This article by Paul Louis was apparently the first analysis of imperialism to appear in the continental European socialist press. ‘Paul Louis’ was a pseudonym used by the French Socialist Paul Lévi (1872–1955). As a youth, he was opposed to militarism and became a member of the Blanquist Comité Révolutionnaire Central (CRC), later known as Parti Socialiste Révolutionnaire (PSR). In 1905, he joined the newly united socialist party (Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière or SFIO), representing the Seine area (greater Paris) in Socialist national congresses and sitting on the national council. At that time he wrote *Le colonialisme*, the major French-language book on the subject to appear during the entire period of the Second International.¹

The historian Georges Haupt quotes Louis expressing a hope, on the eve of war in 1914, that German Social Democrats would save the International: ‘As part at least of the French and British socialists are in favour of the proposal signed by Vaillant and Keir Hardie [calling for the declaration of a general strike in case of war], the eyes of the world – and not only

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¹ Louis 1905. Among his articles in the international socialist press should be mentioned Louis 1900b.
of the workers – are focused on Germany. It is up to German Social Democracy to help this proposal to victory or to bring about its defeat. On the Germans depend the International’s decisions.²

It was probably disillusionment with the SPD that fuelled his chauvinism when war began. During the War, he initially supported the union sacrée, a commitment by the French Left not to oppose the government or to start a strike for the duration of hostilities. After the October 1917 revolution in Russia, however, he actively backed the Bolsheviks. At the SFIO Tours Congress, held in December 1920, he endorsed affiliation with the Third International, later becoming a member of the French Communist Party’s executive committee and of the editorial board of L’Humanité. In 1923, he was expelled and subsequently served as general secretary of the Parti d’Unité Prolétarienne (PUP), which reunited with the SFIO in 1936. He ceased all political activity during the Second World War.

Louis wrote several books on the history of socialism, including Histoire du socialisme en France de la Révolution à nos jours (1789–1945) and Cent cinquante ans de pensée socialiste: de Gracchus Babeuf à Lénine, as well as countless articles for La revue socialiste, La revue bleue, La grande revue, La revue du mois, etc.³ In an article on ‘Contemporary Colonisation’, published in 1901, he attributed the British concern for markets to overproduction, which he regarded as ‘the chronic evil of the modern world…. Tout vient de la surproduction et tout y aboutit [it all comes from overproduction and it all ends there]’,⁴ a conviction that reappeared in his ‘Essai sur l’impérialisme’ in April 1904. In the meantime, he wrote another essay in 1903 on ‘The Bases of Imperialism’. There, he identified imperialism with protectionism and maintained that the growth of trusts and cartels in the United States and Germany resulted from their early adoption of high tariffs.

In the current article, he uses the term ‘Anglo-Saxon imperialism’ (which he borrowed from the English political lexicon) in reference to calls for a British imperial federation. Repudiation of free trade and creation of a protectionist tariff-union were being proposed to halt the decline in England’s share of the world export market. Louis warned that plans to surround the British

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⁴. Louis 1901a, p. 163.