

Labour Affairs

Incorporating the Labour and Trade Union Review

No. 309 - July-August 2020

Price £2.00 (€ 3.00)

Starmer Sacks RBL

Keir Starmer's sacking of Rebecca Long-Bailey is an ominous sign for the prospects of the Labour Party. Ms Long-Bailey had endorsed an opinion that obnoxious Israeli police practices, much used against Palestinians, had been adopted by US police forces. No-one disputes either that Israeli security forces employ such practices or that the Israelis give US police forces seminars on policing. What remains in dispute is whether there is a direct causal link between the seminars and the US police practices.

There can be no doubt that 'knee on the neck' policing is inhuman and carries risk of serious damage to the apprehended person. We are not aware that this practice is in use anywhere outside Israel and the USA. It cannot be condoned by any Labour Party worthy of its salt, wherever it takes place.

When Labour adopted new rules about anti-Semitism, its advocates said it did not prevent legitimate criticism of the actions of the Zionist State. What Ms Long-Bailey endorsed was not a criticism of anything Jewish, but of brutal policing methods common to Israel and the USA. That Keir Starmer expels her from the Shadow Cabinet on such spurious grounds indicates that he rules out any criticism of Israel, however outlandish its actions. In fact, the action highlights the fact that he has not condemned Israel's proposed annexation of parts of the West Bank.

Starmer said definitely in a TV interview that Ms Long-Bailey is an anti-Semite. Yet he has not expelled her from the party, and he would have done, if he stood by his characterisation of her as an anti-Semite. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that he slandered her for some other purpose.

It seems that any principled stance on Israel is to be taken as an opportunity to purge the Party of its left wing.

Brexit, Covid-19 And Labour's Task

The decision not to extend UK membership of the European Union (EU) beyond 31 December leaves the government with two options. Either make a deal with the EU by this October; although Johnson is hopeful that an outline deal can be reached by the end of July if the EU is prepared to compromise. Or the UK leaves without a deal at the end of the year, and reverts to World Trade Organisation rules. With Europhobes like Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and Trade Secretary Liz Truss favouring a no-deal and Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Chancellor Rishi Sunak hoping to negotiate a deal favourable to the UK, the stage is set for a possible conflict of interests. Although at the moment there is little sign of opposition to Johnson's aim of an outline deal by 31 July.

In preparation for the UK leaving the EU, Liz Truss has already held trade talks with her US counterparts. The news that leaked out of the talks suggest the UK is prepared to lower hygiene standards on food imports from the USA. Truss has dismissed concerns about the import of chlorinated chickens with a threat to impose higher tariffs on such foods. How she can square this with the promise of cheaper food from a deal with the USA is anyone's guess. The UK has some of the world's highest animal welfare standards. British farmers are therefore understandably concerned that they could be undercut by US farmers where more intensive farming methods enable them to produce cheaper food. Once the UK leaves the EU, competition from the US and elsewhere could potentially destroy British farming. At this early stage in the talks we are unclear about the USA's intentions for access to the NHS. It appears that the government have ruled this out, but the prospect of profits for US

pharmaceutical companies from NHS contracts, in return for an attractive deal for the UK, may prove to be irresistible. It should be noted that a favourable deal with the USA would add 0.2% to GDP, compared with an estimated loss of 5% from leaving the EU.

Boris Johnson won the 2019 general election because he successfully persuaded voters in leave areas that, whereas a Labour government would mean more dither and delay, a Conservative government would deliver on the 2016 referendum result. And the first three months of his premiership were primarily focused on that objective. But events have a long history of waylaying the best laid plans. Covid-19 was such an event, for which Johnson and his government were totally unprepared. The virus had hit parts of Europe, particularly Italy and Spain, at an earlier stage. Yet in spite of the obvious threat to the UK, the government dithered and delayed. The lockdown, imposed later than other countries, has caused avoidable deaths and dealt the economy a blow from which it could take years to recover.

Rishi Sunak's measures to deal with the economic impact of Covid-19 are a necessary, but no more than, sticking plaster. Unemployment is currently around 2.8 million and is expected to go higher when his furlough scheme, which covers 9.2 million workers, ends in October. From August, employers will have to contribute towards the cost of the scheme, around £14 billion per month, a total of £70 billion by the end of the scheme. (The £70 billion is equal to the estimated amount of tax avoidance in the UK per year). The payments will place an extra financial burden on companies. Labour has called for a carefully targeted sectoral approach, with extended help for the self-employed, including

hairdressers and other vulnerable groups at risk of long-term unemployment.

But bolder, longer term measures are needed to move the economy rapidly forward. The question is this: is the government prepared to give the state a bigger, permanent role in Britain's future economic development?

The UK needs investment in education, skills and training. For years employers fell short of their responsibilities for skilling and training their workers. This failure forced governments under Cameron and May to step in with short-term schemes dressed up as permanent apprenticeships and eventually with a mandatory VET levy on larger firms. The recent announcement of a government strategy to invest more in skills and training, including apprenticeships for every young person aged 16 to 25, looks attractive. Details of the jobs and skills package was promised for late June/early July. Whether they will prove to be real apprenticeships or simply measures to disguise the expected massive unemployment figures when the furlough scheme ends, remains to be seen.

National output fell by 10.4% in the three months, January to March, with a further fall of 20.4% in April alone. However, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has warned that caution must be expressed due to the difficulty of collecting data under the government's public health restrictions. Nevertheless the decline in output for the second quarter is expected to be higher than that for January to March. Over the full year the fall in output is forecast to be 10.2%, with a further decline to 14% if the economy is hit with a second wave of the virus.

With the economy tanking the government is anxious to get people back to work, albeit

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ISSN 0953-3494

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Subscription: £20 for one year (10 issues)

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on a gradual basis and with strict conditions placed on distancing and the wearing of protective masks when travelling. With non-essential shops and stores having already opened, consumer spending will rise. From 4 July further easing of the lockdown will occur when the hospitality sector, which includes pubs and restaurants, can open in what the government calls a "Covid-secure way", with more handwashing, ventilation and table service indoors, along with safe distancing. A relaxation of the lockdown will also occur in other areas of entertainment, such as galleries and museums. The government is clearly hoping to strike a balance between protecting people's health and preventing total meltdown of the economy. But easing the lockdown is a huge risk: there could be a new outbreak of the virus as has occurred in Beijing and some US states. The media euphoria over 'independence day' may yet prove to be misplaced.

Keir Starmer has shown his lawyer's forensic skills in dealing with the government's handling of the pandemic to date. But a critical analysis of its overall performance will have to wait until international comparisons can be accurately made. Labour needs now to knuckle down to producing practical policies for the economy. Work on a plan for a green new deal is already underway, but more detail is required before a proper judgement can be made of its potential. More joined up thinking and action is required, with shadow Business Secretary Ed Miliband working with other key cabinet members on a comprehensive plan to rebuild Britain's economy, with the state playing a more prominent role. We need targeted investment in local economies to help create jobs, particularly for young people where, unless this happens, there is likely to be stiff competition in the digital technology world of work. Labour also needs to provide workable solutions to the gross inequality in income and wealth arising from globalisation over the last three decades. Under this, by far the greater share of the increase in

wealth has gone to the richest 5%.

Writing in the Guardian on 19 June Ed Miliband claimed that Labour is learning lessons from the 2019 election defeat. Drawing on the recent 'Labour Together' report which examines why Labour lost that election he wrote, "To make the most of our wider movement we must put aside the factionalism and division of recent years." As Labour Affairs has consistently pointed out, those responsible for the factionalism and division were the former Blairites in the party who refused to accept Jeremy Corbyn as leader and constantly sought to undermine him. They were determined that he would never become Prime Minister; some even preferring a Tory government.

Miliband is correct to argue that Labour's problems in its historic heartlands go back decades. They began under Thatcher's premiership in the 1980s with the decline of traditional jobs in manufacturing, mining, the docks and steel industry and continued under Major in the 1990s. In Labour's thirteen years in government Blair and Brown failed to address adequately the problems, exacerbated by technological change, in these predominately Labour areas. Most of the replacement jobs under Labour were in the public sector, which declined due to austerity. And Cameron and May then created millions of low-paid, insecure jobs.

But Miliband must accept his share of the blame for four successive election defeats. Following Cameron's election victory in 2010, the Tories accused Labour of being

responsible for the 2008 financial crisis which left the country deeply in debt. As Labour leader, Miliband failed to answer this false accusation, leaving voters to believe the Tories' lies. His further weaknesses as leader led Labour to defeat at the 2015 general election.

The next general election is about four years away. Labour has a mammoth task to win back the lost 'red wall' seats in the north and midlands, as well as capturing a multitude of seats elsewhere. It should avoid being drawn into the culture war being fostered by Johnson and Cummings. Cummings is the mastermind behind the Tory targeting of focus groups in the Labour seats won in the 2019 election. He believes he understands that the way people feel about themselves and the country largely determines how they vote. The Brexit vote in those constituencies is a prime example of this. His strategy is to draw voters' attention away from the economy which is likely to be in a bad shape come the next election and appeal instead to their sense of identity and patriotism. It's important for Labour to identify with voters' concerns, but it won't win if it fights the Tories on this prepared ground. It must make the economy the main focus, offering voters believable, practical solutions to their problems. We look forward to commenting on these in the near future.

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Or by subject at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/m-articles-by-topic/>.

Froggy

News From Across The Channel



This continues on the topic of obesity in connexion with Covid 19, relevant almost equally to France and the UK.

Covid 19 has revealed social inequalities: the less well-off and black and ethnic minority people are more likely to suffer more severe forms of the disease and even die of it. Because obesity affects these groups particularly and is an additional risk factor, it is relevant to ask questions about the quality of food consumed by these groups, and whether governments are doing enough to regulate food production. Is there an inequality in the safety of food, based on price?

Obesity is most common in the US, then in the UK, then in France. The EU has managed so far to slow down the trend through higher food standards. This may be about to change in the UK, which is negotiating trade deals with the US and perhaps having to accept its lower standards. It is not looking hopeful.

On 29 August 2019, in an interview with Sky News, Professor Sir Ian Boyd, retiring Chief Scientific Adviser at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), commented on the question of whether imports of chlorinated chicken and beef reared with artificial hormones should be allowed into the UK. He said that these were matters that should be decided by 'consumer choice'.⁽¹⁾

"The issue is about production processes and animal welfare, and that is a values-based choice that people need to make.

"My view is that we need to be allowed to make that choice."⁽²⁾

This is shocking. First of all, chlorinated chicken is not safe:

"the academics point to [research published last year](#) which found washing food in bleach does not kill many of the pathogens that cause food poisoning. Instead, it sends them into a "viable but non-culturable state", which means they are not picked up in standard tests, which take a sample of the food and try to culture any germs on it."⁽³⁾

Five other chemical disinfectants

can be used (acidified sodium chlorite, peroxyacetic acid, cetylpyridium chloride, lactic acid, and trisodium phosphate).

Accepting chlorinated chicken means giving up the EU approach which is preventative and precautionary rather than remedial. It aims to ensure that foods are produced in sufficiently hygienic ways to avoid the need to be disinfected prior to sale.

Secondly it will not be a matter of choice; people constrained by money worries will buy cheaper food, which this will be. We leave aside the implication that only the rich have a conscience about animal welfare, or the consequence that UK poultry producers will be under pressure to abandon good practice if they want to remain competitive.

But this is not the most shocking. What is more shocking is that this attitude, 'it's consumer choice' in the face of unsafe but cheap food, is in fact the prevalent attitude of both the government and society in general.

Take NHS nutrition advice. It describes ready meals as overladen with fat, sugar and salt and best avoided, throwing responsibility on the consumer. Whole sectors of the supermarket become a black hole; better off consumers avoid them, and the government has washed their hands of them. Yet there are prices and quality differences between ready meals. Pizza, lasagne, shepherd's pie, chicken curry come in a range of prices. The cheaper the finished product, the longer the list of ingredients; the extra components compensate the cheapness of the main ingredients, ensuring the result looks and tastes good. This applies beyond ready meals; the quality of staples such as bread also varies according to price. The cheaper versions are suspected of containing obesogenic ingredients over and beyond fat, sugar and salt.

Take for example High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS), which is a cheaper sort of sugar. We knew about sugar made from cane and from sugar beet. These plants contain natural sugar juice, extracted and refined to make sugar. HFCS comes

from corn (maize), which does not contain sugar but starch. This starch is transformed into types of sugar with an array of chemicals. The resultant syrup is not processed (metabolised) in the body like cane and beet sugar, for example it does not stimulate the production of the hormone that produces the sensation of fullness, in other words it creates a hormonal dysfunction.

This alone should make it suspect. Because it is cheap and easier to use than ordinary sugar, and it is useful in many ways other than making things sweet, for example it helps frozen food to keep its appearance, it is present everywhere. Its increase in use has coincided with an increase in obesity in the countries where it is used and imported.

There is alarm about it, but no action. Lobbies make sure that facts are fudged.

Although their existence is well known, talking about 'lobbies' means talking without proof, since lobbies are not public bodies and do not publicise themselves. Their influence is documented after the event, for example when lobbies spread doubt that tobacco is carcinogenic.

Another occasion when lobby influence was manifest was in 1979; the 70s was a time of public alarm regarding Antibiotic Growth Promoters (AGPs) in the meat industry. An academic paper on the question summarises lobby influence to avoid limitation of AGPs: "Calling for concrete proof of harm and employing counter science, pharmaceutical lobbyists successfully played on growing regulation wariness and concerns about 'stagflation' to defeat restrictions. With scientists appearing divided, Congress effectively imposed a moratorium on statutory AGP restrictions by calling for more research in 1979."⁽⁴⁾

The same applies today about limiting HFCS: regulation wariness (light touch regulation/self-regulation, small state), concerns about economic growth (the need of cheap food to keep the economy

Continued On Page 5

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

No Statues of Neville Chamberlain

To put up a statue is not the passive recording of history. Museums do that, though not all are neutral. But statues are all about approval.

Neville Chamberlain was an important Prime Minister. Also an embarrassing failure.

Public statues hold up people seen as admirable.

Bristol was expressing approval of a slave-owner who spent a lot on the town.

Edward Colston was anyway buying status in his native town, having made his money elsewhere. He had no heir, but became MP for Bristol after his massive charitable donations.

I don't approve of crowds deciding who should and should not be honoured.

But our cities are full of statues praising people who do not merit it. Moving these to museums and putting up new statues to worthier people would be excellent.

But who should go?

Churchill doesn't merit the common adulation. His enthusiasm for Mussolini's original Fascism has been almost forgotten.¹ The bulk of the British Left has let it be forgotten, preferring to bitch about left-wing rivals.

Churchill is correctly called a racist and imperialist. Even guilty of genocide: he allowed more than two million Bengalis die in the Bengal 1 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/why-churchill-admired-mussolini/>

famine of 1943.² George Orwell as a BBC propagandist seeking Indians support for the war backed the cover-up, denying that the famine was anything special.³

But if there were ever a popular vote on it, I'd let Churchill keep his statues. He could have created a much more formidable British Fascism in the 1930s than Oswald Mosley managed. He helped save democratic politics. As Prime Minister, he stopped the Tory majority in the House of Commons from making peace with Hitler after the Fall of France.

Or do so if you find the notion of a 1940 peace with Hitler unacceptable, as most Britons do. That depends on what you think would have happened next. The mass killing of Jews only happened later – but massive deportation or death for Poles of any religion was planned, to clear the region for German settlement. The invasion of the Soviet Union was partly to grab resources which Germany could no longer get from overseas with the British blockade. But given a 1940 peace, he might have invaded the Soviet Union a few years later and from a stronger position. He wanted Ukraine for further German settlement.

Much is uncertain. So let him still be honoured.

Likewise the USA should keep Andrew Jackson. Slave owner and killer of Native American, certainly. But also the man who gave the USA real democracy, if only for white males.

Actual democracy and an actual right of political opposition came about by stages. European feudalism gave a right of political opposition to the nobles, and sometimes to commoners. Britain in the 1830s extended this right and voting rights to the middle classes – one man in seven. Jackson established not just that all white males could vote, but that they should dominate. That they were just as good as the rich and educated.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bengal_famine_of_1943

³ The Complete Works of George Orwell, Volume XV: Two Wasted Years. Page 332.

Continued From Page 4

going), scientists appearing divided, the vague conclusion that more study is needed. It is not reassuring that the NHS analysis of studies about HFCS says exactly that: 'there is no proof, further research is needed' even though they accept that countries with high consumption of the sugar substitute have higher level of obesity; their reaction should be instead to invoke the principle of precaution. (5)

Citizens have a choice: either campaign to stop the substance being used, and fight against lobbies that have the power of the big food corporations behind them, or turn your back on the problem and buy your way out. As the same study says: "Similar to the history of pesticide regulation, relying on the market-driven provision of 'antibiotic free meat' not only risks the creation of very unequal access to allegedly safe food. What is more, it also runs danger of reinforcing regulatory stagnation by rhetorically displacing responsibility for what can only be tackled at the societal and political level onto the shoulders of individuals."

In the UK the campaign by, among others, the National Farmers Union, to keep up British standards on food and animal welfare in the face of US imports is an encouraging sign that the responsibility will not be put on the shoulders of individuals, but recognised as a social and political responsibility. The labour movement should build on this to improve standards still further.

Source: Weighing In— Obesity, Food Justice and the Limits of Capitalism by Julie Guthman, 2011

Notes

(1) <https://foodresearch.org.uk/publications/chlorinated-chicken-lower-standards/>
<https://news.sky.com/story/no-health-problems-with-chlorinated-chicken-govts-chief-scientific-adviser-11796443>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/13/science-on-safety-of-chlorinated-chicken-misunderstood>

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-018-0152-2>

<https://www.nhs.uk/news/diabetes/sugar-substitute-sparking-global-diabetes-epidemic/>

Britain only gave votes to a majority of white males in the 1880s. The persistence of Tory governments dominated by the elite shows that democracy in Britain has a long way to go.

There is nothing natural about democracy. Most of Europe lived happily without it until the 19th century. Most of the human race only picked up the notion in the 20th century. Many then decided that Western Parliamentary Democracy did not work. Most Chinese think that a Communist Party they can't vote out of power serves their actual needs and desires, at least as well as several rival dishonest parties with a pattern of failing.

But Leninism is a relatively new creed. One that built on top of Jackson's insistence that 'the common man' was just as good as the elite. But it was Leninism that did the main work to insist that women and non-whites ought to be equal, even if in practice they aren't always. Nice liberals might say it but then favour moderation in all things, including social justice.

Jackson's statue symbolises the breakthrough in the USA for mass democracy. The first major example of such a system lasting and running successfully.

So honour Jackson, despite his faults.

Past Sins

Industrial society started in Britain in the 18th century, after scientific thinking emerged in Europe in earlier centuries.

It began a persistent leftward advance in politics.

One clear instance: equality for women was fringe-left in the 18th century. Rejected by most radicals in the French Revolution. Not seriously considered in the USA till much later. Then pushed mostly by socialists, especially Communists. And now it is mainstream in principle, if not always in reality.

Improved welfare and more state planning grew continuously till the 1980s. I'm hoping the reversal since then will prove to be a blip, caused by a shift in radical energies to various forms of Personal Liberation.

Personal Liberation flourishes in most places. The Islamic World is an exception, thanks to the New Right's foolish policy of destroying brutal but effective secular regimes.

If you can't fix it, don't break it. That's a lesson that needs to be remembered.

In the West, the liberal-left's 'Poor Little Oppressed Me' narrative obscures just how much has been won for people who used to be economically privileged

but socially oppressed. Still sometimes in danger of violence and even murder, but certainly better off than they were.

"Culture wars risk blinding us to just how liberal we've become in the past decades..."

"Nine out of 10 Britons, it showed, would be happy for their child to marry someone of another ethnic group. Just 3% thought someone had to be white to be 'truly British'. 'The British public,' the pollsters observed, 'have become avowedly more open minded in their attitudes towards race.'

"There is a similar puzzle in America. Two months ago, had you asked academics or commentators about the consequences of American cities burning in the wake of protests over the killing of a black man by a white policeman, most would probably have agreed that polarisation would be exacerbated and Donald Trump strengthened. The opposite has happened. The president seems more politically isolated and even demographic groups seen as significant to the Trump base, those without higher education, for instance, show sympathy towards Black Lives Matter..."

"From one perspective, liberals have already won the culture wars. Attitudes on race, gender and sexuality have changed so much over the past 40 years that we've almost become blind to that transformation. Between 1989 and 2019, the proportion of the population that thought that gay relationships were wrong fell from 40% to 13%; the numbers opposed to abortions halved, as did those who thought it wrong to have a child outside of marriage. When the first British Social Attitudes Survey was published in 1983, more than 50% of whites would not countenance a spouse of a different race, a figure that barely declined throughout that decade..."

"The complexity of the response is not surprising. The public has become more liberal and less racist. Immigration has, however, also become symbolic of unacceptable change. Working-class lives have in recent decades been made more precarious through the stagnation of wages, the rise of the gig economy and the imposition of austerity. The power of labour movement organisations has eroded, the Labour party has drifted away from its traditional constituencies."⁴

4 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/21/culture-wars-risk-blinding-us-to-just-how-liberal-weve-become-in-the-past-decades>. The survey itself is at <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/attitudes-race-and-inequality-great-britain>.

"Only My Life Matters"?

A majority of the public now reject racism. But it is deeply part of Anglo society. Particularly in law enforcement.

"Police enforcing the coronavirus lockdown in England and Wales were almost up to seven times more likely to issue fines to black, Asian and minority ethnic people than white people, figures show."⁵

Worse in the USA. The nice idea of 'local control' means police forces that are largely a law unto themselves:

"One reason for that complexity is that, unlike policing in most European countries, American policing is mostly local. There are almost 18,000 law-enforcement agencies, most of them small, only 65 of them federal. All told, they employ around 800,000 officers. Chiefs appointed by mayors head most big-city departments. Elected sheriffs head most county forces.

"Also unlike most police forces elsewhere, American police patrol a heavily armed country. That can make their job dangerous—between 2000 and 2014, 2,445 died on duty, compared with just 25 in Britain. But police also return fire, killing around 1,000 people each year. African-Americans are nearly three times likelier than whites to be killed by police. In fact, being killed by police is now the sixth-leading cause of death for young black men. African-Americans are likelier to be convicted, and serve longer sentences than whites convicted of the same crime; they comprise 13% of the adult population, but 33% of the imprisoned population."⁶

Britain had the Windrush scandal – trying to throw out elderly people who came as children and lacked the right paperwork. Lacked because arrival records were mysteriously destroyed a few years earlier.

Unlike the US Republicans, the British Tories have some non-white faces in top jobs. But those people keep defending what is an obviously racist system.

A case of 'Only My Life Matters'?

Thatcherism was built on a general attitude of **Only My Life Matters**. Society did not exist. If the government withdrew, all would be well.

All is not well.

5 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/17/police-in-england-and-wales-six-times-more-likely-to-fine-bame-people-in-lockdown>

6 <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2020/06/04/how-to-fix-american-policing>

Small Property Loses Again

“US big business gets help first but who needs it most?”

“To avoid the mistakes of 2008, focus on individuals and smaller enterprises...”

“Their ranks include not only private equity giants, but also airlines, which spent the majority of their copious free cash in recent years on buybacks, though may not survive even with federal aid. These are joined by manufacturers such as Boeing, Big Oil, the cruise industry, hotels, hospitals, casinos, pork producers, drug companies and drone manufacturers.

“Many large companies and financial institutions have received all the credit and funds they need, with no Fed time limits on payback. Large technology companies such as Uber, that employ mainly gig workers rather than full-time staff, have been able to offload the cost of unemployment benefits to taxpayers.

“Small businesses that represent the majority of all job creation have been able to tap a \$660bn loan scheme. But disbursements have been slow and disorganised, say some SMEs, activists and others. Many small enterprises have found themselves ineligible for loans for bureaucratic reasons, or held to higher employment standards than some bigger businesses...”

“All this smacks of the same old Washington rescue story, circa 2008/2009 — one in which large businesses and well-connected individuals get unlimited support, and others are left on their own.

“This is bad economics and worse politics. It risks repeating the moral hazard problems and political polarisation after the 2008 meltdown, when banks needed bailing out to prevent a depression.

“Back then, the strongest banks went on to thrive, becoming richer and more concentrated than they were before the crisis. Corporate concentration looks likely to increase amid coronavirus too. Meanwhile, millions of Americans lost their homes because they could not make mortgage payments. Many of these were in turn bought cheaply and flipped for massive profits by the same private equity groups now asking for handouts.”⁷

The reaction to the 2008 was a massive success for New Right politics. People in the West believed them despite their clear failure.

From the rich it was a triumph, not a mistake.

It is not a failure in the system. It is the system.

In 2012, many wanted Bernie

⁷ <https://www.ft.com/content/ac732940-9048-11ea-bc44-dbf6756c871a>

Saunders. The Democratic establishment imposed Hillary Clinton, dedicated to Feed-the-Rich policies.⁸ And Trump won.

This time, the electorate were more timid. Bob Dole won. If he wins, it will be Feed-the-Rich again.

Feed-The-Rich Triumphs

“Why Isn’t the Stock Market Reading the Room?”

“The nation is in crisis, but it’s not the market’s job to care...”

“The stock market is not the economy. In fact, as a wise person on TikTok once said, it’s more of a graph of rich people’s feelings. But that raises the question: Why are rich people feeling so optimistic?...”

“The stock market is inherently amoral. It does not and cannot measure the country’s health — politically, socially or even economically... ‘Its sole function, as wonky as it may sound, is to quickly, accurately and unemotionally tabulate investors’ consensus view about the health and prospects of publicly traded companies... The market has rarely been good at accounting for anything else.’”⁹

What’s not said is that rich people control Western politics, and make sure that they are looked after.

Many small businesses will fail. Meaning long-term gains for most of those large enough for a stock exchange listing.

“Why the Stock Market Just Doesn’t Care

“Civil unrest, racial inequality, pandemic, recession, severe unemployment? No problem.”¹⁰

“Bumper CEO stock awards dwarf salary sacrifice...”

“When the chief executive of Dick’s Sporting Goods said in March that he would temporarily relinquish his \$1.1m salary, Edward Stack became one of hundreds of US executives to signal they would share the pain the coronavirus shutdown was inflicting on employees...”

“Mr Stack received more than 950,000 stock options, which he can exercise in stages over the next four years. The initial value of the award on paper was calculated based on the depressed share price in March, but by June 9 it had

⁸ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-mixed-economy-won-the-cold-war/>
⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/09/opinion/stock-market-coronavirus.html>
¹⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/05/business/why-the-stock-market-just-doesnt-care.html>

rebounded by 133 per cent, or \$21.5m in potential gains — far outstripping the sum he had sacrificed in salary.”¹¹

“How to Avoid a ‘Rich Man’s Recovery’

“The economic legacy of the pandemic threatens to be an extraordinary new concentration of wealth...”

“When the United States experienced the collapse of the financial sector in 2008, the federal government took measures that saved banks and stabilized the economy, but it left behind too many others, creating a resentment that festers to this day. Now, amid an even more severe crisis, the Trump administration is making the same mistake, offering programs that may seem neutral and necessary on their face, but which disproportionately aid the wealthy.”¹²

That’s the *New York Times*, traditional liberalism. Not saying that politics dominated by the selfish rich was the norm from the 1980s.

China Defying Western Power

“China not wanting a new world order, it wants this one.”¹³

More exactly, China wants the current system with rules applied more honestly. Not massively biased to suit selfish US interests.

They must know that China could never have the global cultural dominance that the Anglosphere won through successful imperialism and general creativity.

And it’s absurd to say that the West’s real motive is democracy. During the Cold War, the USA caused the destruction of more multi-party democracies than any other state in history. With Indonesia a notable case, where the USA helped and encouraged the mass murder campaign that local right-wingers carried through.

They were still doing it in Venezuela when the left was a clear victor in elections, before the present impasse.

For functional democracy, China with its one-party rule is better at giving its citizens what they actually want than India, Indonesia or most of them.

Including now the USA, where an unfair Electoral College system means that most of the Presidential wins for Republicans happened with a minority of the popular vote.

Bush Junior in 2004 was the last US

¹¹ <https://www.ft.com/content/f6f61677-745a-4afc-b3de-3c68fd45a50e>

¹² <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/18/opinion/covid-economic-recovery-inequality.html>

¹³ http://iht.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/iphone/homepage.aspx#_articleabc69a69-18e2-4cd0-8510-2519e7aa90bf

Republican to have a popular majority. And before that, Bush Senior in 1988.

Snippets

Above The Law?

"The Trump administration has launched an economic and legal offensive on the international criminal court in response to the court's decision to open an investigation into war crimes in Afghanistan carried out by all sides, including the US.

"The US will not just sanction ICC officials involved in the investigation of alleged war crimes by the US and its allies, it will also impose visa restrictions on the families of those officials. Additionally, the administration declared on Thursday that it was launching a counter-investigation into the ICC, for alleged corruption."¹⁴

They've always insisted US citizens should not be judged by foreigners. But punishing those who dare question it is new.

Ireland Within Europe

"Paris to Berlin in just four hours on proposed European ultra-rapid train network...

"Paris to Dublin - from Paris to Brest, taking the Brest-Cork ferry then running from Cork to Dublin. The report describes this route as 'taking on an additional significance in the context of Brexit'."¹⁵

Britain Losing Status

"UK universities suffer worst-ever rankings in world league table

"Asian universities enjoyed their best-ever showing. Twenty-six universities in China, South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan now feature in the top 100."¹⁶

Losing Scotland

"Scots now back independence

"A growing majority of Scots now support independence, according to a new poll.

"It reveals that 54% would vote to leave the rest of the UK, while 46% would want to stay, in the event of another referendum."¹⁷

Helped by massive failures over Covid-19.

"I'm Too Macho For That Virus"

Thanks to the militant ignorance of Trump etc., the pandemic trend is up again.

It is not purely a right-wing error. They failed to learn from Australia, where a right-wing government has been foolish over Climate Change, but smart about the Pandemic.

But it has been a horrible and costly error.

"If 80% of Americans Wore Masks, COVID-19 Infections Would Plummet, New Study Says"¹⁸

"Only three out of 53 countries say US has handled

14 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/11/trump-icc-us-war-crimes-investigation-sanctions>

15 <https://www.thelocal.com/20200619/paris-to-berlin-in-just-four-hours-on-proposed-european-ultra-rapid-train-network>

16 <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jun/10/uk-universities-suffer-worst-ever-rankings-in-world-league-table>

17 <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/poll-growing-majority-scots-now-back-independence-2890692>

18 <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2020/05/masks-covid-19-infections-would-plummet-new-study-says>

coronavirus better than China."¹⁹

Someone should produce a facemask with photo of protestors and **'Free the Covid 19?'**

Or a spoof version of 'I'm Too Sexy', which this comment references.

Caused By China?

Experts have warned for years that there were a host of dangerous viruses out there. Found in wild animals, notable bats. But liable at any time to adapt to humans:

"In the last 20 years, we've had six significant threats - SARS, MERS, Ebola, avian influenza and swine flu ... We dodged five bullets but the sixth got us."²⁰

And many more to come.

Old newsnotes at the magazine website. I also write regular blogs - <https://www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams>

19 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/15/only-three-out-of-53-countries-say-us-has-handled-coronavirus-better-than-china>
20 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-52775386#>

BAD HAIR YEARS

The world has become long-haired,
the barber/hairdresser sit at home
impaired,

the clippers, the scissors breed rust
while Covid-19 indulges in lust.

Where do you buy shoelaces, a watchstrap
or furniture polish,
the schools are shut, as are all strongholds
of knowledge.

The human tide is a trickle, it runs out too far
on superficial fear.

It's a loyal one which to its nation adheres.
This enemy of the human race takes its pick,
despite population control, destruction still has
its kicks.

We lie in the trenches of WW1, according to some.
But can we stay forever, awaiting orders,
plain dumb.

When do we, in our tens of thousands, go over-the-top
to our death.

Or how about WW2 for the fight-back spirit. But who
won that war, have a guess.

So bring on the oldsters and the medals
and empire nostalgia to peddle,
though it was in itself a virus, relegated to commonwealth
level.

Such is the nature of Britain whom in incessant wars
reveals.

Wilson John Haire. 31st May, 2020.

The Remaking of Momentum

Momentum, founded in 2015, will divide into two groups: Forward Momentum and Momentum renewal. The following is an extract from an article by Sam Bright which appeared in BYLINE TIMES on 15 June 2020.

Momentum will this month elect a new National Coordinating Group (NCG) to lead the organisation – following the resignation of its founding father, Jon Lansman. Signalling the first time that Momentum has formally divided into competing factions, there are two groups (typically known as “slates”) contesting this election. Superficially, their manifestos appear aligned. Both want to reform the democratic structures of the organisation; both want to see more devolution of powers to local groups; both want to defend the radical policies of the Corbyn era.

Yet, reading between the lines, and speaking to informed members of the Labour movement, there are some marked differences between the two groups. Indeed, in one sense, they are proxies for a war of control between more senior figures on the Labour left.

One of these factions, Momentum Renewal, is seen as the continuity group, with its candidates broadly aligned with Lansman. Meanwhile its rival, Forward Momentum, is more closely associated with the former Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, who has given his backing to the group.

Corbyn was the most perfect cipher to run for leader, because he’s the perfect character through which you can project your hopes, your aspirations – he is exactly the same as you.

There are also fundamental policy distinctions between the two factions. Forward Momentum appears to advocate a more member-led structure, with decision-making opened up to ordinary activists.

“Since joining, I have been disappointed by some the decisions of Momentum,” says Ana Oppenheim, who is standing as a Forward Momentum candidate in London. “Very often it felt like a mailing list, instead of the movement we were promised, where people can discuss ideas, learn from each other and run independent campaigns. It felt like we were given a line to follow from the top.”

As evidence, Oppenheim points

to the way Momentum treated its members during the recent Labour leadership contest. The group didn’t allow members an open vote on who it should support, instead presenting the Momentum leadership’s favoured candidates (Long-Bailey and Angela Rayner for deputy leader), with members merely allowed to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

At the time, Oppenheim tweeted to say this was an “insult” to members, and hasn’t changed her mind since. “It felt like Momentum was scared of its members – that it’s scared to give us a voice and see what we want,” she says.

While Momentum Renewal also has policies to improve democracy within the movement – claiming that interactions with members are currently “toothless consultations and rubber-stamping exercises” – it has been noted that Renewal is standing four candidates who currently sit on the NCG and have been, at least in part, responsible for the present approach.

Democratising the Party

In the context of the Labour Party as a whole, this debate over the supposed anti-democratic tendencies of Momentum is more than slightly ironic.

Since 2015, Momentum has led the charge for what it perceives as greater democracy in the Labour Party. In particular, the group has called for Labour members to have a greater influence over party policy and for Labour MPs to be more accountable to their local members.

Despite this, Momentum itself doesn’t seem to have lived by these principles.

In late 2016, there was an attempt by the Trotskyist Alliance for Workers’ Liberty (AWL) to infiltrate Momentum and seize power. In response, Lansman put in place a constitution to cement his power and prevent a coup. Ever since, control of the group has been tightly guarded by Lansman and his acolytes, even when they were arguing for more participatory democracy in the Labour Party.

When Labour’s Deputy Leader Tom Watson warned in August 2016 that Trotskyists were attempting to gain a foothold in the party, this claim was seen as a swipe against Momentum. Yet, Momentum fully appreciated this

risk and took action to prevent it – even arguably subverting its own internal democracy to do so.

However, there are some within Labour who think Momentum never sought to be a fully open, democratic movement.

“Momentum was a vehicle to influence the new members who joined Labour after 2015,” says Nathan Yeowell, the director of rival Labour faction Progress – a group that acted as a support network for Tony Blair during his time as Prime Minister. “It was the fan club and shock troop regiment for Jeremy Corbyn and his handlers.”

The current Momentum leadership would doubtless deny this claim, and point to its thousands of supporters as evidence that it has cultivated a healthy sense of democracy and participation. Yet, even those close to the movement are hard pressed to deny its function as the battering-ram of Corbynism.

“I think a legitimate criticism of Momentum is it became too much about supporting the leader’s office, and actually what it should have been doing is mobilising people to support policies,” says Zarb-Cousin. “It became too associated with Corbyn rather than socialism.”

With the Islington rebel now getting accustomed to his old spot on the faded Commons backbenches, Momentum is forced to figure out how to stay relevant without its guiding angel. Counter-intuitively, however, Yeowell claims there hasn’t been the moment of crisis in Momentum that might have been expected.

“There has barely been a ripple from Corbyn’s departure” among left-wing groups, he says. “My argument has always been that Corbyn was the most perfect cipher to run for leader, because he’s the perfect character through which you can project your hopes, your aspirations – he is exactly the same as you.

“He’s been around for a very long time and he’s stuck to his views since the late 1970s, but otherwise in terms of being a top, first-rank politician there’s not an awful lot there, so you can easily project your hopes and aspirations through Corbyn. He’s a prism.”

What Is Forward Momentum?

Labour Briefing 23 April 2020

Forward Momentum is a new time limited campaign that aims to transform Momentum into a democratic, member-led, open, inclusive and action-focused campaigning socialist organization.

Momentum emerged in 2015 as a new vibrant force on the left which sought to build a people-powered movement aimed at transforming the Labour Party, local communities and British society.

Momentum achieved a considerable amount. Most importantly, it provided a focal point for many new young left activists who were drawn into the Labour Party from 2015 by Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. Local meetings of Momentum attracted large enthusiastic attendances. The dynamism and elan of youth was reflected in the highly effective campaign material that Momentum continues to produce even now. Momentum was successful in internal Labour elections, securing a left majority on Labour's NEC.

Yet from the outset Momentum had its flaws and there will be some who question the point of trying to change it now because of them. It lacks a democratic organizational structure. Initially one began to develop from the local groups almost by accident. However, that was swept away in 2017 and many local Momentum groups withered as a consequence.

Momentum members have little say in key decisions. The recent internal referendum on the Labour leadership election, which limited members' choice to affirming or not the leadership's decision, was widely derided. Other political decisions taken by a few leaders in London have been rightly criticized. Momentum - and the Labour Party - have become increasingly disconnected from everyday struggles in local communities. The recent NEC elections saw the left soundly defeated with Momentum and other left groups unable to bring together a joint left slate.

Clearly, something needs to change. However, it would be a mistake to use these shortcomings and failures as an excuse to write off what was by far and away the most successful left organization in the Labour Left's history. Momentum still has 40,000 members which dwarfs by a long way any other organization on the left. We cannot just walk away and abandon them.

Many Labour members will be demoralized by the election defeat and the recent revelations about the activities of the full time officials at Labour HQ. A considerable number could simply leave the Party, which of course is just what the Blairites hope will happen. A transformed Momentum with its considerable resources would be best placed to reach out and retain them.

Some will say that it is not possible to transform Momentum as it is just a private company and how can you possibly change that? That again is an error. 40,000 members are not 'just a private company'. True, the legal basis of Momentum does include two private companies - one manages Momentum's finances and employs staff while the other acts as data controller for the purposes of GDPR. However, they do not own Momentum which is an unincorporated association ultimately owned and controlled by its members.

Forward Momentum has been created as a time-limited campaign to mobilise Momentum's membership to transform the organization. Over the coming months it aims to address the weaknesses whilst preserving what was best.

Forward Momentum is proudly socialist. Its supporters believe in a society run by and in the interests of working people where resources are allocated according to need, not profit.

Forward Momentum seeks to:

transform the organization so that members have far more say. These democratic reforms are not a distraction from key campaigning tasks. Effective campaigns require the active involvement of all the members, including in decision making.

rebuild Momentum in a forward-looking way, with local groups rooted in their communities and workplaces re-establish the creativity and innovation that characterized much of Momentum's

best work.

work with other left organisations to create a united voice.

Forward Momentum is a pluralist campaign. It is not a front for any particular group but, instead, a broad coalition of activists from across the country. Many of those involved are young activists (sadly, that cannot be said for the author of this article). They see the ongoing potential if Momentum can be changed. It would be churlish for older activists to dismiss their efforts and deny their choices.

If the socialist left is to have a future, we cannot retreat back into small meetings passing lengthy and meaningless resolutions. Forward Momentum wants to rebuild Momentum to help give the left the best chance of succeeding in the struggles that lie ahead. We need to fight shoulder to shoulder with them.

What Does Forward Momentum's Win Mean For The Labour Party?

Sienna Rodgers, Editor Labour List

1 July 2020

Keir Starmer scored another big internal win at the latest Labour national executive meeting (NEC) yesterday. The ruling body decided to switch from first-past-the-post to a single transferable (STV) system for member representative places on the NEC. In plain English, the nine local party reps will now be elected by a more proportional system and – according to proponents of the change – this will limit 'hyper-factionalism'. Basically, someone like Ann Black has a much better chance of being elected to the NEC.

Why is this controversial to some on the Labour left, even sparking threats of a legal challenge? Partly because the issue has not gone to conference, and this shows that Starmer can push big changes through the NEC. Partly because by reducing 'one-slate-takes all' results, STV means that even if the left returned to power at leadership level they would struggle more than they did under Jeremy Corbyn to get a majority on the body. In the meantime, the Labour left will be relying on a limited number of reps to stick up for their side on the NEC.

It wasn't all smooth sailing for Starmer in the NEC meeting. He was criticised by Huda Elmi and Lara McNeill over his response to Black Lives Matter and approach to racism in the party. Further details of what happened during the lengthy Zoom call can be found in my detailed write-up (including NEC election timetable) and Alice Perry's super speedy NEC report, which reveals that: policy consultations are being extended; a virtual policy conference will be held in the autumn; local parties will use Microsoft Teams to nominate NEC candidates; David Evans will work on allowing normal local party business to resume online; Labour now has 580,000 members.

In other big internal party news, Forward Momentum has emerged victorious from the Momentum elections that mark the exit of co-founder Jon Lansman. Rival slate Momentum Renewal had high-profile backers, but the Forward campaign started earlier and won over Momentum members with a strong message of change. FM won all 20 member representative places, giving them a majority on the top body, while MR won the four public office holder seats elected by MPs and councillors. We've seen this divide between public office holders and the grassroots in Momentum for a long time, but these results offer a stark illustration.

What does this mean for Starmer and the wider party? There were many more public office holders in Renewal's slate (a point of contention in itself). The Labour leader can be cheered that they have lost: Momentum is now less intertwined with Labour in parliament and local government. Whether these results are good news for the leadership overall, though, depends on how effective you reckon the new Momentum is going to be. Bluntly, you can argue that this is good for Starmer because the left is spread more thinly. But you can also conclude that Momentum will be tough on policy. Forward candidates are strongly opposed to any watered-down positions on migrants' rights, a Green New Deal or democratisation such as mandatory reselection. To think of them as 'soft Momentum' is wrong. And they are determined to organise.

Middle East Eye interview Jeremy Corbyn - Part One

By David Hearst and Peter Osborne in London

Published date: 3 June 2020

David Hearst, editor-in-chief of Middle East Eye, and contributor Peter Osborne sat down with Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn in late May 2020.

David Hearst: Hello, my name is David Hearst, I'm editor of Middle East Eye, with me is Peter Osborne. We are here to interview the Right Honourable Jeremy Corbyn, the former leader of the Labour Party, about what was a tumultuous, but important, leadership of his party.

Mr Corbyn, you have now had time to reflect on what happened during your period as leader. What would you say are the achievements of your time in office?

Jeremy Corbyn: More than trebling Labour Party membership. Changing the political debate on austerity into one of an investment-led economy and changing the political debate on the treatment of the poorest and most vulnerable people within our society. The way in which the government eventually responded to the corona crisis indicates that everything I was saying in the general election in November and December about investment in housing, health, education and support for manufacturing industry jobs has now come full circle. And it's a Tory government that has, in many ways - not perhaps in the way I would have totally wanted - but in many ways, the principle of public spending in order to protect people in a crisis is now accepted as a political norm, it hasn't been, ever since the austerity budget of 2010 that [then-Chancellor of the Exchequer George] Osborne brought in. So, I'm proud of that.

I'm also proud of the way in which we developed the idea of a national education service,

developed the idea of a green industrial revolution, and perhaps not as developed as I would have wanted, but we did go in the direction of a human rights-, peace- and democracy-based foreign policy, including the proposal of a war powers act and a re-examination of our role in the world. And so, I'm proud of a lot of what we achieved and in those areas, obviously very, very sad at the election result. In a sense, Brexit was a bridge that was too big for the Labour Party to traverse between strongly Remain areas, that were very strong for Labour, such as in London and my own constituency, for example; and equally strong for Labour areas in the north-east, south Yorkshire and the north-west that were strongly for Leave. I tried to bridge that gap with the proposal that we should do a trade deal with the European Union and put that alongside Remain as a choice for the people. And that was a decision taken at last year's Labour Party conference, and so it turned out not to be possible.

So obviously, I'm very, very sad at that, but I remain determined that, personally, I will spend the rest of my life as I spent my life up to now: campaigning on the issues that I strongly believe in and representing people who are going through such terrible times in Covid. I'll just say this about Covid - because it does dominate everything - it's exposed the health inequalities around the world. It's exposed the interdependence of countries around the world and it's exposed the risk to even healthy people in healthy countries of a pandemic like this. It's also exposed the inequalities in our own society.

Where we're sitting now, it's in my office, in my constituency. Three minutes' walk from here,

there are several large housing estates. Those people going through lockdown, small flat, three or four children, no balcony, no play space, very hard for them to stay in lockdown. A more affluent middle-class family in a nice house in the suburbs, garden, work at home, it's not that difficult. And these are the people that are suffering through this, and it's the black and minority ethnic communities and the oldest, poorest and most vulnerable people that are dying because of Covid. It's exposed the fissures in our society. We've got to heal them.

DH: Do you think that shift you're describing leftwards, ie you claim to have shifted the agenda leftwards, is a permanent shift or a temporary one under Boris Johnson?

JC: I think it's a permanent shift because when people go out every Thursday night to applaud the NHS, it's very interesting. The whole country does it, everybody, and they recognise we need our National Health Service. Now, there might be arguments about how it's run and so on, and so on. Fine. But the principle of healthcare free at the point of need is one that is now universally accepted in the whole of society. And those people are going out applauding the NHS are now demanding PPE, are now demanding decent pay. And they're no longer tolerating horrible language like "unskilled migrant workers", who are care workers and cleaners. They suddenly realise if you didn't have a good cleaner in a hospital, you're going to get disease. They are skilled workers as well.

Peter Osborne: I think I could add more to your list of achievements, for instance you were ridiculed about universal broadband,

that was your call and now the government's going to do that. You can argue, very convincingly, that you won the argument in the election and it wasn't just before coronavirus. Already, that first Rishi Sunak budget [on 11 March] incorporated an awful lot of your fiscal arguments and indeed, you know the Johnson government now is absurdly reckless compared to what you were proposing. But, there is this but... you know, the election result and those red wall seats, you know, the former mining communities...

JC: Obviously, devastated by the result. In fact, the number of people [who] actually switched from Labour to Conservative was quite small, about 300,000 I believe. You can argue about the figures, but it wasn't huge. The election resulted, as we all know, in a relatively close result, and it was a two-party race almost back to the 1950s map of Britain when, well, 89, 90 percent –

PO: - 95 percent –

JC: - 95 percent of the population voted either Labour or Conservative, it was back to that. This time, there was some growth in the Liberal Democrat [vote], but also the Brexit Party and its shenanigans of dropping candidates, putting candidates up in various place and so on obviously was a factor in all of this. The Brexit Party was always really a tool of the Tories anyway, in some form or another, in my view.

PO: But you didn't answer the question. Sorry [phone ringing interruption]. I mean, but you didn't answer the question. How do you explain the fact that these absolute core Labour seats, ex-mining seats in many cases, switch from your Labour Party to the Johnson Tory Party?

JC: The results we got there were bad in 2019, but in some of the constituencies, they were not great in 2017. We did very well in big, urban areas in 2017, but we didn't do so well in some of those older industrial, white, working-class areas except where there had been a

complete change in the structure of the local community.

The sense of disillusionment in those areas with [the] modern economy is huge, and they've also had a steady diet for five years of unbelievable attacks on the Labour Party, on me personally and it had an effect. There's no question about that, it has an effect, if you're told, day after day in your daily newspaper, that the leader of the Labour Party is an evil person. Something gets through.

PO: It's more than just the press, isn't it? I mean in those areas, they were Leave areas, they obviously felt that your message was not really –

JC: Yeah. They were not in favour of the offer we'd put forward of a referendum between an agreement with the EU and Remain. I was faced with a problem after 2016 from the referendum then, that the vast majority of Labour members, Labour Party members, were for Remain. The majority supported a concept of a second referendum, which was a huge issue, as you know, up until... well, for a long way through all this it's been a huge issue. And a majority of Labour voters were in favour of Remain, but a substantial minority, probably 40 percent, 35, 40 percent, something like that, were for leave. And the Labour Party Conference of last year had this very difficult chasm it had to cross. And they came to a compromise that was agreed by, put forward by all of the unions, both those very strongly Remain unions like TSSA Unison and those very strongly Leave unions like ASLEF and Bakers [Food and Allied Workers'] Union. And the bigger unions were reflective of their membership on this. And so, it was a compromise that clearly didn't find favour with Labour voters in those areas. But had we gone in any other direction, I'm quite clear we would have lost support in London and the south-east. And there are, what, nearly 57... I think it is... Labour MPs in London, for example.

DH: So you're damned if you do and damned if you don't –

JC: Whatever we'd done was going to be difficult, and in the election campaign I was trying to point out that if we reached an agreement with the EU on trade, it would be about protection of workers' rights, environmental standards, consumer rights, and it would not be a bargain basement economy to please Donald Trump, which I suspect is what Boris Johnson was then trying to do. What he'll try and do now? I'm not entirely sure.

Fundamentally, whether we're in or out of the European Union, a Labour government led by us would be one that would want high-quality jobs and an investment-led economy, hence the National Investment Bank, hence the infrastructure investment, hence the green industrial evolution, hence the broadband offer that we made during the election campaign. And I tried to get that message across.

DH: Did you personally get Brexit wrong, in the sense that there's this persistent claim that you didn't campaign hard enough? That yes, in the referendum, it was a bit wishy-washy, that you pleased virtually no one? Looking back on your time, are there honestly points at which you would say: "Actually, I should have done something else?"

JC: Well, in the referendum in 2016, the Labour policy was for Remain and reform of the EU because the EU, yes, it has quite good basic environmental standards, it has quite good intentions on workers' rights, they're not as strong as they ought to be, but it also has a bit of a penchant for neoliberal economics. Look at the way it treated Greece, look at the lectures that they're given to southern European countries during the financial crisis. And my view was that if we remained in the European Union, ours would be a voice for interventionist economics, would be for full employment, would be for minimum welfare

standards and a European-wide minimum employment standards, because at the moment there are very low wages paid in eastern Europe and that means that people leave eastern Europe to work somewhere else and send the money home. And the issues of inequality and the treatment of those migrant workers when they come to western Europe is disgraceful. So mine would have been a voice that would have been very, very different.

So, in the referendum campaign I was trying to articulate why I thought we should remain and reform the European Union, I was not going to go down the road of the Better Together campaign, which was so disastrous for Labour during the [2014] Scottish referendum. But the media during the referendum campaign were quite interesting, because from their point of view, the only show in town was the blue-on-blue war. So, the stories, day in, day out, were between [then-prime minister David] Cameron and Boris Johnson, basically, who were obviously on opposite sides on the EU referendum issue.

Did I campaign hard enough? I did more visits, more, more miles, more meetings, more rallies than the rest of the shadow cabinet put together. I spoke at rallies on Perranporth beach in Cornwall, and I spoke to fishermen in Aberdeen. I travelled the length and breadth of the country on it. And so, did I not do enough? I think that is, frankly, a bit unfair. Nobody said that during the campaign. They only sort of concocted the story afterwards.

PO: George Osborne I think was the first to blame –

JC: And how much did he do during the campaign? [Laughs] He was probably busy applying for his seven jobs then.

PO: Following up, I mean, given what you're saying about a more human, more worker-friendly Europe, do you now feel that you should have backed Mrs May's deal? Because it was open to you at any moment, to throw the weight of the Labour Party behind Mrs May's deal, which would have been a much softer Brexit, potentially even

continued membership of the single market, conceivably the customs union. Did you ever feel that in retrospect, that was a mistake?

JC: We did go into negotiations with her. We were serious about it and we went on for six, seven, weeks and, we had teams of people involved dealing with the environmental aspects, dealing with the workers' rights aspects and dealing with future trade arrangements. We made quite a lot of progress on the workers' rights side of things. Becky led on that part, [shadow secretary of state for business] Becky Long-Bailey. We didn't make as much progress as I wanted on environmental standards and protection of those, and it seemed to me that that was the area that we could not reach agreement on. And so, there were, obviously, a lot of discussions and I deliberately made sure the teams doing the negotiating were balanced between the individual views of people that were known to be Remain and known to be Leave in the talks that went on. Eventually, the shadow cabinet concluded the talks had reached their natural conclusion. So, we then left them at that point.

Could we have done a deal? I'm not sure that deal would have stuck within the parliamentary Labour Party anyway if we had done a deal. The parliamentary Labour Party, as you know, was divided on the subject and indeed, the deal that finally went through - the Johnson proposal, the one bill that Johnson put up - went through with Labour support, not mine, but with a minority of Labour MPs, voted for it from strongly Leave areas, thinking it would save their seats.

PO: But the thing is, now we've got what looks like the ultimate hard Brexit, no deal Brexit, from [the] Johnson government. A year ago, just over a year ago, there was a deal, there was on the table a soft Brexit from Mrs May's government, which you could have led Labour towards.

JC: Well, Labour as a whole were not going to buy into that and one of the litmus tests of this was the referendum issue. There was never a parliamentary majority for a second referendum. The closest it

came was a minority of 30 I think, or some, something around there, and there was never a parliamentary majority for that. And, looking back on it, could things have been done differently? Well, obviously, things can always be done differently. Would the result have been any different? I'm not really sure. I think the problem was that many parts of this country have seen no investment for a very long time. They've seen deindustrialisation that started in the 1980s, have never seen the replacement of cherished and now lost industries with good quality jobs. And you have communities where there's very low levels of union membership, there's very high levels of insecure work and very high levels of institutional poverty within those areas. And our economic success in the past has actually been predicated on cheap Chinese imports as much as anything else. And so, the economic system that developed in this country during the 90s and early 2000s was actually [based on the] ever-reducing price of Chinese imports, a deindustrialisation at the same time, the replacement of manufacturing jobs by service industry jobs.

And we therefore have a fundamental economic weakness in Britain, which is not the same particularly in Germany, because you have essentially a kind of agreement across the political spectrum in Germany that it is the job and duty of government to be involved in industry and major investment decisions. [Also] to a slightly lesser extent in France. And so, we have a structural problem which has to be addressed, which is why [then shadow chancellor] John McDonnell, Becky and myself made a great deal about investment in a green industrial future for this country, were very serious about that.

Part Two, featuring the media attacks on Corbyn and foreign policy matters, will be published in the September Labour Affairs

More Witch Hunting?

David Rosenberg, Jewish Socialists' Group, posted 4 June 2020:

"Hazuan Hashim is one of four officers of Liverpool Wavertree Constituency suspended from the Labour Party very recently. He was the BAME officer for the constituency. Other officers suspended include the Chair, Secretary and Women's Officer. I don't know them personally but I do know Haz.

Back in 2011 I was part of the committee that organised the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street, celebrating the day that communities of the East End came together in huge numbers to repulse an invasion by a menacing antisemitic, fascist movement that would have terrorised the mainly Jewish streets of the East End. In 2011 there was a march and an indoor festival and several events in the days that followed, one of which was the premiere of a brilliant film called "From Cable Street to Brick Lane" pulling together the struggles against antisemitism and fascism of the 1930s East End with the struggles in the 1970s and 1990s of the Bangladeshi community against the violent threat from the National Front and later the BNP.

The film-makers were Hazuan Hashim and Phil Maxwell, two individuals I have known over many years, whose documentation of the fight against racism and bigotry of all kinds has been central to their life's work. Part of the film includes very moving reflections by multi-ethnic school students about their experience of racism in the present and how they relate to difference and nationalism. I pop up a few times on screen – they filmed my Anti-Fascist Footprints walk – to tell some of the narrative. I helped them much more behind the scenes. The film features Jewish witnesses and participants in the struggles of the 1930s. It is made with real love as well as rock solid anti-racism politics.

It was also made under great stress as Phil was battling a life-threatening illness, with Hazuan not only his collaborator, but also partner and carer - two complete mentshen (human beings).

I was very sad that some years back they moved out of the East End to settle in Liverpool. Our loss but Liverpool's gain - and they picked up where they left off continuing to make films that aid the fight for a better world - and also continuing as Labour Party members to fight for social justice. Their new constituency was Liverpool Wavertree, served by Luciana Berger, a right wing Labour MP who was parachuted in and who struggled to hold wider support among local members. She has now left the Labour Party having played a leading role in the factional war against Jeremy Corbyn's leadership.

Having left, she joined Change UK and then the LibDems and stood unsuccessfully in Barnet where she was parachuted in again to replace the Lib Dem candidate who had already been chosen to contest that seat. In the run up to the General Election her rhetoric against Labour as a Lib Dem was little different from what she had been saying for years as a Labour member and MP.

There is no doubt that she also suffered hostility from an entirely different source in Liverpool for different reasons. She was targeted by far right activists for being Jewish, something that was condemned by all anti-racists and local LP members, who offered and gave their solidarity, but she allowed, and very much encouraged a mythology to develop that blurred these disgusting attacks from the far right with

criticism from the left of the Labour Party that was made on entirely legitimate, democratic, political grounds. She dishonestly portrayed herself as a victim of antisemitism and thuggishness from local LP members.

When she stood down she was replaced by Paula Barker – a socialist MP with a strong trade union background. Phil and Haz worked with Paula and made films to support her campaign at the General Election.

Recently though they were among many local members dismayed by some particular comments within an article that Paula Barker wrote for the local Jewish newspaper which was ostensibly trying, quite rightly, to mend fences between the Labour Party and the Jewish community that had been strained and got mixed in nationally with a war by the Tories and the establishment in general against Corbyn and the Labour left. In that article she wrote about Luciana Berger: "Luciana leaving the Labour Party was a shock to many and I find it deeply regrettable that she felt she could no longer stay" – a comment which seems to give credence to the very unfair factional spin that Luciana Berger put on events in Liverpool.

Four Liverpool Wavertree CLP officers (Chair, Secretary, Women's Officer and BAME officer – Hazuan) wrote a carefully worded letter in an internal CLP members forum expressing their praise for many actions that Paula Barker had done since becoming MP, but also registering their surprise that Barker "given the opportunity this article afforded ... failed to clearly and unequivocally defend Wavertree CLP from the slanders thrown at us over the last two years. Our disappointment is especially acute because we believed we now had an MP who could offer sincere support for Liverpool's Jewish communities alongside a principled defence of the political integrity of the members of the CLP and the constituency which she represents.

That letter was made public not by those who wrote it. The four officers who signed it have now been suspended by the Labour Party.

A report on the matter by the Jewish Chronicle claims that the four "had criticised their own MP as she tried to reach out to the local Jewish community," and quotes a Labour party spokesperson on the matter saying that the Party treats "all complaints of antisemitism extremely seriously."

"Antisemitism. If my caring, socialist, anti-racist, anti-fascist film-maker friend Hazuan Hashim is an antisemite, I'm Dominic Cummings."

Post (25 June) by David Rosenberg of the Jewish Socialists' Group and Jewish Voice for Labour

Conspiracy theories are all about unearthing secret plotting by sinister powerful groups, revealing a hidden hand. Anyone who has studied the writings of fascist groups over many decades will be familiar with their antisemitic conspiracy theories, which see certain Jewish individuals or small groups as responsible for social, economic and political developments which they abhor.

Fascists, internationally, rail against mass immigration to the West. They claim to see the "hidden hand" of Jews behind this "Great Replacement". Very right wing politicians in several countries especially Trump and Orban and Netanyahu, and

certain key Tory MPs here like Rees Mogg see the hidden hand of Hungarian Jew George Soros behind protest movements and pro-migrant, pro-refugee movements.

When Keir Starmer and the Board of Deputies President, Marie Van der Zyl berated Maxine Peake's claim that American police had learned a certain potentially deadly police tactic from training sessions with Israeli counterparts, and berated (and sacked Rebecca Long-Bailey) for sharing Peake's interview, describing it unequivocally as a "Jewish Conspiracy Theory", they emptied that term of all its meaning.

I commented yesterday that this particular tactic – police kneeling on the neck of an individual they are apprehending – goes back several decades in America's policing of black communities. It precedes any cooperation with Israeli services. But her general point was sound: that Israeli units have run seminars for American counterparts. An article published in the respected liberal Israeli daily, Ha'aretz, in August 2017 reported that 24,000 American police were trained by their Israeli counterparts. There is no conspiracy here. The information is out in the open. The people leading the seminars are the Israeli National Police. Peake's remarks, and those in the Ha'aretz article, are not a comment on Jews in general but a comment on a particular unit of the Israeli state.

If we allow the slippage that criticism of Israeli state units/office holders is "antisemitic", then we will place off-limits any criticism of anything oppressive or discriminatory or lethal done by anyone Israeli.

My two questions to Keir Starmer are: Can you explain how Maxine Peake's comments represent a "Jewish conspiracy theory", rather than just saying that they do?

And how does Rebecca Long Bailey's tweeting of an article which, at worst, alleges that an Israeli state unit (not Jews in general) influenced specific policing methods in America, compare with Shadow Cabinet postholder Rachel Reeves' glowing admiration broadcast for the vociferous antisemite and Hitler/Nazi supporting Nancy Astor? You have taken no action against her, or even condemned her comments of admiration. Why?

Here is Jeff Halper's very informative Ha'aretz article from August 2017, which illuminates Israel's global role in Homeland Security/internal counter insurgency/methods and equipment for "pacification of troublesome populations", and gives details of several Israeli companies that provide this. (See the paragraph that begins at "2." in particular. My questions for Marie Van der Zyl are: which facts in Halper's article do you disagree with? Has the American born Israeli Jew, Jeff Halper said anything antisemitic here? if so, what?

Jeff Halper, Ha'aretz 10 August 2017

Whenever a terrorist attack happens such as the one last week in Barcelona, Israel politicians and security "experts" get on TV to criticize European naiveté. If only they understood terrorism as we do and took the preventive measures we do, they say, they would suffer far less attacks. Most infamous in this regard were the remarks of Israeli Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz after the Brussels bombing in March 2016, in which 34 people died.

Rather than convey his condolences in the name of the Israeli government, he scolded the Belgians in the most patronizing way possible. "If in Belgium they continue to eat chocolate, enjoy life and parade as great liberals and democrats while not taking account of the fact that some of the Muslims who are there are organizing acts of terror," he pronounced, "they will not be able to fight against them."

The Belgians reacted angrily, and asserted the position of most European governments: "While we will continue to be vigilant and take the necessary precautions, we are not going to forsake our freedoms and political openness to become copies of Israel." For they understand that Netanyahu's government is peddling something far more insidious than mere precautions – even more than the weapons, surveillance and security systems and models of population control that is the bread-and-butter of Israeli exports. What Israel is urging onto the Europeans – and Americans, Canadians, Indians, Mexicans, Australians and anyone else who will listen – is nothing less than an entirely new concept of a state, the Security State.

What is a Security State? Essentially, it is a state that places security above all else, certainly above democracy, due process of law and human rights, all of which it considers "liberal luxuries" in a world awash in terrorism. Israel presents itself, no less, than the model for countries of the future. You Europeans and others should not be criticizing us, say Katz and Netanyahu, you should be imitating us. For look at what we have done. We have created a vibrant democracy from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River that provides its citizens with a flourishing economy and personal security – even though half the population of that country are terrorists (i.e., non-citizen Palestinians living in isolated enclaves of the country). If we can achieve that, imagine what we can offer those of you threatened by terrorist attacks?

In a brilliant shift in imaging, Israel has managed to turn 50 years of Palestinian resistance to occupation into a cottage industry. By labelling it "terrorism," it has not only delegitimized the Palestinian struggle but has transformed the occupied territories in a laboratory of counterinsurgency and population control, the cutting edges of both foreign wars and domestic repression. It has transformed tactics of control and their accompanying weapons of surveillance systems into marketable products. No wonder, as Netanyahu constantly reminds us, "the world" loves Israel. From China to Saudi Arabia, from India to Mexico, from Eritrea to Kazakhstan, Israel supplies the means by which repressive regimes control their restless peoples.

Israel's vast military reach is well-documented. It extends to more than 130 countries and brought in \$6.5 billion in sales in 2016. Less known but more corrosive to civil rights are Israel's security exports. Three examples:

1. Israel harnesses foreign security agencies and police forces to lobby for Security State practices in their own countries. It scoffs at the unwillingness of Western democracies to employ ethnic and racial profiling, as Israel security and police do at Ben-Gurion International Airport and throughout the country. In specific contexts like airports profiling may indeed be efficient – Ben-Gurion is certainly one of the safest airports in the world – but it comes at the price of humiliating and delaying those targeted. When extended outward into society, however, it loses that effectiveness and almost invariably turns into a legalized method of intimidation against whatever populations a government seeks to control.

2. The Israeli national police holds dozens of training programs and conferences with police forces from around the world, with an emphasis not on domestic police tactics but rather on “internal counterinsurgency” and the pacification of troublesome populations. The Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange Center in the U.S. claims to have had 24,000 American police trained by their Israeli counterparts. Unlike other Western countries that erect a wall between their militaries that conduct operations abroad and their domestic security and police agencies charged with ensuring the security but also the civil rights of their citizens, Israel has no such internal constraints. The IDF and the police are one interlocked unit, with paramilitary forces – the Shin Beit, the Border Police, Homefront Command, Yasam and others – further connecting them. Thus in Israel the distinction between citizens with civil rights and non-citizen “suspects” and targets gets lost, and that is a distinction Israeli police try to erase in their training of foreign police as well.

3. Israel is a world leader in securing cities, mega-events and “non-governable” zones. There is a direct link between its lock-down of Palestinian neighbourhoods, villages and refugee camps and the marketing of such tactics to local police to create sanitized “security zones” and “perimeter defences” around financial cores, government districts, embassies, venues where the G-8 and NATO hold their summits meetings, oil platforms and fuel depots, conference centers in “insecure” Third World settings, tourist destinations, malls, airports and seaports, sites of mega events and the homes and travel routes of the wealthy. So involved is Israel in Trump's border wall that is nicknamed the “Palestine-Mexico border.”

There the Israeli firm Magna BSP, which provides surveillance systems surrounding Gaza, has partnered with U.S. firms to enter the lucrative “border security” market. NICE Systems, whose technicians are graduates of the IDF's 8200 surveillance unit. Privacy International investigated how the autocratic governments of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan managed to monitor human rights activists, journalists and other citizens within and outside their countries, revealing the most intimate details of their personal lives. “The biggest players,” concluded Human Rights Watch, “are multinationals with offices in Israel – NICE Systems and

Verint.”

In its ultimate form the Security State peddled by Netanyahu and Katz is merely a form of police state whose populace is easily manipulated by an obsession with security. Israel's model is especially invidious because it works; witness the pacification of the Palestinians. That seems like a potent selling point indeed. The problem is that it turns a country's own people into Palestinians without rights. It would seem that the Security State can be reconciled with democracy – after all, Israel markets itself as “the only democracy in the Middle East.” But only the world's privileged few will enjoy the democratic protections of the Security State, as do Israeli Jews. The masses, those who resist repression and exclusion from the capitalist system, those who struggle for genuine democracy, are doomed to be global Palestinians. The Israelization of governments, militaries and security forces means the Palestinianization of most of the rest of us.

Jeff Halper is an Israeli anthropologist, the head of the Israel Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHN) and the author of *War Against the People: Israel, the Palestinians and Global Pacification* (London, Pluto Books, 2015).

Board of Deputies Statement on Meeting with Keir Starmer

“Things are moving in the right direction, albeit with a long way still to go”: Statement following latest video meeting between Labour Leader Keir Starmer and representatives of the Jewish community

19th June 2020

Today, Labour Leader Keir Starmer held a video meeting with representatives of the UK Jewish community from the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Jewish Leadership Council, the Community Security Trust and the Jewish Labour Movement.

After the meeting, Keir Starmer, Leader of the Labour Party, said:

“I am thankful to the Jewish community leaders who gave me their time and their views today. I am in no doubt that it will take time to rebuild trust between the Jewish community and the Labour Party. Some of the problems will not be fixed overnight. But I was pleased to update the meeting today on the work which has already taken place since we last met. We are beginning to wash clean the stain of antisemitism from our Party. At today's meeting, I also emphasised that it is not enough for the Labour Party to have an effective system for dealing with antisemitism. I want to lead a Party without any antisemitism. I also reiterated Labour's commitment to implementing, in full, the recommendations of the EHRC's inquiry.”

Speaking on behalf of the Jewish delegation, Marie van der Zyl, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Jonathan Goldstein, Chair of the Jewish Leadership Council, Gerald Ronson CBE, Chair of the Community Security Trust and Mike Katz, Chair of the Jewish Labour Movement, said:

“We were grateful to Keir Starmer for making the time for today’s meeting. We began the meeting with a discussion of the current Coronavirus crisis and an expression of our solidarity with black people in the face of the reminders of their experience of racism on both sides of the Atlantic. We then moved on to consider the progress that had been made on tackling antisemitism since Sir Keir’s election as leader and our first meeting with him a few days after that. There was broad agreement that things are moving in the right direction, albeit with a long way still to go due to the scale of the mess that Sir Keir inherited.

We urged Sir Keir to: Take a tough line with MPs, senior Labour figures and other members who still trade in the tropes and behaviours of the last few years; Continue to make strenuous efforts to detoxify the culture of the Party in relation to the Jewish community, including the accusation that antisemitism was falsely used by Jews to smear the former leadership; Publish the documents relevant to EHRC inquiry at the earliest opportunity that he is able after it is released; and Proceed with all due haste to the implementation of his pledge to implement an independent disciplinary process, beyond the reach of factional considerations.

Overall, we give credit where credit is due and thank Sir Keir for the progress made so far, and hope to be able to reflect on further advances in the fight against antisemitism in the Labour Party at our next meeting in October.”

The Jewish community’s delegation comprised:

Marie van der Zyl, President, The Board of Deputies of British Jews, Gillian Merron, Chief Executive, The Board of Deputies of British Jews, Phil Rosenberg, Director of Public Affairs, The Board of Deputies of British Jews, Jonathan Goldstein, Chair, The Jewish Leadership Council, Claudia Mendoza, Joint Interim Chief Executive Officer, The Jewish Leadership Council, Gerald Ronson CBE, Chair, The Community Security Trust, Mark Gardner, Incoming Chief Executive, The Community Security Trust, Rebecca Filer, National Organiser, The Jewish Labour Movement, Mike Katz, Chair, The Jewish Labour Movement, Peter Mason, National Secretary, The Jewish Labour Movement, Lord Jonathan Kestenbaum, Sir Trevor Chinn CVO

Unravelling the sacking of Rebecca Long-Bailey

Jewish Voice For Labour statement 25 Jun 2020

Thousands of Labour Party members were shocked to learn that Rebecca Long-Bailey has been sacked from her position in the Shadow Cabinet based on her retweet of an interview with Maxine Peake, who is, incidentally, one of her own constituents. The allegation was that she had engaged in a “conspiracy theory that Israel was responsible for the death of George Floyd”

Is that what she did? Is that what she said? Was that even what was in the article that she retweeted? No, no and no.

Keir Starmer said this to the BBC “The sharing of

that article was wrong... because the article contained anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and I have therefore stood Rebecca Long-Bailey down from the shadow cabinet.” And “I’ve made it my first priority to tackle anti-Semitism and rebuilding trust with the Jewish community is a number one priority for me.”

Where was this antisemitic conspiracy theory? Within a wide ranging interview, including discussion about her new film, what highly respected actor Maxine Peake, actually said was:

“Systemic racism is a global issue ... The tactics used by the police in America, kneeling on George Floyd’s neck, that was learnt from seminars with Israeli secret services.”

How is it antisemitic to refer to this tactic of control? We know that knee on neck is used by Israel (and we know it, not least because this has been photographed on many occasions). We also know that some US police forces have sent officers to Israel and/or welcomed officers from Israel as part of their training. The extent of that training has been attested to by Amnesty USA. And we do know the Minneapolis Police, responsible for the death of George Floyd was one such police force.

What we can’t know is whether that particular technique was taught to US police, and specifically to members of the Minneapolis force. Independent witnesses are not available. A spokesperson for the Israeli Police has even denied that Israeli police use it domestically – despite profuse photographic evidence to the contrary.

Despite these disputed and in some cases unknowable facts, there is enough evidence to support Maxine Peake’s inference that the knee on neck technique has an Israeli origin, with a plausible even probable transmission mechanism to the US. Coming to such a conclusion based on the available evidence is one that many people would share with Ms Peake. It is not antisemitic. It doesn’t hold Israel responsible for the death of George Floyd in any way. Many people will see such collaboration as deeply problematic. But it too is also not antisemitic.

The ongoing and widespread allegations of antisemitism in the Labour Party do not have to be based on fact, and this is guilt by association to the nth degree. Yet again, this nonsense, this sending prominent Corbyn supporters to the wolves, masks the serious antisemitism in our society, some of which does exist in the Labour Party. Pledging to address this is right, pledging to punish people (and it is almost always leftwing people) for something that only those determined to interpret every statement that refers to Israel in the slightest negative way as antisemitism is wrong and dangerous.

Letter to Israeli Ambassador

from Luciana Berger, Malcolm Rifkind, Simon Schama,
Howard Jacobson, Vivien Duffield and 35 others

Published on 04.06.2020

The following letter was sent by leading members of the UK Jewish community to Israel's Ambassador to the Court of St James's, Mark Regev:

Dear Mark,

We are writing to convey our concern and alarm at the policy proposal to unilaterally annex areas of the West Bank, as outlined in the coalition agreement of Israel's new government.

Despite the decades we have invested in strengthening the relationships between Israel, the UK and British Jews and despite the leadership roles many of us have held or still hold, we are writing in a personal capacity. Our concerns are, however, shared by large numbers of the British Jewish community, including many in its current leadership, even if they choose not to express them. As such, we would ask you to convey frankly our unprecedented level of concern to the Government of Israel.

We are yet to see an argument that convinces us, committed Zionists and passionately outspoken friends of Israel, that the proposed annexation is a constructive step. Instead, it would in our view be a pyrrhic victory intensifying Israel's political, diplomatic and economic challenges without yielding any tangible benefit.

It would have grave consequences for the Palestinian people most obviously. Israel's international standing would also suffer and it is incompatible with the notion of Israel as both a Jewish and democratic state. Numerous former Israeli military and security officials have unequivocally stated that they regard it as a reckless move that would have adverse consequences for Israel's security and its future as a Jewish democracy. We have no reason to doubt their assessment.

On the ground, it will be perceived as evidence of Israel's rejection of negotiated peace and a two-state solution. This threatens to inflame tensions among the Palestinians – whose president has already announced the suspension of agreements with Israel and the U.S. – undermine the Palestinian Authority perhaps fatally, destabilise Israel's strategically important peace with Jordan and Egypt and undermine the growing cooperation between Israel and the Sunni Arab states while emboldening Iran and its proxies.

That is not to say we believe a two-state solution can be easily achieved in the short-term. We appreciate the crucial role Palestinian violence, abandonment of negotiations and rejections of offers made by previous Israeli leaders have played. We are not opposed to Israel taking unilateral steps if such steps were to enhance Israel's security, advance peace and protect Israel's existence as a Jewish and democratic state. Annexation proposals meet none of those criteria.

The damage to Israel's international reputation, however, will be enormous. The British prime minister has, like many European leaders, written to his Israeli counterpart

imploping him not to pursue annexation. The UK's Middle East Minister, James Cleverly, has stated that the UK government will oppose it. The British government will come under increasing pressure on this issue and similar reactions can be expected across the European Union, in particular from the governments of Germany and France.

Annexation would be a shot in the arm for the BDS movement and the delegitimization of Israel. It will take calls for sanctions against Israel away from the fringes of the far-left and catapult them into the mainstream of the political discourse.

The impact on Diaspora Jewry and its relationship with the State of Israel would also be profound. The British Jewish community is an overwhelmingly Zionist community with a passionate commitment to Israel. We proudly advocate for Israel but have been helped in doing so by Israel's status as a liberal democracy, defending itself as necessary but committed to maintaining both its Jewish and democratic status.

A policy of annexation would call that into question, polarising Jewish communities and increasing the divisive toxicity of debate within them, but also alienating large numbers of Diaspora Jews from engaging with Israel at all. Under these circumstances, the commitment to Israel that has been such a vital glue in sustaining and uniting Jewish communities, as well an asset for Israel, will decline.

On many occasions we have been asked to make Israel's case in the UK. We have always endeavoured to use whatever tools we have at our disposal to nurture a more sympathetic environment for Israel in this country. If asked to make the case for West Bank annexations, however, we will not be able to do so.

Whether it starts with smaller pieces of land – which we will no doubt be asked to point out would likely be part of Israel under the terms of any deal – or large swathes of territory, and whether it is called “annexation” or “extending sovereignty,” annexation will make a principled global defence of Israel a near-impossible task.

We therefore ask you to convey our opinion that it is a policy that not only lacks merit, but would pose an existential threat to the traditions of Zionism in Britain, and to Israel as we know it.

Yours sincerely,

Celia Atkin, Lord Jeremy Beecham, Bill Benjamin, Luciana Berger, Laurence Brass, Sir Trevor Chinn, Nicola Cobbold, David M. Cohen, Sir Ronald Cohen, Smadar Karni Cohen, Sir Mick Davis, Sir Lloyd Dorfman, Dame Vivien Duffield, Dr Arabella Duffield, Lord Daniel Finkelstein, Stephen Grabiner, Richard Harrington, Sir Ben Helfgott MBE, Maurice Helfgott, Alan Jacobs, Howard Jacobson, Senior Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, Anthony Julius, Isaac Kaye, Steven Kaye, Dr Edward Kessler, Douglas Krikler, James Libson, Laura Marks OBE, Lord Jon Mendelsohn, Lord Parry Mitchell, Baroness Julia Neuberger, Martin Paisner CBE, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, Sir Simon Schama, Simon Sebag-Montefiore, Clive Sheldon QC, Sir Harry Solomon, Vivian Wineman, Lord Robert Winston, Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, Marc Worth

Israeli Ambassador's response to letter-writers

As the full letter from Mark Regev was not accessible the following is taken from a report in Jewish News, 9 June 2020.

Writing on June 8, Ambassador Regev said: "The policy of consecutive Israeli governments has in fact always been that Israeli law must be extended to parts of the West Bank as part of any final status reality.

"I know you understand that the pre-1967 lines brought Israel neither peace nor security, and it was for this reason that, in the immediate aftermath of the Six Day War, the Labour governments of Levi Eshkol and Golda Meir rejected returning to those frontiers. "

He added: "Eshkol extended Israeli law into formerly Jordanian-controlled territory, and under Meir's government, the Allon Plan was developed, which recognised the particular strategic significance of the Jordan Valley and Golan Heights. Menachem Begin applied Israeli sovereignty to the latter some three decades ago.

"Yitzhak Rabin, who led Israel to victory in the Six Day War and as Prime Minister signed the Oslo Accords with the Palestinians, firmly believed that any sustainable peace would have to be built on robust security arrangements.

"In his final speech before the Knesset, barely a month before his murder by a hateful Jewish extremist, Rabin outlined his vision of a final status peace, which he said would demand Israeli control over the Jordan Valley 'in the broadest meaning of that term'."

But responding, Mr Regev said: "Israel's friends in the international community have long understood secure borders to be a cornerstone of any durable peace." He added: "I know many friends of Israel here in the United Kingdom share that view."

The ambassador also attempted to defend President Trump's much criticised Middle East 'Peace Plan' which he said builds on the "core principles" of Israel's security being protected by "control over the Jordan valley" region in the West Bank.

He added it was "regrettable but unsurprising that this plan was immediately rejected outright by the Palestinian leadership, who dogmatically cling to one-sided UN and EU 'peace plans' that consistently ignore Israel's vital concerns."

Rejecting suggestions outlined in last week's letter that Israel's "international standing" is

undermined by the annexation plan, Mr Regev writes: "In moving forward, Israel's new unity government will remain cognisant of our steadily improving relations across the Arab and Muslim world, and our critically important partnership with Jordan.

"We will continue to engage with Washington about how best to seize the historic opportunities inherent in the American initiative, which offers the hope of a more peaceful and secure future. It is high time for the Palestinians to come to the table and constructively do the same."

Board of Deputies President issues statement on Israeli Government's annexation proposals

MAY 22, 2020

Board of Deputies President Marie van der Zyl has issued the following statement on the Israeli Government's proposal to annex some of the major settlement blocs in the West Bank and the Jordan Valley.

Marie said: "The Board of Deputies of British Jews represents the views and interests of the UK Jewish community. In the main, this is a Zionist community and Israel is of central importance to the identity of many of us. The Israeli Government's proposal to annex some of the major settlement blocs in the West Bank and the Jordan Valley has prompted impassioned opinions and lively debate amongst Jews in Israel and the diaspora alike. There are some who have called on the Board of Deputies to support annexation and there are also those who call on the Board to oppose the move. In fact, the variation of opinion is even more nuanced than this, and as the body responsible for representing this range, we do not in good faith support one view over another. Rather we are here to facilitate this debate from all sides. We also have to take into account that Israel – the only democracy in the Middle East – has an elected Government which reflects the will of Israeli voters. We do, as ever, emphasise our continued belief in a negotiated two-state solution, leading to a secure Israel alongside a viable Palestinian state."

Labour Figures Speak Out Against Annexation

Labour List 10th June 2020

The new Israeli Government has said that it intends to annex large swathes of Palestinian land in the West Bank, starting in July, land which was militarily occupied in 1967. This would be the culmination of years of appropriation of land – through the forced displacement of Palestinians, settlement and the annexation of East Jerusalem. Annexation, illegal under international law, is the forcible and unilateral acquisition of territory over which it has no recognised sovereignty and to make it an integral part of the state – in this case, Israel.

Palestinian civil society has made a global call for ‘effective measures’ to be taken to stop this annexation happening. If the measures are to be effective, this means the UK should now, at the very least, be adhering to an ethical policy on all the UK’s trade with Israel, in particular by applying international law on settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and stopping any arms trade with Israel that is used in violation of the human rights of Palestinians.

In the midst of the Covid pandemic a number of organisations and individuals (see a list of Labour and other prominent figures below) are cooperating to try to respond to the call from Palestine by making Annexation a live issue on the current political agenda. Israel’s timetable is to annex land quickly with Trump’s support – this means we cannot wait.

If you agree with this and want to support the Palestinian call for action, please indicate your agreement with the following statement in one or more of the ways listed below:

SPEAK OUT TO STOP ANNEXATION NOW

“I am speaking out now in order to stop the threatened annexation of Palestinian land by Israel in July and I call on the UK Government and all UK political parties to support the call of Palestinian civil society organisations for Effective Measures by all States to Stop Israel’s Illegal Annexation of the Occupied West Bank.”

Labour members, please add your name at <https://labourandpalestine.eaction.online/stopannexation>

Signatories include:

Parliamentarians: Diane Abbott MP, Apsana Begum MP, Baroness Tessa Blackstone, Baroness Christine Blower

Richard Burgon MP, Ian Byrne MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Lord Peter Hain, Lord John Hendy, Rachel Hopkins MP

Stephen Kinnock MP, Ian Lavery MP, John McDonnell MP, Grahame Morris MP, Kate Osborne MP, Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP, Andy Slaughter MP, Zarah Sultana MP, Jon Trickett MP, Claudia Webbe MP, Mick Whitley MP.

Trade Unions : Len McCluskey, General Secretary Unite the Union, John Phillips, Acting General Secretary GMB, Mary Bousted, Joint General Secretary NEU, Mick Whelan, General Secretary ASLEF, Manuel Cortes, General Secretary TSSA, Jo Grady, General Secretary UCU, Mark Serwotka, General Secretary PCS, Sarah Woolley, General Secretary, BFAWU, FBU, RMT, Barbara Plant, President GMB.

Organisations: Labour and Palestine, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Amos Trust, Artists for Palestine UK, British Palestinian Policy Council, Jews for Justice for Palestinians, Labour Friends of Palestine and Middle East, War on Want.

Individuals : Hugh Lanning, Labour & Palestine, Dr Hafiz Alkarmi (Chair- Palestinian Forum in Britain), Philip Pullman, John Austin, former Labour MP, Victoria Brittain, Julie Christie, Brian Eno, Ghada Karimi, A.L.Kennedy

Sara Husseini, Kamel Hawwash, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Professor Karma Nabulsi, Maxine Peake, John Pilger, Alexei Sayle, Irvine Welsh, Tony Burke, Labour & Palestine.

For a full list see the Palestine Solidarity Campaign website.

Avi Shlaim op-ed on Churchill and 1937 Arab revolt

Dear friends

Here is the link to my op-ed in the Guardian this morning:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/22/palestine-britain-balfour-declaration-colonialism-uk-israeli-annexations>

Trump announced his plan not in January 2019 but this January – the editor’s mistake. The Guardian also reduced the original text by a third and omitted two whole paragraphs. Here is the para on Churchill:

“Churchill, Johnson’s hero and role model, personified the racism of the British ruling class of that era. This is what Churchill told the Peel Commission inquiry into the Arab Revolt in Palestine in 1937: “I do not agree that the dog in a manger has the final right to the manger even though he may have lain there for a very long time. I do not admit that right. I do not admit for instance, that a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America or the black people of Australia. I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher-grade race, a more worldly-wise race... has come in and taken their place”. This statement is shocking but not surprising: racism goes hand in hand with colonialism. A “Black Lives Matter” activist recently wrote on the plinth of Churchill’s statue in Parliament Square that he was a racist. The activist had a point”.

The other para is about a letter to Boris Johnson from a group of liberal Israelis who campaign for international recognition of Palestine as a state. They are a very impressive and energetic group. One of their members is Alon Liel, a former director-general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and a good friend of mine:

“Last month Mr Johnson received a letter from The Policy Working Group, a voluntary team of senior Israeli academics, former diplomats, media experts, and human rights defenders who campaign to end Israel’s 53 year-old occupation of the Palestinian territories. The signatories call upon the British government to recognize the State of Palestine in line with the resolution passed by the British Parliament in October 2014, a resolution ignored by David Cameron’s government”.

Best wishes

Avi

Avi Shlaim, FBA

Emeritus Professor of International Relations

St Antony’s College

An MMT Perspective –

Should governments ever borrow from the private sector?

By Martin Seale

MMT stands for Modern Monetary Theory. It calls itself 'Modern' because the theory deals with the monetary world that emerged post 1971 when the Bretton Woods monetary system was abandoned mainly because it had been undermined by attempts by the US government to pay for the Vietnam War by printing dollars.

In 1971 the value of currencies ceased to be tied to a physical object like gold. Money became fiat money. Governments could create unlimited amounts of this money. MMT attempts to explain how this modern monetary economy works. A big question for governments is what to do if their expenditure is greater than their tax revenue.

To better understand the issues here we need to consider some different scenarios.

Consider first the scenario of the GFC in 2008. The private sector was in panic. Households increased savings. Businesses cut investment. As a result demand dropped and tax revenues dropped. The government deficit ballooned. According to mainstream economics the government should finance its deficit by borrowing the money from the private sector. According to MMT the government should (electronically) print the money.

Mainstream economics says that it is necessary for the spending of the private sector to be reduced by the amount the government will spend into the economy otherwise there will be inflation. Borrowing from the private sector is a way to reduce the private sector's spending. However the MMT economists believe that the reason the government must spend into the economy is precisely because the private sector has decided not to spend into the economy. They therefore see no danger of inflation and therefore no reason to issue bonds to the private sector. Issuing bonds simply changes the nature of the portfolio held by the private sector from cash to interest earning, risk free government bonds. It's as if the government sector is rewarding the private sector for creating the drop in aggregate demand which forces the government to spend into the economy if unemployment is to be avoided. MMT economists see no reason for doing that.

Now consider the scenario created by the Coronavirus crisis. How would an MMT economist analyse and address the economic problems raised by this crisis? Well some 25-30% of the workforce will be unable to work due to health safety rules and are on furlough. The government announced that it would pay some 80% of the earnings of these furloughed workers.

Rishi Sunak expects to spend £300 billion more than will be raised in taxes. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) this £300 billion will be borrowed from the private sector. The MMT folks would disagree and would instead argue that the government should simply create the money by marking up the bank accounts of those it wants to pay. In the national statistics this will show up as an increase in the national debt. But, since the government is borrowing from the Bank of England (BoE), it is effectively just borrowing from itself so the debt will never have to be repaid.

The IFS would argue that creating money in this way would be inflationary. But let's examine the logic. Suppose Sunak expected 20% of the workforce to be unable to work because of the lockdown. Let's call this segment of the workforce the Out Of Work Segment (OOWS). 80% of the workforce is able to continue working. Let's call this segment of the workforce the In Work Segment (IWS). Then the economy will experience a drop in demand of some 20%. Also the OOWS would typically spend about 80% of their wages on the produce of the IWS. Because of the lockdown the OOWS workers will lose all income and be unable to sustain themselves. Although the IWS has work they will experience a drop in demand from the OOWS of some 16% ($80\% \times 20\%$). By making furlough payments to the OOWS of 80% of their earnings Sunak allows them to survive and to continue to buy from the IWS and so reduces the possibility of unemployment in the IWS because of a drop in demand from the OOWS. So it's a win-win situation. And there are no inflationary pressures on the produce of the IWS since no more is being consumed than would normally be consumed. Sunak's furlough spending into the economy broadly matches the drop in demand

caused by the inability of the OOWS to work.

Why does the IFS argue that Sunak should borrow this money from the private sector? In general that argument is based on the assumption that the private sector would have spent the money into the economy if they had had it. Government spending financed by creating money would therefore be inflationary. But as we can see the OOWS will be spending nothing into the economy other than what they receive from Sunak. So creating the money will not be inflationary and will stabilize the society.

Now the IWS would of course, in normal times, be spending some 16% into the OOWS. They can no longer do this since the OOWS is producing nothing. Will they instead spend it on goods produced by the IWS thus creating inflation? It's a possibility. But the evidence so far suggests they will either save it or use it to reduce their debt. But that might change if the lockdown were to continue for years.

A lockdown, in which a large number of people are not allowed to work for health reasons, is not too dissimilar to a war situation where large numbers of people are taken away from producing household consumables and into producing war fighting machines. The furloughed workers correspond to those engaged in the production of war equipment, although in this case they are producing good health by being on furlough.

Those remaining in work will initially become involuntary savers. If, after a period, they decide to increase their consumption of the reduced number of household consumables then inflation might result. To prevent this, their involuntary savings could be taxed away or some sort of Coronavirus bond could be introduced with a minimal interest rate to make them feel less resentful of their forced, involuntary savings.

Perhaps, in this situation of a long term lockdown, it might make sense, even from an MMT perspective, to issue bonds. But the bonds would be issued to remove the possibility of inflation and not to raise money for the state.

A Letter From Our New Zealand Correspondent

Feergus O'Raghallaigh

*I was speaking to a mate of mine,
just the other day*

A guy called Bruce Bayliss

Who lives up our way

*He's been round the world on an
8th army do, for a year, more or less*

I said "Describe the global position, Bruce"

He said "Fred, it's a mess."

From We don't know how lucky we are

by John Clarke

We continue here to live with the plague that plagues the world. The government has managed to eliminate the virus from New Zealand. It keeps on arriving though, through Kiwis in their thousands escaping home. They bring it with them, quarantine catches it and we sleep comfortably – except for the media and the opposition, in hunger for domestic panic, crisis and 'chasis', a 'story' and a charge of incompetence against the Ardern government.

There are I think two political-policy approaches to Covid-19. Both start from the same point, the highly contagious character of the virus and the disruption, social and economic, it brings with it. After that they diverge.

Jacinda Ardern has from the arrival in New Zealand of CV-19 pursued a policy based on a sincere belief, not in socialism, but in common humanity and the essential goodness of people. Her object is to, together, defeat and eliminate the virus (from the country). Her project is that 'we do this together, all five million of us'. She has communicated that collective ideal, purpose and project – and it has worked so far. As I wrote in my last letter, there is to it a touch of China's Confucian philosopher Mencius:

there is no distinction of class, race, ethnicity, religion or identity; there is simply, again, common humanity and the compassion required by decency, toward those struck by the virus.

There is another tack or in modern parlance, trope. It is to turn to the war metaphor, to declare government dedication to fighting an invasion as it is put, invisible but insidious and everywhere – fighting it on the beaches, in the hills, dales and valleys, in the towns and street by street if that is what it takes, regardless of cost and with victory the aim.

But here is a question and a contrast, posed by the writer, Mike Marquee about cancer (which killed him),

Why must every concerted effort be likened to warfare? Is this the only way we are able to describe human co-operation in pursuit of a common goal?

The business of professional modern journalism – modern mainstream media – loves the war metaphor with its reductionist binary, offering a lazy, cheap and uncomplicated storyline. It also plays readily to a headline-hungry, sidelined political opposition heading into a general election.

Ardern's common humanity and communal approach has so far won the day, dramatically. The population has bought into the collective agenda – 'we are five million people together'. Covid-19 has been for the present, eliminated inside New Zealand. The virus simply was not allowed to get even a toe-hold.

A ruthless policy of lockdown early and hard has worked. The opposition National Party has rolled its leader and deputy leader (who has resigned from politics) and remains in disarray. Opinion polls still continue to predict

Labour may secure an outright majority in the general election in September – remarkable if realised. For the government there have been some slips including a couple of spectaculars, all at the frontier which remains sealed except mainly for returning nationals who in their tens of thousands are now flooding back to New Zealand. They all undergo quarantine, testing and screening with individual cases being captured and isolated. The influx is putting the quarantine and isolation systems under severe strain, much to the joy of the media and the political opposition (both branding the quarantine an operational shambles milking every little slip for headlines). A very stupid, arrogant and incompetent Minister for Health David Clark, has for both proved a lightning rod. As I write (2 June), RNZ is reporting he has finally jumped off the cliff (figuratively speaking) and resigned having been effectively slowly stripped over recent weeks by a smiling Ardern of his ministerial duties and functions. She remains in control even after some shaky slips and apart from her finance minister (Grant Robertson) a cabinet of inconsequential at best. Even the huge economic disruption seems not to have counted against her so far. The late Kiwi comic John Clarke composed and recorded a humorous ditty, 'We don't know how lucky we are'. It became world famous in New Zealand. I think it does capture the current mood in the country (maybe even the national personality) as the pandemic still rages beyond New Zealand's shores.

Losing Control?

Dick Barry

Neil O'Brien, Conservative member for Harborough since 2017, appears to be in a lather over Britain's nuclear power programme. According to a report in the Financial Times of 2 June regarding the construction of Sizewell C nuclear power station he said, "It is a really important decision: do we want to regain the ability to build our own nuclear power stations, or are we happy to get supply from friendly third countries, or are we happy for anyone to control it?"

This is a rather confused statement. Apart from France, which supplies Britain with nuclear generated electricity via a cross-Channel underwater connector, (between 3% and 4% of demand), I am not aware of any other foreign source. O'Brien's question is clearly aimed at China. Sizewell C nuclear power station is to be built by EdF Energy, with the involvement of CGN, China's nuclear construction company.

Conservative MPs have expressed their concern over Huawei, a Chinese telecommunications company, being allowed access to a part of Britain's 5G mobile phone network. O'Brien clearly sees CGN's role in Britain's nuclear power programme as a further example of creeping Chinese involvement in British industry. His opposition is no doubt based on the perceived threat to western interests of China's increasing economic power.

O'Brien seems to be unaware of the involvement of France in Britain's current nuclear power programme. All fifteen of Britain's nuclear reactors are owned and operated by EdF Energy, a subsidiary of EdF, the mainly state-owned French company. The fifteen reactors are made up of 7 twin-unit Advanced Cooled Reactors (AGR) and 1 Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR).

As can be seen below almost half of the fifteen reactors is to be retired by 2024. And all but one by 2030.

Dungeness B 1&2 AGR Reactors. Capacity 2x520mw. To be retired in 2028

Hartlepool 1&2 AGR Reactors. Capacity 585mw & 595mw. To be retired in 2024

Heysham 1, 1&2 AGR Reactors. Capacity 575mw & 585mw. To be retired in 2024

Heysham 2, 1&2 AGR Reactors. Capacity 2 x 610mw. To be retired in 2030.

Hinkley Point B 1&2 AGR Reactors. Capacity 470mw & 475mw. To be retired in 2023

Hunterston B 1&2 AGR Reactors. Capacity 475mw & 485mw. To be retired in 2023

Sizewell B PWR. Capacity 1198mw. To be retired in 2035

Torness 1&2 AGR Reactors. Capacity 595mw & 590mw. To be retired in 2030.

Total capacity is 8,888 megawatt or 8.888 gigawatt.

In the 1st quarter of 2020, the share of electricity generation in Great Britain came from Renewables 44.6%, (Wind turbines being the greater contributor), Gas 29.6%, Nuclear 15.3%, Imports 7.3%, Coal 3.7%. Nuclear Power's contribution has decreased in recent years due to lower downtime as reactors move towards the end of their operating life. Hence the support in government circles for new nuclear stations to help provide base-load electricity.

Britain's future nuclear power programme is in doubt due to uncertainty over EdF's ability to deliver on time and to budget in the case of Sizewell C. The most conservative estimate for Sizewell C is £20 billion. An investment decision by EdF on the new plant is not expected until the end of 2021. British nuclear industry executives insist that a much earlier decision is required if replacement capacity is to be ready to plug the gap when existing plant is retired. (see above). Concern over the budget for Sizewell C is based on

the increasing cost of the 3.2 gigawatt Hinkley Point C reactor in Somerset, currently being built by EdF Energy and CGN. (China's involvement in this seems to have escaped O'Brien). The cost of Hinkley Point C, currently at £22 billion and rising is already over budget.

The problem facing the government is the financing of future nuclear plants. EdF and CGN agreed to shoulder the capital costs of building Hinkley Point C in return for a guaranteed price to the consumer of £92.5/MWh, considerably higher than that of existing nuclear plants. Since then, a Nuclear Industry Association report has said that the next generation of plants could be delivered at a cost to the consumer of £60/MWh, providing the government can agree a financing mechanism to cut capital costs, which account for about two-thirds of the total bill. A government decision on this is still to be agreed.

Note: A government consultation found that serious doubts were expressed about programme delivery by a number of groups within the nuclear industry. There was solid opinion, including from the independent Nuclear Energy Consulting Group, that the government should set up a state-backed investment vehicle to build new nuclear stations. Unite, the trade union has "warned against letting what it views as inevitable cost overruns be passed on to energy-intensive consumers, which might then take their operations and jobs elsewhere." In general, Unite "favours a policy of state ownership of the energy sector."

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a jealous lover? A flatmate suggested that he was working for Mossad. She said that the Egyptian authorities had agreed with her that there might be a connection.

Clearly the Egyptian authorities have not cooperated to discover the truth behind Regeni's murder. And the Italian Governments of Renzi and now Conte have had to weigh up many complexities before they acted over Regeni. Luigi Manconi, Italian Senator and President of the Human Rights Commission of the Senate, asked Declan Walsh whether he understood Latin. He then quoted the phrase used by Tacitus: "*arcana imperii*" - i.e.: the level of secrecy needed to govern securely.

Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

EXPECTATIONS

At 83 Silvio Berlusconi believes that he should be nominated to be one of the Italian Senators for Life. This honour is given to just five people of high merit in the social, scientific, artistic and literary fields. There are currently no vacancies and President Mattarella sees no reason to change the constitution, to add one more, particularly as the ex-Premier has served a sentence for fraud. Silvio is not amused and a *La Repubblica* comment called his request “shameless”.

But Italy had other matters on its collective mind in the first week of July. Some Covid spikes were giving concern and the political management of the 2016 murder in Cairo of the student Giulio Regeni was reverberating within Italy.

Regeni, an Italian graduate student at Cambridge, disappeared and his extensively tortured body was found by the side of the road in Cairo. A few days after this five men who were said to have robbed and killed him were themselves executed by a section of the security services. This was the start of a long and complex saga involving the Italian government and Egyptian government of Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi.

In 2019 the Italian Government had asked Egypt for more information, particularly the names of five National Security officials who might be able to provide more information on the Regeni case. 14 months elapsed before the response arrived. Rather than answering the request or attempting to offer anything useful, the Egyptians asked for further information – all or most of which they already had. Italy construed this as not only prevarication but also provocative.

In *La Repubblica*’s words this information should include: “*the reasons for (Regeni’s) stay in Egypt, the nature of his relations in that country, the testimonies given by those who were close to him, and the hard drive of his laptop.*” *La*

Repubblica of 2 July threw up its hands in horror at what it saw as the Government’s diplomatic “flop”. A series of articles show that there are, and have been, political differences in the handling of the case which complicate matters.

The Regeni family, who have had a high media profile, were shown to be outraged. Carlo Bonini, investigative journalist and staff writer for *La Repubblica* wrote an article “*Time is Up*”; in essence commenting on the lacklustre progress made by this and previous Italian Governments. Negotiations have taken place and the Italian Ambassador was even withdrawn at one point. But no incisions have been made through the muddles and obfuscations that Bonini, who has written extensively on the Regeni case, knows are necessary to solve the murder.

An important element in Rome’s handling of Egypt has been the huge shared economic and diplomatic involvement between the two countries. The Italian intelligence services need Egyptian cooperation to counter the flow of migrants, to manage the conflict in Libya, the former Italian colony, and to minimise the threat from Islamic State. Of even greater interest is the apparent involvement of Italy’s *Eni*, (*Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi*), the state-owned energy company. *Eni* discovered and manage the Zohr gas field 120 miles north of Egypt. The sale of two frigates to the Egyptians is also pending.

Relevant here is an article written for the *New York Times* (*NYT*) on 14 August 2017, by Irish foreign affairs journalist Declan Walsh who lived in Cairo at the time. Walsh said that the head of *Eni*, Claudio Descalzi “has discussed the case at least three times with Sisi”. To summarise: there appear to be active contacts on open and covert diplomatic levels, and here Walsh hints at this when he refers to a book by Andrea Greco, co-author of a book about *Eni* called “*The Parallel State*”. An

interesting aside is that shortly after Walsh’s *NYT* article was published a US Embassy staffer secretly passed on the information that the Trump administration knew that Walsh was about to be arrested by the Egyptian authorities. The Irish Embassy swiftly evacuated him.

Giulio Regeni’s background is significant. He studied Arabic and politics at Leeds University and in 2013 he became an intern in Cairo at a United Nations agency. This was the time when the Islamist Mohamed Morsi was overthrown by Sisi. Regeni later worked with Oxford Analytica, a business research company, before starting on a doctorate in development studies at Cambridge. He focussed on the upsurge in unions and union membership which had precipitated the “Arab Spring” revolt that led to the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak. Walsh said that Regeni believed that the street vendors and their unions were the key to future social and political development and he studied them for his thesis.

Regeni’s doctorate supervisor was an Egyptian academic, Maha Abdelrahman, who had written critically of Sisi. The Italian Government have asked for help from the University and also the UK Government but cooperation has been very limited. Can one ask why? Abdelrahman initially refused to be interviewed but later did agree. In November 2017 the Law Society Gazette reported that an Egyptian human rights lawyer, Ibrahim Metwaly Hegazy, who had been working on the Regeni case, had been taken to the Tora Prison. There is no further information on him.

The Italian investigators who initially travelled to Egypt found that their enquiries were unwelcome. It appeared that their contacts had been coached and evidence had been covered up or destroyed. There were attempts to discredit Regeni; perhaps he was gay? Perhaps the killer was

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