

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



# weekly **worker**



**Allies of Tom Watson: Sean Matgamna and AWL cannot be treated as part of the left**

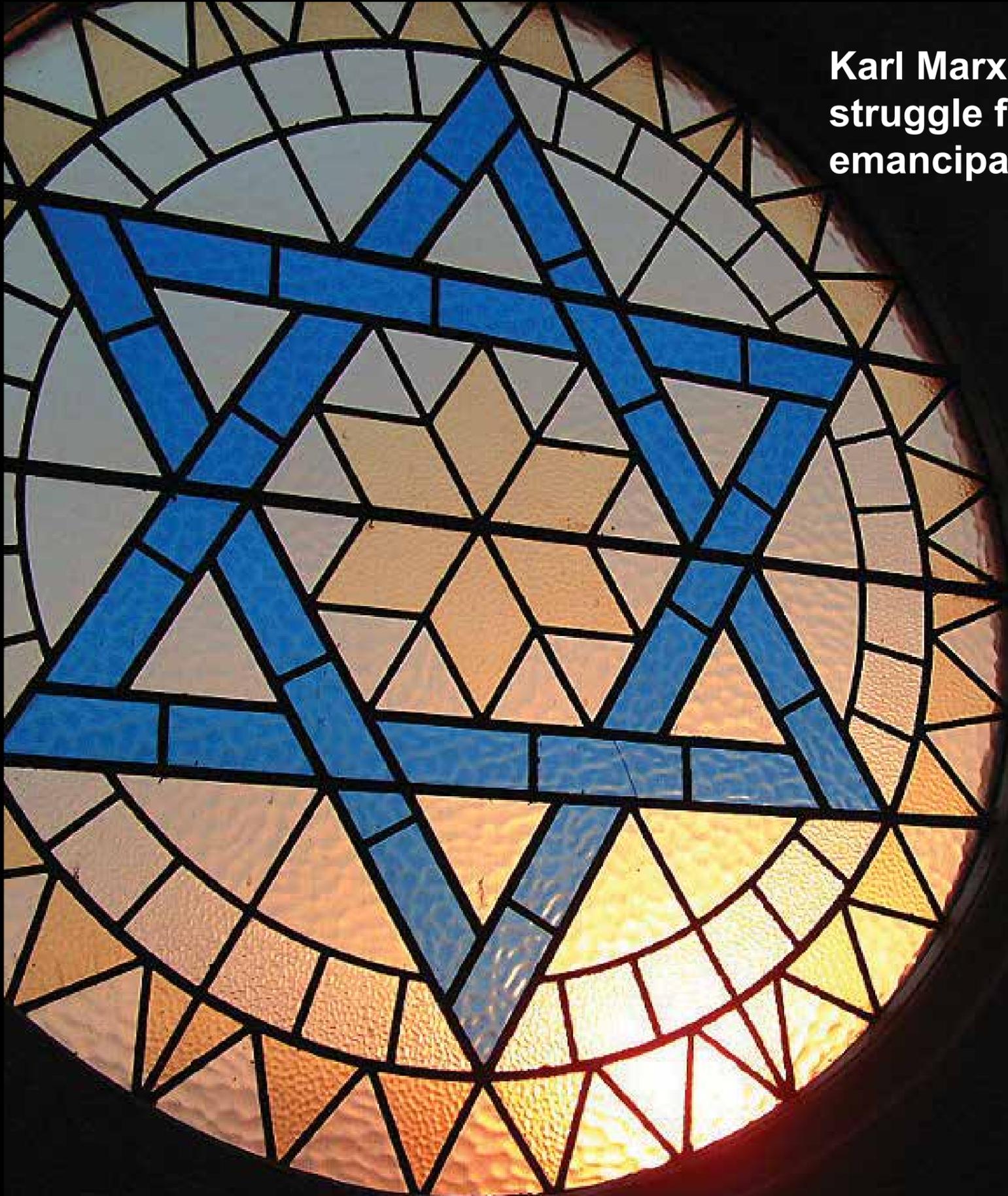
- Letters and debate
- Brexit chaos
- Corbyn's silence
- CLPD's AGM

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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**Karl Marx and the struggle for Jewish emancipation**



# LETTERS



Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed

## Assange

Why has the left abandoned support for Julian Assange? His situation - trapped in the embassy of Ecuador for six years in the face of persecution by the US authorities - merits a vigorous campaign on his behalf. Assange and Wikileaks did an immense service in releasing files that showed the brutality of US forces in Iraq deliberately shooting civilians.

Many on the left were glad to receive these files and other material, and are well aware of the moves to have him brought to the US to face severe penalties at the hands of a secretive grand jury, yet are unwilling to lift a finger in his defence. The latest twist in the case is a move to force Chelsea Manning to give evidence against him. She has courageously refused and been jailed for contempt until she gives in or the legal process is over.

*Socialist Worker* respond to the latest development by publishing an old article from 2013 describing the early moves to prosecute her and Wikileaks, while managing to avoid mentioning Assange at all. By contrast, there have been pickets and rallies internationally in his support - most recently in London and in Australia, whose government has lined up with the US to deny any assistance to Assange, its citizen. These are extensively covered on the World Socialist Web Site.

Just about everywhere else there is complete silence: this includes the *Weekly Worker*. Back in 2010 the paper took a principled stand ('Hands off Assange', December 9'; 'Drop trumped-up charges', December 16). But by 2012 the position was more ambivalent, labelling Assange a "paranoid narcissist" (September 6): not exactly helpful in an article seeking to clarify "confusion on the left".

Having managed to get it about right in 2010, could the editors explain why they no longer feel the need to actually support the campaign or even report on it?

**Mike Martin**  
Sheffield

## Value for money

Maren Clarke writes, in reply to Moshé Machover: "As Marx says, exchange-value is simply the form of appearance of value" (Letters, March 7).

But, of course, that is not what Marx says. He wrote: "And the form in which this proportional distribution of labour asserts itself in a state of society in which the interconnection of social labour expresses itself as the *private exchange* of the individual products of labour is precisely the *exchange-value* of these products."

Marx is saying that exchange-value is an historically specific and determined form of value, the corollary of which is that in other forms of society value itself takes different forms to that of exchange-value. In other words, exchange-value is the form that value takes in a society where the exchange of products has developed into the production and exchange of commodities. In fact, it would be unnecessary for Marx to make this comment if he did not also believe that value exists as a concept, and as a reality, separate from such exchange-value, and in societies that are not based upon the exchange of products as commodities!

If we look at the start of that paragraph, in Marx's letter to Kugelmann, that is clear. First of all, making clear that Marx is discussing

value, and the law of value, in all societies, Marx writes: "As for the Zentralblatt, the man is making the greatest possible concession in admitting, that, if one means anything at all by value, the conclusions I draw must be accepted. The unfortunate fellow does not see that, even if there were no chapter on 'value' in my book, the analysis of the real relationships which I give would contain the proof and demonstration of the real value relation. The nonsense about the necessity of proving the concept of value arises from complete ignorance both of the subject dealt with and of the method of science. Every child knows that any nation that stopped working, not for a year, but let us say, just for a few weeks, would perish. And every child knows, too, that the amounts of products corresponding to the differing amounts of needs demand differing and quantitatively determined amounts of society's aggregate labour."

So, it is clear that Marx is talking about the value of 'products'. In *Capital* volume 1, Marx distinguishes a 'product' from a use-value by setting out that a 'product' is a use-value which is not just a free gift of nature, but is also the result of free human labour. The 'value' of the product is determined by the amount of labour embodied within it. Marx further explains that not all such products are commodities. A commodity is something produced for the explicit purpose of being exchanged, so as to obtain some other use-value, representing an equivalent amount of value. He further explains that this excludes, therefore, the surplus products produced by peasant labour that is paid to the landlord as feudal rent. These products, as Marx explains, are not commodities, but they still represent value.

This is the point of his comment: "Compulsory labour is just as properly measured by time as commodity-producing labour; but every serf knows that what he expends in the service of his lord is a definite quantity of his own personal labour-power."

Marx's point here is that the nature of value, and the law of value, is not cloaked in mystique by commodity fetishism, and the form of value as exchange-value. And if we look at Marx's analysis of the development of pre-capitalist rent, in *Capital* volume 3, this is clearly indicated in the form of feudal money rents. Money is exchange-value incarnate; it is impossible to say, therefore, that the money rent paid by the peasant to the feudal lord is not a transfer of a given amount of value. But, as Marx explains in that historical analysis, the money rent under feudalism is merely the last stage in its process of development from being the labour rent, described above, to then being rent in kind, whereby the peasant hands over a given quantity of products to the feudal lord, to being money rent, as merely the money equivalent of the value of those products.

It's quite true that the concept and nature of value itself changes over time, as I am discussing in an upcoming blog post that deals with this issue, and the points previously raised by John Bridge, in more detail, but that does not change the fact that value, and the law of value, operates, for all the reasons Marx describes in his letter to Kugelmann, in all societies. To say that prior to a certain time society had no concept of 'value' is meaningless, for the reason Marx states above - because it represents a failure to understand the "method of science". It is like saying that prior to Priestley society had no concept of oxygen, and so oxygen did not exist! As Marx goes on to say, in his letter to Kugelmann, "science consists precisely in demonstrating *how* the

law of value asserts itself".

Again, if the concept of value and the law of value only applies to commodity-producing societies, and so only ever exists in the form of exchange-value, this statement is rather meaningless.

The idea that we cannot speak about the exchange-value of a commodity, and can only speak of exchange-values, is simply wrong - Marx speaks of the exchange-value of a commodity repeatedly. It's true that, unless more than two products take the form of commodities, then commodity production and exchange would not develop, but that is a different issue. It's wrong to say that value does not exist outside of the concept of exchange-value for the reasons I have previously cited, and, as Marx sets out in *Theories of surplus value*, chapter 20, unless products have value, and this value increasingly becomes the basis upon which the exchange relation between those products develops, there could be no development of commodities in the first place, and no objective rational basis for the development of exchange-values.

I think that Moshé gave too much ground in relation to the question of value in post-capitalist societies. Engels does not say that value ceases to exist under communism: he says that its fetishised form - ie, exchange-value/money - prices ceases to exist. In *Anti-Dühring*, he writes: "The useful effects of the various articles of consumption, compared with one another and with the quantities of labour required for their production, will in the end determine the plan."

And: "As long ago as 1844 I stated that the above-mentioned balancing of useful effects and expenditure of labour on making decisions concerning production was all that would be left, in a communist society, of the politico-economic concept of value ... The scientific justification for this statement, however, as can be seen, was made possible only by Marx's *Capital*."

That is also what Marx says: "Secondly, after the abolition of the capitalist mode of production, but still retaining social production, the determination of value continues to prevail in the sense that the regulation of labour-time and the distribution of social labour among the various production groups, ultimately the book-keeping encompassing all this, become more essential than ever."

The nature of value changes, depending on the nature of society, and the social form of production. The hypothetical case of Robinson Crusoe, as set out in *Capital* volume 1, indicates the nature of value as individual value, where society consists of one individual. Robinson's labour is immediately both abstract as well as concrete labour, and is average social labour, precisely because he constitutes the whole of society. When Friday joins him, the society is enlarged. Together they form collective labour. The individual value of Robinson's labour continues to exist, but is added to by that of Friday, so that the individual value produced by both becomes aggregated into social labour, and the individual value of that output now consists in the combined labour embodied within it by both. To the extent that, by working cooperatively, they enhance their productivity, this does not change the value of their output - it amounts still to their combined social labour - but is now embodied within a greater quantity of use-values, representing an increase in social wealth. This is the point of Marx's further comment in *Capital* volume 1, explaining the nature of this individual value of products:

"We have one close at hand in the

patriarchal industries of a peasant family, that produces corn, cattle, yarn, linen and clothing for home use. These different articles are, as regards the family, so many products of its labour, but as between themselves, they are not commodities. The different kinds of labour, such as tillage, cattle tending, spinning, weaving and making clothes, which result in the various products, are in themselves, and such as they are, direct social functions, because functions of the family, which, just as much as a society based on the production of commodities, possesses a spontaneously developed system of division of labour ... The labour-power of each individual, by its very nature, operates in this case merely as a definite portion of the whole labour-power of the family, and therefore, the measure of the expenditure of individual labour-power by its duration appears here by its very nature as a social character of their labour."

In so far as we are talking about products here, rather than commodities, it is this individual value that is decisive for the society in allocating its available labour-time. The individual value produced by each individual in this production is now subsumed within the individual value of the collective labour involved in the production. But, as Marx and Engels describe, as different tribes and communities come into contact with each, and trade develops between these different communities, the individual value of the products of each community itself evolves into a social value, which forms the basis for the development of exchange-values.

But this development of value - not exchange-value - itself requires a long historical process: from the production of products to their occasional exchange; from the development of individual value based upon the labour of individual producers to the collective labour of producers working cooperatively and enjoying the benefits of the division of labour, through to the more regular trade in such products as commodities, and thereby to the production of those commodities specifically for the purpose of exchange or sale; and so the development from individual value into social or market value, which then forms the objective basis upon which exchange-values can be calculated.

**Arthur Bough**  
email

## Criminal

We all know how much Binyamin Netanyahu loves anti-Semites, and they love him: Trump, Orbán ... better not put in too many names in case someone wants to sue. But it is interesting that they like to share in their criminal activities too.

Netanyahu recently kicked

out the 'Temporary International Presence in Hebron' (TIPH), which was established to monitor the local terrorists - sorry, 'settlers' - who terrorise the local, majority, Palestinian population, including children on their way to school. This was deemed necessary after Baruch Goldstein - in some Israeli eyes a national hero - murdered 29 Muslims, who were praying in their mosque in Hebron.

Local Palestinians are trying to fill the gap by keeping their children, among others, safe - much to the indignation of the 'settlers'. But, with the expulsion of the TIPH, the 'settlers' - as usual protected by Israeli soldiers - have become even more aggressive, with their shouts of "Death to Arabs!" and throwing rocks at Palestinian homes. The Palestinians must be very happy that that the existence of a state of Israel is by no means a racist endeavour.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu's good friend, Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, is busy dismantling the protections offered by the Brazilian constitution to indigenous peoples. Not that they have had much protection in the past, but with Bolsonaro invasions of these lands have increased, along with the killings. Along also, for the rest of us, with the deforestation in the Amazon rainforest.

So Netanyahu and Bolsonaro share their desire to get rid of indigenous peoples as well as their no doubt other numerous reasons for mutual admiration.

**Jim Cook**  
Reading

## Putrid porridge

Tony Blair has said: "President Macron is right. Any extension of the article 50 process should be for a reason. It should be to eliminate the blind Brexit Theresa May proposes. But first her deal must be defeated" (*The Observer* March 3). Blair has put his finger on the key issue - defeating May's deal. He says: "If I were an MP I wouldn't want to own this putrid porridge of poor political leadership."

And, of course, May's deal went down. It has now been defeated in parliament twice. Has it finally been killed off or will it come back for a third time? While May survives, this is surely possible and the Tories are unlikely to get rid of her unless really forced to, because they fear a general election.

We are in a peculiar constitutional situation between crown, parliament and people. The 'sovereign people' voted to leave, even though they have no place in the constitution. The crown, through the prime minister, promised to carry out the will of the people. Despite repeated evasions and defeats in parliament, the PM has

## The gender wars

London Communist Forum  
Sunday March 17, 5pm  
Speaker: **Dr Amanda MacLean**

The UK government's consultation on the Gender Recognition Act in 2018 resulted in a poisonous and sometimes threatening debate between two highly polarised viewpoints. The science behind sex, intersex and the gendered brain are crucial in the debate over the key question: are trans-women women? Whatever the answer, how do we work towards a society where gender non-conformity is not only tolerated, but welcomed?

Amanda MacLean has a background in evolutionary biology and behavioural ecology. She has been influenced by the thinking of the Radical Anthropology Group, is a member of the Labour Party, and is closely following the current debate on gender identity.

Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.  
Organised by CPGB: [www.cpgb.org.uk](http://www.cpgb.org.uk); and  
Labour Party Marxists: [www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk](http://www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk)

continued 'representing' the people against parliament.

In the UK constitution the people are not sovereign and have no authority to halt the parliamentary farce by taking control of the decision. Of course, there is no need for a ratification referendum if the May deal is finally finished. But is it? It may now hide in the shadows awaiting a moment to come out again. The people seem powerless to prevent this nonsense carrying on.

The *Observer* editorial says: "The principled case for a referendum on May's deal remains as strong as ever. It is critical that the negotiated agreement is put before voters for ratification or rejection. This is not rerunning the 2016 referendum, but about making sense of its result: the government has not been able to secure what voters were promised, and it must give the public the chance to accept or reject the deal" (March 10).

Unfortunately liberals, like Blair, are playing a different game. Last week he said if all else fails MPs should "accept her deal", but "with a Kyle-Wilson amendment". This is smoke and mirrors. In the name of 'confirmation' Blair and his allies want to us to vote against putrid porridge and for remaining in the EU.

Keir Starmer takes the same line. He calls for a public vote between "May's deal and 'remain'". He is backed up by John McDonnell MP and no doubt deputy Labour leader Tom Watson under the banner of a second referendum. Michael White is cautious about this. He says: "I am not sure 'remain' will pull it off" (*New European* March 6).

There are two obvious objections to voting for "May's deal or 'remain'". It will be seen as illegitimate by many who voted to leave. There would be no question in this kind of ballot for millions of 'leave' voters who want no-deal. It will be seen as the liberal elite fixing the result.

Polling evidence suggests that public opinion has not changed much among those who voted. It may even have hardened people's views. But there is a shift towards 'remain', because new, young voters have joined the electoral register. Refighting the 2016 referendum with a marginal shift among those who voted first time will deepen the divisions and settle nothing.

Hence White says: "I remain nervous about the prospect for a second referendum. It is hard for reason to defeat zeal, especially when coupled with anger and mendacity on a scale likely to be far nastier than the last time, because 'leave' voters will insist that the 2016 verdict must stand."

Corbyn seems to have been dragged into a 'confirm or remain' second referendum, because he, his advisors and his supporters don't seem to have grasped the basic democratic case for a ratification referendum. If May or her deal survives, it is Labour's only route to an early general election with the prospects of a Labour victory. Otherwise there is a danger that Corbyn will drown in a bowl of "putrid porridge" - with a Tory dollop of alleged anti-Semitism and a dash of Hezbollah sauce. Let us see what happens when the dust settles.

**Steve Freeman**  
London

## Next casualty

In a survey carried out last week on behalf of two anti-Brexit youth groups it came to light that 74% of newly eligible voters would back 'remain' if there were to be a second poll, while 91% actively support another referendum.

Whilst probably not suggesting any blind faith in the European Union to solve all the problems

resulting from the capitalist system, it does seem to be the case that these youthful participants in the survey have a gut instinct that being part of a larger entity than our 'sovereign' little set of islands will provide better opportunities than wandering off in a direction most politely described as suburban, bigoted, small-minded and laughably backward-looking. But this is not shared by many modern-day Marxists - certainly not comrades at *Weekly Worker*/CPGB.

OK, nobody in their right mind could suggest that pandering to delusions or misconceptions about the primary nature and core function of capitalist entities would be a sensible - let alone productive - thing to do. However, it *does* seem to have slipped your notice that these youngsters are the very people to form the basis of any next-level 'wokefulness'. A potential influx of revolutionary cadres to be entirely lost in the enveloping mists of history, if only 'automatic' hostility to the EU is projected in their direction.

Well, how simultaneously tragic and idiotic that would be. Indeed, how dangerous, given that any consequent distrust and despair on the part of that upcoming generation may lead them up the Satanic pathway of nihilism. Even worse, a psychic wave of disgust and fury might descend upon them - one that propels this youthful treasure into the welcoming arms of rightwing populist reactionaries.

It seems clear that any such fostering of alienation may well come to haunt our Marxist movement as a whole. Surely it's now crunch time - a customised Year Zero is looming above stormy horizons! The insensitive, inflexible and stubbornly old school position taken by yourselves in relation to the EU is becoming a veritable living/breathing apparition of the Goddess Nemesis.

One thing certainly is true: Brexit continues to lengthen its already long list of hostages taken - the next casualty is being pushed onto the rails in front of that runaway train!

**Bruno Kretschmar**  
email

## Council housing

There's a saying in Marxist circles that if you want firm predictions, you should ask the astrologers.

My late father when deciding the best time to set his seed potatoes always referred to *Old Moore's Almanac*. Interestingly, this year's edition has an article titled 'Is

Jeremy cut out for Number 10?' *Old Moore's* assessment is that Jeremy Corbyn is unlikely to achieve the highest political position in Great Britain.

As his leadership of the Labour Party rapidly draws to a close, Marxists should be preparing for the aftermath. A Labour Party with a dozen Marxist MPs living on the wage of a skilled worker would have a greater effect on British politics than a Labour Party with 250 Blairite MPs. Marxists should go on the offensive and call for a workers' government, which will build one million council houses and flats each year, for five years.

Coincidentally, the Yellow Vests movement in France has the building of five million affordable homes as one of its key demands. The demand for the building of one million council houses and flats would put enormous pressure of Theresa May and the Tories. This is especially so, given that 'Generation Rent' were amongst the hundreds of thousands of young people who have been abandoned by the Tories and now support Jeremy Corbyn.

I have often thought that the big dividing line in politics is not whether one wants to nationalise 150 monopolies, but whether one supports the building of council houses and flats. Even the rightwing Institute of Economic Affairs supports the building of council houses and flats as a way of eliminating the £32 billion-a-year government subsidy given to private landlords in the form of housing benefit.

One of the reasons for the anger of Generation Rent is that they have nowhere to have sex and bring up the next generation of workers to be exploited. Theresa May and the Tories are well aware of this anger, but they mistakenly think building council houses and flats would just create young Labour voters.

It must be remembered that during the 1950s both Tories and Labour competed with each other in the number of council houses and flats they said they would build. It must not be forgotten that in 1954 under a Tory government 440,000 council houses and flats were built in the UK - the highest number of homes ever built in one year. A Labour Party with a dozen Marxist MPs could force the Tories to do the same today.

**John Smithee**  
Cambridgeshire

## Fighting fund

# Can't be beaten

"The *Weekly Worker* can't be beaten for its coverage of the Labour Party," writes comrade LC. "It should be read much more widely." He adds: "It just goes to show what could be achieved if the Labour Party had its own press - maybe then Corbyn wouldn't feel the need to retreat quite so much!"

Just to show that he means it, LC added an extra £20 to his resubscription cheque - thanks, comrade. But CG was even more generous - the cheque he handed to our editor at last Sunday's London Communist Forum was for £50. He was just about to undergo two separate operations and was slightly concerned he wouldn't see us for a while. Here's to a speedy recovery, comrade!

There were three PayPal donations - a handy £25 from LG, the usual monthly £7 from DB and £5 from a comrade with

the same initials. Admittedly DB number two originally made this donation by mistake - he had taken out an annual PayPal subscription and forgot to cancel his previous monthly payment. But, when this was pointed out, he was only too pleased to let us keep it!

On top of this we got five standing orders totalling £140 - thanks to AN (£50), NH (£30), GD and DV (£25) and SM (£10). All in all, we received £247 over the last seven days, taking our running total to £697.

Well, we're just a bit below par, but not too far, so let's hope one or two really generous donations come our way over the next couple of weeks it ●

**Robbie Rix**

Fill in a standing order form (back page), donate via our website, or send cheques, payable to *Weekly Worker*

# ACTION

## London Communist Forum

**Sunday March 17, 5pm:** 'The gender wars'. Speaker: Dr Amanda MacLean.

**Sunday March 24, 5pm:** Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and reading group: study of August Nimtz's *Lenin's electoral strategy from 1907 to the October Revolution of 1917*. This meeting: chapter 2 (continued): 'Pravda: a work in progress'.

Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

Organised by CPGB: [www.cpgb.org.uk](http://www.cpgb.org.uk) and Labour Party Marxists: [www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk](http://www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk).

## Radical Anthropology Group

**Tuesday March 19, 6.30pm:** Series of talks on social and biological anthropology, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1.

This meeting: 'Massage and bushman shamanism'. Speaker: Chris Low.

Organised by Radical Anthropology Group:

<http://radicalanthropologygroup.org>.

## Youth Strike 4 Climate

**Friday March 15, 11am:** UK-wide (and global) student and school student demonstrations. Take direct action on the climate crisis and ecological catastrophe - system change, not climate change!

Organised by UK Student Climate Network:

[www.facebook.com/events/1169886679841901](http://www.facebook.com/events/1169886679841901).

## UN Anti-Racism Day demonstrations

**Saturday March 16:** All out to defeat the rise of racism and the far right - organised by Stand Up To Racism.

**London:** Assemble 12 noon, Park Lane, London W1.

[www.facebook.com/events/2013107605418593](http://www.facebook.com/events/2013107605418593).

**Cardiff:** Assemble 11am, City Hall, Cardiff CF10.

[www.facebook.com/events/935115200024518](http://www.facebook.com/events/935115200024518).

**Glasgow:** Assemble 11am, George Square, Glasgow G2.

[www.facebook.com/events/2242706462615178](http://www.facebook.com/events/2242706462615178).

## Don't march with apartheid

**Saturday March 16, 10.30am:** Counterdemonstration, George Square, Glasgow G2. Protest against participation of Zionists in SUTR march.

Organised by Zionism is Racism and Celtic fans for Palestine:

[www.facebook.com/events/247686286110662](http://www.facebook.com/events/247686286110662)

[www.facebook.com/events/2248332178716500](http://www.facebook.com/events/2248332178716500).

## Palestinian children under occupation

**Sunday March 17, 2.30pm:** Meeting, Waltham Forest Community Hub, Orford Road, London E17. Film, speakers and stalls about the situation of Palestinian children under Israeli military occupation.

Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign:

[www.facebook.com/events/589604371508997](http://www.facebook.com/events/589604371508997).

## We need a Corbyn-led Labour government

**Wednesday March 20, 7pm:** Rally, House of Commons, London SW1.

For a fundamental shift in wealth, power and control. Speakers include MPs Richard Burgon, Dan Carden and Laura Pidcock. Ticket only (free).

Organised by Labour Assembly Against Austerity:

[www.facebook.com/events/1015298511988284](http://www.facebook.com/events/1015298511988284).

## Defend Jackie Walker

**Tuesday March 26, 9am to 1pm:** Solidarity picket, London - venue details to follow. Outside her Labour Party disciplinary hearing celebrate the courage and resilience that Jackie Walker and so many anti-racists, pro-Palestinian activists, ordinary members and those wrongly accused and witch-hunted have shown over more than three years.

Organised by Labour Against the Witchhunt:

[www.facebook.com/events/307118239945402](http://www.facebook.com/events/307118239945402).

## Defending the union link

**Saturday March 30, 11am to 4pm:** Meeting, Swarthmore Education Centre, 2-7 Woodhouse Square, Leeds LS3. Defending and democratising the Labour Party-trade union link. Speakers include Matt Wrack (FBU).

Organised by Labour Representation Committee:

[www.facebook.com/LRCofficial](http://www.facebook.com/LRCofficial).

## Keep Honda Swindon open

**Saturday March 30, 11am:** March and rally, car park, Swindon Town FC, County Road, Swindon SN1. Resist Honda's plan to shut its Swindon plant in 2021 with 15,000 local jobs at risk.

Organised by Unite the union: [www.facebook.com/events/2258617220887948](http://www.facebook.com/events/2258617220887948).

## Exist! Resist! Return!

**Saturday March 30:** National day of action organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign. First anniversary of the Great Return March. Demand freedom, justice and equality for Palestinian people. No new nakba! End the siege! Defend the right of return!

**London - 1pm:** Opposite Israeli embassy, Kensington High Street, London W8: [www.facebook.com/events/421148881781618](http://www.facebook.com/events/421148881781618).

**Newcastle - 11.30am:** Grey's Monument, Blackett Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1: [www.facebook.com/events/257054025227458](http://www.facebook.com/events/257054025227458).

**Carlisle - 1pm:** Rally in city centre, Carlisle CA3: [www.facebook.com/events/251043685817788](http://www.facebook.com/events/251043685817788).

**Jersey - 11.30am:** Liberation Square, St Helier JE1: [www.facebook.com/events/2247479855540173](http://www.facebook.com/events/2247479855540173).

**Cardiff - 12 noon:** Queen Street, Cardiff CF10: [www.facebook.com/events/333820567249650](http://www.facebook.com/events/333820567249650).

**Manchester - 12 noon:** Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester M1: [www.facebook.com/events/463166254219978](http://www.facebook.com/events/463166254219978).

**Birmingham - 1pm:** Outside HSBC, New Street, Birmingham B2: [www.facebook.com/events/462515080952125](http://www.facebook.com/events/462515080952125).

**Hitchin - 10am:** Market Square, Hitchin SG5: [www.facebook.com/events/1015538905312220](http://www.facebook.com/events/1015538905312220).

**Oxford - 11.30am:** Outside HSBC, Cornmarket, Oxford OX1: [www.facebook.com/events/294681177869984](http://www.facebook.com/events/294681177869984).

## CPGB wills

Remember the CPGB and keep the struggle going. Put our party's name and address, together with the amount you wish to leave, in your will. If you need further help, do not hesitate to contact us.

**BREXIT**

# Hitting the reset button?

Now that Theresa May's deal has been defeated for a second time and MPs have voted against 'no deal', **Eddie Ford** says almost anything can happen in the short term. But in the longer term the expectations of the Brexiteers will surely be betrayed

**B**ritish politics is now in a state of chaos, after Theresa May suffered yet another humiliating defeat on March 12. When it came to the second 'meaningful vote', MPs roundly rejected her "revised" Brexit deal by 391 to 242 - losing by 149 votes, with 75 Tory MPs voting against her. Then the next day a withdrawal from the European Union with no deal was also rejected - this time by 321 votes to 278.

May's pleading got her nowhere, and neither did her 11th-hour 'mercy dash' to Strasbourg on March 11 to secure supposedly "legally binding" changes to the Irish backstop. As predicted, she was greeted with lots of warm words and came back with documents full of legalistic verbiage - but nowhere near enough to win over a majority of MPs.

The pretence that the Strasbourg documents represented a breakthrough lasted less than 12 hours. After agonising into the early hours of the morning, attorney general Sir Geoffrey Cox announced that, while the backstop risk had indeed been "reduced", the actual legal situation remained "unchanged". That is, under the withdrawal agreement the UK could be trapped "indefinitely" within the Irish backstop with "no internationally lawful means of exiting the protocol's arrangements".

Of course, this put the final kibosh on things - the game was up. The Democratic Unionist Party came out against it as did the Brexiteer ultras of the European Research Group. Of course, the ERG would have been quite happy with no deal - allowing the 'great' to be put back into Great Britain, of course.

If she wants, Theresa May can perhaps take a small slither of comfort from the fact that the margin of defeat on March 12 was smaller than the historic 230 kicking she got back in January. But a humiliation is a humiliation and her torturously negotiated withdrawal agreement with the EU is now dead, even if she does get a third bite of the cherry - which seems unlikely, as events are spiralling out of her control.

Immediately after her defeat May announced that MPs would be given a *free vote* the next day on blocking a no-deal exit on March 29 - which is quite extraordinary in some respects, given that that we are talking about a key plank of governmental policy (indeed, Boris Johnson called the decision "absurd"). But despite that the result was inevitable, as must also be the case for the March 14 vote on an extension to article 50. Then again, even if a miracle had occurred on March 12 and Theresa May had managed to scrape her deal through, an extension would still have been needed, as time is so impossibly short in regards to passing all the necessary legislation.

Of course, the motion submitted by the government for the free vote was typically slippery - adding a caveat effectively meaning no deal would *still* be left on the table. But a cross-party amendment deleting this, drawn-up by Caroline Spelman and Jack Dromey, was narrowly accepted by 312 votes to 308, while the motion as amended was rather more comfortably accepted. Obviously, May had been attempting to please both sides of the debate, but ended



**At the end of the day it will be 'remain' - probably**

up pleasing neither.

## Extension

Now that almost anything can happen, many are saying it is time to hit the Brexit 'reset' button. A significant number of MPs want a series of "indicative votes" on possible ways out of the deadlock in order to see if there is a parliamentary majority for any of them - Canada plus, second referendum (or 'People's Vote'), general election, Norway plus ('Common Market 2.0'), permanent customs union, etc.

However, frustrating as it must be for some, there does not - as things stand right now - appear to be a clear parliamentary majority

for any of these options, especially a second referendum or general election. Jeremy Corbyn, as widely pointed out in the media, did not mention a referendum once during the March 12 debate - some finding this "incredible". Instead, as usual, he called rather forlornly for a general election. If there is a majority - or potential majority - for anything, then it might be for something in the territory of a Common Market 2.0-cum-customs union arrangement, with some sort of relationship to the single market. But to secure this possible parliamentary majority, of course, May must drop her 'red lines' and reach across to Labour and the other opposition parties - a course

of action urged on by publications like the *Financial Times*. And under the pressure of fast-moving events, what now seems unlikely or even unthinkable could become eminently sensible or inevitable. For example, on March 13 an executive member of the Tory 1922 committee said that if MPs voted to reject no deal then things could not carry on as they are and a general election would be necessary.

An extension of article 50 surely became inevitable. But is it more than likely that the EU will grant such a request? The UK government can only ask for an extension *once*, or so it seems, and very recently the president of the European Council,

Donald Tusk, emphasised again that there needs to be a "credible justification" for a possible extension and its duration. Playing hardball, Guy Verhofstadt, the European parliament's lead Brexit spokesman, said on March 13 he would oppose even a 24-hour extension to article 50 "if it is not based on a clear opinion of the House of Commons for something" - the EU has to know "what they want". But at the moment the plain fact is that there is not a strong and stable majority for anything in parliament: just various expressions - sometimes contradictory - of what it is *against*.

However, while it is not *entirely* impossible that the EU will turn down an extension request, the odds are that it will be granted. But there are widely differing views on its duration. Some think it should be very short and limited, whilst others think quite the opposite - up to 21 months has been mooted. Maybe even an *open-ended* extension, which needs to be renewed at regular intervals, should be approved - the argument being that if parliament is gridlocked then very little can be achieved within a couple of months: just further disagreements and more attempts at renegotiating the treaty or backstop. An extension would have to be for at least a year in order to allow time for some real movement or breakthrough in parliament - say an emergent majority for 'Common Market 2.0' or another referendum and/or general election (or some form of national government).

Before it was rejected, a worried Michel Barnier said in a speech to the European parliament that the risk of a no-deal Brexit "has never been higher". In anticipation of such an outcome, with the clock ticking ever louder, almost a trillion pounds in assets and investments has been moved out of the City to the EU. The Confederation of British Industry described the prospect of no deal as a "sledgehammer for the economy" - it would represent the imposition of the biggest change in terms of trade this country had faced since the mid-19th century. Yet there had been "no consultation with business" and "no time to prepare". That is "no way to run a country", concluded the CBI.

Thanks to Theresa May's handling of Brexit, the so-called "party of business" is not very popular with business at all. And, of course, it is not only May - it was David Cameron who dreamt up the whole idea of a referendum. For him, it was not really about the EU at all, but about seeing off the threat from the Tory right and sidelining the UK Independence Party. He never for a moment thought he would lose the referendum and the verdict would be 'leave'.

As for communists, we are not in favour of a withdrawal from the EU, but neither are we in favour of the EU as it is now. That is why we called for an active boycott of the 2016 referendum. Our aim is for a *workers' Europe* - not one run quasi-democratically in the interests of big capital. The left needs to get its act together and start working towards what we really need, as displayed on the front page of every issue of the *Weekly Worker*: "For a Communist Party of the European Union" ●

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# LABOUR



More and more accusations and more and more suspensions

# Corbyn should speak up

Labour HQ has decided upon yet more suspensions. **Carla Roberts** reports on the appalling consequences of appeasement

**T**om Watson's inaugural meeting of rightwingers in parliament this week certainly looked quite impressive in terms of numbers - there are reports of up to 140 people present, including between 60 to 80 current Labour Party MPs, among them "at least 13 members of the shadow front bench". But dig a little deeper and the thing looks decidedly uninspiring.

Despite its name, 'Future Britain', this outfit is looking firmly back towards the past: "I feel that the voice of the social democratic and democratic socialist traditions hasn't been strong enough in recent times," said Watson. Darren Johnson, MP for Bristol North West, expanded: "This is the coming together of the TBs and GBs." So we presume Tony Blair is supposed to be the social democrat and Gordon Brown the democratic socialist? Have we got that right? It does not matter, really. "Even some of Watsons' supporters remain unsure what his ultimate intentions are," writes *The Guardian*, not known as a friend of Corbyn's.

Apparently, the group wants to "concentrate on policy development", move alternative papers to those of the national policy forum and other such exciting things. The *New Statesman* believes that Tom Watson is "in effect trying to provide a support network and safe space for Labour MPs contemplating life outside the party".

They can call it what they want, but we know that it is part of the ongoing slow coup against Corbyn. They know they cannot challenge Corbyn in a leadership contest, because they are bound to lose. The membership is still firmly on his side. So Future Britain is very much part of the campaign to kill Corbyn's leadership through 1,000 cuts, as is the formation of Chuka Umunna's The Independent Group. In and of themselves, they would not amount to much.

But they have to be seen within the exceptionally successful and very much ongoing campaign to paint Corbyn and his supporters as anti-Semites. This was the only muck that ever really stuck - because Corbyn and his allies allowed it to stick.

They bent over backwards to try and prove to the right that they would take the allegations seriously and 'sort it out' - when clearly it was only ever a minuscule problem, reflecting the low-level prejudice and racism that exists in wider society.

But, by suspending one person after another on false and trumped-up charges of 'anti-Semitism' (or expelling them for 'bringing the party into disrepute') and by adopting the much-disputed definition of anti-Semitism published by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the party could only ever achieve the opposite: ie, it is *demonstrating* that Labour has indeed a 'huge problem'. The fact that 12 members have been expelled over anti-Semitism does not prove that the party is dealing with that problem - but that it has let off the other 661!

Now the Jewish Labour Movement, which has sadly voted to remain a part of the Labour Party for now, has succeeded in getting the government quango, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, to open an investigation into the Labour Party over anti-Semitism. And at the same time - as if to show how important such an investigation is - the compliance unit seems to have lost all sense of proportion.

Not only have automatic suspensions for the most minor of accusations been reinstated - in clear contravention to what Shami Chakrabarti recommended following her inquiry. We have also seen members being suspended for even *questioning* the claim that there is a big anti-Semitism problem in the party.

For example, part of the case against Jackie Walker (whose expulsion hearing takes place on March 26) is that she described the witch-hunt against her and others as ... "a witch-hunt". That charge was, of course, added *after* her suspension. So fighting back against your suspension becomes part of the charge sheet against you - that is clearly against all natural justice and reeks of Kafkaesque

madness.

## New victims

These are just some of the latest suspensions that we have become aware of:

- Councillor Stuart Porthouse, former mayor of Sunderland, was suspended for sharing an interview with George Galloway on *Sky News*, in which the former MP said the party was not-anti-Semitic.<sup>1</sup>

- The suspension of Chris Williamson MP also clearly falls into this category: he is not charged with saying anything anti-Semitic, but questioning if the party's tactics were wise.

- Councillor Jo Bird from the Wirral has been suspended for making a number of jokes, like changing 'due process' to 'Jew process' (she is Jewish herself).<sup>2</sup>

- Sean McCallum, mayoral candidate in Mansfield, has been suspended on the basis of two 25-months-old tweets questioning the origins of a meme that Naz Shah MP had posted three years ago.<sup>3</sup>

- Asa Winstanley, investigative journalist with the *Electronic Intifada*, has been suspended for calling out the Jewish Labour Movement on Twitter: "Israeli embassy proxy the JLM confirms it was responsible for the referencing of Labour to the Equality and Human Rights Commission for supposed 'institutional anti-Semitism'. Shameless sabotage of the party."<sup>4</sup>

- Last but not least, we are also seeing a new attempt to 'get' eminent Middle Eastern expert Moshé Machover, who John Mann MP and the JLM first tried to have suspended back in 2017, after we reprinted his article, 'Anti-Zionism does not equal anti-Semitism',<sup>4</sup> in our Labour Party conference issue of *Labour Party Marxists*. But the compliance unit did one better and expelled him under clause 2.1.4.B ('Exclusions') in the party's rulebook. You see, because comrade Machover *attended* meetings organised by LPM and the CPGB, it was seen as 'proven' that he was a member of LPM, CPGB (or both) and therefore not eligible for membership of the Labour Party.

Comrade Machover, however, managed to get not only some very pointed lawyer's letters to the compliance unit: his expulsion also led to an international outcry and the party was flooded with supportive statements and resolutions. Within 30 days, the party reinstated him as a full member. The original charge that his meticulously researched article was anti-Semitic was never looked into, "because you are not currently a member of the Labour Party",<sup>5</sup> as his expulsion letter stated.

This week though, the *Jewish Chronicle* is fronting another attempt to get him on those allegations. As part of the campaign to charge Jeremy Corbyn with 'interfering' with disciplinary cases, the *JC* reminds its readers of comrade Machover's crime: "He quoted Reinhard Heydrich, the architect of the final solution, to support the notion that the Nazis supported Zionists before the holocaust." I mean, where do we get if we actually start quoting sources to make a point?

The *JC* has also dug up a number of newish quotes from comrade Machover, "who has continued to make controversial remarks": for example, "Mr Machover also claimed Israel's ministry of strategic affairs had driven an 'immense public campaign' in the UK against Labour's new guidelines on anti-Semitism."

That is, of course, common knowledge - as well as the fact that the pro-Zionist lobby put enormous pressure on the party to accept the disputed IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, including all 11 examples. The paper also quotes from a speech at Labour Against the Witchhunt's conference, when he "compared incidents of anti-Semitism in the party to the hunt for paedophiles - suggesting eventually someone will be found".

Of course, he did not "compare" the two. As opposed to the hack from the *JC*, I was actually there. Comrade Machover said: "... of course there are some anti-Semites in the party, just as no doubt there are some paedophiles, but it is definitely not the major problem it has been portrayed to be".<sup>6</sup>

None of these so-called accusations

would hold up in any bourgeois court system. But unfortunately, we cannot be sure of what kind of madness has broken out in the compliance unit - we would not put it past them to suspend comrade Machover too. Having accusations printed in the *Jewish Chronicle* is usually the first step in the campaign to get somebody suspended - Asa Winstanley first learned of his own suspension from that rag. Comrade Machover, however, is not one to go down quietly. The compliance unit might well stretch itself too far with such a move - which could have all sorts of unintended consequences.

We hear that Jeremy Corbyn is getting increasingly unhappy about some of the recent suspensions - especially that of Chris Williamson MP. How much longer can he simply watch, as one of his supporters after another is handed over to the witch-finders in the compliance unit?

Yes, he is a prisoner of the rightwingers in the Parliamentary Labour Party and it is true that even his long-term ally, John McDonnell, now appears to have fully jumped on board the 'anti-Semitism' crisis bandwagon (which Momentum's owner, Jon Lansman, has been sitting on for quite some time).

But Corbyn still has a voice - and he is, after all, the reason why hundreds of thousands of members have joined the party. If he spoke up - publicly - in support of Jackie Walker, Chris Williamson, Jo Bird, Moshé Machover and Asa Winstanley, he could make a massive difference to the outcome of the civil war in the Labour Party ●

## Notes

1. [www.sunderlandecho.com/news/politics/former-mayor-of-sunderland-suspended-from-labour-party-over-sharing-facebook-post-1-9637111](http://www.sunderlandecho.com/news/politics/former-mayor-of-sunderland-suspended-from-labour-party-over-sharing-facebook-post-1-9637111).
2. <http://labourpartymarxists.org.uk/jo-bird-and-chris-williamson-fake-outrage-fake-accusations>.
3. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-47503473](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-47503473).
4. <http://labourpartymarxists.org.uk/anti-zionism-does-not-equal-anti-semitism-2>.
5. <http://labourpartymarxists.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Moshe-Machover-second-expulsion-letter.pdf>.
6. As LPM supporter David Shearer reported from conference: <http://labourpartymarxists.org.uk/standing-up-to-the-right>.

## OUR HISTORY

# Marx and Jewish emancipation

By citing a few thoroughly decontextualised phrases, the establishment finds Marx - and therefore contemporary Marxism - guilty of anti-Semitism. Jack Conrad puts the record straight

As a young man Karl Marx studied and thoroughly absorbed the materialist and atheist ideas of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-72). However, he soon became convinced that, while atheism was a vital intellectual premise, historic processes, developments in the means of production, social relations and crucially revolutionary practice had to be made the real starting point of "our criticism".<sup>1</sup>

Inevitably, that necessitated further, deeper, endless investigations - not least into the "inverted reality" of the bourgeois world. Hence the first of two articles which Marx wrote in what was a seminal period spent in the snug little Rhineland town of Kreuznach between March and October 1843 - just prior to his enforced move to Paris.

*On the Jewish question* was published in the first and only edition of the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* journal (February 1844). A very early work: concepts such as capital, exploitation and surplus value are not there yet. Concrete history hardly gets a look in. Nor does the proletariat.

Nonetheless, *On the Jewish question* constitutes a devastating rebuttal of Bruno Bauer - the Young Hegelian radical, atheist firebrand and a former collaborator and friend. More importantly - not least because of Bauer's present-day status as a mere footnote - *On the Jewish question* established a profound critique of the limited way liberals typically treat demands for equality, freedom, rights, etc.

## Emancipation

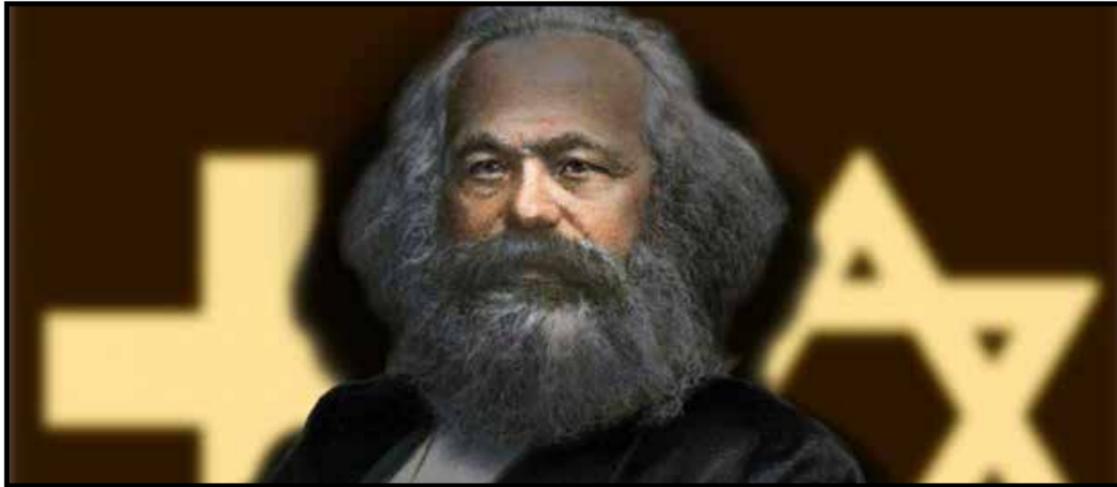
Protestant Christianity was the only officially recognised religion in Frederick William IV's Prussia. Jews in particular faced a whole raft of laws which humiliatingly discriminated against them. Bauer - barred from teaching in 1842 for daring to show that biblical stories were full of human invention - argued, in his book, *The Jewish question* (1843), that Jews can achieve political and civic emancipation only if they renounce their religious allegiances, religious modes of thinking and religious practices.<sup>2</sup>

He barbedly asks, if no-one in Germany is politically emancipated, how are we going to free you Jews? Demands for Jewish emancipation were, therefore, dismissed as a demand for special treatment. Those who continued to make such selfish claims on the Prussian state were branded "egoists".

Moreover, Jews who appealed to what was an explicitly *Christian* state for equality were inexcusably legitimising the regime of general oppression. The Christian state can only grant privileges. Without showing the least blush of shame, Bauer then proceeded to argue that in Prussia, Jews have the privilege of being a Jew. Therefore Jews have rights not enjoyed by Christians. Why should Jews be granted rights which only Christians enjoy? Therefore, in the name of bringing about general freedom, he felt fully justified in rejecting demands for Jewish equality in a *Christian* state.

Bauer went further. He maintained that granting Jewish rights would be incompatible with either the political rights of citizens (eg, the 1787 US constitution) or general civic rights (eg, France's 1789 'Declaration of the rights of man'). According to Bauer, an *atheist* state was alone the only conceivable solution ... and for him that meant Jews, Lutherans, Catholics - everyone - divesting themselves of their religion. He wanted to free the state from Judaism, Lutherism, Catholicism and religion in general. But, of course, that still left the state.

Note, Bauer drew a sharp theological



Marx saw a "Judeo-Christian complex" obsessed with money

line of distinction between Judaism and Christianity: in the process he depicts Judaism as narrow and tribal; Christianity as universal and superior. Sadly, after the failure of the 1848 German revolution, Bauer swung violently to the right and began to promote an ever more vile anti-Semitism: these Jewish "white Negroes" should be "shipped to the land of Canaan".<sup>3</sup>

As a militant champion of *genuine* human liberation, Marx rejected Bauer's 'solution' as theoretically flawed and totally inadequate. Bauer was trying to solve a social question as if it were purely theological. He failed to see that religious inequalities were not the cause of social inequalities - merely their symptom. Bauer's critique was also misdirected because it was aimed at the *Christian* state, not the state as such.

Bauer's problem - and that of bourgeois radicals in general - was that he mistook political emancipation, embodied in declarations, constitutions, etc, for human emancipation. Simply decreeing the separation of church and state, while needed, could not ensure the disappearance of religion (and its associated prejudices). The original 13 American states, for example, had written separation of the state from organised religion into their constitutions, and yet the US remained "pre-eminently the country of religiosity".<sup>4</sup>

Bauer was still using the criticism of religion as his basis for the criticism of politics, but, as Marx insisted:

[T]he existence of religion is the existence of a defect ... We no longer regard religion as the cause, but only as the manifestation, of secular narrowness ... History has long enough been merged in superstition; we now merge superstition in history. The question of the *relation of political emancipation to religion* becomes for us the question of the *relation of political emancipation to human emancipation*.<sup>5</sup>

So it is not that Marx rejects demands for political and civic equality. Quite the reverse. He considers the *political* emancipation of Jews perfectly feasible ... even without them renouncing their religion completely and irrevocably. However, the achievement of political emancipation is not *human* emancipation. Political emancipation in and of itself can only go so far.

Taking issue with his own earlier reliance on universal suffrage, for example, Marx points out that some American states had abolished property qualifications for (male) participation in elections. From the liberal standpoint, it could be said that "the masses have thus gained a victory over the property-owners and moneyed classes", that the "non-owner had become the law-giver

for the owner".<sup>6</sup> This victory, however, was only partial, because there is a world of difference between everyone getting the vote - desirable and necessary as that is - and getting everyone real and effective power over their lives.

## Religion

Unsurprisingly, *On the Jewish question* reiterates the ethical postulate Marx presented in 'Debates on freedom of the press' - a six-part supplement carried by the *Rheinische Zeitung* back in May 1842. Here Marx lambasted Prussian press censorship - "a perfumed abortion", he called it. Prometheus-like, he defiantly proclaims: "only that which is a realisation of freedom can be called humanly good".<sup>7</sup>

Since organised religion, by its very nature, makes human beings into slaves of an imaginary deity, conceding them merely a specious sovereignty in alienated form, it cannot, in Marxist terms, be a force for human good in any meaningful sense. Religion and 'morality' (ie, bourgeois morality) exist in the abstract sphere of 'public life', the realm of illusory collectivity and illusory sovereignty represented by the state, whereas the concrete sphere of 'everyday life' - civil society - remains dominated by individual antagonisms and by all the kinds of inhuman domination, bondage and debasement implicit in the category of alienation.

Bruno Bauer's mistake was to imagine that religious emancipation in and of itself could free humanity, whereas, for Marx, even the most far-going version of (bourgeois) political emancipation cannot succeed in achieving freedom. Religious emancipation gives freedom of religion, but it does not give freedom from the *rule* of religion, property or trade: it just gives us the right to profess the religion of our choice, hold property and practise trade as individuals in a civil society dominated by the *bellum omnium contra omnes* (war of all against all).

Just as religion, though constituting an illusory collectivity of humanity in relation to god, actually renders us into alienated, atomised individuals in relation to an imaginary creator, so political emancipation, while endowing us with an illusory sovereignty as citizens of the state, renders us into alienated, atomised individuals in a civil society dominated by property and the power that flows from it. Marx writes:

Only when the real, individual man reabsorbs in himself the abstract citizen, and as an individual human being has become a *species-being* in everyday life, in his particular work, and in his particular situation; only when man has recognised and organised his own '*forces propres*' [own powers] as *social forces*, and

consequently no longer separates social power from himself in the shape of *political* power; only then will human emancipation have been accomplished.<sup>8</sup>

The central idea is that humanity can achieve real emancipation by rediscovering its identity in and through community, but not through the imaginary community represented by either religion or the state.

In the second part of *On the Jewish question*, the category of religious alienation appears in another guise - strikingly adapted in order to illustrate the significance of money and commodities in capitalist society - in a way that foreshadows some of Marx's fundamental ideas about commodity fetishism and the alienation inherent in the capitalist mode of production. Hence the following passage:

Selling is the practice of externalisation. Selling is the practical aspect of alienation. Just as man, as long as he is in the grip of religion, is able to objectify his essential nature only by turning it into something alien, something fantastic, so under the domination of egoistic need he can be active practically and produce objects in practice only by putting his products, and his activity, under the domination of an alien being, and bestowing the significance of an alien entity - money - on them.<sup>9</sup>

Feuerbach's 'inverted reality' - a world in which the essence of everything is externalised (*entäußert*), or objectified (*vergegenständigt*) into an alien, imaginary entity, a process whereby all values are turned upside-down - could not be more clear. Both notions, of course, appear - in a richer, more profound and dialectical form - in Marx's later critique of political economy.

But - some may ask - how can the social role of money and commodities be equated with religion? Is this not stretching a point? No, it is not, for by 'religion' and 'religious' in this context Marx refers not to the cultic beliefs or observances of this or that religion, but to the subordination of human beings to a thing of their own making. Hence, in *Capital* Marx says: "in religion man is governed by the products of his own brain". He elaborates:

A commodity is, therefore, a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products

of their labour ... [the commodity is] a definite social relation between men ... [and] assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world, the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands.<sup>10</sup>

It is precisely the analogical, paradigmatic role of religious alienation in unravelling the "mysterious" nature of commodities, money and much else in the world of political economy that is of central importance to an understanding of the development of Marx's thought. Commodities are the products of our hands and brains, which exert an alien power over us, at least exist in actuality, whereas god or gods are entirely a figment of the human imagination, with no existence in objective reality. It is precisely the 'purity' of religious alienation in this respect that endows it with a prototypical value when considering alienation in general.

The point is, of course, that the relationship between religious alienation and its 'secular' counterpart in the world of humanity's productive activity rests on the same basis of a fundamental inversion of subject and object, a radical confusion between appearance and reality at every level:

The religious world is but the reflex of the real world ... The religious reflex of the real world can ... only then finally vanish when the practical relations of everyday life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellow men and to nature.<sup>11</sup>

## Feigned horror

While Bauer argued in terms of the emancipation of "the *Sabbath Jew*" - Jews seen purely in terms of their religion<sup>12</sup> - Marx extends the notion of emancipation by focusing on the oppression of Jews in an actual socio-economic context:

Let us not look for the secret of the Jew in his religion, but let us look for the secret of his religion in the real Jew. What is the secular basis of Judaism? Practical need, self-interest. What is the worldly religion of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly god? Money. Very well then! Emancipation from huckstering and money - consequently from practical, real Judaism - would be the self-emancipation of our time.<sup>13</sup>

Why, for Marx, is "Emancipation from huckstering and money, consequently from practical, real Judaism" rated as the "self-emancipation of our time"? Because it is money that dominates all social relations, money and the power that flows from it is that constitutes the material base of capitalist society:

Money is the jealous god of Israel, in face of which no other god may exist. Money degrades all the gods of man - and turns them into commodities. Money is the universal, self-established value of all things. It has therefore robbed the whole world - both the world of men and nature - of its specific value. Money is the estranged essence of man's work and man's existence, and this alien

essence dominates him, and he worships it.<sup>14</sup>

Biased, purchased or merely worthless opinion reacts with feigned horror to such passages, denouncing them as irrefutable proof of Marx's deep-seated anti-Semitism. Here are three professional Marx bashers:

- Jonathan Freedland, *The Guardian's* resident Zionist, writes that, given the "2,000-year-old" practice of equating "Jews and the wickedness of money, it absurd to imagine any one of us would be immune to [anti-Semitism]. Inevitably, plenty of Jews have themselves internalised it - including no less than Karl Marx, whose writings are peppered with anti-Jewish sentiment."<sup>15</sup>

- Nothing compared to Jonah Goldberg, the rightwing US commentator and author of *Liberal fascism* (2007). He insists, that for Marx, "capital and the Jew are different faces of the same monster .... Marx's writing, particularly on surplus value, is drenched with references to capital as parasitic and vampiric .... The constant allusions to the eternal wickedness of the Jew, combined with his constant references to blood, make it hard to avoid concluding that Marx had simply updated [medieval anti-Semitic imagery] and applied it to his own atheistic doctrine. His writing is replete with references to the 'bloodsucking' nature of capitalism. He likens both Jews and capitalists (the same thing in his mind) to life-draining exploiters of the proletariat."<sup>16</sup>

- Despite his status as a celebrity professor, Simon Schama displays exactly the same rigour and intellectual honesty: "Demonstrating that you do not have to be a gentile to be an anti-Semite, Karl Marx characterised Judaism as nothing more than the cult of Mammon, and declared that the world needed emancipating from the Jews."<sup>17</sup>

In other words, Marx was a 'self-hating' Jew. However, such a claim could not be more wrong. Few of Marx's detractors go to the bother of explaining that he was combating the malign anti-Semitism of Bruno Bauer and advocating Jewish emancipation.

Put aside Marx's own Jewishness, a religiously pious mother and rabbinical lineage: a good case can be made for his communism being connected, consciously or otherwise, with messianic *Old Testament* prophets, such as Amos, Micah and Habakkuk.<sup>18</sup> Possibly this came through his personal acquaintance with the proto-Zionist Moses Hess (1812-72), who likewise condemned the "Judeo-Christian huckster world"; a line of thought that surely came via Spinoza, Goethe and Hegel. In turn their passionate commitment to human freedom recognisably descends from the Christian utopias of the 16th and 17th centuries.

Not that I would go along with Erich Fromm (1900-80), when he describes Marx's communism as "the most advanced form of rational mysticism".<sup>19</sup> Such a paradoxical formulation, while having the virtue of counteracting the dismal technological determinism of the Stalinists, runs the risk of appearing to reconcile Marxism with religion.

Either way, Marx's *actual* argument in *On the Jewish question*, can neatly be summarised:

- Since the rights of man and citizen include freedom of religion, what grounds can there be for excluding Jews because of their religion?

- Since the rights of man include rights of egoism, what grounds can there be for denying civil rights to Jews because of their alleged egoism?

- Since the rights of citizens abstract 'political man' from their social role, what grounds can there be for excluding Jews because of their allegedly harmful social role?

- Since money in modern society is the supreme world power, what grounds can there be for denouncing Jews for allegedly turning money into their god?<sup>20</sup>

While Bauer represents the Jew as a "financial power", Marx responds

that society now revolves around huckstering, trading and making money. While Bauer imagines that money is "the practical spirit of the Jews", Marx responds that money has also become "the practical spirit of the Christian nations".<sup>21</sup> While Bauer says that money is the "jealous god of Israel", Marx responds that the god of the Jews has "become the god of the world".<sup>22</sup>

Nor did Marx and Engels hold back from combating German or 'true' socialism that was capable, as they put it in the *Communist manifesto*, of little more than "hurling the traditional anathemas" against liberalism, against representative government, against bourgeois freedom of the press.<sup>23</sup>

Amongst those traditional anathemas was, of course, that Jews constituted "a secret world power which makes and unmakes governments", a "secret force behind the throne", a "secret force which holds Europe in its thrall".<sup>24</sup> 'True' socialism's most noted representative was Karl Grün and, naturally, he expressed his profound dislike of the class struggle and the "men of destructive tendencies, the levellers": ie, Marx's party.<sup>25</sup> Objectively, 'true' socialism served to defend the interests of the reactionary petty bourgeoisie: parsons, university professors, country squires and government officials.

## Sense and sensibilities

Fewer still of Marx's detractors show any appreciation of the fact that it is thoroughly misleading to read present-day sensibilities back onto 19th century language. A telling example is Marx's race banter contained in private correspondence with Frederick Engels (amongst others).

In 1862, infuriated by what he saw as a visiting Ferdinand Lassalle's meanness, ostentation and political shallowness, an impoverished Marx wrote to Engels cursing him as a "Jewish nigger".<sup>26</sup> Needless to say, such rages cooled. Given news of Lassalle's untimely death, just two years later, Marx expressed his "great sorrow" to Lassalle's lover, Sophie von Hatzfeldt: Lassalle "was one of the people by whom I set great store". He went on to compare him to a triumphant "Achilles".<sup>27</sup>

Paul Lafargue, his future son-in-law, got called his "medical Creole".<sup>28</sup> Marx was a possessive father. He urged Lafargue to curb his "Creole temperament" till after his marriage with Laura. Within the Marx household Lafargue was also called the "African". Such references were not a sign of prejudice, but were "couched in affectionate and joking terms and were seen as a source of amusement, not concern".<sup>29</sup> Not that any of this seems to have offended Lafargue. He went on to be one of the leaders of the French Workers Party (an implicitly Marxist organisation). Again in terms of race language, when fellow socialist Daniel De Leon asked him about his origins, Lafargue promptly replied: "I am proudest of my negro extraction."<sup>30</sup>

Because of his dark complexion and wild hair, Marx's closest friends and family nicknamed him "Moor" - a racial tag he happily embraced. True, Marx, to his discredit, suffered a brief infatuation with Pierre Trémaux and his now totally obscure book, *The origins and transformation of man and other beings* (1865). He momentarily credited this work of biological racism as a "very significant advance over Darwin".<sup>31</sup> Engels, it should be added, did not share his enthusiasm: Trémaux's "evidence" for his "hypothesis" is nine-tenths based on "erroneous or distorted facts and the remaining 1/10 proves nothing".<sup>32</sup>

As might well be expected, other contemporary Jewish progressives wrote in exactly the same terms as

Marx: eg, Ferdinand Lassalle and Henrich Heine. And the fact of that matter is that Marx was criticising not Judaism alone, but what he saw as a "Judeo-Christian complex". A complex which elevates money-making above every human value, relationship and instinct.<sup>33</sup> Eg, Marx writes: "Judaism reaches its highest point with the perfection of civil society, but it is only in the Christian world that civil society attains perfection."<sup>34</sup>

Needless to say, it is political programme, political statements and political actions which really matter. Leave aside his advocacy of Jewish emancipation. Marx savaged American slavery with a passion, fought to ensure that the British government did not intervene in support of the southern slavocracy in the US civil war and, crucially, through his leadership of the First International, championed the northern cause. Again and again he urged Abraham Lincoln to take up the call for abolition. August Nimtz argues that, in practical terms, Marx and Engels, in conjunction with their co-thinkers in America, had an "enormous influence" on what amounted to the second American revolution.<sup>35</sup> And, famously, in *Capital* volume 1, Marx coined this memorable aphorism: "Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin, where in the black skin it is branded."<sup>36</sup>

When it comes to race-language, Hal Draper convincingly shows that Marx was merely following the near-universal practice of his day. One could make the same point about his male-dominated language too: ie, the word 'man' is used more or less unremotely as synonymous with 'humanity'. Hence, 'Jew' is sometimes treated as being synonymous with 'usury'.<sup>37</sup>

This is a relational join with well documented material roots in the Christian economics of European feudal society. Jews were barred from either working the land or holding the land. Hence, they had no other socio-economic niche open to them apart from trade, brokering and lending money for interest. Jews were, as a result, widely reviled. Peasants, artisans and nobles alike despised them with a passion.

Not that hatred of the Jews began with Christianity, as Jonathan Freedland implies. Seneca considered Jews to be a criminal race. Juvenal thought that Jews existed only to cause trouble for other peoples. Quintilian regarded Jews as a curse to all other peoples. The aristocratic classes in classical antiquity upheld an elitist disdain for any form of economic activity other than that based on agriculture.<sup>38</sup>

However, despite the widespread hatred of Jews, feudal monarchs both protected the Jewish population and exploited them. They were needed for loans and subject to high levels of taxation. Hence the widely acknowledged antagonism between the Jews and feudalism - but likewise the widely acknowledged bond between the Jews and feudalism.

So historically Judaism survived not because of the loyalty of Jews to their religion. No, Judaism survived because Jews constituted a distinct economic caste within the feudal nexus. And, though Jews were subjected to occasional bouts of persecution and ongoing oppressive provisions, they were vital to the working of the system.

And as transcontinental intermediaries between the Muslim east and the Christian west Jewish merchants could amass very considerable fortunes. The Catholic church preached against Jewish usury, but did not demand extermination. That privilege was reserved for pagans and the ever more luxuriant outgrowth of Chris-

tian heresies.

## Proudhon and Bakunin

When it comes to the left, for a hatred of Jews of a kind that really does resemble the Nazis, one must look not to the writings of Marx or Engels, but Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-65). Though never one to let facts get in the way of a good libel, Simon Schama has him echoing Marx's "message": "blood-sucking, whether the physical or the economic kind, was what Jews did."<sup>39</sup> So Marx is held morally responsible for this notorious passage written by Proudhon in his private notebook:

December 26, 1847: Jews. Write an article against this race that poisons everything by sticking its nose into everything without ever mixing with any other people. Demand its expulsion from France with the exception of those individuals married to French women. Abolish synagogues and not admit them to any employment. Demand its expulsion. Finally, pursue the abolition of this religion.

It's not without cause that the Christians called them deicides. The Jew is the enemy of humankind. They must be sent back to Asia or be exterminated. H Heine, A Weill, and others are nothing but secret spies; Rothschild, Crémieux, Marx, Fould, wicked, bilious, envious, bitter, etc, etc, beings who hate us. The Jew must disappear by steel or by fusion or by expulsion. Tolerate the elderly who no longer have children. Work to be done - What the peoples of the Middle Ages hated instinctively I hate upon reflection and irrevocably. The hatred of the Jew like the hatred of the English should be our first article of political faith.

Moreover, the abolition of Judaism will come with the abolition of other religions. Begin by not allocating funds to the clergy and leaving this to religious offerings. And then, a short while later, abolish the religion.<sup>40</sup>

Sad to say, Mikhail Bakunin (1814-76) held closely related views. And note, one again, that Marx is counted amongst the Jews to be hated:

This whole Jewish world, comprising a single exploiting sect, a kind of blood-sucking people, a kind of organic, destructive, collective parasite, going beyond not only the frontiers of states, but of political opinion - this world is now, at least for the most part, at the disposal of Marx, on the one hand, and of Rothschild, on the other ... This may seem strange. What can there be in common between socialism and a leading bank? The point is that authoritarian socialism, Marxist communism, demands a strong centralisation of the state. And, where there is centralisation of the state, there must necessarily be a central bank, and, where such a bank exists, the parasitic Jewish nation, speculating with the labour of the people, will be found.<sup>41</sup>

Not that the followers of either Proudhon or Bakunin, at least to my knowledge, have a record of chanting 'Death to Jews', 'Death to reds', as they burn, beat and massacre. That 'honour' goes to the Orthodox Christian Black Hundreds in Russia; to Polish nationalists, egged on by a bigoted Catholic church, in 1918-38; and to the Nazi Third Reich (blessed by the German Christian Movement and leading Protestant and Catholic bishops alike).

Today, once again, anti-Semitism

is on the rise: in Poland, Hungary, Austria and Germany. Once again "traditional anathemas" are being hurled. George Soros serves as the living embodiment of the *Protocols of the elders of Zion*. He is the "secret force" that explains miserable living standards, mass migration and the spread of corrosive liberal values. But it is Muslim migrants, freedom of expression, women's rights, leftwing activists and workplace conditions which bear the brunt of current attacks.

Meanwhile, Israel, with the full support of Donald Trump, plunges ever further to the right. The conditions are in place for yet another bout of ethnic cleansing of the native Palestinian population. Zionist demonstrators in Jerusalem chant 'Death to Arabs'. And here in Britain the likes of Freedland and Schama play their chosen role in a witch-hunt designed to silence pro-Palestinian voices, demonise the left and prevent a radical Labour government led by Jeremy Corbyn.

The danger is obvious. A British version of Jarosław Kaczyński's Law and Justice Party, Viktor Orbán's illiberal democracy, Heinz-Christian Strache's Freedom Party, Germany's AfD ... and the return of *real* anti-Semitism ●

## Notes

1. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 3, London 1975, p144.
2. Unfortunately, Bauer's *Die Judenfrage* is still unavailable in English. For the German original, see [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=gLUAAAACAAJ&pg=PA61&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=gLUAAAACAAJ&pg=PA61&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false)
3. J Carlebach *Karl Marx and the radical critique of Judaism* London 1978, p147.
4. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 3, London 1975, p151.
5. *Ibid* p151.
6. *Ibid* p153.
7. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 1, London 1975, pp158-59.
8. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 3, London 1975, p168.
9. *Ibid* p174.
10. K Marx *Capital* Vol 1, London 1970, p72.
11. *Ibid* p79.
12. *Ibid* p169.
13. *Ibid* pp169-70.
14. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 1, London 1975, p172.
15. J Freedland, 'For 2,000 years we've linked Jews to money. It's why anti-Semitism is so ingrained' *The Guardian* March 9.
16. J Goldberg, 'Karl Marx's Jew-hating conspiracy theory' *Commentary* March 2018.
17. S Schama, 'The left's problem with Jews has a long and miserable history' *Financial Times* February 21-22 2016.
18. E Fromm *Marx's concept of man* London 2004, p52.
19. *Ibid* p52.
20. See R Fine and P Spenser *Anti-Semitism and the left: return of the Jewish question* Manchester 2017, p37.
21. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 3, London 1975, p170.
22. *Ibid* p172.
23. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 6, New York 1976, p511.
24. H Arendt *The origins of totalitarianism* London 1976, p24.
25. Quoted in J Strassmaier, 'Karl Grün: the confrontation with Marx, 1844-1848' *Dissertations paper 1059*, Chicago 1969, p61: [https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss/1059](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/1059).
26. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 41, London 1985, p389.
27. *Ibid* p563.
28. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 42, Moscow 1987, p303.
29. L Derfler *Paul Lafargue and the founding of French Marxism, 1842-1882* Cambridge MA 1991, p46.
30. *Ibid* p15.
31. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 42, Moscow 1987, p304.
32. *Ibid* p323.
33. H Draper *Karl Marx's theory of revolution* Vol 1, New York 1977, p593.
34. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 3, London 1975, p173.
35. AH Nimtz Marx, *Tocqueville and race in America* Lanham MY 2003, p129.
36. K Marx *Capital* Vol 1, London 1970 p301.
37. See H Draper *Karl Marx's theory of revolution* Vol 1, New York 1977, pp591-608.
38. The best known 20th-century Marxist study of anti-Semitism being Abram Leon's *The Jewish question* (1946). After suffering torture at the hands of his Nazi captors, he died in Auschwitz in September 1944. He was just 26.
39. S Schama, 'The left's problem with Jews has a long and miserable history' *Financial Times* February 21-22 2016.
40. [www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/proudhon/1847/jews.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/proudhon/1847/jews.htm).
41. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail\\_Bakunin#Antisemitism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail_Bakunin#Antisemitism).

**AWL**

# No longer part of left

The AWL is clearly in alliance with Tom Watson and the Labour right, argues **Tony Greenstein**



Gustav Doré 'Dante and Virgil in the ninth circle of Hell' (1861). Traitors are bound in a frozen Lake Cocytus as a punishment for their crimes

The guru and founder of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, Sean Matgamna, recently penned an open letter to Jeremy Corbyn, which marks a final break with the left.<sup>1</sup> In it Matgamna both justifies and supports the current Labour Party witch-hunt. He openly calls for the expulsion of anti-Zionists. If there are any socialists left in the AWL, then they should get out - Matgamna has clearly aligned the AWL with Tom Watson, Jon Lansman and Jonathan Freedland, to say nothing of the Tory press.

Matgamna declares that anti-Zionism, including support for the right of return of Palestinian refugees, "should not be tolerated in a healthy labour movement" and should be made "incompatible with membership of the Labour Party". Only a died-in-the-wool racist could suggest that advocating a multiracial society should be an offence. This is the politics of Enoch Powell, not Karl Marx.

Matgamna attacks the Corbyn left as anti-Semitic. He states that "the Corbyn surge was also an anti-Semitic purge". This is the language of the *Daily Mail*. He describes the hundreds of thousands who joined the Labour Party in the wake of Corbyn's victory as having "brought their political baggage" - ie, anti-Semitism - with them. Most of those who joined Labour in the wake of Corbyn's victory had never belonged to any political party and were motivated above all by disgust at the re-election of the Tories and the austerity politics of New Labour.

Matgamna displays utter contempt for the movement that brought Corbyn to victory in the leadership elections of 2015 and 2016.

Matgamna begins with an innocent question: "How has the crisis that grips the new, new Labour Party on anti-Semitism come about? How has it come to be the major scandal it is now?"

The answer is, of course, obvious. Even before Corbyn was elected he was accused of anti-Semitism. False allegations were made in the *Daily Mail* and *Jewish Chronicle* that Corbyn was an associate of a Holocaust denier Paul Eisen. Attacking Corbyn for 'anti-Semitism' was somewhat easier than denouncing him for opposing, say, the privatisation of the national health service.

The reasons for the vicious and never-ending campaign against Corbyn and the left are not difficult to understand. Corbyn was seen as a threat to the political and economic interests of the establishment. He was anti-nuclear, anti-Nato, anti-imperialist and pro-Palestinian. He was an ally of workers in struggle. To have him as the leader of the major opposition party of the US's closest ally in Europe was unacceptable - not only to Israel, but to the US and British states. The 'anti-Semitism' smears were their answer.

For over 30 years, the AWL (and its forerunner, Socialist Organiser Alliance) was unique for its theory of 'left anti-Semitism'. The AWL refused to accept the most obvious reason for socialists' hostility to the Israeli state: namely that most people

do not like apartheid.

You do not have to be a socialist to understand that anti-Zionism is not about antagonism to Jews, but opposition to racism and colonialism. Israel is a state where a plurality of Israeli Jews support the deportation of Israeli Arabs and where 79% believe that Jews should be given preferential treatment over Arabs.<sup>2</sup> Israel is a state where the right marches to the drumbeat of 'Death to the Arabs' and where Arab villages are demolished in order to make way for Jewish towns. Israel is the only state in the world where Donald Trump is popular. A recent survey by the Pew Research Center found that 94% of Jewish Israelis have a favourable view of the US in general (83% overall).<sup>3</sup>

## Scab

The AWL's obsessions with Israel have been humoured by the rest of the left - treated much as one treats a dotty aunt. However, what in previous times was a quaint oddity has now become totally unacceptable. Where once the AWL's support for imperialism was passed over in awkward silence, today we have to call a spade a spade and say that the AWL has become a scab organisation in the service of the right. It is not the first group to have taken this path: eg, the Revolutionary Communist Party.

The AWL's politics have come full circle. What was reactionary externally has infected its domestic politics. Marxism teaches that in time theory and practice align with each other. Nowhere was this truer than with the socialist Zionists, who,

when they began the colonisation of Palestine, abandoned their 'socialism', as it was incompatible with their day-to-day relations with the natives. Instead they chose 'constructivism' - the building up of the proto-Jewish state thanks to the capital of the bourgeoisie.

In the words of David Hacoheh, an important figure in Labor Zionism:

I had to fight my friends on the issue of Jewish socialism, to defend the fact that I would not accept Arabs in my trade union, the Histadrut; to defend preaching to housewives that they should not buy at Arab stores; to defend the fact that we stood guard at orchards to prevent Arab workers from getting jobs there ... to pour kerosene on Arab tomatoes; to attack Jewish housewives in the markets and smash Arab eggs they had bought ... to buy dozens of dunums<sup>4</sup> from an Arab is permitted, but to sell - god forbid - one Jewish dunum to an Arab is prohibited; to take Rothschild, the incarnation of capitalism, as a socialist and to name him the 'benefactor' - to do all that was not easy.<sup>5</sup>

The Histadrut's policy of Jewish labour - *Kibbush Ha'avodah* - meant a boycott of Arab labour. Labor Zionism opposed solidarity between Arab and Jewish workers in favour of unity with Jewish employers.

(Those socialist Zionists who chose socialism over Zionism were a minority. Those who prioritised

work with the Arab working class formed the Palestine Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party (MPS) and became anti-Zionists. As a result they came into conflict with both the British colonial forces, who deported many of them with the active connivance of Histadrut and the Zionist leadership.)

So it is with the AWL. Over 30 years ago it abandoned anti-Zionism and support for a democratic, secular state in Palestine in favour of a two-state solution. This meant giving positive support to Israel as a Jewish state. The AWL had become a pro-Zionist organisation, yet for reasons of nostalgia still called itself Trotskyist despite its support for the occupation of Iraq, the CIA-backed mujahidin and America's war in Afghanistan, and partition in Ireland.<sup>6</sup> The AWL has consistently opposed any solidarity with the Palestinians. In the trade unions it vehemently opposed boycott, divestment and sanctions in Unison, the University and College Union, amongst others.

Life has not been easy for the AWL ever since Jeremy Corbyn was elected as leader. On the one hand, it could hardly be seen to oppose him or the movement that brought him to power, but, on the other hand, it found support for the Palestinians and opposition to Zionism galling. This led to an uneasy tension. In Momentum it supported Jon Lansman's removal of anti-Zionist Jackie Walker as vice-chair in 2016, only for Momentum owner Jon Lansman to then turn on the AWL itself.

The AWL also found itself the target of the witch-hunt under Labour's previous general secretary, Iain McNicol. This reached farcical proportions in 2016, when Owen Smith denounced the AWL's "anti-Semitism"! Quite understandably the AWL leadership was furious. After having done their best to ingratiate themselves with the right over Zionism,<sup>7</sup> they had become victims of the 'anti-Semitism' attacks on the crude basis that 'left equals anti-Semitic'!

Soon after Corbyn's victory against Smith I debated with the AWL's Daniel Randall, who had himself just been expelled from Labour. Randall conceded that

it is undeniably the case that the issue of anti-Semitism has been instrumentalised and manipulated by some on the Labour right and their supporters in the press in order to undermine Corbyn and the left ... Owen Smith accused us of anti-Semitism on national television, so it is very clear that there is a certain process going on there, a certain instrumentalisation and manipulation of an issue for cynical factional ends.<sup>8</sup>

## Oasis

To the AWL Israel is synonymous with being Jewish. It shares the fantasy of Israel as a democratic oasis - an island of toleration and civilisation in a barbarous Middle East. It is Ronald Reagan's 'city upon a hill' transplanted to Tel Aviv. The AWL is engaged in "A love-in with a mythical Israel".<sup>9</sup>

Of course, there is another Israel. It is the Israel of Geoff Halper's *War against the people*<sup>10</sup> - a militarised state that trained the Guatemalan army of Rios Montt, as it murdered up to 200,000 Mayan Indians. It is the Israel which today is supplying weapons to the genocidal army of Myanmar in its war against the Rohingya people. It is the state which was the closest ally of apartheid South Africa and the death squad regimes of Latin America. This is the AWL's golden state. As Dr Verwoerd, the South African premier, acknowledged, "The Jews took Israel from the Arabs after the Arabs had lived there for a thousand years. Israel, like South Africa, is an apartheid state."<sup>11</sup>

None of this penetrates the minds of the AWL. Matgamna is not ignorant: he is indifferent. Like the colonists that Ahad Ha'am warned against in *The truth from the land of Israel* (1891), Matgamna cannot see the Palestinians. They are invisible, caricature Muslims and Islamic fanatics (he ignores Palestinian Christians). Matgamna offers instead a sop: "There is an element of supporting the Palestinians, championing their rights which Israel often tramples on ..."

Palestinian oppression is merely incidental to the AWL. What matters is the survival of the Israeli state. Matgamna concedes that "There is a lot to criticise and condemn in Israeli policy", but his only example is Israel's "opposition to a Palestinian state". Israel's racist treatment of the Palestinians is irrelevant. Israel is historical recompense for the Nazi genocide. No matter that Zionist colonisation predated the holocaust and that it was the Nazis, not the Palestinians, who were responsible for it.

Matgamna calls himself a socialist and he is probably sincere - after all, Ramsay MacDonald also believed he was a socialist. What is clear is that Matgamna is Islamophobic, since the only alternative he can contemplate to a two-state solution is an Arab Islamic state - Arabs being incapable of democratic politics

(that is reserved for Europeans). The AWL is in a long line of pro-imperialist 'socialist' groups.

## Racist state

The French Revolution of 1789 marked a break from the ethno-religious state. The French Revolution held that the nation-state consisted of all of those who lived in it. Henceforth religion and state were separate. Religion was irrelevant to one's civil and political rights. In the words of Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre, a deputy in the constituent assembly "To the Jews as a nation nothing, to the Jews as individuals everything." France was the first state to grant Jewish emancipation, but Zionism was linked to a hatred of emancipation, which for it signalled assimilation. It took Britain a further 69 years before such emancipation allowed Lionel de Rothschilds to take his seat in the UK parliament.<sup>12</sup>

Israel is a throwback to the Europe of the 1930s. The objection to the Israeli state is not this or that act of discrimination, but to a state not of its own citizens, but of all Jews, wherever they live in the world. That is why officially there is no Israeli nationality.<sup>13</sup> As the recently passed Jewish Nation-State Law makes clear, only Jews have national rights in Israel. Its non-Jewish inhabitants are resident aliens. Even Arabs born in Israel are regarded as tolerated guests, which is why half the Arab villages are unrecognised: ie, liable to be demolished at any time.

Because Israel is a Jewish state, the chief rabbi of Safed, a paid state official, can issue an edict forbidding the renting of apartments to Arabs and be backed up by dozens of rabbis.<sup>14</sup> It is why hundreds of Jewish residents of Afula can demonstrate for days in protest at the sale of a single home to an Arab.<sup>15</sup> In Israel there are hundreds of Jewish communities where Arabs are barred and the Admissions Committee Law gives them the right to keep Arabs out.<sup>16</sup>

Yet to Matgamna Israel as a Jewish state is entitled to treat non-Jews as aliens. He has no complaint about discrimination against Arabs. His only concern is with what he calls "absolute anti-Zionism", which is "barely distinguishable from anti-Semitism". I confess I was absolutely opposed to apartheid in South Africa, but that did not make me anti-white.

Matgamna does not pretend that 'anti-Semitism' is not about Israel. During the past three years the Labour right has run with false 'anti-Semitism' and if you question their claims then that is proof of your own 'anti-Semitism'. An Orwellian Catch-22. When the Zionists and the Labour right demanded that the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism be accepted, they stated that for them 'anti-Semitism' meant opposition to Israel as a "racist endeavour".

Luciana Berger MP's Constituency Labour Party wanted to deselect her, but this had nothing to do with her being Jewish. She was a Blairite parachuted into a working class Liverpool seat and would not commit to remaining within Labour. Yet when the CLP passed a motion of no confidence in Berger, deputy leader Tom Watson called it the "worst day of shame in party's 120-year history" - presumably more shameful than the war in Iraq, the deportation of asylum-seekers, the 1968 Kenyan Asian Immigration Act, etc.

But Matgamna agrees:

Nobody who watched and listened to Luciana Berger's speech explaining why she left the Labour Party will doubt the sincerity of her account of the anti-Semitism that has driven her and the others, or most of them, out of the party.

Matgamna and the AWL's parroting of Watson's lies is shameful - there is not the slightest evidence that Berger was the subject of anti-Semitism within her CLP. The AWL's theory of 'left anti-Semitism' has effectively led it to support the Blairite right.

A person who *has* been the recipient of much more racial abuse is Diane Abbott. Yet, whereas six people have been charged for abusing Berger, no-one has ever been arrested for abusing Diane. Yes there is institutional racism, but it is in the Metropolitan Police, not the Labour Party.

Matgamna's two-state 'solution' is both reactionary and impossible. In the words of Israel's deputy foreign minister, Tzipi Hotovely: "This land is ours. All of it is ours. We did not come here to apologise for that."

## UnMarxist

Matgamna's article rests entirely on assertion. It consists of windy rhetoric, bile and frothing at the mouth. A Marxist or class analysis it is not. Evidence is conspicuous by its absence. Matgamna asserts:

There is a long tradition in much of the Jewish community of support and involvement with the Labour Party. To the leaders of the Jewish community and many Jews ... the 'left' in the party, or some of it, must appear as possible future anti-Jewish pogromists, as has much of the would-be 'revolutionary' left for a long time now.

Anyone who considers themselves a socialist would ask which sections of the "Jewish community" Matgamna is referring to? Matgamna treats the whole Jewish community as one.

The scurrilous allegation of socialists being "future anti-Jewish pogromists" is the product of Matgamna's fetid imagination. It is venom masquerading as an antidote. Any Marxist worth their salt would ask why and when the "long tradition" of Jewish involvement in the labour movement came to an end. They would ask what the sociological changes in British Jewry are. Matgamna's inability to make a serious case comes from a tradition of 'left' denunciations that has more to do with Stalinism and the Workers Revolutionary Party, which regularly denounced their opponents as spies and agents.

Any serious analysis would begin by asking when the decline in Jewish support for the Labour Party began. As far back as 2014 *The Daily Telegraph* ran with a story about Ed Miliband "losing the Jewish vote". The class composition of the Jewish community had changed and so had its involvement in the labour movement. A Marxist would ask what political effect has the growing socio-economic prosperity of the Jewish population had on its political allegiances? Matgamna is the poor man's Nick Cohen.

Before the 1960s the majority of the Jewish population in London lived in the East End. I remember as a child going for a meal in Blooms, a popular kosher restaurant, and waiting in a long queue. In 1996 the restaurant closed. Why? Because "from the 1960s onwards, Whitechapel's Jewish population declined, as people made their money and moved out to the suburbs of Golders Green and Ilford".<sup>17</sup>

William Rubinstein, a past president of the Jewish Historical Society, wrote:

... the rise of western Jewry to unparalleled affluence and high status has led to the near disappearance of a Jewish proletariat of any size: indeed the Jews may become the first ethnic group in

history without a working class of any size ... it has made Marxism, and other radical doctrines, irrelevant to the socio-economic bases of western Jewry, and increasingly unattractive to most Jews.<sup>18</sup>

Dr Geoffrey Alderman, a Jewish academic, has stated: "By 1961, over 40% of Anglo-Jewry was located in the upper two social classes, whereas these categories accounted for less than 20% of the general population."<sup>19</sup> Alderman charted the political shift in British Jewry. In 1945, for example, Phil Piratin was elected as a communist MP in the heavily Jewish constituency of Mile End, but by the 1960s many Jews were becoming strong supporters of the Conservative Party. Class, not Israel, explained this shift in Jewish voting patterns.

Matgamna refers to the "Jewish leaders". As Audrey Gillan noted in 2006,

The Jewish Board of Deputies advised Jews to stay away [from Cable Street in 1936]. The *Jewish Chronicle* warned: "Jews are urgently warned to keep away from the route of the Blackshirt march and from their meetings."<sup>20</sup>

Today, however, those "leaders" in the Board of Deputies are happy to mobilise against the 'anti-Semitism' - ie, the anti-Zionism - of the left. Matgamna asserts that anti-Zionism derives from Stalinist anti-Semitism. On the contrary, it derived from the new left's rejection of Stalinism in the wake of support for the Vietnam war and liberation struggles.

As part of his racist demonisation of the Palestinians Matgamna echoes Zionist propaganda, when he rejects the right of return of those expelled from Israel in the past: "Only a small fraction of those six million are refugees." Matgamna joins hands with Donald Trump and Binyamin Netanyahu in denying the existence in any numbers of Palestinian refugees from Israel.

Matgamna justifies the *nakba* - the expulsion of the Palestinians - by comparing them with ethnic German refugees expelled from eastern Europe at the end of the war. There is no comparison. The Palestinian refugees were the victims of Zionist settler colonialism, which sought to create a racially exclusive Jewish majority state, whereas the Sudeten Germans had acted as a fifth column for the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1938. In 1935 the pro-Nazi Sudeten German Party won over 60% of the vote. While, of course, socialists should have opposed the mass deportation of ethnic Germans, their expulsion from Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia was at least understandable, given the role a majority of these communities had played in the Nazi occupation and in the *Volksbund* militias, which worked with the Nazi occupation forces in helping deport the Jews and fight the resistance.

Matgamna claims that "The Jewish nation that won independence in 1948 was built up around Jews indigenous to the area." In other words, he subscribes to the racial myth that Jewish settlers are 'returning' to Israel rather than dispossessing the indigenous population. Jews constituted a fraction of the original population of Palestine. It is true that by the mid-19th century Jerusalem had a majority of ultra-Orthodox Jews from eastern Europe. However, these Jews were mostly *anti-Zionist*. They were known as the Old Yishuv. Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first president, wrote disparagingly about them in his autobiography.<sup>21</sup>

As part of his justification for the *nakba*, Matgamna refers to the myth that the Arabs aimed to "drive the Jews into the sea". As Ilan Pappé has documented, the only people thrown

into the sea were the Palestinians of Haifa in their panic to flee the shelling.<sup>22</sup>

What marks the writings of Matgamna on Palestine is his sheer ignorance. The AWL's support for Israel and Zionism relies on nothing more than Israeli *hasbara* (propaganda). Matgamna caricatures supporters of Palestine, when he says they believe that "Arab and Islamic states that want to put [Israel] out of existence should be supported". The reality is that Israel is surrounded by a belt of reactionary Arab states - from Egypt to Saudi Arabia (with which it has friendly relations). Just as opponents of apartheid in South Africa had no illusions in the surrounding black states, so no supporter of the Palestinians seriously believes that Zionism will end as a result of armies of the corrupt, pro-American Arab states, which are also a product of imperialism.

Referring to the Ken Livingstone affair Matgamna mentions "the nonsense ... about Zionist-Nazi affinity". What he does not do is explain why it is nonsense. Zionist historian David Cesarani cites how "The efforts of the Gestapo are oriented to promoting Zionism as much as possible ... Zionists saw the [Nazi] pressure towards segregation as the fulfilment of their assertion that the Jews were a separate nation with no place in Germany."<sup>23</sup>

The AWL's rhetoric about a progressive imperialism disguises its ignorance of Zionism and Israel. Nothing Matgamna writes contributes to our understanding of neo-colonialism and imperialism today. Israel is a Jewish state representing the 'Jewish nation' both inside and outside Israel. Yet Matgamna can only see the liberation of Palestine as leading to the creation of an Arab-Islamic state. This is part of his racist, orientalist perspective, in which the Arabs are backward and infested with religion - unlike Israel, which alone amongst western nations forbids civil marriage.

Today the AWL's domestic politics have caught up with its imperialist politics and the result is that it has joined hands with Tom Watson and Luciana Berger. We should recognise the AWL as such and treat it as we would other sections of the Labour right ●

## Notes

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**LEFT**

# Follow my leader

Whatever happened to the democratic exchange of ideas? William Sarsfield reports on the CLPD's March 9 AGM



There were good things to take from this year's annual general meeting of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy in Birmingham's Council House. The 200 or so attendance was excellent. The fighting mood was encouraging. There is confidence about the next round of elections in the party.

The problem is the impoverished political perspective of the CLPD's leading lights - sadly something shared with most left organisations, inside Labour and out. A problem encapsulated by the twin track policy they seek to impose.

First, that support for Jeremy Corbyn (and, by implication, other core left leaders around him, including John McDonnell) must be *uncritical*, if it is to have any operative content. This position was put with useful bluntness in the opening lines of the executive's motion 1 (which we never got the chance to discuss - see below). It called on comrades to give "Full support to the party leader at all times".

Farcically, I did hear some comrades trying to pass this off as a call for the membership to constitute itself as a sort of political comfort blanket for Corbyn - a collective cuddle for the rank and file. Certainly, there is no argument that he has taken some very unpleasant personal kickings from the capitalist media and the treacherous majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party. This 'explanation' is desperate, however. Clearly, we were being counselled to provide *uncritical and unconditional* support to Corbyn and the political concessions he makes - the measures he judges necessary to pursue the chimera of a pacified PLP right.

A couple of amendments to this terrible formulation were submitted, one emphasising that support for Corbyn should be predicated on his working within the remit of conference decisions and the other, politically much better amendment, which made support for Corbyn conditional on him fighting for "the thorough democratisation of the Labour Party and society" and emphasising the basic right for members to "criticise him when and

where necessary - for example, over his silence when it comes to the witch-hunt against his supporters in the Labour Party". A debate on this would have been very useful and, no doubt, would have revealed some serious differences. Precisely for this reason, the organisers ensured that there was no time to have this key issue aired at all.

Second, the mantra came from the top table, as well as the floor, that the *only* priority that mattered was the achievement of a "Labour Party government led by Jeremy Corbyn" - no caveats about the political content of that government's programme, the compromises it might offer to pacify the right wing, its room to provide meaningful gains for the working class, etc. In the absence of a debate on these themes, the conference's discussions around this mantra of the 'next Labour government' became both apolitical and ahistorical. It was almost as if we have enforced on ourselves a sort of voluntary amnesia, where we forget the actual history of past Labour governments - their attacks on our class, authoritarian restrictions on democratic rights, support for brutal imperialist wars, etc.

The bulk of the day's proceedings were taken up with reports from the CLPD's various working groups. These were of widely varying degrees of political nous and quality, it must be said. For instance, the women's group presented an interesting feedback on its impressive record of work, even though I felt that its orientation was very 'bureaucracy-centric'. There was too much emphasis on structural/legalistic initiatives as avenues towards women's liberation rather than the question of struggle and the role of the working class. The comrades spoke of increasing "diversity" and the problems of "low-income" women. I was put in mind of the Women Against Pit Closures movement in 1984-85: their energy, anger and brilliantly innovative methods of struggle and solidarity. Surely that should be a model for us as socialists, rather than the route to women's freedom being through 'breaking glass ceilings' and shimmying up the corporate ladder?

**It cannot be right to support someone regardless of whether they are right or wrong**

**Stephen Marks of JVL hammered the witchhunt and called for politics independent of both Corbyn and McDonnell**



Councillor Yasmine Dar was billed to speak "on national executive committee goings-on". Instead, the comrade delivered a very high-tempo, slightly garbled contribution, the bulk of which consisted of telling us that she and other left comrades on the governing body were there not to "put forward *our* views - we put forward *your* views". In fact "*Our* responses are *your* responses," she told us at one point. Quite how she or any other leftwinger on the NEC could aggregate the views of the couple of hundred in Birmingham - let alone the hundreds of thousands in the party at large - remains a mystery to me.

## Best speech

By far the best speech of the day was the last, made by Stephen Marks,<sup>1</sup> a Jewish Voice for Labour comrade from Oxford, who was co-reporting from the national constitutional committee (which deals with all disciplinary matters that the NEC feels it cannot resolve). While the comrade explained that he was constrained by some legal considerations, he certainly was not constrained by politeness. He spoke with real passion and anger about the witch-hunt in the party. He ripped into the existing procedures as not fit for purpose; called for a "no leaks" stricture to be rigorously imposed on the right wing of the PLP - weasels who go scuttling to the press with privileged information<sup>2</sup>; he was nearly drowned out by cheers when he stated that Tom Watson should be told to "shut up"; and - most important of all, in my view - called for comrades to formulate an "independent position to Corbyn and McDonnell" on key issues like this.

Undoubtedly, it was a stirring way to end proceedings, but the point was that we had not even touched on the key business we needed to debate and decide on - the secretary's report and the policy motions. Throughout, the various chairs bumped other things up the agenda, in front of these two key items. This toxic culture of regarding debates and public differences between comrades - even if the divisions are sharp and heated at times - is anti-democratic to its core. It is a crippling weakness that comrades suffer from.

At the start of the afternoon session we were advised by the chair that the executive committee (largely the same as the 2018 version, I believe) had met and produced a feeble motion of mealy-mouthed 'support' for Chris Williamson MP. This reads:

1. CLPD exposes all forms of anti-Semitism and racism.
2. CLPD notes the personal statement from Chris Williamson MP.
3. CLPD does not believe Chris Williamson MP should be expelled from the Labour Party.
4. CLPD will circulate the statement at [bit.ly/dontexpelchriswilliamson](http://bit.ly/dontexpelchriswilliamson).<sup>3</sup>

Err, that's it ...

I have no doubt that, if conference had been allowed the time and space to amend this pathetic 'solidarity' message, we would have ended up with a far angrier, harder position being adopted. By the same token, I am sure that if the comrades in Birmingham had also been able to discuss the motion calling for critical distance from Corbyn - let alone the icon-smashing call for a new, Marxist influenced clause four - there would have been outrage, sharp exchanges and hard lines drawn between different positions.

In other words, the CLPD's executive committee seemed determined to starve us of the meat and drink of politics ●

## Notes

1. Stephen Marks was (ostensibly) the bone of contention that caused the 2018 bust-up between Momentum and the CLPD when - under their mutual flag of convenience, the Centre Left Grassroots Alliance - they fell out pretty spectacularly over the composition of the slate for the NCC. Momentum's owner, Jon Lansman, opined that "the Jewish community will not tolerate a JVL representative" - ie, Stephen Marks.
2. My opinion of them, not his!
3. The CLPD officers were also too quick to circulate what was reported to be "recent advice" from general secretary Jenny Formby, urging CLPs not to discuss the Chris Williamson fiasco. It appears, however, that an overly keen London regional organiser took it upon herself to copy a paragraph from an old email of Formby's and send it out as a strong steer from Labour Party HQ. Amongst other organisations and individuals, the CLPD too added to the manufactured confusion by distributing the false information.

# UNIONS



Peter Gregson: hardly an anti-Semite

## Reinstate Peter Gregson

The use of the IHRA 'definition' of anti-Semitism to expel a union activist marks a new low, writes David Shearer of Labour Party Marxists

On March 6, a shameful precedent was set when it was confirmed that Peter Gregson, a GMB shop steward in Edinburgh, has been expelled from his union for his political opinions.

In September 2018 Gregson launched a petition for Labour members, which has been signed by almost 1,600 people, declaring Israel to be "a racist endeavour". This was, of course, intended as a direct challenge to Labour's adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance so-called 'definition' of anti-Semitism, which lists precisely this expression among its 'examples', along with six other forms of criticisms of the Israeli state. According to the IHRA, all seven such examples are 'anti-Semitic'.

His appeal against expulsion was heard on March 5, and the following day he was informed by the GMB's central executive council that it had been rejected. The CEC letter states: "whilst you have every right to your freedom of speech, ... you continued to post online and send emails against the decisions and policies set out by the governing authorities of the union ..." In other words, "your freedom of speech" doesn't apply when we tell you to shut up.

Gregson comments: "I have been expelled for breaching the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, for I failed to 'cease and desist' in promoting 'anti-Semitic views and material', when I was told to by the GMB Scotland secretary ... and am therefore in breach of the rulebook."

I will return to the details of the case below, but first it is necessary to outline the reasons why this decision is particularly outrageous. The aim of a union is to organise all workers

in a particular sphere of employment, irrespective of their political views. Whereas a party is obviously defined by its politics, and clearly must have the right to decide which particular political opinions are compatible with its overall trajectory, that most certainly does not apply to unions.

The reason for this is obvious. While we must aim to win over the vast majority of union members to principled working class politics, the necessity for such political organisation will become clearer as a result of workers initially accepting their common class interests, as opposed to those of employers and the bourgeoisie in general. So unions must not vet members for their political opinions: it is to be accepted that these will vary enormously and - especially in the current climate, where forms of populist nationalism are on the rise - a minority of workers will have racist and even fascist views.

However, these should only result in disciplinary action if it is clear that they have impacted directly on union organisation. If, for example, a member of a far-right grouping was elected as a local union official and began discriminating against black or other members, that person would have to be removed from their post (preferably through the actions of the local membership). But expulsion must only be implemented as a last resort - if, say, a member, whether as a result of their political views or not, attempts to sabotage agreed union actions and is clearly working against the interests of the overall membership.

It goes without saying that this is not such a case - to put it mildly - with Peter Gregson. The rightwing leadership of the GMB is in reality

importing the Labour witch-hunt into the union - it adopted the IHRA 'definition' itself immediately following its adoption by Labour's national executive on September 4, so that now, in the union as well as the party, anything but the mildest criticism of Israel is declared to be "anti-Semitic".

In addition to spreading the message that Israel is a "racist endeavour", Gregson was also found guilty of breaching another IHRA 'example': "Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the holocaust". He admits that he has accused Israel (as opposed to Jews) of "exaggerating the holocaust" and quotes the former Israeli minister of education, Shulamit Aloni, who said in an interview: "Well, it's a trick - we always use it. When from Europe somebody is criticising Israel, then we bring up the holocaust ..." But Gregson adds: "I most definitely do not accuse [Israel] of exaggerating the numbers - six million Jews died in the crime of the century."

Just for good measure, Gregson - who is also "under investigation" by the Labour Party - was found "guilty of a direct attack on one of the GMB's employees". No, not a physical attack - he had "singled out" for criticism Rhea Wolfson as the person most likely to have initiated the disciplinary action against him. He stated (correctly) that Wolfson, a leading member of the Jewish Labour Movement, is "an avowed Zionist". As a result he was accused of "targeting" her "because she is Jewish".

It goes without saying that, while Gregson is not anti-Semitic, he can certainly be criticised for

his eccentric politics - in the words of Jewish Voice for Labour, he is a "loose cannon". For example, he admits that his initiative can be described as a "death-wish" petition, in that it is "sticking two fingers up to the NEC" by "brazenly breaking the IHRA rule". He adds: "It is important now for more of us to come out and openly breach the IHRA, whilst never being anti-Semitic in the true sense of the word."

Such brazen defiance is a matter of tactics, of course, but it must be said that in current circumstances it is not exactly a wise move. Firstly, the forces opposing the witch-hunt are extremely weak and are hardly in a good position to mount a successful challenge of this sort. Secondly, the "death-wish" petition does the right's work for it by identifying hundreds of Labour members as easy targets.

Gregson also makes himself a target through his inappropriate choice of words. For instance, he has claimed that "Jews" in Britain have "leverage" because of what he describes as a general feeling of guilt over the holocaust. When this clumsy phrasing was criticised by JVL - surely it is the Zionists, not undifferentiated "Jews", who would try to turn any such sentiment to their advantage? - he was not prepared to admit his error or change his wording. His response is: "... we suffer in the UK from holocaust guilt. Thus, all Jews have leverage, whether they want it or not, because all Jews were victims."

However, we must not let this hold us back from defending him. He is a victim of a rightwing witch-hunt, aimed at defeating the left and regaining control of the party for the Blairites ●

## What we fight for

■ Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

■ There exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.

■ Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members should have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

■ Communists oppose all imperialist wars and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question—ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.

■ Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'.

■ The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.

■ Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.

■ Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote.

■ We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.

■ Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.

■ Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.

■ Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin's Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.

■ Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism—a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

# weekly worker

**Paradoxically  
sanctions  
enrich  
supposed  
targets**

## Raking in fortunes

It is workers who have been hit the most, writes **Yassamine Mather**, while those close to the regime have benefited enormously

**W**e all remember Hillary Clinton's promise of "targeted sanctions" against Iran's Islamic republic. They were deployed to 'moderate' the Shia government's regional policies, as well as its internal human rights record. Of course, anyone with any knowledge of the regime in Tehran would have told the then secretary of state how futile such policies were.

We knew that, given the existing political and economic structures in Iran, sanctions would enrich those in power, while creating misery, through food and medical shortages, for the majority. Yet none of us could have predicted the extent to which those associated with the government of the populist, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (the supporter of the poor and disinherited!), were benefiting from sanctions - profiting to the tune of millions of dollars.

Last week in a trial in Tehran we got a glimpse of what had occurred under the 'targeted', 'smart' sanctions of the Obama era. The latest government drive to root out corruption - concentrating on events that occurred under the previous government, not the current one - has revealed a scandal which, according to the Iranian judiciary, involved the theft of some \$7.4 billion.

The case involves 14 executives and board members of Iran's Petrochemical Commercial Company (PCC), going back to the last years of the second term of Ahmadinejad's presidency (2010-13). Most of the suspects are in custody in Iran, while three who now reside abroad and are being tried in absentia.

The charges read out in court involve "disrupting Iran's economic system" by profiteering from the multi-tiered exchange rate. According to a senior judiciary official, who addressed the hearing on March 7, "Despite numerous letters [from] the minister of oil ... to the defendants that the foreign currency proceeds must be paid in full ... the defendants did not pay any attention ... and seized a portion of the foreign currency."

In other words, they were involved in circumventing sanctions when selling petrochemical products and in the process they embezzled a percentage of the profits. A spokesman for Iran's prosecutor general explained on March 9:

The suspects converted the foreign currency into Iranian currency before returning it to the government, making a profit in the process. They kept some of the foreign currency, allegedly selling it for up to three times the official rate on the black market.

Of course, this case is not unique. We already know of a similar one - that of billionaire businessman Babak Zanjani, who is currently in prison awaiting execution.

All this is a familiar story. The



**Mehdi Khalaji: doing very nicely, thank you very much**

immediate effect of sanctions is a dramatic fall in the rate of exchange and Iran's currency continues to fall, as new sanctions are imposed. The current administration under president Hassan Rowhani relies on the export of oil and petrochemical products and often the deals negotiated open the way to uncontrolled black-market trading.

As with most other industries, Iran's petrochemical companies have been privatised and inevitably those close to various factions of the Iranian religious state have benefited. Managers are often nominated by the president and his cabinet, and also involve influential MPs in the *majles* (Iranian parliament), as well as the Revolutionary Guards militia.

The case of the Iranian PCC is getting widespread attention, mainly because of the sordid tale of one of those being tried in absentia - you couldn't make it up. The controversial figure involved is Marjan Sheikholeslami Aleagha, who is currently in the United States. She was apparently a supporter of 'reformists' in the regime, but switched to support for Ahmadinejad, once he was in power. She now lives in the US and is married to Mehdi Khalaji, a 'senior researcher' in the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP). The institute is by all accounts a rightwing, pro-

war, pro-sanctions set-up - it was established in 1985 by, amongst others, Martin Indyk, an Australian-trained academic and former deputy director of research for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. According to an article by David Ottoway, published in 1989, "Indyk described the think tank as friendly to Israel, but doing credible research on the Middle East in a realistic and balanced way."<sup>1</sup>

In December 2003, professor Rashid Alkhalidi, director of Columbia University's Middle East Institute, criticised WINEP in an interview with *Al Jazeera*, claiming it represents "the fiercest of the enemies of the Arabs and the Muslims", and described it as the "most important Zionist propaganda tool in the United States".<sup>2</sup>

As for Khalaji, Iranians know him as one of the most ardent advocates of sanctions! In recent months he has promoted 'discussions' with the pretender to the Iranian throne, Reza Pahlavi. In a number of BBC Persian TV debates, where he was promoting sanctions, I have argued against his position. And now, of course, Farsi social media is inundated with comments about his political stance and his wife's role in the current scandal.

According to documents presented to last week's court hearing, Marjan Sheikholeslami transferred proceeds

from sales of Iranian petrochemical products to the accounts of her trading companies in Turkey, profiting by a cool \$9 million.<sup>3</sup>

Another individual facing corruption charges is Reza Hamzelou, who was managing director of the Iranian PCC in 2010-11. It is now alleged that in the autumn of 2011, as new economic sanctions went into effect, he was given a new role: to bypass them by selling petrochemicals on the black market.

By the time all this was happening, I had already written extensively on the consequences of the US's 'targeted' sanctions. According to the theocratic government's own statistics, by 2009 one third of the state assets had been privatised (value: \$37 billion, out of \$110 billion), and 78% of such privatisation occurred under Ahmadinejad, who was following the International Monetary Fund's model for 'structural adjustment'. In many ways, this dismantling of the public sector resembles what happened in Russia and other east European states in the 1990s, when vast sections of the economy were turned over to oligarchs at bargain-basement prices. In Iran it was the Revolutionary Guards Corps of Iran (RGCI) and its subsidiaries, followed by individuals associated with pro-Ahmadinejad factions of the regime, who benefited from relentless privatisation. In this

period tens of billions of dollars in state assets were handed out to the RGCI in secret deals. The sanctions were supposed to be 'targeted' at the Revolutionary Guards, close associates of the supreme leader and senior clerics, but, because these people own everything, they were the *least* affected.

Of course, it would be a complete mistake to believe that anything has changed in Iran. Now that the country faces a new wave of sanctions imposed by the Trump administration, it would be foolish to think that with the departure of Ahmadinejad the economy is more transparent or that those associated with the Rowhani government are not involved in sanctions-busting, the black market and dodgy currency deals. As before, the ones who are suffering from sanctions are mainly the workers - for instance, those who have lost their jobs, as companies incapable of importing basic raw materials go bust; those who have not been paid their wages for months; civil servants who have suffered pay cuts; patients who cannot get the medicine they need or receive treatment in hospitals where basic surgical equipment cannot be repaired.

Next time someone tells me about corruption in Iran, I will remind them that the money made from it manages to find its way out of the country. So how come western banks and financial institutions - which in the two years since Trump's presidency began have, in order to avoid US-imposed penalties, blocked the accounts of thousands of Iranian law-abiding citizens in their searching for 'money laundering' - have failed to detect millions in dirty money sent from Iran to Canada and the US?

Next time anyone advocates sanctions against Iran, they should be reminded of a certain Mehdi Khalaji - he also advocates US sanctions, while his wife has been raking in millions as a direct result of them ●

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