Leaked UK Labour Party anti-Semitism report: A filthy witch-hunt exposed

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A leaked 860-page investigation, "The work of the Labour Party's Governance and Legal Unit (GLU) in relation to antisemitism, 2014-2019," paints a devastating picture of the filthy operations of the Blairite right. In doing so, it underscores the politically criminal role played by former party leader Jeremy Corbyn in shielding these vicious anti-socialist and anti-working-class forces from demands for their expulsion.

Written by Corbyn's allies, ostensibly to show that a "hyper-factional atmosphere" undermined the party's response to anti-Semitism complaints, the document proves that the party apparatus waged a relentless, reactionary campaign against its own membership and that Corbyn went along with this witch-hunt.

The report draws on roughly 10,000 emails, thousands of messages exchanged on the party's internal messaging service, and 400,000 words of messages in two WhatsApp groups for senior party staff. As hundreds of thousands of workers and youth signed up to the Labour Party, with illusions that Corbyn would lead a fight against austerity and war, staff at Labour's head office were running, in their own words, a "Stasi system" to purge left-wing sentiment.

Anatomy of a conspiracy

The contents of the document confirm the historically derived analysis made by the Socialist Equality Party in 2015 following Corbyn's election as Labour leader:

> "No one can seriously propose that this party—which, in its politics and organisation and the social composition of its apparatus, is Tory in all but name—can be transformed into an instrument of working-class struggle. The British Labour Party did not begin with Blair. It is a bourgeois party of more than a century's standing and a tried and tested instrument of British imperialism and its state machine. Whether led by Clement Attlee, James Callaghan or Jeremy Corbyn, its essence remains unaltered."

Although the specific instances of abuse detailed are shocking, it has only fleshed out a conspiracy which was already widely known. Labour's members have had to wait years for the details because Corbyn and his allies refused to oppose the campaign against them and systematically suppressed any struggle against it by the rank and file. His sermons on Labour's "broad church" and party "unity" were a political shield, behind which a vicious cabal could carry on policing the Labour Party.

In 2015, when Corbyn's campaign began to gather steam in the Labour leadership election, the apparatus went on the offensive, looking for pretexts to expel members and supporters or bar them from voting. The *World Socialist Web Site* wrote: "The entire full-time staff of the Labour Party, along with constituency party branches and university Labour Clubs, is now exclusively occupied in investigating those who have paid £3 to become Labour supporters to vote in the leadership contest. … The stench of McCarthyism hangs over the Labour Party, which is underscored by the naming of the investigation of sign-ups as 'Operation Icepick' in an obscene reference to the weapon used to assassinate Leon Trotsky."

The leaked report shows that these new supporters were repeatedly referred to by at least 40 Labour staff members as "trots." The word—a derogatory term for Trotskyists—appears hundreds of times in the document, in the context of a violent hatred shared across Labour's offices for anyone "left of [former Prime Minister and Tony Blair's chancellor, Gordon] Brown."

Party officials wrote about the need for "pepper spray" and "water cannons" at Labour's annual conference and major rallies, which they feared would be overrun by "rampaging trots." In reference to one well-attended rally, Governance and Legal Unit (GLU) Director John Stolliday wrote, "Truncheons out lads, let's knock some trots."

Corbyn, who was held responsible for this influx of left-leaning members, was abused in psychopathic terms. One staff member wrote, "anyone who nominates corbyn [sic] 'to widen the debate' deserves to be taken out and shot." Another said that a staff member who cheered one of Corbyn's speeches "should be shot." Two different officials discussed "hanging and burning" Corbyn and another said "death by fire is too kind" for him and his leadership team. Sarah Mulholland, Secretary of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), said of a Corbyn-supporting Young Labour member, who was known to suffer from mental health issues, "I hope [the young member] dies in a fire."

As it became clear that Labour's thousands of new members and supporters would win Corbyn the leadership, senior staff discussed delaying or cancelling the process either on the pretext "of whether we have the resources to do the checks" or by having the other candidates "just drop out next week and the whole thing would have to be halted."

When these plans proved untenable, Labour HQ organised the mass expulsion of members. The work, considered "a priority," was discussed in terms of "hunting out 1000s of trots," "trot busting," "bashing trots," "trot spotting," "the trot hunt," "trot purge" and "trot hunting." People who joined groups protesting these actions, like the Stop the Labour Purge Facebook page, were specifically targeted for exclusion. Others were thrown out for liking or retweeting material from organisations like the People's Assembly, UK Uncut, the National Health Action Party and the Green Party.

This witch-hunt failed to prevent Corbyn's victory on an overwhelming mandate. The mood in Labour's head office was apocalyptic, with staff

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writing “we’re so fucking screwed,” “irrevocably fucked,” “not sure how much more I can take.”

But all despondency was immediately dispelled by Corbyn’s selection of a shadow cabinet of warmongers, demobilising of opposition to austerity with the order that Labour councils enforce Tory cuts, and endorsement of the right-wing Remain campaign in the Brexit referendum. Emboldened by Corbyn’s capitulations, the right-wing conspiracy was escalated with the 2016 leadership election, triggered by a coup mounted by Labour’s Blairite MPs. In a statement distributed at Labour’s special congress that year, the Socialist Equality Party explained: “The campaign waged has been vicious—including denying more than 130,000 members and supporters the right to vote, and utilising the Orwellian Compliance Unit to trawl through online accounts to find ‘evidence’ of thought crimes.

“The designation of this purge as ‘Operation Icepick,’ along with the routine denunciation of ‘Trotskyite infiltrators’ is apposite, given that an historical precedent can only be found in Stalin’s Russia.”

According to the report, Labour HQ initially solicited legal advice to argue that Corbyn should not automatically appear on the ballot if not nominated by MPs. When this failed, the GLU began trawling through Labour members’ and applicant supporters’ social media accounts to find a pretext for expulsion or rejection.

Algorithms were designed to search for negative comments about a specific list of Blairite MPs. After the release of the Chilcot Inquiry into the Iraq War, a general search was made for the phrase “war criminal” or for references to “warmongers,” with staff worrying about “an influx of antiwar angry people.” Phrases like “red Tory,” “pseudo Tory,” “undercover Blairite,” “backstabber” and “Tory lite” were also searched for as the basis for expulsion. Specific fishing operations were launched against those signed up to left-wing Facebook groups. GLU’s Head of Disputes and then Acting Director Sam Matthews said of “Nye Bevan News,” “we can probably suspend everyone who is a member of the page.”

Outside of leadership elections, senior staff persistently sought to interfere with or overturn the party’s democratic processes to block perceived left-wingers gaining positions. Matthews and GLU Executive Director Emilie Oldknow worked to prevent Corbyn ally Rebecca Long-Bailey being selected as a Manchester representative on the party’s governing body. They also discussed maintaining the suspension of Wallasey Constituency Labour Party to give anti-Corbyn MP Angela Eagle more “time to organise” to win the annual general meeting. Party General Secretary Ian McNicol discussed with other senior staff plans to delay changes in Labour Party youth elections that would benefit pro-Corbyn groups.

Labour HQ repeatedly acted against the electoral interests of the Labour Party, in the hope of demoralising Corbyn’s supporters and helped Deputy Leader Tom Watson leak party documents. Staff in the GLU planned to install Watson as an interim leader following what they hoped would be a Labour defeat in 2017 and diverted hundreds of thousands of pounds of party funds to a “secret key seats team” to support Blairite MPs.

These efforts were a failure. Corbyn came out of the 2017 election in an unassailable position. Had he wanted to, Corbyn could have thrown out the Blairite conspirators with the full backing of the Labour membership. Instead, Corbyn worked with close ally Jon Lansman to establish their own political police force in the form of Momentum —the supposed “grassroots” campaign group nominally founded to further the left-wing transformation of the Labour Party. In reality from the beginning, this organisation was the pliant tool of Lansman, designed to neuter any rank-and-file opposition which developed to the party’s Blairite core.

The investigation explains, “Trotskyists”—by which it means members of various pseudo-left groups—“did try to organise within local groups of Momentum. But in January 2017, Momentum implemented a constitution which excluded anyone who was not a member of the Labour Party …”

At Labour’s 2018 annual congress, Momentum joined with Corbyn and the trade unions to prevent the mandatory reselection of Labour MPs. In 2019, a fraudulently organised national campaign to deselect Blairite MPs was turned into a rout. Wherever Labour members tried to wage a fight against Blairite MPs and officials on their own initiative, Corbyn intervened personally to shut them down.

The events of the last five years cannot be understood outside of a reckoning with these actions of the so-called “Labour lefts,” which were the decisive elements in the victory of the Blairite conspiracy.

Corbyn and the anti-Semitism witch-hunt

Claims that Labour was “institutionally anti-Semitic”—which reached the hysterical and cynical low of branding the party an “existential threat” to British Jews—were a continuation of the party’s right-wing campaign against its membership by other means. In a call to Labour’s members in 2018, “Reject the anti-Semitism slurs against Jeremy Corbyn! Drive out the Labour Party right wing!” the Socialist Equality Party warned: “Recent weeks have seen the acceleration of a campaign by the right-wing of the British Labour party to paint Jeremy Corbyn as an anti-Semite, in hopes of driving him from his position as leader of the party.

“In its scale and ferocity, these efforts have all the hallmarks of a destabilisation campaign involving MI5 in the UK, Mossad in Israel and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the United States … the goal of this campaign is to discredit socialism in the hope of preventing any challenge by the working class to austerity and the escalating pursuit of militarism and war in the Middle East and throughout the world.”

Using internal party statistics, the leaked Labour investigation finds that there were 34 actions taken against members for anti-Semitism between November 2016 and February 2018, while the Blairites controlled the party apparatus. The investigation’s authors estimate that there were an additional 170 complaints which ought to have been actioned, giving a total of 204 cases, or 0.037 percent of Labour’s membership. In 2018, there were 283 suspensions and investigations, with no action taken against 133 people, and 10 members expelled. In 2019, with pressure for “action” on anti-Semitism reaching fever pitch, there were 579 suspensions and investigations (0.1 percent of the membership), with no action taken against 255 people and 45 expelled.

Even accepting that all these expulsions were fair, and the cases of high-profile figures show they were not, anti-Semitism was a miniscule fringe phenomenon in the Labour Party.

The anti-Semitism “crisis” was politically manufactured. Right-wing individuals supportive of the Israeli state submitted thousands of spurious complaints of alleged anti-Semitism and told fabricated horror stories to the media. The GLU ignored or delayed responses to a handful of genuine cases of anti-Semitism while presenting a misleading picture of the number and nature of complaints being received. This provided the fuel for hysterical headlines about Labour’s “inaction” and the anti-Semitism of the “left.”

In early 2017, dossiers of allegations were submitted by the Labour Against Anti-Semitism group. The group claimed publicly in 2018 to have submitted 700 individual reports of alleged anti-Semitism, when the real number was just over 100.

In 2019, half of anti-Semitism complaints came from one Labour Party member “who is trawling social media for evidence” and is often “rude and abusive” towards party staff and members. A “large proportion” of his complaints are duplicates, and do not refer to Labour members or to

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members already in the disciplinary process, “something the complainant has been told repeatedly.” They “regularly submit complaints about people sharing Jewish-related articles, with the comment ‘They’re not Jewish’.”

Material of this kind was manipulated for maximum effect by party staff. Last summer, several news sites reported that employees at Labour HQ had resigned from the party’s offices and destroyed key complaints documents as they left, keeping copies which were then leaked to the press as evidence of “inaction.” The report provides similar examples.

Between November 2016 and February 2018, 79 percent of actions taken against members for anti-Semitism did not flow from the work of the GLU. Matthews allowed unresolved cases to pile up in the Disputes inbox. When asked for reports on anti-Semitism complaints procedures in 2018, he provided inaccurate figures. Matthews and McNicol repeatedly claimed to be pursuing cases when they were not. Once a backlog had been built up, and after McNicol had left the post of general secretary, Matthews and Oldknow broke with previous procedure to begin forwarding cases to the Labour leadership’s office. These emails were then leaked to the media as “evidence” of interference by the leadership in the complaints process.

Every smear was amplified by a complicit corporate media. In July 2019, McNicol and Matthews were invited onto a BBC “Panorama” hatchet job, “Is Labour Anti-Semitic?” to spread lies about the membership and criticise the failings they had orchestrated.

Cases which were repeatedly delayed included those for which extensive evidence of Holocaust denial existed. At least one was deliberately ignored to pursue a malicious investigation against left-wing activist and Jewish Voice for Labour member, Glyn Secker.

In the face of all this evidence, the report nonetheless accepts the allegations of Labour’s anti-Semitism problem as good coin, explicitly stating the manifestly untrue: that “This report thoroughly disproves any suggestion that antisemitism is not a problem in the Party, or that it is all a ‘smear’ or a ‘witch-hunt’.”

To legitimise the witch-hunt, Matthews’ and McNicol’s duplicitous actions are absurdly held to be the product of “bureaucratic drift and inertia.”

The investigation even claims that the essential significance of the sprawling conspiracy against the party’s membership was that it encouraged an alleged culture of “denialism” towards anti-Semitism, which the membership is accused of harbouring. This contemptible accusation aims to justify not only the actions of the Blairites, but of Corbyn in going along with the anti-Semitism witch-hunt. As explained by the WSWS: “In the face of overwhelming opposition from Labour Party members, the Blairites have only been able to proceed with a campaign based on such a pack of lies because of constant capitulations from Corbyn and his inner circle.”

A part of the investigation concludes, “This section has demonstrated that Jeremy Corbyn, [Shadow Chancellor] John McDonnell and Leader’s Office staff urged that candidates accused of antisemitism be removed and disciplinary action taken …” They specifically called for Ken Livingstone, Marc Wadsworth and Jackie Walker’s cases to “be concluded swiftly, as called for by Jewish stakeholders.” Chris Williamson MP was given the same treatment.

None of these individuals are anti-Semites and all of them have spent a lifetime in the “left” of the Labour Party, working in close political collaboration with Corbyn. Yet when Livingstone was given a two-year suspension by the National Constitutional Committee in April 2018, the report notes, “WhatsApp messages make clear that LOTO [Office of the Leader of the Opposition, i.e., Corbyn] staff had expected Livingstone to be expelled and were both shocked and unhappy about this decision.”

Later, “GLU did not commence a new investigation into Ken Livingstone, and it was LOTO staff who repeatedly chased them to do so.”

Finally, Corbyn’s advisor Seumas Milne “discussed with Oldknow trying to arrange that Ken Livingstone resign from the party rather than go through another disciplinary case.”

Walker, who is black and Jewish, was expelled after “Jeremy Corbyn and [new General Secretary and Corbyn ally] Jennie Formby met with the Board of Deputies, Jewish Leadership Council and the Community and Security Trust, which stated that the Party should expedite Ken Livingstone and Jackie Walker’s cases.”

The report details how “Walker’s case demonstrates a continual drive from LOTO staff … to seek a speedy and decisive resolution.”

Williamson’s suspension received the go-ahead from Corbyn’s Political Secretary Amy Jackson: “I agree something needs to be done today. People from all sides of the Party are absolutely furious with him.”

Momentum head Jon Lansman became Corbyn’s liaison officer with the most ardent Zionist reactionaries. As the report explains, he was instrumental in Labour’s endorsement of the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism, which includes as examples of supposed anti-Semitism denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavour, and drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy towards the Palestinians to that of the Nazis.

In 2018, Momentum’s Digital Media Manager Harry Hayball oversaw the organisation’s own investigations and disciplining of those accused of anti-Semitism. He “met with a wide range of stakeholders from JLM, Jewish communal organisations and the wider Jewish community,” the investigation states, and “studied the history of antisemitism on the left from works such as Steve Cohen’s ‘That’s Funny You Don’t Look Antisemitic’ and Dave Rich’s ‘The Left’s Jewish Problem’.”

Hayball was hired by the GLU itself the following year, in July 2019, as a Senior Governance Officer dealing specifically with anti-Semitism. He joined Patrick Smith, made Head of Disputes in June 2019. The report states that Smith “was hired specifically because of his knowledge of anti-Semitism and the forms it takes on the left ...”

Smith is a former organiser for the anti-Trotskyist Alliance for Workers’ Liberty group. Alongside Smith, Laura Murray—daughter of Corbyn’s Stalinist adviser, Andrew Murray—was seconded to the GLU in 2019 as its Head of Complaints. Hayball and Smith dramatically escalated the investigations into Labour’s membership, trawling social media for “problematic” search terms and evidence of “denialism,” “defensiveness” or criticism of pro-Zionist “Labour MPs and affiliates.”

According to guidance drawn up by this team, examples of “problematic” posts include, “arguing that Israel misuses the Holocaust to its own ends,” “inappropriate sharing of Jewish people, such as Norman Finkelstein, speaking about the Holocaust in an aggressive or inappropriate way” and “inappropriate emphasis on non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust, as if there is too much focus on Jews.” On Israel and Zionism, the guidance states, “it must be expected that Jewish people or Israeli people have greater freedom to discuss these issues.”

These were not just examples of political cowardice, but the political endorsements of a right-wing witch-hunt. This is confirmed by the fact that Corbyn’s allies went on to oversee and even step up the disciplinary process from January 2018, after securing a majority on Labour’s National Executive Committee. As the WSWS wrote during the 2019 General Election, “Never once did [Corbyn] defend his own supporters, including Ken Livingstone, Marc Wadsworth, Jackie Walker and Chris Williamson, who were expelled or forced to resign from the party over false accusations of anti-Semitism. Instead, he has now apologized repeatedly for a supposed failure to deal rigorously and speedily with anti-Semitism.”

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An anti-Trotskyist political police force

The timing of the leak of the Labour Party investigation marks an appropriate endpoint to Corbyn's five-year record of political surrender and collusion. It was not revealed in a major public rally or presented to sections of the party as the basis for a political campaign against the conspirators. Quite the opposite. The report's authors affect surprise at their findings, writing, "Labour Party staff, who are employed by the Party rather than as political advisers to politicians, are expected to act impartially and serve the Party, regardless of the current Leader …" They even state baldly that they are "not concerned with the rights and wrongs of different political positions espoused by different factions and individuals in the Labour Party in the preceding five years."

The leak was only carried out after Corbyn and McDonnell had already resigned, after a new shadow cabinet of Blairite reactionaries had been installed under new leader Sir Keir Starmer, and after Corbyn himself nominated Tom Watson and Ian McNicol for life peerages in the House of Lords!

The sole purpose of leaking the investigation is to guard against its suppression as evidence in the politically motivated Equality and Human Rights Commission inquiry into anti-Semitic discrimination in the Labour Party. The key message Corbyn wanted to get out is that he and his team were anxious to root out anti-Semitism from the party but were prevented from doing so by the "hyper-factional atmosphere" generated by his opponents.

Labour's members, meanwhile, are tarred with the accusation of anti-Semitism, or at least "denialism," and left at the mercy of a renewed right-wing assault. The scandal over the investigation has already been used as a springboard for a new offensive. Starmer has taken no action on the prima facie evidence against Labour staff, telling party members, "We have to stop the factionalism in our party." Last Thursday, Labour's National Executive Committee agreed to open an investigation into the contents of the report and the way it came to be authored and leaked, due to report in mid-July. The NEC meeting, which included multiple supposed "lefts" including Jon Lansman, was described by *Labour List* as "not an acrimonious one."

Meanwhile the attack by the Blairites and Zionists continues apace. The Labour Party is reportedly facing up to £8 million worth of legal suits for breach of privacy by the right-wing scoundrels named in the report. *Skwawkbox* cite Labour sources who say that those thought to have had a hand in compiling and leaking the investigation are already facing suspension.

On April 16, members of the GMB trade union at Labour HQ passed a motion of no confidence in General Secretary Jennie Formby, claiming that she had "effectively unilaterally placed all members of staff under investigation" and demanding that she "personally apologise to the current staffers named in the report."

A social media backlash forced GMB General Secretary Tim Roache to claim that the union was "not going for" Formby and would at least wait for Labour's "independent inquiry" before doing so! His position was made clear by the comment that "Leaking an un-redacted report, containing names and personal messages of employees and the names of people who made complaints about racism on the understanding of anonymity, is unacceptable."

Novara Media report that the pro-Zionist Jewish Labour Movement (JLM) is calling for any Constituency Labour Party organisations which even discuss the document to be suspended. Starmer has already promised a stepped-up witch-hunt of the Labour membership in cooperation with the JLM, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Community and Security Trust. This purge could take place under the oversight of none other than leading conspirator Emilie Oldknow, one of Starmer's top choices to replace Formby as Labour's general secretary—again, according to *Novara Media*.

Oldknow is assistant secretary general at the Unison union, an employer she shares with former GLU colleague John Stolliday, who is now the head of Unison's Member Liaison Unit. At least one journalist has reported that the union's General Secretary Dave Prentis has assured these two right-wing plotters of his support and protection. Unison backed Starmer in the recent Labour leadership contest, saying he was "best placed to unite" Labour.

These are historically significant events.

The most striking political point to emerge out of the whole rotten episode is the Labour Party's pathological denunciation of "trots." This obsession with Trotskyism points to the fact that what was feared and acted against by the Labour Party was not Corbyn himself—who, as the report shows, collaborated with the party's right-wing—but the broader leftward movement of the working class and youth he tried to corral.

Labour's apparatus and Corbyn's Stalinist advisers like Seumas Milne and Andrew Murray, from the hard-line *Straight Left* faction of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), were in complete agreement. In fact, *Straight Left* were among the biggest cheerleaders of the real "stasi"—the Stalinist secret police of East Germany—and the real "Operation Icepick" directed by Joseph Stalin which resulted in the assassination of Leon Trotsky in 1940.

Stalinism worldwide took the politics of subordination to reactionary national labour bureaucracies and world imperialism, and of murderous hostility to international socialism, to its most counterrevolutionary extremes. Today, utterly discredited as a political tendency, its ideologues in the UK function as the most loyal apparatchiks of the unions and social democracy and fervent academic opponents of any independent movement of the working class.

Corbyn too has been shaped by this politics since his involvement in the trade union bureaucracy and time spent writing a column for the *Morning Star*, organ of the Communist Party. Guided by its reactionary nationalist perspective, he consistently sought an alliance with the saboteurs, witch-hunters and Blairite MPs against his own supporters.

The *World Socialist Web Site* commented in its 2020 New Year's statement: "Corbynism, which peddled the illusion of a revival of the Labour Party as an instrument of anti-capitalist struggle, proved in the end to be synonymous with political cowardice and prostration before the ruling class."

These forces come together in the institution of the Labour Party, which was founded at the dawn of the last century and has developed ever since as British capitalism's most important bulwark against socialism.

Both the Stalinists and social democrats, those on the nominal "left" as much as those on the right, view Trotsky and Trotskyism with undisguised and venomous hostility. No other figure or movement more fully embodies the struggle for world socialist revolution. Trotsky was the co-leader of the October Revolution with Lenin, founder of the Fourth International and the most implacable opponent of the bureaucratic tendencies that have betrayed the working class for decades—social democracy and Stalinism.

Since the Stalinist degeneration of the Communist Party of Great Britain and of the other parties affiliated to the Third International, Trotskyism has been the sole political tendency seeking to break the working class from the Labour Party and the trade unions in order to build a revolutionary leadership. That is why it has become a synonym for the bureaucracy for any emerging threat to their political stranglehold over the working class.

The hatred felt by the Labour apparatus for Trotskyism was reinforced during the post-war years by the extraordinary growth in political support for the Trotskyist movement under the leadership of Gerry Healy. Working inside the Labour Party during the 1950s and 60s, the British

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Trotskyists opposed not only Labour's right-wing but the "lefts" on which they relied and who sought to maintain the loyalty of socialist-minded members.

The Socialist Equality Party explains in its Historical and International Foundations document that the gains made at that time "were the product of the Healy group's support for the Open Letter, issued by James P. Cannon of the US Socialist Workers Party in 1953, defending Trotskyism from the Pabloites' attempts to liquidate the Fourth International."

Pabloism—named after its leading theoretician Michel Pablo—emerged as an impressionistic response to the post-war restabilisation of world capitalism. Resting on the combined impact of the betrayal of revolutionary struggles by Stalinism, social democracy and the bourgeois nationalist movements, US imperialism was able to utilise its economic hegemony to restore global production and trade.

The Stalinists in particular, by limiting the movements they headed to a bourgeois democratic perspective and pursuing policies of "détente" and "peaceful coexistence," encouraged the illusion that permanent gains could be realised through the policies of national reform that were given a new lease on life after the war.

Petty-bourgeois forces within the Fourth International coalesced into a revisionist tendency under the leadership of Pablo and Ernest Mandel, claiming that the Stalinist and Social Democratic parties and petty-bourgeois nationalist movements were an alternative means of realizing socialism. The Fourth International, they insisted, had no independent role to play, but must act as a pressure group seeking to push the existing leadership of the working class to the left.

As the SEP's 2011 historical foundations document explained, as a result of the struggle against Pabloism and for the perspective of world socialist revolution led by a Marxist vanguard party, the British Trotskyists made powerful gains: "The founding of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) was critical in the political strengthening of the British Trotskyists to intervene in a hostile political milieu. In the crisis in British Stalinism that followed Khrushchev's Secret Speech in 1956, they were able to win important forces from the Communist Party of Great Britain. This enabled the Healy group to win significant support in the Labour Party and the trade unions, centred on their work to expose the 'lefts,' demanding that they break with the right wing and take up the struggle for a Labour government pledged to socialist policies."

The Labour bureaucracy retaliated with a vicious witch-hunt against its Trotskyist opponents, who responded in March 1959 by forming the Socialist Labour League (SLL) as an open political tendency. The SLL was proscribed and dozens of its leading personnel expelled from the Labour Party, but its principled struggle won the leadership of Labour's youth movement, the Young Socialists (YS). The SLL's *Keep Left* youth paper was proscribed, its supporters expelled and supportive YS branches closed down.

From this experience, Labour learned a lesson they have not since forgotten: without the most ruthless bureaucratic suppression of its own membership, the danger existed that Trotskyism, i.e., revolutionary international socialism, could come to the leadership of powerful sections of workers and youth.

The 1980s saw the beginning of Labour's abandonment of any connection with the working class, as it responded to the development of globalised production by ditching its programme of national reformism in favour of an unvarnished glorification of capitalism that was to end in the formation of New Labour under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

Inevitably, this process began with yet another witch-hunt smoothing the path for a series of massive betrayals including the 1984–85 miners' strike. This time, the Militant Tendency was targeted, despite its slavish loyalty to the bureaucracy and its insistence that the Labour Party and trade unions were the mechanism for realising socialism. The future heroes of New Labour cut their teeth in this purge, alongside those with Stalinist backgrounds including Peter Mandelson, John Reid, Charles Clarke and Alan Johnson. Others, like Alan Milburn and Alistair Darling, had a background in the Pabloite International Marxist Group.

Corbyn's winning of the Labour Party leadership in 2015 was universally hailed by the pseudo-left fraternity, in Britain and internationally, as marking a return to Labour's reformist past. Instead, the leaked investigation confirms that Labour's character as a pro-business, pro-austerity and pro-war party, irreconcilably hostile to the working class and socialism, remains unchanged.

Against Corbyn's apologists in the pseudo-left Socialist Party and Socialist Workers Party, the Socialist Equality Party insisted from the beginning that Labour would "never recover" from the betrayals of Corbynism. On the basis of the Marxist method, a century's experience of social democracy and the recent example of SYRIZA's reactionary role in Greece, we explained, citing Trotsky:

> "Should the electoral successes of the Labour Party raise it once again to power, the consequences would not be a peaceful socialist transformation but a consolidation of imperialist reaction, that is to say, an epoch of civil war, in the face of which the leadership of the Labour Party will inevitably reveal its complete bankruptcy."

Corbyn carried out a five-year suppression of the class struggle—demobilising strikes and protests—which prepared the way for the most right-wing government in British history under the leadership of Boris Johnson. Corbyn's last political act of any significance was to declare loyalty to Sir Keir Starmer, who, in turn, immediately promised to support the Tory government and has taken the right-wing party inherited from Corbyn into what is, to all intents and purposes, a government of national unity with Johnson.

British social democracy is eating its own entrails as it enters its final death agony, brought on by a fundamental change in international class relations that is rapidly accelerating as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. A new stage in the political life of the working class is beginning.

Thousands of Labour members and supporters have already left the party in disgust and in search of a genuine socialist movement. But the central issue that must be addressed is which party represents genuine socialism. That answer can only be found through addressing the history and programme of political tendencies which advance themselves as an alternative to Labour. The Socialist Equality Party calls on all workers and youth seeking a new political home to study our political record and that of the International Committee of the Fourth International and take the decision to join the world Trotskyist movement.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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