correct to point towards a diversity of ideas inherent from its members numerous roots. 'This single section of the Labour Party brought together socialist fundamentalists ... Christians and pacifists ... former radical Liberals ... trade unionists who had been influenced by the preachers of "direct action" ... and Marxists'. Broadly speaking the Left desired that the Attlee Governments (1945-51) went farther in its socialisation of the means of production - nationalisation. Whilst in foreign policy, Britain was urged to maintain an independent voice in world affairs, leading a third group of nations. The 'multi-faceted' Left also shared two common commitments. Firstly, a refusal to limit themselves 'merely to state intervention on behalf of the poor', emphasising 'the intangible aspects of socialism' dependent on ethics and on a revolution in the minds of individuals. And secondly, that their brand of socialism could only be brought about in Britain by the Labour Party.<sup>2</sup>

The development of ginger groups is usually seen as a stark indication of the Left's weakness and impotency *vis-à-vis* the Labour Party leadership. As Laybourn has written, the Left's opposition to the Party's leadership can be deemed as either the action of 'salutary gadflies' or 'lost sheep', or both.<sup>3</sup> Both the 1930s and 1950s are regarded as fertile breeding grounds for disputes between the Left and the Party's hierarchy. The emergence of the Socialist League in the 'devil's decade', and the Bevanite movement during the 1950s are seen as indicative of this tendency. Interestingly, the intervening decade of the 1940s when the Labour Party was in Government throughout, either as a coalition partner, or, as the sole ruling party, has received scant attention. When one considers the major socio-politico-economic changes which occurred during the period this omission is surprising. Britain's world role was subject to major revision and re-positioning. Maintaining an economy on a war footing for nearly six years meant the loss of huge swathes of her overseas holdings. Being

undefeated but economically dependent on America could only have had a wide-ranging and long-term effect on the British psyche. Additionally, as Laybourn notes between 1945 and 1952 the Labour Left groups numbered ten in total: a relatively large number to not merit critical examination.<sup>4</sup>

The emergence of parliamentary backbench revolts over foreign policy during 1946 and 1947 were part of this tradition, and were a direct response to the aforementioned developments in Britain's world ranking. During November 1946, Richard Crossman circulated an amendment to the King's Speech which was critical of the Government's foreign policy for being too 'pro-American'. Despite severe pressure from the leadership (a three-line whip was called), 154 Labour MPs did not vote with the Government; too large a number to be disciplined individually.<sup>5</sup> During early 1947 a small number of the 'King's Speech dissenters' formed the 'Keep Left' group which published a pamphlet of the same name in May 1947, calling for, amongst other things, a 'third force' of nations led by Britain. The *Keep Left* pamphlet and grouping are again usually viewed as a result of the disquiet felt by MPs on the Left of the Party.<sup>6</sup>

Other pressure groups did appear during the latter part of the decade. The Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) Europe Group instigated by R. W. G. Mackay and Christopher Shawcross, held its first meeting on 2 December 1947 and was attended by thirteen MPs 'interested in promoting the political and economic integration of Europe'. Despite this initial statement the group split when it attempted to clarify its aims and decide upon a political strategy. Three separate positions were taken on European integration by group members: essentially (a) 'federal', (b) 'functional' and (c) 'fundamentalist' or socialism first. Agreement on a single outlook and strategy was not achieved and the PLP Europe Group fractured. Supporters of the latter position, including William Warbey and

Sydney Silverman, formed a Socialist Europe Group (SEG) in July 1948 which continued to argue for a socialism first position and the creation of a 'third force' of *socialist* nations independent politically and militarily from either the US or the USSR. Socialist Fellowship, organised by the MPs Ellis Smith and Fenner Brockway, held a wider brief than both the PLP Europe Group and the SEG, and was established to propagate a more fundamentalist socialism across domestic and foreign policy, but did include demands for a socialist Europe.<sup>7</sup>

*Keep Left* and these other groupings all shared two basic goals, at least in the realm of foreign affairs: the search for a socialist foreign policy, and the striving for a 'third force' in global politics. Whether these ideas could have been translated into reality is open to debate. And what constituted these 'mythical holy grails' was, and is, subject to much contemporary and more recent attention and dispute.<sup>8</sup>

Among the ranks of the Labour Party one additional, but rather different, ginger group did emerge during the 1940s - the Socialist Vanguard Group (SVG). Due to its later guise as the Socialist Union (SU) which was launched in June 1952, and its attachment to Hugh Gaitskell and the revisionist wing of the Party, the SVG has been subject to a somewhat teleological positioning on the right of the Labour Movement. Overall the SVG has received scant attention from historians. More importantly the archives of the SVG, particularly those relating to the 1940s and concerning the future of Europe, exhibit many similarities with other groups and individuals normally ascribed as part of the Left. For example, the prevalence of a European-wide federation based on socialism was a repeated desire of the SVG. What then was the SVG, left or right ? Or do we need a different set of criteria, in matters of foreign policy, to position groups on the left-right scale ? To answer these questions we firstly must outline the roots, ideas

and philosophy of the SVG. Secondly, as part of the Group's *raison d'être* was to gain influential positions in the Labour Movement, we need to examine briefly the careers of leading members of the Group. And lastly, the political desires of the SVG for Europe require more detailed and closer scrutiny.<sup>9</sup>

### **The roots and ideas of the SVG**

The roots of the SVG can be found within the factional nature of German politics during the inter-war period. Norman Davies, commenting on the Wall Street Crash and the rise of Nazism in Germany, summarises the position well:

German politics were specially vulnerable to the Depression, whose effects were poured into a cup of insecurity already full to the brim. The rancour of defeat still lingered. The street battles of extreme left and extreme right were ever-present.

Democratic leaders were mercilessly squeezed both by the Allied Powers and by voters' fears. The Germany economy had been tortured for a decade, first by reparations, then by hyperinflation. By the end of the 1920s it was exceptionally dependent on American loans.

The political situation of Weimar Germany was therefore one of extremes. The aborted (left-wing) Spartacist coup in January 1919 was followed by an equally unsuccessful attempt by the right (the Kapp Putsch) in March 1920. The main left-wing political party - the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD) - remained the largest party within the Reichstag, in terms of total votes cast, from 1919 until 1932. On the left the SPD was in competition with a number of other

organisations, such as the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (KPD - Communist Party) and the *Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (USPD - Independent Social Democratic Party). Amongst its own ranks a number of smaller factions, including the forerunner of the SVG, were also in operation.<sup>10</sup>

Leonard Nelson (1882-1927), a neo-Kantian philosopher, sought to put his intellectual ideas into practice and subsequently formed the *Internationaler Jugendbund* (IJB, International League of Youth) which operated within the SPD. The IJB espoused politics which 'were revolutionary, though of a Kantian and rationalist, not Marxist, variety', and a socialism based on ideals such as justice and a just state. Ethical superiority predominated over any class interest of the proletariat in the Nelsonian perspective. Members were to act morally, as a moral consciousness brought self-liberation and freedom from the negative effects of the ego.<sup>11</sup>

Popular sovereignty was also rejected, leading to the Leninist-type 'vanguardist' organisation and structure of the IJB and later the SVG. In foreign policy the sovereignty of a single nation was rejected as legally unacceptable. According to Nelson, following Kant, each state should act as a guarantor of its citizens rights based on a 'republican constitution' and that 'every state should combine with the others in a republic of states, making possible a relationship of rights between them', suggesting an equal union of nations.<sup>12</sup>

Disputes with the leadership of the SPD over the group's independent political functioning led to the expulsion of the IJB in November 1925. The faction was resurrected in the following year as the *Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund* (ISK, or Militant Socialist International - MSI). The ISK sought to

operate as an independent group, and according to Lipgens positioned itself on the left of German politics 'intermediate between the SPD and the KPD'. As its title suggests, the ISK looked to further its international contacts and network. Resultant from this policy was the emergence in 1930-31 of a British section of the MSI - the Socialist Vanguard Group. The founding members of the SVG - Edith Moore, Allan Flanders and George Green - were all contacted by Gerhard Kumleben of the ISK on a recruitment visit to Britain.<sup>13</sup>

A not surprising strand to Nelsonian socialism was the educational training of the political elite. (The similarity in outlook with the founders of the Fabian Society should not be discounted). Minna Specht, on Nelson's suggestion, had founded the *Walkemühle* near Kassel in 1925. Its purpose was two-fold. Firstly, adults were to be morally and ideologically trained in the role of leadership, both Moore and Flanders were to go through the process of educational training for leadership. At the *Walkemühle* there was also a second strand to the pedagogy: a boarding school for the children of the elite, who would receive the fullest possible education to enable them to lead when maturity arrived. On the accession of the Nazis to power in Germany the school was confiscated in March 1933, but re-opened in Denmark later that same year. The school relocated to Wales in 1938 and then Butcomb Court near Bristol in 1940, when it was eventually closed, due to the internment of Minna Specht and other ISK members by the British authorities. The SVG was to continue this educating role; one tenet of its self-perceived function was to aid 'clarification of socialist principles [and] to increase the systematic training and education of its members'.<sup>14</sup>

Part of the ISK/SVG's philosophy involved members partaking in a written commitment to the Group's key principles. Four points were seen as basic requirements for membership. All potential recruits were expected to abstain

fully from alcohol; be totally vegetarian, and visit an abattoir to cement and confirm this undertaking; be a member of a 'free' trade union (i.e. not communist or Catholic), where applicable; and not be a member of any church or religious body. SVG members were further expected to write a statement analysing their reasons for wishing to join the Group and their ultimate loyalty to the principles of the SVG. When potential recruits had fulfilled these conditions, and obtained letters of recommendation from two sponsors willing to support their applications, they were admitted to the Group.<sup>15</sup>

The SVG initially sought to act as an independent grouping within the British political scene. As the 1930s developed the SVG remained critical of the Labour Party, particularly over the Party's 'tepid anti-Catholicism'. The different political circumstances of the war led the SVG to abandon any hope of playing 'an effective independent role.'<sup>16</sup> Members of the Group therefore joined the Labour Party *en masse* in late 1942. From within the Labour Party the SVG hoped to make contact with like-minded individuals and ultimately influence policy decisions. Within a year the SVG was able to report that 'we are not on the verge of the Labour Movement but inside it and part and parcel of it.' Post-war, the Group recognised that, although they were an avowedly revolutionary group the political situation was decidedly non-revolutionary, therefore, as the SVG was the self-professed 'vanguard', the Group was to perform an educating and leading role within the Labour Movement. Again the similarities in outlook and practice with rather different traditions - the Fabians and the Bolsheviks - make an interesting comparison. One method of gaining prestige was by taking positions within organs of the Labour Movement, such as Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs), Trades Unions and the Fabian Society; a number of key SVG members were successful in this, particularly in the post-war period. For example, Rene Saran became the Secretary of the St. Albans CLP and was delegated to the

Labour Party's Conference of 1945 where she discussed the need for supporting 'the movements in Europe which are ... capable of reconstructing that Continent.'<sup>17</sup>

A further method of influence was through the Group's monthly journal *Socialist Commentary*. Although *Commentary* only sold in relatively small numbers it has been seen by one historian of the 1950s as the house journal of revisionism, with influence disproportionate to actual copies sold. Whether the same can be said for the 1940s is open to debate, but members at the time certainly perceived that they had sizeable clout. Articles in *Commentary* by leading Labour figures in the years following the war, such as Denis Healey - International Secretary of the Labour Party - would tend to support this. The issue revolves around the question of quantitative versus qualitative influence. Meehan estimates that *New Statesman* sold in excess of 80,000 copies in this period; whereas *Tribune* sold half that figure. The sales of *Socialist Commentary* were in the region of a maximum of 900 per edition during the immediate post-war period.<sup>18</sup>

### **Members of the SVG**

The membership total of the SVG is open to question; papers which survive include detailed application forms from prospective recruits, but do appear to be incomplete. During the 1940s, and prior to Socialist Union, there was a total of approximately fifty members. A small number, but as individuals were expected to be politically active and dedicated to the cause quality was again more important than quantity.<sup>19</sup>

A number of SVG members were able to gain credible reputations within the wider Labour Movement. Flanders, who was a member of the Group's Executive

Committee, became noted as the founder of the 'Oxford' school of industrial relations (circa.1970) which suggested a consensual form of workplace politics. In earlier days Flanders worked as a Research Assistant at the TUC (1943-46) and, most importantly for this piece, as Head of the Political Branch of the Control Commission in Germany (1946-47). He was also a member of the Fabian's International Bureau.

Mary Saran (1897-1976) also achieved a reputation of some note in later years: she became the Women's Secretary of the Socialist International in 1954. Originally a German socialist and member of the IJB/ISK in Germany, Saran moved to France in 1933 and eventually onto Britain, where she made contact with the ISK's sister organisation. Saran was also the long-time editor and co-editor (1941-55) of *Socialist Commentary* and wrote a number of pamphlets and books on Europe for the SVG.

Part of the SVG's political work was the recruitment of like-minded ethical socialists; perhaps their greatest coup was the addition of Rita Hinden (1909-1971) to their ranks. Born in Cape Town, Hinden emigrated via Palestine to Britain in 1938. Shortly after arriving in Britain, Hinden helped co-found, the Colonial Bureau of the Fabian Society (FCB) during 1940. She was to remain the Secretary of the FCB for ten years. Hinden joined the SVG in 1947, taking over the editorship of *Commentary* from Saran, and remained in this capacity until her death in 1971.

On the industrial side of the British Labour Movement the SVG achieved some success also in addition to the role of Flanders in the TUC and in Germany. George Green, also an Executive Member of the Group, became, in 1955, the General Secretary of his union - the Civil Service Clerical Association (CSCA).

During the 1940s he was dedicated to fighting both the Catholic and Communist cliques within the CSCA. Joe Madin, was a shop steward for the Amalgamated Engineering Unions (AEU) in Sheffield. Similarly, as with Green, Madin faced the problem of operating within a union dominated by communists. He was able to obtain a reputation of integrity for his incorruptible approach to negotiations with management. A further figure of note within trade union circles, was Bob McBeth, a local official of the Durham National Union of Mineworkers and its predecessor the Miners Federation of Great Britain.<sup>20</sup>

### **The SVG and Europe**

On the question of ideas relating to Europe during the 1940s, the SVG is an interesting case study. Essentially, the period can be neatly sub-divided into two clear and distinct phases. The first, or 'idealistic' phase, covered 1940 - June 1945, when the SVG espoused a united Europe based on a federal model. Post-war, in the second 'realistic' phase (July 1945 - 1950) the Group altered its outlook. In response to global political events, the SVG readily accepted the leading role of the USA to the western half of the continent of Europe.<sup>21</sup>

A united Europe was a long standing political objective of the SVG. The ideal, at least initially following Nelson, was based on a conception of the union of free and independent socialist and progressive forces, throughout geographical Europe. During World War Two, the SVG continued to press for the unity of Europe. An article in *Socialist Commentary* during 1942, suggested the following prescription for Europe's long-standing problems:

It would be a catastrophe to allow Europe to return to the old multitude of sovereign States, or to be once more divided .... A United Europe, on a

free basis, promises greater guarantees for peace ... because it would mean a progressive solution to the European problem.<sup>22</sup>

Note the stress on 'a progressive solution': the SVG was at great pains to emphasise the unity of socialist and progressive forces throughout the war. Mary Saran made a similar point in her pamphlet *The Future Europe: Peace or Power Politics* which was published in 1943. To further propagandise its position on Europe, members of the SVG were expected to join with progressive forces such as the Federal Union (FU) and 'push for a European federation'. The FU, as its title suggests, was created in 1939 to further the cause of federation but on a world-wide scale. In Britain the surge of interest in federalism was at its height between the Munich agreement of 1938 and the fall of France in the summer of 1940. A Penguin Special: *The Case for Federal Union* written by the FU's W. B. Curry sold in excess of 100,000 copies within six months of its publication.<sup>23</sup>

The relative success of SVG's operation within the FU was later questioned, but ultimately it did allow the Group a wider audience for its ideas. Similarly the SVG functioned within the Fabian Society, which it deemed the most political arena within the Labour Movement in Britain. The SVG's work within the Fabians did eventually prove more fruitful, at least in terms of recruitment. Further, an internal report of the SVG during 1944, commented that, work within the Fabians was 'proving more and more [a] valuable medium' and we are making 'the Fabians more political'.<sup>24</sup>

In line with other pressure groups, such as the aforementioned FU, the SVG's 'European' political line was a reaction to the second outbreak of hostilities on the Continent within one quarter of a century. The nation state had proved itself incapable of maintaining any façade of peace. Therefore, the SVG argued, the

only viable solution was to limit each nation's sovereignty within a wider international organisation. Mary Saran, writing in 1941, argued for the instigation of an 'International Authority ... with power to limit the sovereignty of States at all points where the exercise of this sovereignty seems likely to plunge Europe into another war.' The author's primary concern was understandably the threat of war; federation, in this example, was clearly not seen as a suitable solution, which was an important recognition with later post-war developments.<sup>25</sup>

A united Europe was to incorporate, ideally, all of continental Europe, but when one looks a little deeper, the SVG's conception focused predominantly on those nations covering the western and northern parts of the continent; in essence the democratic socialist nations. That is countries which had experienced at least some form of parliamentary democracy, despite the subsequent onslaught of Fascism and totalitarianism. Evidence of the SVG's focus on the democratic European nations can be seen within the pages of *Socialist Commentary*: during the war years first-hand reports were often received from countries of Western Europe - Germany, Italy, France, Spain and Portugal. Furthermore, during 1940, *Commentary* published an article stressing the need for a wartime International of 'the Labour and Trade Union Movements in Europe ... composed of representatives from Germany, Italy, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France'; with the exception of Poland, all non-Eastern European nations. The inclusion of Poland was due in part to the good relations established between the SVG and the Bund members in London, such as Lucjan Blit, who were also critical of the Soviet Union. Contrary to some others within the Labour Party the SVG's conception also clearly included delegates from 'enemy' nations.<sup>26</sup>

Members of the SVG have suggested recently that this notion of essentially Western Europe was as a direct result of the contacts the Group was able to establish both pre-war and during the war years. But the fact remains, especially with later, post-war, developments that most of those countries named fell within the Atlantic Alliance. Eastern Europe appeared to be left to its own devices, or more correctly Soviet politics. Mary Saran writing in *The Future Europe*, whilst remaining critical of Stalin's policies, intimated agreement when acknowledging 'Russian leadership ... in Central and South-East Europe [a] part of Europe [in which] Britain has never taken any great interest'. Whether Britain should change this attitude of non-intervention was not addressed.<sup>27</sup>

When the SVG argued for its favoured solution of a European federation, the role which Britain would fulfil was somewhat ambivalent. Was Britain to be part of the federation or not ? Surviving members of the Group insist that the continent's 'awkward neighbour' was unequivocally part of the federal settlement. Contemporary publications were less clear. Flanders writing during July 1942, in *Socialist Commentary* argued that, 'European Unity, does not only depend on an identity of interests between Britain and Russia, but on the efforts and will of the European people themselves .... [For] European Unity is not something that can be devised from *outside* Europe.' A similar point was put forward when *Commentary* discussed the Labour Party's 1944 statement on the post-war settlement. An editorial commented, that socialists 'should not rely on Big Three unity' when the time came to eradicate Fascism and Nazism.<sup>28</sup>

To shed light on this problem one needs to examine the reasons offered by the Group for the breakdown in world politics which ultimately had precipitated a Second World War. 'Power Politics' was a phrase often found in the SVG's publications. Essentially, the failure of the diplomatic machinations and

manoeuvres of the big powers - Britain, USA and USSR - had, coupled with the economic propensity of monopoly capitalism to rearm, brought about a further military conflict. The SVG further castigated monopoly capitalism for its of imperialistic tendencies, an added cause of the Second World War. A resultant factor of the expected continuance of 'Power Politics' post-war was, for the SVG, a federation of Europe alone, rather than any form of world organisation as was suggested by the FU. Peace could only be maintained by a piecemeal union of a small number of - European - nations, as two of the big powers - the USA and USSR - would wreck any attempt at a wider solution. Additionally, argued Mary Saran, as Britain shared the blame for war, it would remain on the fringes on any European federation. This argument of the SVG, although coherent, clearly lacked much faith in socialist politics in Britain, ignoring the prospect of a Labour victory in any future general election and a subsequent change in foreign policy.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, the SVG was never as purely anti-American as other members, or groupings, within the Labour Party such as the *Tribune*-milieu. During the war at least, the SVG stressed in fairly equal measures the failings of both the USA and USSR. Although the establishment of an Anglo-American Union post-war, was not overly problematical for the SVG, ultimately it would be an insufficient 'alternative to European Union.'<sup>30</sup> The Group continued to emphasise its long-standing opposition to the Marxism of the Soviet Union, which in turn had been augmented by the experience of the KPD's manoeuvres in Germany prior to the accession of the Nazis. In response to pro-Soviet opinions in the Labour Party, and in particular the arguments contained in G. D. H. Cole's *Europe, Russia and the Future*, Mary Saran stressed that any interference by Stalin in European reconstruction contained inherent dangers:

Socialists must be clear that any kind of intervention by the Stalinist Soviet Union ... would be a contribution not to progress, but to reaction. The road along which the Soviet Union might lead us would have no connection whatever with socialism. For Stalinist Russia is to-day a totalitarian State ... a State which employs the same ruthless and constant terror against its own people as do the fascist dictatorships.<sup>31</sup>

The key post-war political problem which faced socialists during the war, was the future of Germany. Throughout the war years, and unlike many within the Labour Party, the SVG continued to stress the existence of a sizeable number of anti-Nazi Germans.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the Group kept-up its call for a non-vindictive peace settlement on Germany. The blame could not be placed solely at the door of the German people, Britain and the other major powers shared the responsibility; 'Power Politics' was again indicted. Additionally, the calls for an anti-Nazi German uprising by the Allies during the early years of the war had been over optimistic and incorrectly applied. Assurances of support from the Allied countries needed to be more concrete, the German people, according to an SVG pamphlet:

must be convinced that, after this war, there will be a guarantee against future wars, that further guarantees will provide against a repetition of that terrible wave of unemployment, that plans are already prepared to bring to account the real war-mongers in Germany who helped the Nazis to power.

Only then will the 'large sections of the [German] people ... be ready to ... ensure that the peace shall be a lasting one'.<sup>33</sup>

Why did the SVG arrive at such positions ? A number of factors are important. Firstly, the attitudes of the SVG, relating to Europe, were informed by the Group's roots within German politics. As we have seen the ISK stressed a Kantian philosophy, which included as one of its central tenets the limiting of national sovereignty, a concept which was transposed to the British section of the MSI - the SVG. More concretely, the demarcation between the SVG and the ISK during the war broke down. Members of the latter who sought refuge in Britain swelled the ranks of its British sister organisation. As administrative positions became common property, one can safely assume that political positions were also subject to cross fertilisation.<sup>34</sup> More fundamentally, the SVG's impetus came from German socialists recruiting like-minded British comrades, which gave the Group a more open European outlook from the outset. The SVG looked to Europe with hope, and as an arena of potential solutions rather than as either an irritant, or subsidiary to the British Empire and Commonwealth.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, the influence of a larger and wider body of exiled socialists cannot be underestimated. People who had fought Fascism 'face-to-face', as it were, held great sway in any discussions about the future European order. The pre-eminence of the federal idea within resistance movements and exiles stressed by Lipgens, amongst others, cannot be ignored.<sup>36</sup> The heroism of the resistance appealed to many, including the SVG, whose 1944 pamphlet *Europe and World Peace* proudly published news from resistance movements in France, Poland, Holland, Norway and Italy. Extracts were reprinted to emphasise the popularity amongst the ranks of the resistance - and the SVG - for a federal solution for Europe.<sup>37</sup> Similar items were frequently included in the pages of *Commentary*. Consequently, some form of European federation was seen as vital for a peaceful post-war world. As many exiles had gravitated towards London the opportunity to 'network' became available. In the December 1944 issue of *Socialist*

*Commentary* an article by Mary Saran, revealing entitled, 'The Re-making of Europe', emphasised the 'strength and importance of exiles' who had 'above all, at least in London, the chance to make contact with many European socialists from other countries'.<sup>38</sup>

It should also be remembered that the leaderships of the main parties - Labour and Conservatives - had called a political truce for the duration of the hostilities. This left the political arena open to much smaller organisations who in turn were able to exert an influence disproportionate to their actual size. The SVG's wartime role, and overall impact, must be seen in this light.

One method by which exiles could discuss the future European order was at conferences. The SVG organised a number of such gatherings during the war. Three of these meetings are indicative of the subjects discussed by the SVG and exiles during the war years. The titles of the conferences, and reputations of the speakers involved are also of interest.

'The Future Order of Europe' was held on 5 April 1942 with Jef Rens, Willi Eichler, Bernard Drzewieski, Louis Lévy, Paolo Treves and Green for the Executive of the SVG as speakers. Despite some minor differences of opinion at this conference, overall agreement was reached by the orators resulting in the SVG publishing a pamphlet later that year detailing the speeches under the revealing title: *Calling all Europe*. Clearly, for the delegates, including the SVG, the proclamation was meant for the whole of the European continent. All speakers stressed the need for federation, Lévy, for example, stated that 'all States must give up a large part of their sovereignty' as 'political ... [and] economic anarchy must disappear'.<sup>39</sup>

Towards the end of the war the SVG organised 'The Future of Germany'. At this conference which took place on 9 April 1944, the speakers were: Yves Goeau, H. N. Brailsford, John Burns-Hynd MP, Willi Eichler, Emmanuel Scherer, and Moore for the Executive of the SVG. The advertising material produced by the SVG for this gathering restated the Group's stance on Germany by stressing the existence of serious numbers of 'anti-Fascist fighters' within Germany who, when peace came, 'would seize the opportunity to undertake [to restore] to Germany her title to rank as a civilised nation'. The discussion returned to themes previously outlined by Mary Saran in *European Revolution*: the adherence of Germany to democratic ideals, the existence of anti-fascist Germans; and the need for a democratised German nation in any post-war settlement.<sup>40</sup>

In the last months of the war 'Europe Calling for unity and independence' (31 March 1945) was organised by the SVG. This gathering was chaired by John Burns-Hynd MP and the speakers were: Daniel Mayer, Emmanuel Scherer, Wenzl Jaksch, Arturo Borea and Flanders for the SVG's Executive. The post-war stability of Europe was central to this conference, which took place in the last months of the Second World War, and the speakers agreed that European unity was to remain the central 'cornerstone of socialist international policy to-day'.<sup>41</sup>

These meetings, as their titles suggest, had one major theme in common: a striving for a commonly agreed position on how Europe would develop after the conclusion of the war. The conference of 1942 ('The Future Order of Europe') led to an agreed pronouncement incorporating 'Nine Points of Agreement', which were subsequently slightly modified and published as a pamphlet by the SVG in February 1944, under the title *Europe and World Peace*. The document contained the following eight points, and provides an excellent summary of the SVG's position on Europe in the latter stages of the war:



1. To oppose any return to the era of national sovereign States.
2. To expose and resist all plans for a division of Europe into blocs or spheres of influence dependent upon rival Powers.
3. To struggle against the economic and political forces that were responsible for the growth of Fascist regimes in Europe.
4. To press for the immediate and total disarmament of Germany and the destruction of the social, political and cultural roots of Nazism, militarism and racism.
5. To support the formation of a European Federation which will guarantee the European peoples security, democratic liberties and national self-determination.
6. To revive the Trade Union and Socialist Movements on the Continent, and to entrust the responsibility for the creation of the new Europe to their representatives and those of other Resistance Movements.
7. To invite and encourage the new united Europe to play its part in world economic collaboration and the world peace system.
8. To act on all these matters in close contact with the progressive forces on the Continent, and to serve as a link between them and similar forces in all other parts of the world.<sup>42</sup>

All of the main arguments of the SVG appear. The era of the nation state was at an end and the only alternative for a viable European settlement was a continental federation, which in turn would form part of world-wide co-operation. Power politics, spheres or blocs were redundant due to their association with the rise of Fascism. Nazi Germany had to be fully disarmed to enable a peaceful Germany to be established. A new Europe was to be safeguarded by reinvigorated labour movements and also by the resistance and

other progressive forces. The stress of national self-determination guaranteed by federation would appear contradictory, but reflected the views of those involved in drafting the original statement such as Drzewieski from Poland, who obviously wished to assure his country's independence particularly from the USSR. This then was the SVG's political outlook towards the end of the Second World War. Consequently, the Group awaited the end of hostilities with a great sense of hope for the future of Europe.

With the defeat of the Axis Powers, and the election of the first ever Labour Government with a clear majority in the summer and autumn months of 1945, the SVG had the opportunity to push for its desired European federation. The Group stressed the contacts which had been established with senior members of the Labour Party, who now held ministerial, or prominent positions within the Labour Movement. MPs thought favourable to the SVG were: John Hynd; James Griffiths; Arthur Creech Jones; Harold Wilson; John Parker; and Arthur Skeffington.<sup>43</sup>

In relation to the future development of Europe Hynd held a key position as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, with responsibility for the Control Commission in Germany. The Group had a long-standing relationship with, and respect for the MP for Sheffield, Attercliffe. Subsequently a number of members of the SVG and ISK - Flanders, Werner Hansen, Walter Fliess and Tauba Green - worked in Germany on the reconstruction of political parties and trades unions; probably in the case of Flanders at the direct recommendation of Hynd.<sup>44</sup>

Although there had not been any of the expected, and keenly desired, revolutions on the European continent, the political developments were most definitely promising for the SVG. During the early months of peace many socialists were

able to gain office in Europe. The prospects for European unity led by Britain looked rosy to the SVG. Within two months of the Labour victory *Commentary* reported that the Foreign Secretary's - Ernest Bevin - statements concerning the economic reconstruction of Europe, were 'a very welcome indication that the unity of Europe on a progressive basis [had] an advocate in the Labour Government.' The editorial continued, that current economic problems 'may also bring this country a great deal nearer to Europe, both *morally* and economically', which in turn created conditions 'more favourable for the British Labour Government to give ... leadership to Europe'.<sup>45</sup> The relatively uncritical support for the much maligned Bevin, although subject to some fluctuation, stayed with the SVG throughout the 1940s and is central to the Group's later political developments in relation to Western Union and the Atlantic Alliance.

*Socialist Commentary* recognised an additional reason why Labour should lead Europe. The relegation of Britain to a minor role, in the now bi-polar superpower-dominated world, left the room open for the leadership of 'the progressive forces in international affairs'.<sup>46</sup> Here we see evidence of the SVG's emerging support for a 'third force' in the post-war world, an argument which was to gain many followers on the Left, during the 1940s and 1950s. But other global events would be required to bring the 'third force' to centre stage.

The stark reality of international relations was, for the SVG, quick to dent any hope of a progressive settlement to the long standing problems of the states of Europe. The breakdown in constructive dialogue between the Big Three led to a new type of conflict - the Cold War. For the SVG the tactics employed by the USSR were not wholly unexpected. The Group's antipathy to Marxism, especially Soviet-style, was long-standing. During the last days of the Soviet-Nazi pact *Commentary* noted that the Marxism of Stalin's Russia was a corrupt

and unscientific combination of 'practical observations and unlimited mysticism.'<sup>47</sup>

As the USA and USSR grew further apart, the SVG rejected any position of neutrality for Britain. The Berlin blockade of 1948-49, argued the Group, forced socialists to choose sides: co-operation with the USA had become an accepted necessity. An internal paper of the SVG dated August 1948 suggested that 'socialists [could not] be neutral'. Survival became the key word; survival of democratic socialism in the western part of Europe. Flanders, addressing the Executive Committee of the SVG in 1947, suggested that 'the integration of Western Europe [was] necessary as an act of survival.' Ultimately, he continued, the federation of Europe remains the aim', but only economic matters could be tackled at present as the key issue was the maintenance of social democracy. In addition, Flanders stressed that, the western sectors of Germany should be incorporated within Western European developments which reflected the SVG's understandable adherence to an anti-Nazi Germany.<sup>48</sup>

According to the SVG the policies of the Soviet Union had destroyed any hope of an all European solution. Similar shifts were to occur on the pages of the two main intellectual journals of the Left - *Tribune* and *New Statesman and Nation*. An article of May 1949 by Michael Foot in the former laid the full blame for the division of Europe at the door of the Soviet Union, whilst accepting the inherent benevolence of American aid from the Marshall Plan. Western Europe's only possible hope, according to the editor of *Tribune* was the development of the Atlantic Alliance. *New Statesman and Nation* was more circumspect but accepted the general principles of the survival of Western Europe backed by American dollars. The economic stability of the western sector of the Continent

was to grow organically from the Marshall Plan, which was aimed at making the social democratic nations resolute against the threat of Communism.<sup>49</sup>

As the ideal of European unity based on federalism disappeared from the SVG's vista, the Group shifted its focus onto alternative approaches to a continental settlement. Discussing the controversy which surrounded the amendment to the King's Speech moved by Crossman in November 1946, *Socialist Commentary* noted that whilst 'a European Federation is not practical politics at present, the vision of a freely United Europe ... can and should determine our actions to-day ... The creation of a Council of Europe ... would be an important step.'<sup>50</sup> Consequently, the emphasis was placed on a more 'informal' arrangement of inter-governmental co-operation in the form of a Council, rather than a fully fledged federation as previously.

The SVG also rejected alternative visions for Europe which were debated during the early post-war years. On the far left of British politics, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) had a long-standing commitment to a United Socialist States of Europe (USSE). The ILP launched its official USSE campaign in London during February 1947. In response Mary Saran writing in *Socialist Commentary* suggested that the USSE was in essence a good idea, but was 'of small value unless the political obstacles are faced'. The overwhelming difficulty with the desire for a USSE which was perceived by the SVG, was the dilemma of socialism or European Unity first. Would socialists have to wait until their comrades were in office in Europe before an avowedly socialist Europe (USSE) could be introduced ? Or was unity the key goal ? Conversely the SVG rejected the appeals by Churchill and others in the United Europe Movement for what in essence would be an ill advised 'western bloc against Bolshevism'.<sup>51</sup>

As the Cold War became entrenched, the SVG looked for an alternative to its long-standing commitment to federation. Enter Bevin with his famous Commons 'Western Union' (WU) speech of January 1948. Despite the ambiguities of the Foreign Secretary's speech the SVG welcomed the suggestion of a union of the countries of Western Europe for collective security which, 'should be the purpose of the Third Force once it ... became consolidated'. Moreover, the Labour Party suggested the SVG, should promote 'individual freedom with a planned economy; democracy with social justice'. Thus the touchstones of democratic socialism became the foundations of the proposed third force in the form of a WU, around which anti-Marxist socialists in Western Europe could combine. Ultimately it was still hoped that 'the "Third Force" ... would be socially progressive and internationally a factor for peace.' Hence, the SVG's conception of a 'third force' exhibited two evident dimensions: a commitment to the ideological precepts of social democracy and secondly, a 'geographical' construct of Western European nations for the defence of the same.<sup>52</sup>

Conversely, other papers of the SVG suggest that the third force had been dealt a mortal blow. In response to Bevin's Commons announcement the SVG set up an internal study group on the possible development of WU as a concrete plan for Europe's future. After considering the issue for over a year Mary Saran reported that 'we found, as we went along, that on the whole, the British Government was taking the right course ... the gradual and functional approach was in fact being accepted.' Interestingly, the use of the adjectives 'gradual' and 'functional' were common to the Labour Government's official statements also, and represented a clear shift for the SVG from its previous adherence to a federal European settlement. Similarly, the gradual/functional approach was accepted by the main body of the Fabian Society which was a fertile area for the SVG's political work. Additionally, the economic and military co-operation between the USA and

Western Europe according to the SVG, made 'it ever more difficult to show that the Third Force can have a life of its own.' Hence, the Group's ideal of a third force of nations was limited to a military coalition centred on the emerging Atlantic Alliance.<sup>53</sup>

Two important factors are central to this shift in the position of the SVG away from a European federation towards the emerging Atlantic Alliance. Firstly, the absence of the strong influence of the exiles, which had been so prevalent during the war years, left the SVG somewhat 'isolated'. The SVG's sister organisation - the ISK - had rejoined the SPD *en masse* in 1945. Some exiles, such as Blit did remain in Britain but the revolutionary impetus which had emerged so strongly during the war had dissipated.

Secondly, and accordingly, the SVG's only remaining forum for discussion was the British Labour Movement and therefore, the 'European focus' became entwined with, and subject to, the limits of Cold War politics and the preference for the Commonwealth/Empire amongst the ranks of the majority of the Movement. The strong influence of members such as Hinden, with her long-standing expertise in Commonwealth matters was also important in this context. The ethical realism, central to Nelsonian philosophy permitted this volte-face without too much trouble. For members of the SVG, such a political sea change was necessary and the only practical and viable alternative.<sup>54</sup>

## **Conclusion**

An answer to the central question of this paper concerning the SVG's policies relating to Europe, and a subsequent positioning on the left-right scale of the Labour Party still remains problematical. A shift from a European federation to

the military alliance of NATO was broadly common to many on the Left. More importantly members of the SVG rejected any such left-right categorisation, considering themselves a 'loyal opposition' to the leadership of the Labour Party. Further, this relationship was reciprocated: when the SVG's position was challenged by some of the Party's members the Group found some prominent allies such as James and Lucy Middleton and the aforementioned John Hynd, willing to defend their position.<sup>55</sup>

The SVG's political operation within the wider Labour Movement, especially the Fabian Society - who are usually placed on the right - adds weight to a similar positioning of the Group. If one focuses solely on economic policy, then the SVG's favouring of a 'mixed economy' would also by common consent place the Group on the right of the Labour Movement. Returning to Europe, the 1940s, when the *vox populi* shifted to the left and favoured some limit to national sovereignty, can the SVG be examined within the usual left-right framework?<sup>56</sup>

The SVG's roots within the unique political culture and historical period of Weimar Germany may answer this dichotomy. The factional nature of inter-war German politics meant the ISK-SVG developed in a singular way which questionably cannot be successfully examined using the language and models of British politics. Ultimately, the SVG may have been a square peg in the round hole of the Labour Party. This historical and political 'atypicality' of the SVG when allied with its stress on the ethical side of its position, and its choice - initially at least - of a federal Europe perhaps leads to a new form of political grouping outside the normal 'lazy' boundaries? Feasibly, this maybe the real roots of a 'third way'.

## Endnotes

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\* I am grateful to surviving members of the SVG/ISK who have corresponded and given interviews - Rene Saran, Nora Henry and Tauba Green. For a 'sneak' preview of his article on the Socialist Union (and subsequent discussions) I must thank also Lawrence Black. My thanks to Isabelle Tombs, Lawrence Black, Karl Koch, Ian King and Graham Higgins for their stimulating comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain, 1945-51* (London, 1993) pp.333-34; Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour in Power, 1945-51* (Oxford, 1985), pp.234-40; Eugene J. Meehan, *The British Left Wing and Foreign Policy: A Study of the Influence of Ideology* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1960), p.21; Jonathan Schneer, *Labour's Conscience: The Labour Left, 1945-51* (London, 1988), pp.10-12; Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1997), pp.xix-xxv, Sassoon also includes members of the large West European Communist Parties in his study. George Douglas Howard Cole (1889-1959) Chair of Fabian Society 1939-46, 1948-50. Member of Nuffield Social Reconstruction Survey 1941-44; Victor Gollancz (1893-1967) Publisher and social campaigner. Organised Save Europe Now Campaign 1945-48; Harold Laski (1893-1950) Professor of Political Science, LSE 1920-50. NEC of Labour Party 1937-49. Chair of Labour Party 1945; Leonard Woolf (1880-1969) Joint-editor of *The Political Quarterly* 1931-59. Member of Fabian Society.

<sup>2</sup> Schneer, *Labour's Conscience*, pp.10, 12. For a discussion of the Left and economic policy see, *ibid.*, pp.79-103, for an alternative foreign policy see, *ibid.*, pp.52-78. For a contemporary statement from the Left of the case for ethics and a revolution in people's minds see. Ian Mikardo, *The Labour Case* (London, 1949),

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p.1. Ian Mikardo (1908-93) MP for Reading 1945-50, Reading South 1950-55, editorial board of *Tribune*. Member and co-author of *Keep Left*. Member of PLP Europe Group.

<sup>3</sup> Keith Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism in Britain, c.1881-1951* (Stroud, 1997), pp.145-60. For the classic study of the 'Left's weakness' see, Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism* (2nd ed. London, 1973), pp.294-98.

<sup>4</sup> Laybourn, *Socialism in Britain*, p.145. One notable exception which discusses the groups of the 1940s is Schneer, *Labour's Conscience*. For a study of the Socialist League see, Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977). For the Bevanites see, Mark Jenkins, *Bevanism: Labour's High Tide* (London, 1979).

<sup>5</sup> Crossman agreed not to move the amendment to a vote, but two Independent Labour Party (ILP) MPs (John McGovern and Campbell Stephen) acted as tellers and a vote was moved. The Government won 353-0. See Schneer, *Labour's Conscience*, pp.58-59; Kenneth Harris, *Attlee* (London, 1982), pp.301-2. Richard Crossman (1907-74) MP for Coventry East 1945-74, assistant-editor of *New Statesman and Nation*. Member and co-author of *Keep Left*, organised amendment of King's Speech (November 1946). Member of PLP Europe Group.

<sup>6</sup> *Keep Left* (London, 1947). The document was signed by 15 MPs but had been penned by Crossman, Mikardo and Michael Foot. Crossman wrote the section on foreign policy, see chapter IV, 'The Job Abroad', pp.30-45. For a recent examination of the Group see: Laybourn, *Socialism in Britain*, pp.149-56. Michael Foot (1913-) MP for Plymouth, Devonport 1945-55, editor of *Tribune*. Member and co-author of *Keep Left*. Member of PLP Europe group.

<sup>7</sup> For more detailed studies of the PLP and SEG see, Schneer, *Labour's Conscience*, pp.65-77. For the 'Fellowship' see, *ibid.*, pp.127-29. The 'Fellowship' was ultimately constrained by infiltration by Trotskyites based

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around the journal *Socialist Outlook*, see, John Callaghan, *The Far Left in British Politics* (Oxford, 1987), pp.61-64. R. W. G. (Kim) Mackay (1920-60) MP for Hull North West 1945-50, Reading North 1950-1. Australian by birth. Member of *Keep Left*. Chair of PLP Europe Group. Member of USSE campaign; Christopher Shawcross (1905-1973) MP for Widnes 1945-50. Secretary of PLP Europe group; William Warbey (1903-1980) MP for Luton 1945-50. Member of PLP Europe Group. Joint-organiser of SEG. Chief English Press Officer for Norwegian Government (London) 1941-45; Sydney Silverman (1895-1968) MP for Nelson and Colne 1935-68. Member of PLP Europe Group. Joint-organiser of SEG; Ellis Smith (1896-1969) MP for Stoke-on-Trent 1935-50, Stoke South 1950-66. President of Socialist Fellowship 1948-50. Parliamentary secretary at Board of Trade 1945-46; Fenner Brockway (1888-1988) MP for Eton & Slough 1950-64; Member of Socialist Fellowship. Member of USSE campaign. General Secretary of ILP 1933-39, rejoined Labour Party 1946.

<sup>8</sup> Laybourn, *Socialism in Britain*, pp.145-46; Morgan, *Labour in Power*, pp.236-37; Schneer, *Labour's Conscience*, pp.20-26, 35-55; Michael Newman, *Socialism and European Unity: The Dilemma of the Left in Britain and France* (London, 1983), pp.143-47. Newman notes that some of the PLP Europe Group, including Mackay and Shawcross were more right than left, p.140. For a contemporary position see G. D. H. Cole, *Labour's Foreign Policy* (London, 1946). The present search for an 'ethical foreign policy' would appear to exhibit many similarities with the 1940s search for a 'socialist foreign policy'.

<sup>9</sup> Morgan, *Labour in Power*, p.487. He also, incorrectly, states that the Group's journal - *Socialist Commentary* - was founded by Rita Hinden in 1952. For a fuller discussion of the Socialist Union see forthcoming article: Lawrence Black, 'Social Democracy as a Way of Life: Fellowship and the Socialist Union, 1951-

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59', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.10, No.1, (1999), Black rightly questions this lazy use of left-right. Interestingly the SU was launched to broaden the appeal of the SVG's politics, and can also be seen as a response to the elections of 1950 and 1951, when Labour lost its large majority. The papers of the SVG can be found at the University of Warwick, Modern Record Centre (MRC). Material is collected in 18 numbered boxes (MSS.173). Papers relating to the Socialist Union can be found in Boxes 10,11,12 and 15.

<sup>10</sup> Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (London, 1997), pp.966-67. Votes for the Reichstag and a fuller history of Germany in this period can be found in Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic* (trans.. P. S. Falla) (London, 1988), pp.204-5.

<sup>11</sup> Black, 'Social Democracy', p.3; *The Vision of Kant*, intro. and ed. David Appelbaum (Rockport, MA, 1995), pp.26, 38.

<sup>12</sup> Hence, the SVG's use of the somewhat elitist adjective 'Vanguard'. For a study of the IJB/ISK see, Werner Link, *Die Geschichte des Internationalen Jugendbundes (IJB) und des Internationalen Sozialistischen Kampf-Bundes (ISK)* (Meisenheim, 1961); Leonard Nelson, *Progress and Regress in Philosophy: From Hume and Kant to Hegel and Fries, Volume I*, (ed. posth. Julius Kraft, trans.. Humphrey Palmer) (Oxford, 1970), p.185.

<sup>13</sup> *Documents on the History of European Integration: Volume 2 - Plans for European Unity in Great Britain and in Exile, 1939-45*, Walter Lipgens (ed.), (Berlin, 1986), p.666; Mary Saran, *Never Give Up* (London, 1976), p.50; MRC. MSS.173, Box 18: 'SVG Applications'. This information was further corroborated by Nora Henry, interview, 11 February 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Geoffrey Spencer, *Beloved Alien: Walter Fliess, 1901-1985* (Donhead St. Andrew, 1985), pp.11-12. Rene Saran was a student of the boarding school, interview 21 January 1998; MRC. MSS.173, Box 16: 'Purpose of the SVG', (n.d.). Minna Specht (1879-1961) Pedagogue. Member of ISK. Founded

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*Walkemuhle* in 1925. Exiled to Denmark 1933, Wales 1938, Somerset 1940. Interned Isle of Man 1940. Returned to Germany post-war, worked for UNESCO.

<sup>15</sup> MRC. MSS.173, Box 18: 'SVG Applications'. The non-meat eating stand to the SVG/ISK led to the successful venture of the 'Vega' restaurant run by Walter and Jenny Fliess, which provided the organisation with much needed funds, see, Spencer, *Beloved Alien*, pp.20-21.

<sup>16</sup> Black, 'Social Democracy', p.4; Saran, *Never Give Up*, p.95.

<sup>17</sup> MRC. MSS.173, Box 18: 'Half Yearly Report' (Nov. 1943 - May 1944); Box 2: 'Members Meeting', 2 June 1946; The Labour Party, *Report of the 44th Annual Conference* (London, 1945), pp.96-97.

<sup>18</sup> Black, 'Social Democracy', p.2. *Socialist Commentary* went through a number of name changes starting as *The Vanguard* in 1934; *Socialist Vanguard Newsletters* 1940; *Commentary* 1941; and finally *Socialist Commentary* 1941-70s. For a full collection of the journal see MRC. MSS.173/4/1/6-11. The journal's influence was confirmed by interviews with Saran and Henry. See Denis Healey, 'Britain and Europe', *Socialist Commentary*, May 1951, pp.111-13; For sales of *Tribune* and *New Statesman* see Meehan, *British Left Wing*, pp.23-24; For sales of *Commentary* see MRC. MSS.173, Box 18: 'Half Yearly Report', (Nov.1947 - Apr.1948). Denis Healey (1917-) International Secretary of the Labour Party 1945-52.

<sup>19</sup> Correspondence with Saran and Henry.

<sup>20</sup> For this section I have used a similar structure to Black, see 'Social Democracy', pp.15-21; Flanders see, *The Dictionary of National Biography 1971-1980*, (London, 1986), eds. Lord Blake & L. S. Nicholls, pp.318-19; Saran see, her autobiography, *Never Give Up*, and H. A. Strauss & W. Röder, *Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933: Band I*

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*Politik, Wirtschaft, Öffentliches Leben* (München, 1980), p.635; Hinden see, Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour People* (Oxford, 1992), pp.239-45 and *Dictionary of Labour Biography: Volume II*, eds. John Saville & Joyce Bellamy, pp.180-81, information was also supplied by Rene Saran, interview; Green see, E. Wigham, *From Humble Petition to Militant Action: A History of the Civil and Public Service Association, 1903-1978* (London, 1980), information was also provided by Tauba Green, interview 25 March 1998; For Madin, Rene Saran confirmed details of his reputation within the AEU; McBeth see, MRC. MSS.173. Box 18: 'SVG Applications', which also further corroborates details for Green and Madin. The MFGB became the NUM on 1 January 1945.

<sup>21</sup> The language used by the SVG and other groups and individuals requires a further and separate study. The imprecise use of phrases such as federal, functional, unification, co-operation, integration, Europe etc. would appear to be used by different people at different times and in differing ways. A detailed semantic study of the European debate is a clear need for the post-war period, which in turn may aid more contemporary discussions.

<sup>22</sup> Mary Saran, *The Future Europe: Peace or Power Politics* (London, 1943), p.24; also interview with Saran confirmed the SVG's adherence to an all-encompassing united Europe; 'The Old World and the New Order', *Commentary*, 18 April 1942, p.9.

<sup>23</sup> Saran, *The Future Europe*, pp.26-27, ; MRC. MSS.173,. Box 4: M. Saran, 'Federal Union Policy', 13 October 1943; Martin J. Dedman, *The Origins and Development of the European Union, 1945-95* (London, 1996), p.19.

<sup>24</sup> MRC. MSS.173, Box 18: 'Half Yearly Report', (Nov. 1943 - May 1944); 'Half Yearly Report', (May 1944 - Nov. 1944), p.4. Post-war in particular the SVG's work within the Fabians led to a number of new recruits - Pearl Veerhault, Marjorie Peach, Betty Hope, Jean Hadfield and most notably Rita Hinden all

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joined as a result of this area of 'contact' work, see *ibid.*, Box 18: 'SVG Applications'. Rene Saran also confirmed this information, letter 22 May 1998.

<sup>25</sup> Mary Saran, *European Revolution: How to Win the Peace* (2nd ed. London, 1941), p.34.

<sup>26</sup> *Commentary*, May 1941; *Commentary*, 6 September 1940. Lucjan Blit (1904-1978) Bund member, exiled to Britain 1943, wrote for *Commentary* post-war, joined Socialist Union 1952. See also correspondence with Bund members in London and the SVG, MRC. MSS.173, Box 4.

<sup>27</sup> Interviews with Saran and Henry; Saran, *The Future Europe*, p.12.

<sup>28</sup> Interviews with Saran, Henry and Green; Flanders, 'Realistic Proposals for Reconstruction', *Commentary*, July 1942, p.19. Italics are this author's; Editorial, 'Labour and the Post-war Settlement', *Commentary*, June 1944, p.243.

<sup>29</sup> Saran, *European Revolution*, pp.14-19, 20.

<sup>30</sup> Saran, *Future Europe*, p.17.

<sup>31</sup> Saran, *European Revolution*, p.33; G. D. H. Cole, *Europe, Russia and the Future* (London, 1941).

<sup>32</sup> Other members of the Labour Party and Movement were more prone to 'socialist Vansittartism', i.e. all Germans were inherently nationalistic and prone to war. See: Isabelle. Tombs, 'The Victory of Socialist "Vansittartism": Labour and the German Question, 1941-5', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.7, No.3 (1996), pp.287-309.

<sup>33</sup> Saran, *European Revolution*, pp.13, 34.

<sup>34</sup> For example, one member of the ISK, Hilda Monte, had written a clarion call for a European unification which was published by the Left Book Club: *The Unity of Europe* (London, 1943). Biographical details of Central European exiles (including members of the ISK) can be found in Strauss & Röder, *Biograpisches Handbuch*.

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<sup>35</sup> The post-war political developments of members of Keep Left and others are an interesting comparison. More often, Europe was secondary to Britain's relationship with her colonies for such members of the Left.

<sup>36</sup> Lipgens, *Documents of European Integration*.

<sup>37</sup> SVG, *Europe and World Peace* (London, 1944), pp.5-6.

<sup>38</sup> Mary Saran, 'The Re-making of Europe', *Commentary*, December 1944, p.377.

<sup>39</sup> SVG, *Calling all Europe: A Symposium of Speeches on the Future Order of Europe* (London, 1942); Copies of the speeches can also be found in MRC. MSS.173, Box 16: 'Calling all Europe', April 1942; excerpts can also be found in Lipgens, *Documents of European Integration*, pp.517, 666-72; Jef Rens - Chair of Belgian Trade Union Centre (London). General Secretary of Belgian Committee for Reconstruction; Willi Eichler (1896-1971) Chair of ISK 1927-45. Exiled to Paris 1933 to London 1939. Executive of the Union of German Socialist Organisations (London). Returned to Germany post-war, joined SPD; Bernard Drzewieski - Polish Social Information Bureau (London); Louis Lévy (1895-1952) Executive of the *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière* (SFIO) 1926-39; Paolo Treves - Member of the Underground Italian Socialist Party 1926-38 and Free Italy Association.

<sup>40</sup> MRC. MSS.173, Box 4: material on Public Meeting 'The Future of Germany', 9 April 1944. Yves Goeau - *Officier d'Academie*, Councillor of Commerce in London; Henry Noel Brailsford (1873-1958) Socialist and author. Member of ILP 1907-1932. Co-editor of *New Statesman* during Second World War. Wrote for *New Statesman* and *Reynolds News* during 1930s; John Burns Hynd (1902-1971) MP for Sheffield Attercliffe 1944-70. Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 1945-7. Minister of Pensions Apr. - Oct. 1947. Vice-chair of PLP Europe Group. Hynd dropped the 'Burns' from his name post-war; Emmanuel Scherer - Polish National Council, Executive of the Bund.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., Box 4: material on Public Meeting 'Europe Calling for unity and independence !', 31 March 1945. Daniel Mayer - General Secretary of the SFIO 1943-46; Wenzl Jaksch (1896-1966) Chairman of the German Sudetenland Social Democratic Party; Arturo Borea - Spanish socialist and author.

<sup>42</sup> SVG, *Europe and World Peace* (London, 1944), p.8; The original nine points can be found in Lipgens, *Documents of European Integration*, pp.671-72.

<sup>43</sup> MRC. MSS.173.,. Box 18: 'Half Yearly Report', (May - Nov. 1945). James Griffiths (1890-1975) MP for Llanelli 1936-70. Minister of National Insurance 1945-50, Secretary of State for the Colonies 1950-1; Arthur Creech Jones (1891-1964) MP for Shipley 1935-50. Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Colonial Office 1945-6, Secretary of State for Colonies, 1946-50. Co-founder with Hinden of Fabian Colonial Bureau in 1940; Harold Wilson (1916-1995) MP for Ormskirk 1945-50, Huyton 1950-83. Parliamentary secretary of the Ministry of Works 1945-47. Secretary of Overseas Trade Mar. - Oct.1947. President of the Board of Trade Oct. 1947-51; John Parker (1906-) MP for Dagenham 1945-74, Chair of Fabian Society 1946-50; Arthur Skeffington (1908-71) MP for West Lewisham 1945-50. Executive of Fabian Society 1943-.

<sup>44</sup> Hynd's relationship with the SVG was confirmed by interview with Saran; Werner Hansen (1905-) (psued. Wilhelm Heidorn) Member of ISK. Worked for illegal cell of ISK 1935-36. Exiled to Paris 1938, London 1939; Walter Fliess (1901-1985) Member of ISK. Exiled to Holland 1933, London 1934. Worked for 'Radio Free Europe' 1943-45. Governmental Advisor to Bipartite Economic Control Office, Frankfurt-on-Main 1948-50.

<sup>45</sup> 'Britain's Chance in Europe', *Commentary*, September 1945, p.163. The italics are this author's and are indicative of the SVG's stress on the moral dimension to politics. Ernest Bevin (1881-1951) MP for Central Wandsworth 1940-50, East

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Woolwich 1950-1. Foreign Secretary 1945-51. Minister of Labour and National Service 1940-45.

<sup>46</sup> 'Britain and the Big Two', *Commentary*, March 1946, pp.290-2.

<sup>47</sup> 'Stalin's Russia and the Crisis in Socialism', *Commentary*, 5 March 1941, pp.8-9.

<sup>48</sup> MRC. MSS.173, Box 4: 'Report of a Discussion on Neutrality', August 1948; Box 3: Executive Meeting minutes, Flanders, 5 September 1947.

<sup>49</sup> 'The Third Force', *Commentary*, February 1948, p.98; Michael Foot, 'Socialists and the Atlantic pact', *Tribune*, 20 May 1949, pp.7-8; 'Socialists and Western Union', *New Statesman and Nation*, 21 February 1948, p.147. The so-called Marshall Plan had been announced by General Marshall (US Secretary of State 1947-49) on 5 June 1947, essentially the economic reconstruction of (Western) Europe was to be paid for by US dollars.

<sup>50</sup> 'Controversy on Foreign Policy', *Commentary*, December 1946, p.505.

<sup>51</sup> Mary Saran, 'European Unity', *Commentary*, March 1947, pp.585-87. The SVG had some contact with Brockway on behalf of the USSE campaign but the Group decided it did not have sufficient resources to work with the USSE, see MRC. MSS.173 Box 2: correspondence February 1948.

<sup>52</sup> 'The Third Force', *Commentary*, February 1948, p.99. Bevin's speech has been seen as the starting point of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) which was signed on 4 April 1949. For Bevin's speech see, *Hansard*, Vol.446, cols.383-409; MRC. MSS.173, Box 3: Flanders to Moore, 'A Philosophy for Democratic Socialism', 7 March 1948; *ibid.*, Box 4: 'Report of a Discussion on Neutrality', August 1948.

<sup>53</sup> MRC. MSS.173, Box 18: 'Western Union Group file', M. Saran, 4 April 1949.

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<sup>54</sup> For a discussion of Labour and the Empire see Morgan, *Labour in Power*, pp.389-98; Saran confirmed the necessity for this shift in the SVG's position, interview with Saran.

<sup>55</sup> Saran and Henry both confirmed the SVG's 'loyal opposition' outlook. Saran further suggested that the SVG had strong allies in the Labour Party. Furthermore, the SU was launched in 1952 by Attlee and Griffiths. James Middleton (1878-1962) General Secretary of the Labour Party 1935-44; Lucy Middleton (1894-1983) MP for Plymouth Sutton 1945-51, PLP Europe Group.

<sup>56</sup> Henry confirmed the SVG's favouring of a 'mixed economy'.