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Anti-Zionism does not equal anti-Semitism

Progress, the Jewish Labour Movement and the rightwing media have been running a completely cynical campaign, argues Moshé Machover



Jeremy Corbyn was a champion of the Palestinian cause

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The whole campaign of equating opposition to Zionism with anti-Semitism has, in fact, been carefully orchestrated with the help of the Israeli government and the far right in the United States. It is easy to explain why.

Over recent years there has been a shift in public opinion regarding Israeli policy and the conflict in the Middle East and the legitimisation or otherwise of Israel as a Zionist, colonising state. One factor behind this shift has been the campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions. When the BDS campaign was very young there was some discussion about whether it could actually overthrow the Zionist regime - just as some

people thought a boycott of South Africa could overthrow apartheid. Of course, all analogies between South Africa and Israel are misleading, because they represent two different models of colonisation. But, leaving that aside, while sanctions may help to produce favourable conditions, those who think they are going to overthrow the regime in this way are deluding themselves.

The BDS campaign has, however, been a mobiliser of public opinion. Its advantage is that in various trade unions and professional organisations, in every college and university, there is a group of people campaigning, and this has provoked a very useful debate about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What

is remarkable is that among the BDS activists there is an overrepresentation of young Jewish people.

That is very worrying for the Zionists and if you read the Israeli press it is clear that there is a determination to halt this erosion of support for the Zionist state by discrediting its critics. This was the situation before there was even a hint that Jeremy Corbyn could become Labour leader. Of course, his election has added to worries, because for the first time ever a leader of the main opposition party in Britain is someone who has a long record of supporting the Palestinian struggle.

And so the Zionists and all their allies

decided to launch their 'Anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' campaign. Accidentally or not, the current Israeli ambassador to London is a certain Mark Regev, who has consistently justified Israel's crimes. Regev is hardly a normal diplomat - he is a propagandist by trade. And, of course, the 'Anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' campaign has been taken up by those who have no particular pro-Israel sentiments, but are looking for ways to attack the left of the Labour Party.

So there is now a coalition between, on the one side, people worried about the rise in support for the Palestinian cause and who would like to discredit the Labour left for

that reason; and, on the other, people like the vile blogger, Guido Fawkes, whose real name is Paul Staines - a rightwinger who would do anything to discredit the Labour left. He is using 'anti-Semitism' smears for opportunistic reasons, not because he really cares one way or the other about Israel/Palestine.

The campaign has been remarkably successful and, of course, the biggest scalp so far is that of former London mayor and former NEC member, Ken Livingstone. What did he say that got him suspended? Hitler came to power in 1932 and "supported Zionism until he went mad". Of course, he got the date wrong, Hitler came to power in 1933. It was also wrong to personalise the shift in policy. But the point he was making about the Nazi regime and Zionism is basically correct, as I shall demonstrate.

Don't mention Zionism

How should the left react under such circumstances? A good friend of mine, who is on the left and has been a co-signatory of some of the statements we have been issuing, said to me that maybe we should not talk too much about Zionism, because people do not understand it and can get confused. Maybe we should just concentrate on the actual evils carried out by Israel.

You will not be surprised to learn that this person belongs to that part of the left which is happy to talk about austerity, but does not want to mention capitalism. Everyone understands austerity and it is good to organise demonstrations against it, but 'capitalism' is too much of a political word.

I fail to see how dropping mention of Zionism can work. Even the Zionists acknowledge that it is acceptable to criticise Israeli policy and would not be too concerned if we criticised, say, Israel's continuing colonisation - building settlements on the West Bank and so on. But I ask a question: why does Israel persist in this? It is a policy which earns it the most criticism in the United States. Barack Obama and Bernie Sanders have criticised it directly and the British government's official policy is that these settlements are 'illegal' - they are an 'obstacle to peace', etc. So why does Israel do it? How can you explain it?

It can be explained by the fact that it is an essential part of Zionist policy. In carrying out this policy Israel is, if you like, following an imperative of Zionism from the very beginning. Once you accept that this is an integral part of Zionism, then you realise it would be strange if Israel did not attempt to implement it. It is not as if it were a policy specific to the current government of Binyamin Netanyahu. It has been carried out by all Israeli governments since 1967 and it took place within the former borders - the so-called 'green line' - before 1967. It has been an ongoing policy of Zionist colonisation from the very beginning.

You cannot explain why Israel is continuing with a policy that is not winning it any friends without mentioning Zionism. On the contrary, I think what we should do is not apologise; instead we should go onto the offensive and be aggressive: directly attack Zionism.

And you can also attack Zionism precisely because of its collusion and collaboration with anti-Semitism, including up to a point with Nazi Germany. We should not respond to the attacks by saying, 'We are against anti-Semitism, as we are against all racism', which is to accept that anti-Semitism is actually a problem on the left. While, of course, we oppose such racism, the fact is that its proponents within the left and the Labour Party account for a minuscule proportion. We can deal with anti-Semitism if it shows its head, but we should not make gestures as a kind of apology in the face of the current assault. The handful of people on the left who propagate a version of the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' carry no weight and are without any intellectual foundation.

The Protocols contained claims of both capitalist and working class conspiracy: Jews were 'overrepresented' among capitalists, but they were also 'overrepresented' in the



Israel is a colonial-settler state that seeks to displace the native population

revolutionary movement. The anti-Semitic slogan in revolutionary Russia was: "Sugar - Brodsky, tea - Vissotsky, Russia - Trotsky" - the first two were magnates and all three were Jews. We can deal with similar nonsense on the left in our own time, but not as an apology in response to attacks on the left. On the contrary, we need to go on the counteroffensive.

Link

We should take the side of the Board of Deputies of British Jews - not the current one, but the Board of Deputies of 100 years ago! It put out some very pertinent statements about Zionism and its connection with anti-Semitism. When the negotiations on the 1917 Balfour Declaration were taking place, a prominent member of the Board of Deputies, Lucien Wolf, wrote:

I understand ... that the Zionists do not merely propose to form and establish a Jewish nationality in Palestine, but that they claim all the Jews as forming at the present moment a separate and dispossessed nationality, for which it is necessary to find an organic political centre, because they are and must always be aliens in the lands in which they now dwell, and, more especially, because it is "an absolute self-delusion" to believe that any Jew can be at once "English by nationality and Jewish by faith".

I have spent most of my life in combating these very doctrines, when presented to me in the form of anti-Semitism, and I can only regard them as the more dangerous when they come to me in the guise of Zionism. They constitute a capitulation to our enemies, which has absolutely no justification in history, ethnology or the facts of everyday life, and if they were admitted by the Jewish people as a whole, the result would only be that the terrible situation of our co-religionists in Russia and Romania would become the common lot of Jewry throughout the world.¹

About the same time, Alexander Montefiore, president of the Board of Deputies, and Claude, his brother, who was president of the closely associated Anglo-Jewish Association, wrote a letter to *The Times*. They stated that the "establishment of a Jewish nationality in Palestine, founded on the theory of Jewish homelessness,

must have the effect throughout the world of stamping the Jews as strangers in their native lands and of undermining their hard-won positions as citizens and nationals of those lands".²

They pointed out that the theories of political Zionism undermined the religious basis of Jewry, to which the only alternative would be "a secular Jewish nationality, recruited on some loose and obscure principle of race and of ethnographic peculiarity".

They went on:

But this would not be Jewish in any spiritual sense, and its establishment in Palestine would be a denial of all the ideals and hopes by which the survival of Jewish life in that country commends itself to the Jewish conscience and Jewish sympathy. On these grounds the Conjoint Committee of the Board of Deputies and the Anglo-Jewish Association deprecates earnestly the national proposals of the Zionists.

The second part in the Zionist programme which has aroused the misgivings of the Conjoint Committee is the proposal to invest the Jewish settlers [in Palestine] with certain special rights in excess of those enjoyed by the rest of the population ...

In all the countries in which Jews live the principle of equal rights for all religious denominations is vital to them. Were they to set an example in Palestine of disregarding this principle, they would convict themselves of having appealed to it for purely selfish motives. In the countries in which they are still struggling for equal rights they would find themselves hopelessly compromised ... The proposal is the more inadmissible because the Jews are and probably long will remain a minority of the population of Palestine, and might involve them in the bitterest feuds with their neighbours of other races and religions, which would severely retard their progress and find deplorable echoes throughout the orient.³

This turned out to be highly prophetic.

Nazi collaboration

Let us turn now to the Zionist-Nazi connection. In fact it sounds more shocking

than it is, because we are talking about the early days of the Nazi regime. Today the holocaust is taught in schools, so people may know when the policy of extermination of Jews actually started officially - in January 1942, when a Nazi conference was convened in Wannsee under the chairmanship of Reinhard Heydrich. Heydrich was second in command to Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS.

The minutes of this conference are actually online and in them a change in policy towards the Jews, ratified by the *Führer*, was declared. Although it is phrased euphemistically, it is clear that what was being talked about was both deportation to the east and extermination.

This change occurred following the attack on the Soviet Union, when the Nazis felt they had to find different ways of dealing with the 'Jewish problem'. Until that time the official policy was for the exclusion of the Jews from political and civic life, for separation and for emigration. Quite naturally the Zionist leadership thought this set of policies was similar to those of other anti-Semitic regimes - which it was - and the Zionist approach was not peculiar to the Nazi regime. The founder of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, had pointed out that anti-Semitic regimes would be allies, because they wanted to get rid of the Jews, while the Zionists wanted to rid them of the Jews. That was the common interest.

In 1934 the German rabbi, Joachim Prinz, published a book entitled *Wir Juden* ('We, the Jews'), in which he welcomed the Nazi regime. That regime wanted to separate Jews from non-Jews and prevent assimilation - as did the Zionists. Philip Roth's novel, *The plot against America*, is based on actual people, including Prinz, who emigrated to America and became a leader of the US Jewish community - the fact that he was a Zionist is not mentioned.

Anyway, the Zionists made overtures to the Nazi regime, so how did the Nazis respond? Here are two relevant quotations. The first is from the introduction to the Nuremberg laws, the racist legislation introduced in Nazi Germany in 1935. This extract was still present in the 1939 edition, from which I am quoting:

If the Jews had a state of their own, in which the bulk of their people were at home, the Jewish question could already be considered solved today ... The ardent Zionists of all people have objected least of all to the basic ideas of the Nuremberg laws, because they know that these laws are the only correct solution for the Jewish people too ...⁴

Heydrich himself wrote the following in an article for the SS house journal *Das Schwarze Korps* in September 1935:

National socialism has no intention of attacking the Jewish people in any way. On the contrary, the recognition of Jewry as a racial community based on blood, and not as a religious one, leads the German government to guarantee the racial separateness of this community without any limitations. The government finds itself in complete agreement with the great spiritual movement within Jewry itself, so-called Zionism, with its recognition of the solidarity of Jewry throughout the world and the rejection of all assimilationist ideas. On this basis, Germany undertakes measures that will surely play a significant role in the future in the handling of the Jewish problem around the world.⁵

In other words, a friendly mention of Zionism, indicating an area of basic agreement it shared with Nazism.

Of course, looking back at all this, it seems all the more sinister, since we know that the story ended with the gas chambers a few years later. This overlap is an indictment of Zionism, but the actual collaboration between the two was not such an exceptional thing, when you accept that the Zionists were faced with the reality of an anti-Semitic regime.

By the way, half of what Ken Livingstone said is not very far from the caricature uttered by Netanyahu in 2016 during an address to delegates at the World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem. According to Netanyahu, "Hitler didn't want to exterminate the Jews" until he met the grand mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, in 1941. Netanyahu claimed that "Al-Husseini went to Hitler and said, 'If you expel them, they'll all come here'"

Of course, the allegation that the idea of extermination originated with the grand mufti has been rejected with contempt by serious historians, but Netanyahu was at least correct in saying that emigration, not extermination, was indeed Nazi policy until the winter of 1941-42.

Let me repeat: we must go on the counterattack against the current slurs. It is correct to expose Zionism as a movement based on both colonisation and collusion with anti-Semitism. Don't apologise for saying this. If you throw the sharks bloodied meat, they will only come back for more. At the moment the left is apologising too much, in the hope that the right will let up. They never will ●

Notes

1. Reproduced in B Destani (ed) *The Zionist movement and the foundation of Israel 1839-1972* Cambridge 2004, Vol 1, p727.
2. *The Times* May 24 1917.
3. See www.godlikeproductions.com/forum1/message55570/pg1.
4. See M Machover and M Offenber *Zionism and its scarecrow* London 1978, p38, which directly quotes *Die Nürnberger Gesetze*. See also F Nicosia *The Third Reich and the Palestine question* London 1985, p53; and FR Nicosia *Zionism and anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany* Cambridge 2008, p108. The latter cites a 1935 article by Bernhard Lohsener in the Nazi journal *Reichsverwaltungsblatt*.
5. *Das Schwarze Korps* September 26 1935.

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A new clause four

Understandably, clause four - agreed in 1918 and then rewritten under Tony Blair in 1995 - has totemic status for partisans of both Labour's right and left. But, says **James Marshall**, instead of the left seeking to raise the 1918 Lazarus, we should audaciously reach out for another future

The 1918 clause four (part four) committed us to the following formulation: To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service.

Misstakenly, this is often fondly remembered as a defining socialist moment. But when it was first drafted - amidst the slaughter of inter-imperialist war - the calculated aim of Sidney Webb, its Fabian author, was threefold.

Firstly, clause four socialism must be implicitly anti-Marxist. Webb well knew the history of the workers' movement in Germany. Karl Marx famously mocked various passages in the *Gotha programme* (1875), not least those which declared that every worker should receive a "fair distribution of their proceeds of labour" and that "the proceeds of labour belong undiminished with equal right to all members of society".¹

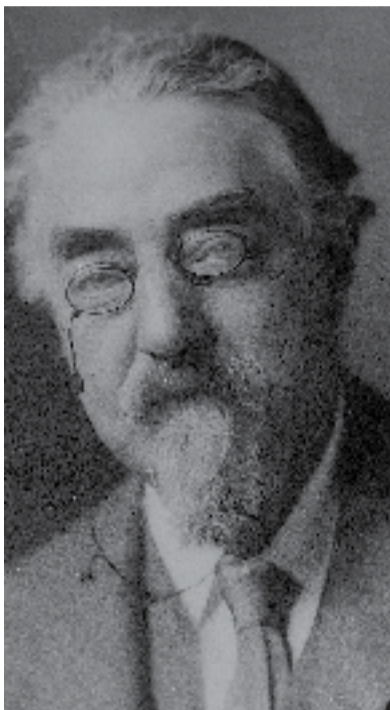
Contradictory and vacuous, concluded Marx. What is fair? What about replacement means of production? What about the expansion of production? What about those unable to work? More than that, Marx explained these and other such woolly formulations as unneeded concessions to the followers of Ferdinand Lassalle. His *Workers' programme* (1862) called for "an equal right to the undiminished proceeds of labour". Obviously Webb wanted to give clause four a distinct Lassallean coloration not out of admiration for Lassalle, but because he wanted to distance the Labour Party from Marxism.

Secondly, by adopting clause four socialism, the Labour Party could both distinguish itself from the exhausted, divided and rapidly declining Liberal Party and please the trade union bureaucracy. Since the 1890s the TUC had been drawing up various wish lists of what ought to be nationalised: eg, rails, mines, electricity, liquor and land. Clause four socialism also usefully went with the grain of Britain's wartime experience. There was steadily expanding state intervention in the economy. Nationalisation was, as a result, widely identified with efficiency, modernisation and beating foreign rivals. It therefore appealed to technocratically-minded elements amongst the middle classes.

Thirdly, clause four socialism could be used to divert the considerable rank-and-file sympathy that existed for the Russian Revolution into safe, peaceful and exclusively constitutional channels. That did not stop prime minister David Lloyd George from declaring, in his closing speech of the 1918 general election campaign, that the "Labour Party is being run by the extreme pacifist Bolshevik group".²

Socialism

Almost needless to say, clause four was mainly for show. Yet, even if it had been put into effect, clause four socialism would have remained statist, elitist and antithetical to working class self-liberation. Capitalism without capitalists should not count amongst our goals. Railways, mines, land, electricity, etc, would pass into the hands of the British empire state.³ Capitalist owners are bought out - eased into a comfortable retirement. But, as they vacate the field of production, a new class of state-appointed managers



Sydney Webb: knew his German politics enters the fray. In terms of the division of labour, they substitute for the capitalists. The mass of the population, meanwhile, remain exploited wage-slaves. They would be subject to the same hierarchal chain of command, the same lack of control, the same mind-numbing routine.

Marxism, by contrast, is based on an altogether different perspective. If it is to win its freedom the working class must overthrow the existing state. But - and this is crucial - in so doing the proletariat "abolishes itself as a proletariat, abolishes all class distinctions and antagonisms, abolishes also the state as state".⁴ Capitalist relations of production and the whole bureaucratic state apparatus are swept away. Every sphere of social life sees control exercised from below. All positions of command are elected or chosen by lot and are regularly rotated. Hierarchy is flattened. Alienation is overcome. What is produced and how it is produced radically alters too. Need, not exchange, is the ruling principle. And alone such an association of producers creates the benign conditions which allows for the full development of each and every individual.

Admittedly, the old clause four resulted from a far-reaching cultural shift. The Russian Revolution has already been mentioned. But there is also the 1867 Reform Act and the extension of the franchise, the considerable popularity of socialist propaganda, the growth of trade unions, the formation of the Labour Party and the horrors of World War I. Because of all this, and more, capitalism was widely considered abhorrent, outmoded and doomed. As a concomitant, socialism became the common sense of the organised working class.

Of course, what the Fabians meant by socialism was a self-proclaimed extension of social liberalism. The Fabians would gradually expand social welfare provision and harness the commanding heights of the economy with a view to promoting the national interest.

In other words, the Fabians consciously sought to ameliorate the mounting contradictions between labour and capital and thus put off socialism. As Fredrick Engels damningly noted, "fear of revolution is their guiding principle".⁵ And, needless to say, the years 1918-20 witnessed army

mutinies, colonial uprisings, a massive strike wave and brutal Black and Tan oppression meted out in Ireland.

Interestingly, before 1918 attempts to commit the party to socialism met with mixed success. The 1900 founding conference rejected the "class war" ultimatum tabled by the Social Democratic Federation.⁶ Despite that conference voted to support the "socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange". The next year a socialistic motion moved by Bruce Glasier was defeated. In 1903 another socialistic motion fell, this time without debate. Two years later conference passed a motion with the exact same wording. In 1907 the previous endorsement of socialism was overturned at the prompting of ... Bruce Glasier. Despite that the same conference agreed to set the goal of "socialising the means of production, distribution and exchange".⁷

The explanation for the seesawing doubtless lies with electoral expediency. While most in the party leadership considered themselves socialists of a kind, they were mortally afraid of losing out in the polls. What appeared acceptable to likely voters set the limits. So, instead of fearlessly presenting a bold, socialist vision and building support on that basis, Sidney Webb, Arthur Henderson, Ramsay MacDonald and co chased the capricious vagaries of popularity. With the radicalisation of 1918-20, socialist declarations were considered a sure way of adding to Labour's ranks in parliament.⁸ Forming a government being both a means and an end.

Blair

Nevertheless, Blairising clause four in 1995 was hugely symbolic - the ground being laid by the Eurocommunists and their *Marxism Today* journal. Socialism was declared dead and buried, the working class a shrinking minority. Only if Labour accepted capitalism and reached out to the middle classes would it have a future. Neil Kinnock, John Smith and finally Tony Blair dragged the party ever further to the right. Out went the commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament, out went the commitment to comprehensive education, out went the commitment to full employment, out went the commitment to repeal the Tories' anti-trade union laws, out went the commitment to "the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange".

By sacrificing the old clause four in the full glare of publicity, Blair and his New Labour clique sought to appease the establishment, the City, the Murdoch empire, the global plutocracy. Capitalism would be absolutely safe in their hands. A New Labour government could be relied upon not even to pay lip service to a British version of state capitalism. Leftwingers such as Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Diane Abbott and Ken Livingstone protested, trade union leaders grumbled, but the April 1995 special conference voted by 65% in favour of Blair's clause four.

Needless to say, his version is stuffed full of managerial guff and classless nonsense. Just what one would expect from the architect of New Labour. After all, one of Blair's big ideas was to replace 'socialism' with 'social-ism'. Another was communitarianism. But, of course, the media glowed with admiration. Crucially, Rupert Murdoch agreed to unleash his attack dogs. Within a few months John Major was almost universally derided as a total incompetent, heading a sleaze-mired

government.

Riding high in the opinion polls, Blair inaugurated a series of internal 'reforms'. Conference was gutted. No longer could it debate issues, vote on policy or embarrass the leadership in front of the media. Instead the whole thing became a rubber-stamping exercise. Then there were the tightly controlled policy forums, focus groups and the staffing of the party machine with eager, young careerists (most on temporary contracts). Blair thereby asserted himself over the national executive committee ... considerably reducing its effectiveness in the process.

Class lines

Demands for a return of the old clause four are perfectly understandable. But why go back to a Fabian past? Instead we surely need to persuade members and affiliates to take up the LPM's pithy, implicitly Marxist alternative:

1. Labour is the federal party of the working class. We strive to bring all trade unions, cooperatives, socialist societies and leftwing groups and parties under our banner. We believe that unity brings strength.

2. Labour is committed to replacing the rule of capital with the rule of the working class. Socialism introduces a democratically planned economy, ends the ecologically ruinous cycle of production for the sake of production and moves towards a stateless, classless, moneyless society that embodies the principle, "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs". Alone such benign conditions create the possibility of every individual fully realising their innate potentialities.

3. Towards that end Labour commits itself to achieving a democratic republic. The standing army, the monarchy, the House of Lords and the state sponsorship of the Church of England must go. We support a single-chamber parliament, proportional representation and annual elections.

4. Labour seeks to win the active backing of the majority of people and form a government on this basis.

5. We shall work with others, in particular in the European Union, in pursuit of the aim of replacing capitalism with working class rule and socialism ●

Notes

1. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 24, London 1989, p83.
2. Quoted in R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1973, p64n.
3. The Fabians supported a *civilising* British empire. In their own words, the white dominions should be given self-government. However, "for the lower breeds" there should be a "benevolent bureaucracy" of British civil servants and military officials guiding them to "adulthood" (G Foote *The Labour Party's political thought* London 1985, p29-30).
4. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 25, London 1987, p267.
5. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 50, New York 2004, p83.
6. Though it had two guaranteed seats on the LRC's leading body, the SDF disaffiliated in August 1901.
7. See RT McKenzie *British political parties* London 1963, pp465-71.
8. Labour gained 15 seats in the December 1918 general election, making it the fourth largest party in parliament after Bonar Law's Tories, Lloyd George's Coalition Liberals and Sinn Féin. It had a total of 57 MPs.

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

1. The central aim of Labour Party Marxists is to transform the Labour Party into an instrument for working class advance and international socialism. Towards that end we will join with others and seek the closest unity of the left inside and outside the party.

2. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, waste and production for its own sake. Attempts to rescue the system through Keynesian remedies are diversionary and doomed to fail. The democratic and social gains of the working class must be tenaciously defended, but capitalism must be superseded by socialism.

3. The only viable alternative is organising the working class into powerful and thoroughly democratic trade unions, co-ops, and other schools for socialism, and crucially into a political party which aims to replace the rule of the capitalist class with the rule of the working class.

4. The fight for trade union freedom, anti-fascism, women's rights, sexual freedom, republican democracy and opposition to all imperialist wars are inextricably linked to working class political independence and the fight for socialism.

5. Ideas of reclaiming the Labour Party and the return of the old clause four are totally misplaced. From the beginning the party has been dominated by the labour bureaucracy and the ideas of reformism. The party must be refounded on the basis of a genuinely socialist programme as opposed to social democratic gradualism or bureaucratic statism.

6. The aim of the party should not be a Labour government for its own sake. History shows that Labour governments committed to managing the capitalist system and loyal to the existing constitutional order create disillusionment in the working class.

7. Labour should only consider forming a government when it has the active support of a clear majority of the population and has a realistic prospect of implementing a full socialist programme. This cannot be achieved in Britain in isolation from Europe and the rest of the world.

8. Socialism is the rule of the working class over the global economy created by capitalism and as such is antithetical to all forms of British nationalism. Demands for a British road to socialism and a withdrawal from the European Union are therefore to be opposed.

9. Political principles and organisational forms go hand-in-hand. The Labour Party must become the umbrella organisation for all trade unions, socialist groups and pro-working class partisans. Hence all the undemocratic bans and proscriptions must be done away with.

10. The fight to democratise the Labour Party cannot be separated from the fight to democratise the trade unions. Trade union votes at Labour Party conferences should be cast not by general secretaries but proportionately according to the political balance in each delegation.

11. All trade unions should be encouraged to affiliate, all members of the trade unions encouraged to pay the political levy and join the Labour Party as individual members.

12. The party must be reorganised from top to bottom. Bring the Parliamentary Labour Party under democratic control. The position of Labour leader should be abolished along with the national policy forum. The NEC should be unambiguously responsible for drafting Labour Party manifestos.

13. The NEC should be elected and accountable to the annual conference, which must be the supreme body in the party. Instead of a tame rally there must be democratic debate and binding votes.

14. Our elected representatives must be recallable by the constituency or other body that selected them. That includes MPs, MEPs, MSPs, AMs, councillors, etc. Without exception elected representatives should take only the average wage of a skilled worker, the balance being donated to furthering the interests of the labour movement ●

There will be no reciprocation

David Sherrief says that the Tories seem determined to put the interests of party above those of capital. However, instead of presenting itself as a defender of British business, Labour needs a socialist vision when it comes to Europe

Theresa May's government is deeply divided and looks set to take Brexit negotiations to a disastrous 'cliff edge'. Despite article 50 and the tick-tocking of the Brexit countdown, there is little progress being made in Brussels. No agreement over the divorce bill. No agreement over Northern Ireland. Then there is Boris Johnson and his *Sunday Telegraph* article calling for a low-tax, low-regulation Britain finding a "glorious" future outside both the single market and the customs union. A cat in the nest of singing birds.

True, the government comfortably got the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill through its second reading in the Commons. The final vote was 326-290. However, the war is far from over. Tory MPs - not least Nicky Morgan, Dominic Grieve and Anna Soubry - have tabled amendments aimed at shooting holes into May's Brexit plans: eg, they want to include the EU's charter of fundamental rights. There will also be challenges to the use of so-called Henry VIII powers and demands for a vote on the final terms. This brings the distinct possibility of a government defeat. Of course, that would not trigger a general election. For the moment at least, May is secure. She would win a vote of confidence. Nonetheless, the government is vulnerable and we should expect compromises, grueling late-night sittings, MPs being brought in from sick beds and desperately fought by-elections.

But, surely, the government's main problem is that a hard Brexit runs counter to the interests of the dominant sectors of big capital in Britain. For example, the recent Downing Street approach to large private companies and selected FT-100 firms, in the attempt to obtain endorsement for the government's post-Brexit plans for a "global Britain", was greeted with derision. Technology, aerospace, pharmaceutical, energy, manufacturing, banking and financial services firms have all warned that the drifting Brexit negotiations in Brussels could lead them to transfer some operations from Britain. Toyota is already openly questioning the future of its Burnaston plant in Derbyshire.

Many capitalists fear that they will face tariffs and other damaging barriers after March 2019 ... if there is no deal. Nor do they have any liking for the government's leaked proposals to limit immigration post-Brexit. The markets confirm what the personifications of capital say. Since the June 2016 referendum the pound sterling has fallen by around 20%, compared with other major currencies. Reports that outward investment has doubled in the last quarter shows the thinking of collective capital. Despite having to pay what is in effect a 20% premium, the bet is that Britain is heading for difficult times. In other words, Brexit is bad for making a profit.

Of course, at Phillip Hammond's prompting, there has been an acceptance that Britain will need a negotiated transition period. This has been cautiously welcomed by many of the CEOs and boardrooms of blue-chip companies. But the lack of detail causes uncertainty, frustration, even anguish.

A recent survey of 1,000 UK businesses reported that more than two-thirds of them needed to "know the details of any transition arrangement after Brexit by June 2018 - just nine months from now - in order to plan properly". If investment and recruitment decisions that have been put "on hold" are to be "unblocked", 40% of the businesses say the government must set out what the transition will involve, when it comes to vital areas, such as the movement of goods, capital and people, as well as legal arrangements.¹

Far from May and her cabinet providing Britain with 'strong and stable' leadership, big capital worries that party interests are being put first. Hence addressing widespread concerns amongst voters about 'unrestricted'



Theresa May is due a big fall

immigration is being prioritised over guaranteeing access to the single market. Private meetings and frantic lobbying have had little effect on David Davies and his department for exiting the EU. The government says it has its mandate and appears intent on brushing aside the interests of big capital. All in all, therefore "big business is in a difficult position", says John Colley of the Warwick Business School.²

Maybe the loss of direct and indirect influence over the Conservative Party, the inability to exercise control, reflects the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of modern capitalism. For instance, foreign investment in Britain stood at around £950 billion in 2015.³ A few big businesses, such as JCB, Westfield and Bloomberg Europe, have donated considerable sums to the Tories.⁴ But most of the money going to

Tory HQ nowadays comes from very wealthy - often very quirky - individuals (many of them after access to government, dinners with ministers, knighthoods, membership of the House of Lords, etc).⁵ Over the years the number of companies making donations has declined.⁶ Yet, with the bulk of Tory finances coming from the rich and the super-rich, with hundreds of Tory parliamentarians holding directorships, with Tory MPs coming from business and going back to business, with the visceral hostility to trade unions, it is clear that the standard Marxist description of the Conservative Party as the party of big business remains correct, albeit it with qualifications.

Nevertheless, the tension that exists between the interests of big capital and the direction being taken by May's party and

government is unmistakable.

The origins of this divergence lies squarely in electoral calculation. Having outmanoeuvred her rivals and taken over from the hapless David Cameron - following his June 2016 referendum humiliation - Theresa May clearly thought that she could inflict a massive general election defeat on the Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour Party ... if she seized hold of the political programme of the UK Independence Party. Of course, her gamble did not pay off. May's presidential campaign proved to be a disaster, while Jeremy Corbyn's *For the many, not the few* campaign was, by contrast, a brilliant success.

Now, irreversibly committed to a hard Brexit, the Tories resemble the Loony Tunes cartoon character, Wile E Coyote. Fixated on chasing the Road Runner, his nemesis, Wile E Coyote, suddenly finds himself in mid-air over a precipitous canyon. His legs still move and so does he. For a brief moment it appears nothing is wrong, that the momentum can be maintained. But, inevitably, Wile E Coyote realises that he is suspended in mid-air ... then comes the long plunge to the ground.

Since the 48.11%-51.89% referendum result, Britain has not suffered the economic disaster George Osborne, Mark Carney, Peter Mandelson and co predicted. No yanking recession. No flight of capital. This has allowed little UK Europhobes right and left - from the *Daily Mail* to the *Morning Star* - to claim vindication. But a Brexit referendum result hardly amounts to Brexit. True,

statisticians report that the British economy has been growing slower than the euro zone. It is, though, a case of anaemic growth compared with anaemic growth. Projected long-term, that heralds Britain's continued relative decline.

Nonetheless, a negotiated hard Brexit deal - let alone a hard Brexit non-deal - could quite possibly result in absolute decline. Such a prospect deeply worries big capital. Unless control over the Conservative Party can be reasserted, the choices it faces are all unpalatable: tariffs on goods going to the EU, reduced supplies of cheap labour, running down investment in Britain, decamping abroad, sponsorship of a national government, etc.

Meanwhile, Keir Starmer has succeeded in getting the shadow cabinet to come out in favour of staying in the single market. Hence the striking paradox. On Europe Labour is articulating the interests of big capital. Not that big capital will reciprocate and back the Labour Party. It is, after all, led by Jeremy Corbyn: pro-trade union, pacifistic and a friend of all manner of unacceptable leftists.

For the sake of appearances, Kier Starmer pays lip service to the 2016 referendum result. There is no wish to alienate the *minority* of Labour voters who backed 'leave'. More through luck than judgement, ambiguity served the party well during the general election campaign. The contradiction between Corbyn's historical hostility towards the EU - now represented in the Commons by the Dennis Skinner-Kelvin Hopkins rump - and the mass of Labour's pro-'remain' members and voters resulted in a fudge.

However, instead of getting embroiled in the argument about what is and what is not in the 'national interest' - eg, staying in the single market versus leaving the single market - Labour needs a class perspective. Marxists have no illusions in the European Union. It is a bosses' club, it is by treaty committed to neoliberalism and it is by law anti-working class (note the European Court of Justice and its Viking, Laval and Rüffert judgements). But nor should we have any illusions in a so-called Lexit perspective.

On the contrary the EU should be seen as a site of struggle. Our task is to unite the working class in the EU in order to end the rule of capital and establish socialism on a continental scale. That would be the biggest contribution we can make to the global struggle for human liberation ●

Notes

1. *Financial Times* September 12 2017.
2. <https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/business-government-lobbying-brexit-isnt-working-heres-143415309.html>.
3. House of Commons Library *Debate pack* Number CDP 2017/0159, September 8 2017.
4. *The Guardian* April 1 2015.
5. www.cityam.com/264987/party-donors-biggest-names-bank-rolling-conservative.
6. B Jones (ed) *Political issues in Britain today* Manchester 1999, p313.

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Boris Johnson: cat in the singing nest of birds

