

THE MARXIST-LENINIST RESEARCH BUREAU

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE FORMATION OF THE SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY

INTRODUCTION

A political party is

" . . . a political organisation that expresses the interests of a social class or its strata, uniting its most active representatives and directing them toward the attainment of certain goals and ideals".
('Great Soviet Encyclopedia', Volume 19; New York; 1978; p. 305).

Labour is

" . . . the general body of labourers and operatives viewed in its relation to the body of capitalists or with regard to its political interests and claims".
('Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 8; Oxford; 1989; p. 559).

Originally, a labour party was

" . . . a political party specially supporting the interests of labour".
('Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 8; Oxford; 1989; p. 560).

A Social-Democratic Party was, originally, a labour party in a country where the bourgeois-democratic revolution has not been accomplished. Already, in late 1897, Lenin stressed the significance of the term 'Social-Democratic' in relation to the name of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP):

"The object of the practical activities of the Social-Democrats is . . . socialist . . . and democratic. . . . Russian Social-Democracy . . . has always emphasised . . . the inseparable connection between its socialist and democratic tasks -- a connection which is strikingly expressed in the name which it has adopted".
p. 496-97).
(Vladimir I. Lenin: 'The Tasks of Russian Social-Democrats', in: 'Selected Works', Volume 1; London; 1944; p. 496-97).

SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY IN BRITAIN

The Social-Democratic Federation

In June 1881, Henry Hyndman, who regarded himself as

" . . . the first important British Marxist",
('New Encyclopaedia Britannica', Volume 6; Chicago; 1994; p. 199).

joined with others

" . . . in founding the Democratic Federation.

In 1884 the Democratic Federation was renamed the Social-Democratic Federation (SDF)".
('New Encyclopaedia Britannica', Volume 6; Chicago; 1994; p. 199-200).

Engels describes Hyndman as

" . . . an arch-conservative and an extremely chauvinistic but not stupid careerist, who behaved pretty shabbily to Marx . . . and for this reason was dropped by us personally".

(Friedrich Engels: Letter to August Bebel, 30 August 1883, in: Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels: 'Selected Correspondence: 1846-1895: With Commentary and Notes'; London; 1943; p. 419).

The Scottish Labour Party

The second party formed in Britain claiming to represent the interests of working people was the 'Scottish Labour Party', founded in May 1888.

(Michael Keating & David Bleiman: 'Labour and Scottish Nationalism'; London; 1979; p. 51).

This merged with the Independent Labour Party

" . . . at the end of 1894".

(Michael Keating & David Bleiman: *ibid.*; p. 53).

Fabianism

With the exception of the SDF, British Labour never based itself, even formally, on Marxism. On the contrary, the roots of its ideology were to be found in the Fabian Society, which was

" . . . founded in 1883-4 in London, having as its goal the establishment of a democratic socialist state in Great Britain".
(*'New Encyclopaedia Britannica'*, Volume 4; Chicago; 1994; p. 647).

The Irish-born playwright George Bernard Shaw and the English economist Sidney Webb,

" . . . later joined by Webb's wife, Beatrice, were the outstanding leaders of the society for many years".
(*'New Encyclopaedia Britannica'*, Volume 4; Chicago; 1994; p. 647).

The name of the society was

" . . . derived from the Roman general Fabius Cunctator (the Delayer -- Ed.), whose patient and elusive tactics in avoiding pitched battles secured his ultimate victory over stronger forces".
(*'New Encyclopaedia Britannica'*, Volume 4; Chicago; 1994; p. 647).

However,

" . . . the British Fabians were only loosely the intellectual heirs to Fabius Cunctator, enemy of Hannibal, from whom they took their name. Fabius the Delayer told his troops to wait patiently -- then to strike hard. The Fabians, on the other hand, never wanted to strike hard".
(David Reisman (Ed.): Introduction to: 'Democratic Socialism in Britain: Classic Texts in Economic and Political Thought: 1825-1952', Volume 4; London; 1996; p. x).

In fact, the essence of the Fabian outlook was that the transition to socialism must be gradual enough not to arouse the opposition of the ruling class, an outlook which postponed the transition to socialism indefinitely. This outlook was embodied in Sidney Webb's phrase,

" . . . the inevitability of gradualness of our scheme of change".

(Sidney Webb: Presidential Address to the Annual Conference of the Labour Party, 26 June 1923, in: 'The Labour Party on the Threshold' (Fabian Tract No. 207); London; 1923; p. 11).

The society

" . . . saw its purpose as primarily educational. It consciously rejected the class struggle; indeed, it held the working class in complete contempt".

(Robert Clough: 'Labour: A Party Fit for Imperialism'; London; 1992; p. 23).

Beatrice Webb expressed this contempt clearly when she wrote in her diary in July 1894:

"What can we hope from these myriads of deficient minds and deformed bodies that swarm in our great cities -- what can we hope from them but brutality, meanness and crime",

(Beatrice Webb: Diary Entry for July 1894, in: 'Our Partnership'; Cambridge; 1975; p. 83-84).

and in July 1895:

"We can expect no leader from the working class. Our only hope is in permeating the young middle-class man".

(Beatrice Webb: Diary Entry for July 1895, in: *ibid.*; p. 125).

As Engels expressed it in a letter to Friedrich Sorge in January 1893:

"The Fabians are an ambitious group here in London who have understood enough to realise the inevitability of the social revolution, but who could not possibly entrust this gigantic task to the rough proletariat alone and are therefore kind enough to set themselves at the head. Fear of the revolution is their fundamental principle. They are 'educated' par excellence. Their socialism is municipal socialism; not the nation but the municipality is to become the owner of the means of production. . . . This socialism of theirs is then represented as an extreme but inevitable consequence of bourgeois Liberalism, and hence follow their tactics of not decisively opposing the Liberals as adversaries but of . . . intriguing with them, of permeating Liberalism with Socialism. . . .

With great industry they have produced amid all sorts of rubbish some good propagandist writings. . . . But as soon as they get on to their specific tactics of hushing up the class struggle it all turns putrid. Hence too their fanatical hatred of Marx and all of us -- because of the class struggle".

(Friedrich Engels: Letter to Friedrich Sorge, 18 January 1893; in: Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels: *op. cit.*; p. 505).

The Independent Labour Party

In the 1870s and 1880s, working people had relied on electoral agreements with the Liberal Party to secure the election of a few working class MPs. Such MPs were called Lib-Labs, and were

" . . . working class MPs who, whilst prepared to speak out on

'labour' issues, accepted the Liberal whip".
(John Cannon (Ed.): 'Oxford Companion to British History'; Oxford; 1997;
p. 576).

The first Lib-Lab MPs were elected in 1874.
(John Cannon (Ed.): *ibid.*; p. 576).

But the Liberal Party was a political party which

" . . . represented the interests of the rising industrial bourgeoisie as opposed to the great landowners. The supporters of these 'Liberals' included the most brutal exploiters of the workers".
(Note to: Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels: *op. cit.*; p. 505).

and so was unable seriously to represent the interests of working people.

It was

" . . . the defeat of a strike in the cotton industry in 1892 that led to the first organisational break in the Lib-Lab alliance -- the formation of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). . . .

Keir Hardie, who was the prime mover behind the founding conference in 1893, was in favour of organisational independence from Liberalism, but not political independence".
(Robert Clough: *op. cit.*; p. 22).

Thus, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) was

" . . . formed in 1893 with the objective of sending working men to parliament".
(*'Cambridge Encyclopaedia'*; Cambridge; 1997; p. 542).

The party was nominally

" . . . socialist in aim",
(*'Cambridge Encyclopaedia'*; Cambridge; 1997; p. 542).

this aim being defined in its Constitution as

" . . . to secure the collective ownership of all the means of production, distribution and exchange".
(Constitution of ILP, in: *Independent Labour Party: 'Jubilee Souvenir'*; London; 1943; p. 31).

For its theoretical base, the ILP

" . . . drew mainly upon the Fabian Society".
(Francis Williams: *'Fifty Years' March: The Rise of the Labour Party'*; London; 1949; p. 104).

but organisationally it still relied on electoral agreements with the Liberal Party.

Lenin correctly said of the ILP:

"It is justly said that this party is 'independent' only of socialism,

but very dependent on liberalism".

(Vladimir I. Lenin: 'Debates in Britain on Liberal Labour Policy', in: 'Collected Works', Volume 18; Moscow; 1963; p. 360).

The Foundation of the Second International

In July 1889.

" . . . the First Congress of the Second International, which was actually the founding congress, was convoked . . . in Paris. . . . There were 393 delegates at the congress, representing almost all the existing national workers' and socialist organisations of Europe and the USA".

('Great Soviet Encyclopedia. Volume 10; p. 336).

Friedrich Engels

" . . . played an exceptional role in the creation of the new socialist organisation".

('Great Soviet Encyclopedia. Volume 10; New York; 1978; p. 336).

and

" . . . from the outset, . . . it adopted the Marxist standpoint in all essentials".

('Great Soviet Encyclopedia. Volume 10; New York; 1978; p. 336).

The Formation of the Labour Party

In February 1900, .

" . . . the Trades Union Congress cooperated with the Independent Labour Party (founded in 1893) to establish the Labour Representation Committee",

('New Encyclopaedia Britannica', Volume 7; Chicago; 1994; p. 82).

The declared purpose of the LRC was

" . . . to establish a distinct Labour Group in Parliament, who shall have their own whips and agree upon their own policy which must embrace a readiness to cooperate with any party which may for the time being be engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interest of labour".

('Encyclopedia Americana', Volume 16; New York; 1977; p. 584).

It must be noted that

" . . . the LRC was formed by a trade union movement which excluded 90% of the working class. . . . It was therefore an exclusive body, formed by the craft unions to represent their interests in Parliament more adequately than the Liberal alliance".

(Robert Clough: op. cit.; p. 26).

In other words,

" . . . the unions which set up the LRC were overwhelmingly the organisations of the aristocracy of labour".

(Harpal Brar: 'Social Democracy: The Enemy within' (hereafter listed as 'Harpal Brar (1995)'; Southall; 1995; p. 21).

The LRC

" . . . took the name 'Labour Party' in 1906".
('New Encyclopaedia Britannica', Volume 7; Chicago; 1994; p. 82).

However, the Independent Labour Party

" . . . remained active within the Labour Party . . . , occasionally as in 1914 and 1931, splitting from the main body".
('Encyclopedia Americana', Volume 16; New York; 1977; p. 584).

but it again

" . . . rejoined the Labour Party in 1975".
(John Cannon (Ed.); op. cit.; p. 507).

Up to 1914,

" . . . the Labour Party (as it was called from 1906) played second fiddle to the Liberals. . . . There was no attempt at political independence: Labour MPs were still elected courtesy of pacts with the Liberals".
(Robert Clough: op. cit.; p. 27).

In 1907, despite its hostility to the nominal Marxism of the Second International,

" . . . the Labour Party was accepted as a member under an ingenious formula devised by Karl Kautsky which declared that the British Labour Party, although it did not recognise the class struggle, carried it on".
(Francis Williams: op. cit.; p. 216).

The Character of the Labour Party

Marxist-Leninists maintain that, despite its name and the fact that the great majority of its membership is made up of working people, the Labour Party has always been a political party which serves the interests of the capitalist class, of the British imperialists:

As Lenin said in August 1920:

"Of course, most of the Labour Party's members are working-men. However, whether or not a party is really a political party of the workers does not depend solely upon a membership of workers but also upon the men that lead it, and the content of its actions and its political tactics. . . . Regarded from this, the only correct, point of view, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie which exists to systematically dupe the workers".
(Vladimir I. Lenin: Speech on Affiliation to the British Labour Party, 2nd Congress of Communist International, in: 'Collected Works', Volume 31; Moscow; 1974; p. 257-58).

It was, indeed, clear from the outset that the Labour Party presented no threat to the continued existence of capitalism: For example, Philip Snowden,

who was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the first Labour Government of 1924 and was made a viscount in 1931, wrote of this government in his autobiography:

"The publication of the names of the Cabinet had a reassuring effect upon that section of public opinion which had been in terror about the advent of a Labour Government. The most timid Conservatives and the most frightened capitalists took heart from the presence of men like Lord Parmoor, Lord Chelmsford and Lord Haldane; they could not believe that these men would be the instrument for carrying out the Socialist Revolution".

(Philip Snowden: 'An Autobiography', Volume 2; London; 1934; p. 607).

Again, from its foundation the Labour Party made it clear that it was a firm supporter of the British Empire. John Clynes, who was Lord Privy Seal in the first Labour government of 1924, wrote in his memoirs:

"It has often been stated that British Labour is a disrupting influence in the Empire. That is nonsense. In the same period of years, no Conservative or Liberal Government has done more than we to knit together the great Commonwealth of Nations which Britain calls her Empire".

(John R. Clynes: 'Memoirs, Volume 2: 1924-1937'; London; 1937; p. 54).

Nevertheless, Marxist-Leninists recognised that, in its early years, the British Labour Party was structurally different from political parties on the Continent. In May 1920 Lenin was writing of

" . . . the quite unique character of the British Labour Party, the very structure of which is so unlike the ordinary political party on the Continent".

(Vladimir I. Lenin: "'Left-wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder: A Popular Essay in Marxian Strategy and Tactics', in: 'Selected Works', Volume 10; London; 1946; p. 131).

The key factor in this difference was until 1918

" . . . until the 1918 Constitution, the Labour Party was a federation of trade unions . . . and a small number of political organisations, such as the ILP and the Fabians. There were no local parties, the Labour Party was represented locally by branches of the ILP in particular. Such a structure was sufficient for a party which, for all its organisational independence, was content to act more or less as an appendage to the Liberal Party".

(Robert Clough: op. cit.; p. 28).

In these circumstances, the Communist International adopted the policy that the 'Communist Party of Great Britain', founded at a Unity Convention in July/August 1920, should seek affiliation to the Labour Party:

"The Communist International is in favour of the affiliation of communist . . . organisations in England to the Labour Party, although the Labour Party belongs to the Second International. For so long as this party allows the organisations affiliated to it their present freedom of criticism and freedom to engage in propaganda, agitation and organisation for the proletarian dictatorship and the Soviet power, so long as this party retains the character of an association of all trade union organisations of the working class, communists must do everything they

can, and even make certain organisational compromises, to have the possibility of exercising influence on the broad working masses, of exposing their opportunist leaders from a high tribune visible to the masses, of accelerating the transference of political power from the direct representatives of the bourgeoisie to the 'labour lieutenants of the capitalist class', in order to cure the masses quickly of their last illusions on this score".

(2nd Congress of Communist International: Theses on the Basic Tasks of the Communist International, in: Jane Degras (Ed.): 'The Communist International: 1919-1943: Documents', Volume 1; London; 1971; p. 125).

The Collapse of the Second International

In Lenin's words,

" . . . the Second International 1889-1914) . . . grew in breadth, and this entailed a temporary drop in the revolutionary level, a temporary increase in the strength of opportunism which, in the end, led to the disgraceful collapse of this International', (Vladimir I. Lenin: 'The Third International and its Place in History', in: 'Selected Works', Volume 10; London; 1946; p. 30).

Opportunism

" . . . is the sacrifice of the fundamental interests of the masses to the interests of an insignificant minority of the workers or, in other words, the alliance of a section of the workers with the bourgeoisie against the mass of the proletariat". (Vladimir I. Lenin: 'The Collapse of the Second International', in: 'Selected Works', Volume 5; London; 1935; p. 203).

Thus, the core of opportunism

" . . . is the idea of class collaboration". (Vladimir I. Lenin: *ibid.*; p. 203).

A resolution of the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International in 1907 declared that

" . . . in case war should break out, . . . it was the duty of the working class to bring it to a speedy end and to take advantage of the economic and political crisis caused by the war to rouse the masses in order to hasten the downfall of capitalist rule. This resolution was endorsed at the special International Socialist Congress held in Basle in 1912".

(Note to: Vladimir I. Lenin: 'Selected Works', Volume 5; London; 1935; p. 350).

However, on the outbreak of the First World War, most European social-democratic parties, in violation of these solemn undertakings, supported the war efforts of their respective bourgeoisies. That is, in 1914

" . . . the majority of the official Social-Democratic Parties have glaringly betrayed . . . the very solemn declarations they made in their speeches at the Stuttgart and Basle International Congresses, and in the resolutions of these congresses."

(Vladimir I. Lenin: 'The Collapse of the Second International', in:

'Selected Works', Volume 5: London: 1935; p. 167).

The British Labour Party was no exception to this betrayal. In February 1915, the British Section of the Second International brought together the parties of Britain, France, Belgium and Russia in an Inter-Allied 'Socialist' Conference, presided over by Keir Hardie. The conference declared that

" . . . victory for German imperialism would be a defeat and the destruction of democracy and liberty in Europe".
(Inter-Allied Socialist Conference: Resolution on the War, in: Francis Williams: op. cit.; p. 226).

Keir Hardie himself insisted that

" . . . a nation at war must be united".
(Keir Hardie, cited in: Kenneth O. Morgan: 'Keir Hardie: Radical and Socialist'; London; 1984; p. 266).

Even the 'Marxist' Henry Hyndman

" . . . supported the First World War".
(John Cannon (Ed.): op. cit.; p. 502).

In Lenin's words.

" . . . opportunism in the conditions of the war of 1914-15, engenders social-chauvinism".
(Vladimir I. Lenin: 'The Collapse of the Second International', in: 'Selected Works', Volume 5: London: 1935; p. 203).

Chauvinism is

" . . . exaggerated patriotism of a bellicose sort; blind enthusiasm for national glory or military ascendancy; . . . Jingoism",
(Oxford English Dictionary, Volume 3; Oxford; 1989; p. 62).

the term being derived from the legendary 19th century French soldier Nicolas Chauvin, whose

" . . . professions of militant patriotism were so exaggerated that his comrades finally turned him to ridicule".
(Webster's New Biographical Dictionary; Springfield (USA); 1983; p. 201).

and for social-democracy which had sunk into this extreme chauvinistic opportunism, Lenin coined the term 'social-chauvinism':

"By social-chauvinism we mean the recognition of the idea of defence of the fatherland in the present imperialist war, the justification of an alliance between the Socialists and the bourgeoisie and governments of 'their own' countries in this war. . . .

Social-chauvinism is opportunism which has ripened to such a degree . . . that it is impossible to tolerate the existence of such a trend within the Social-Democratic Labour Parties".

(Vladimir I. Lenin: 'The Collapse of the Second International', in: 'Selected Works', Volume 5; London; 1935; p. 203, 210).

Thus, on the outbreak of the First World War,

" . . . the chief parties of the Second International betrayed the working class, and each of them. on the pretext of 'defence of the fatherland', went over to the side of 'its' bourgeoisie. . . . It was at that moment that the Second International finally reached bankruptcy and perished".

(First Comintern Congress: Resolution on the Berne Congress of the Parties of the Second International, in: Jane Degras (Ed.): 'The Communist International: 1919-1943: Documents', Volume 1; London; 1971; p. 25).

The Revival of the Second International

As the First World War drew towards an Allied victory,

" . . . in March 1918, a conference of Allied socialist parties . . . set up a committee to resurrect the Second International. Its first conference took place in Berne in February 1919".

(Robert Clough: op. cit.; p. 49).

In March 1919, at its First Congress, the Communist International referred to this move as an attempt

" . . . to restore the old opportunist International and to rally to it all the confused and undecided elements of the proletariat".

(First Congress, Communist International: Resolution constituting the Communist International, in: Jane Degras (Ed.): op. cit., Volume 1; p. 17).

From the beginning, the British Labour Party played a leading role in the revived Second International:

"From the outset, the Labour Party, which had been an insignificant force in the pre-war International, played a leading role. (Arthur -- Ed.) Henderson was its first Chairman and Ramsay Macdonald its Secretary".

(Robert Clough: op. cit.; p. 49).

In fact,

" . . . the headquarters were placed in London, and in effect the British Labour Party took charge of its affairs".

(George D. H. Cole: 'A History of Socialist Thought, Volume 4, Part 1: Communism and Social Democracy: 1914-1931'; London; 1958; p. 329-30).

and, apart from the Austrian, Friedrich Adler,

" . . . the Administrative Committee that took charge of the International's day-to-day affairs was made up entirely of British members".

(George D. H. Cole: ibid., Volume 4, Part 2: p. 684).

The Berne International

" . . . functioned from 1919 to 1923".

('Great Soviet Encyclopedia', Volume 10: New York; 1976; p. 339).

The Foundation of the Communist International

In his 'April Theses', of April 1917, Lenin declared:

"Our Party must not 'wait', but must immediately found a Third International".

(Vladimir I. Lenin: 'The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution', in: 'Selected Works', Volume 10; London; 1946; p. 12).

And so, shortly after the triumph of the Socialist Revolution in Russia in November 1917, in March 1919, on the initiative of the Russian Communist Party headed by Lenin,

" . . . the first congress of the Communist International was held in Moscow",

(Jane Degras (Ed.): op. cit., Volume 1; p. 5).

and founded the Communist or Third International, based on Marxist principles.

In August 1920, the Second Congress of the Communist International laid down conditions of affiliation to the Communist International, drafted by Lenin. Of these, Clause 17 laid down that

" . . . all parties which wish to join the Communist International must change their names. Every party which wishes to join the Communist International must be called: Communist party of such and such a country (Section of the Communist International). This question of name is not merely a formal matter, but essentially a political question of great importance. The Communist International has declared war on the entire bourgeois world and on all yellow social-democratic parties. The difference between communist parties and the old official 'social-democratic' or 'socialist' parties, which have betrayed the banner of the working class, must be brought home to every ordinary worker".

(Second Congress of Communist International: Conditions of Admission to the Communist International, in: Jane Degras (Ed.): op. cit., Volume 1; p. 166).

Thus, after August 1920, the term social-democracy came to be used -- and not only by Marxist-Leninists -- to mean a

" . . . political ideology that advocates a peaceful, evolutionary transition of society from capitalism to socialism using established political processes. . . .

('New Encyclopaedia Britannica', Volume 10; Chicago; 1994; p. 920).

It

" . . . was originally known as 'revisionism' because it represented a change in basic Marxist doctrine, primarily in the former's repudiation of the use of revolution to establish a socialist society".

('New Encyclopaedia Britannica', Volume 10; Chicago; 1994; p. 920).

The Two-and-a-Half International

In February 1921,

" . . . delegates from the 'centre' and 'left' Socialist parties that had refused to join either the Second or the Third International met in a congress in Vienna and formed the 'International Working Union of Socialist Parties', also known as the 'Vienna Union', with the object of preparing the ground for an all-embracing International".
(*'New Encyclopaedia Britannica'*, Volume 7; Chicago; 1994; p. 81).

The 'Vienna Union' was popularly known as the

" . . . the 'Two-and-a-Half International'".
(Robert Clough: op. cit.; p. 50).

From the outset,

" . . . both the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals were determined to isolate the Russian Revolution".
(Robert Clough: *ibid.*; p. 50).

The Labour and Socialist International

The Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals

" . . . drew closer together and ultimately united at a congress held in Hamburg in (May -- Ed.) 1923. . . . It adopted the name 'Labour and Socialist International'".
(*'New Encyclopaedia Britannica'*, Volume 7; 1998; p. 81).

During the Second World War,

" . . . Hitler's conquests in western Europe destroyed the basis of the International in Europe. Only the British, Swedish and Swiss Socialist parties survived, and the International ceased to function".
(*'New Encyclopaedia Britannica'*, Volume 7; 1998; p. 81).

However,

" . . . after World War II, the 'Socialist International' was created in 1951 to replace the 'Labour and Socialist International'".
(*'Great Soviet Encyclopedia'*, Volume 10; New York; 1976; p. 339).

The 1918 Labour Party Constitution

As we have seen, the First World War and the disruption of the Second International

" . . . had landed the British Labour Party in a position it had not held before. Largely owing to the numerical strength -- and to the wealth -- of the British trade-unions, the Labour Party found itself willy-nilly the leading 'Allied' socialist party and the rock upon which European social-democracy was already building its fortress against Bolshevism. Consequently, it appeared necessary to construct a political party appropriate to this industrial support".
(Ross McKibbin: *'The Evolution of the Labour Party: 1910-1924'*; Oxford; 1974; p. 91).

Furthermore,

" . . . growing internal unrest combined with the political impact of the Russian Revolution . . . forced the ruling class to concede universal suffrage for men over 21 and women over 30. The Representation of the People Bill encompassing that proposal would more than double the electorate. . . . Labour's social base amongst the more affluent sections of the working class, and in certain sections of the middle class, would in itself be far too narrow an electoral base to enable it to become a significant parliamentary force in the post-war world. . . . It would have to broaden its electoral support, and the only constituency it could appeal to was the newly enfranchised section of the working class".

(Robert Clough: op. cit.; p. 29).

The extension of the franchise beyond the aristocracy of labour required not only the establishment of centrally controlled local party organisations:

"Labour had to establish proper local party organisations . . .; to prevent any challenge to the domination of the labour aristocracy it had to keep such organisations under tight central control".

(Robert Clough: op. cit.; p. 29).

It also required

" . . . a piece of right-wing revisionism . . . to counter the distant thunderclaps of Bolshevism . . . after the 1917 revolution".

(Jon Sopel: 'Tony Blair: The Moderniser'; London; 1995; p. 271).

So, when in September 1917,

" . . . a committee was established to draft a constitution. . . .",

(Robert Clough: op. cit.; p.

Sidney Webb

" . . . saw individual membership as a means of recruiting middle class support from both the Fabians and disaffected Liberals",
(Robert Clough: ibid.; p. 30).

and his draft

" . . . proposed individual membership",
(Robert Clough: ibid.; p. 30).

while it

" . . . allowed the unions to retain their block vote",
(Robert Clough: ibid.; p. 30).

and thus

" . . . effectively gave the trade union barons complete control over conference and the subsequently elected NEC".
(Robert Clough: ibid.; p. 30).

However, to counter the appeal of Soviet Russia and the soon-to-be established Communist International, Webb felt it necessary to insert in the new constitution of the Labour Party a vague reference to the aim of achieving

socialism, in the sense of a

" . . . social organisation which aims at . . . the ownership and control of the means of production . . . by the community as a whole". ('Oxford English Dictionary', Volume 15; Oxford; 1989; p. 910).

Thus, Clause Four

" . . . of the new constitution, and its elaboration in a programme 'Labour and the New Social Order' were to be the basis for its electoral appeal to the working class. Sidney Webb wrote both, and in them restated the basic principles of Fabianism". (Robert Clough: op. cit.; p. 30).

Clause Four of the new constitution stated that the aims of the Labour Party were

" . . . to secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service". (Labour Party: Constitution and Rules; London; 1929; p. 3).

These aims remained unchanged until April 1995, except that

" . . . the words 'distribution and exchange' were added . . . in 1928". (John Rentoul: 'Tony Blair'; London; 1995; p. 459).

Behind the new 'socialist' constitution lay fear of the genuine socialism represented by Soviet Russia and Marxism:

"Fear of Bolshevism and the extreme left throughout Europe was almost certainly a preliminary to the new constitution, and international developments were the occasion for its drafting". (Ross McKibbin: op. cit.; p. 92).

Harpal Brar, in his on-the-whole excellent study of social-democracy, is undoubtedly correct when he says:

"As to Clause Four an assortment of Trotskyite and revisionist organisations perceive it as an expression of Marxian socialism, which must be defended and which makes the Labour Party an anti-capitalist party deserving of working class and communist support. . . . As a matter of fact, Clause Four has little to do with socialism. On the contrary, it was an anti-communist provision born out of the historical circumstances ushered in by the October Revolution in the aftermath of the First Imperialist World War. The October Revolution . . . had set a rather infectious example to the working class the world over. . . . With force alone, the bourgeoisie could not hope to cope with this challenge. Labour needed much deceit and trickery to forestall such a development. Clause Four was the answer of the thoroughly imperialist and unashamedly racist leadership of the Labour Party". (Harpal Brar (1995): op. cit.; p. 83-84).

A special conference of the Labour Party in June 1918 adopted the new constitution.
(Robert Clough: op. cit.; p. 30).

From Attlee to Foot

In July 1945, Labour secured a

" . . . great victory in the general elections . . . , after the defeat of Germany. The party polled 12 million votes and for the first time captured an absolute majority of the seats in the Commons".
(*'Encyclopedia Americana'*, Volume 16; Danbury (USA); 1978; p. 585).

A progressive

" . . . legislative programme was begun, and by 1951 about one-fifth of the British economy had been nationalised. A . . . national health insurance scheme was put into operation and a sweeping social security plan was enacted".
(*'Encyclopedia Americana'*, Volume 16; Danbury (USA); 1978; p. 585).

At the general election in February 1950, Labour

" . . . continued in power with a majority . . . drastically reduced".
(*'Encyclopedia Americana'*, Volume 16; Danbury (USA); 1978; p. 585).

and at the general election in October the Conservative Party

" . . . won a majority . . . and took control of the government".
(*'Encyclopedia Americana'*, Volume 16; Danbury (USA); 1978; p. 585).

Henceforth, Britain's two-party parliamentary system gave office intermittently to the Labour and Conservative Parties,

Clement Attlee

" . . . retired as party leader in December 1955, and was succeeded by Hugh Gaitskell".
(*'Encyclopedia Americana'*, Volume 16; Danbury (USA); 1978; p. 585).

At the Labour Party conference in Blackpool in November 1959. Gaitskell

" . . . urged the need to revise the party's constitution. . . . On the question of public ownership, he pointed out that the Labour Party had 'long ago accepted a mixed economy for the foreseeable future', and that it should be made clear that nationalisation was not the 'be-all and end-all' of Labour policy".
(*'Keesing's Contemporary Archives'*, Volume 12; p. 17,182).

In March 1960, the National Executive of the Labour Party approved a revised statement of party objectives based on a draft submitted by Gaitskell

" . . . in the form of a composite declaration in two parts: 1) a recapitulation of 'the first full declaration of party objectives in 1918' (including Clause Four, which was re-quoted in its original wording); and 2) a new section which recognised that 'both public and private

enterprise have a place in the economy".
(*'Keesing's Contemporary Archives'*, Volume 12; p. 17,518).

However, in July 1960, the party's National Executive resolved

" . . . not to proceed with any amendment of or addition to Clause Four of the constitution. . . .

The reaffirmation of Clause Four in its original form, without the amendment previously approved in March, was regarded as a defeat for Mr. Gaitskell".

(*'Keesing's Contemporary Archives'*, Volume 12; p. 17,521, 32,262).

After his death in (January -- Ed.) 1963, Gaitskell was succeeded as party leader by Harold Wilson.

(*'Encyclopedia Americana'*, Volume 16; Danbury (USA); 1978; p. 585).

Wilson

" . . . resigned as Prime Minister in April 1976 and was succeeded by James Callaghan".

(*'Europa World Year Book: 1998, Volume 2; London; 1998; p. 3,461*).

The annual conference of the Labour Party held in Brighton in October 1979 approved an NEC statement that in future

" . . . the procedure for the election of the leader . . . should be changed to allow for a widening of the franchise".

(*'Keesing's Contemporary Archives'*, Volume 27; p. 30.757).

through an

" . . . electoral college".

(*'Keesing's Contemporary Archives'*, Volume 27; p. 30.759).

These changes were particularly strongly opposed by David Owen, William Rogers, Roy Jenkins and Shirley Williams, who

" . . . became popularly and pejoratively known as the 'gang of four',"

(*'Keesing's Contemporary Archives'*, Volume 27; p. 30.757).

as

" . . . exemplifying the excessive leftward movement of the party".

(*'Keesing's Contemporary Archives'*, Volume 27; p. 30.759).

In October 1980, Callaghan announced

" . . . his decision to retire as leader of the party".

(*'Keesing's Contemporary Archives'*, Volume 27; p. 30.757).

and in November 1980,

" . . . Michael Foot was elected Leader of the Labour Party".

(*'Europa World Year Book: 1998, Volume 2; London; 1998; p. 3,461*).

For the 1983 general election Foot

" . . . presented a radical manifesto that proposed extensive nationalisation of industry, unilateral nuclear disarmament and the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Economic Community". ('New Encyclopaedia Britannica', Volume 9; Chicago; 1994; p. 82).

This was followed by

" . . . Labour's worst national electoral defeat in more than fifty years". ('New Encyclopaedia Britannica', Volume 9; Chicago; 1994; p. 82).

In March 1981, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) was launched

" . . . by four Labour Party cabinet ministers (Roy Jenkins, David Owen, William Rodgers and Shirley Williams), who had broken away from the Labour Party, charging it with extreme leftist tendencies and excessive control by the trade unions". ('New Encyclopaedia Britannica', Volume 10; Chicago; 1994; p. 920).

Subsequently, the party

" . . . formed an alliance with the Liberal Party", ('New Encyclopaedia Britannica', Volume 10; Chicago; 1994; p. 921).

and in March 1988 the two parties merged to form the Social and Liberal Democratic Party.

('New Encyclopaedia Britannica', Volume 10; Chicago; 1994; p. 919)

After the Conservative government headed by Margaret Thatcher was returned at the general election of June 1983

" . . . with a greatly increased majority over all other parties", ('Keesing's Contemporary Archives', Volume 29; p. 32,262),

Foot announced his forthcoming retirement, ('Keesing's Contemporary Archives', Volume 29; p. 32,527).

From Kinnock to Blair

In October 1983,

" . . . the Labour Party . . . elected Mr. Neil Kinnock as its leader". ('Keesing's Contemporary Archives', Volume 29; p. 32,527).

During his leadership campaign, Kinnock had made it clear for whom he spoke:

"We can only protect the disadvantaged in our society if we appeal to those who are relatively advantaged. The apparent over-concentration of our energies and resources on these groups like the poor, the unemployed and the minorities -- does a disservice both to them and to ourselves". (Neil Kinnock, in: Robert Clough: op. cit.; p. 170).

Having secured election as party leader, Kinnock

" . . . began a 'modernisation' programme". ('New Encyclopaedia Britannica', Volume 9; Chicago; 1998; p. 82).

Under this cloak of 'modernisation', Kinnock led the Labour Party significantly to the right,

" . . . ridding it of its major left-wing policies -- unilateral nuclear disarmament, nationalisation of key industries, union power and heavy taxation".
(*'New Encyclopaedia Britannica'*, Volume 9; Chicago; 1994; p. 82).

Harpal Brar sums up this policy as that the party's

" . . . response to each defeat has been to move further to the right".
(Harpal Brar (1995): op. cit.; p. 77).

Nevertheless,

" . . . the new policy of moderation did not win elections".
(*'New Encyclopaedia Britannica'*, Volume 7; Chicago; 1994; p. 82).

and after the fourth consecutive Labour defeat in April 1992, in October of that year

" . . . Kinnock resigned as party leader
(*'New Encyclopaedia Britannica'*, Volume 7; Chicago; 1994; p. 82).

and was succeeded by John Smith, who

" . . . embodied all the considerable virtues of 'Old Labour': the moderation, the solid roots in the community, the link with the working class in the form of the trade union movement".
(Andrew J. Davies: *'To build a New Jerusalem: The British Labour Party from Keir Hardie to Tony Blair'*; London; 1996; p. 433).

Nevertheless,

" . . . Labour went into the 1992 Election almost indistinguishable on major policy issues from the Tory Party it professed to oppose".
(Robert Clough: op. cit.; p. 178).

Smith

" . . . died unexpectedly of a heart attack in May 1994".
(Andrew J. Davies; op. cit.; p. 436).

and was succeeded by public-school-educated barrister Tony Blair, unaffectionately known as 'Phoney Tony'. Columnists noted that 'Tony Blair, MP' is an anagram of 'I'm Tory Plan B'.

From the moment of Smith's death,

" . . . the media turned to Blair with a speed that many Labour Party members felt was disrespectful".
(John Rentoul: op. cit.; p. 358).

One Labour MP

" . . . cynically observed that Blair's supporters refrained from launching his campaign for a decent period of mourning -- 'about twenty

minutes'".

(John Rentoul: *ibid.*; p. 362).

In comparison with Smith,

" . . . Tony Blair was a moderniser through and through".
(Andrew J. Davies: *op. cit.*; p. 438).

'Modernisation'

" . . . was never defined, but it can perhaps be best understood in terms of two concepts: a detachment from Labour's established values and objects and an accommodation with established institutions and modes of thought".

(Eric Shaw: 'The Labour Party since 1945: Old Labour, New Labour'; Oxford; 1996; p. 218).

Blair

" . . . was duly elected the new leader on 21 July 1994".
(Andrew J. Davies; *op. cit.*; p. 439).

obtaining 57.0% of the vote, against 24.1% for John Prescott and 18.9% for Margaret Beckett".

(John Rentoul: *op. cit.*; p. 404).

and distinguished himself by

" . . . calling his party 'New Labour' in order to signal a fresh start".

(Andrew J. Davies: *op. cit.*; p. 440).

BLAIR AND HIS POLITICAL SUPPORTERS SAW THAT THE LABOUR PARTY'S MOVE TO THE RIGHT, WHILE ATTRACTING ELECTORAL SUPPORT FROM LABOUR ARISTOCRATS AND PETTY BOURGEOIS, HAD LOST IT SUPPORT AMONG MORE POLITICALLY CONSCIOUS MEMBERS OF THE WORKING CLASS.

THEY SOUGHT TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM, NOT BY MOVING BACK TO THE LEFT, BUT BY COMBINING FURTHER MOVEMENT TO THE RIGHT WITH AN INTENSIVE CAMPAIGN TO CONVINCE BIG BUSINESS -- AND THE MEDIA IT CONTROLLED -- THAT LABOUR WAS NOT JUST SOMETHING TO BE UNWILLINGLY TOLERATED, BUT WAS A PARTY WHICH COULD SERVE THEIR INTERESTS MORE EFFICIENTLY THAN THE INCREASINGLY CORRUPT AND DISCREDITED CONSERVATIVE PARTY -- AND THEREFORE A PARTY WHICH BIG BUSINESS SHOULD SUPPORT.

"The unrelenting hostility towards Labour displayed by such papers as the 'Daily Mail' and the 'Sun'"

(Andrew J. Davies: *ibid.*; p. 447).

was notorious. But

" . . . Blair launched a charm offensive aimed at their proprietors, Viscount Rothermere and Rupert Murdoch. He was happy to write columns in the 'Sun', to speak at Murdoch's 'News Corps Leadership Conference' in Australia in July 1995. . . .

Interviewed in the 'Daily Telegraph' . . . in July 1994, Blair claimed that 'positions I have been setting out in the course of the leadership campaign on the economy, education, welfare and crime are positions I

believe many 'Telegraph' readers entirely agree with".
(Andrew J. Davies: *ibid.*; p. 447).

Under Blair's leadership, the Labour Party

" . . . now backs unequivocally the idea that the only way for a country to prosper in the modern globalised economy is to guarantee monetary and fiscal stability, and to ensure that its infrastructure and 'flexible labour markets' -- in other words, low wages, low social costs, weak trade unions and lack of legal restraints on firing surplus workers -- are attractive to investors".
(Paul Anderson & Nyta Mann: 'Safety First: The Making of New Labour'; London; 1997; p. 383).

'New Labour'

" . . . has also discarded the social liberalism that was once its hallmark, taking instead a populist stance in favour of tough law-and-order measures, strong families and 'responsibilities as well as rights' for everyone (but especially, it seems, social security claimants). Whereas in 1983 the Labour manifesto promised 'withdrawal from the European Economic Community, the 1997 manifesto promised 'leadership in Europe'. In 1983, Labour had a non-nuclear defence policy and was highly critical of NATO; in 1997 it was in favour of keeping Britain's nuclear weapons and was uncompromisingly Atlanticist".
(Paul Anderson & Nyta Mann: *ibid.*; p. 384).

In short, under Blair the Labour Party has openly sought to create the image of 'New Labour' as a party serving the interests of the capitalist class. In his pamphlet 'The Third Way', Blair speaks of

" . . . New Labour's partnership with business",
(Tony Blair: 'The Third Way: New Politics for the New Century'; London; 1998; p. 8).

and boasts:

"In New Labour's first year of government we have started to put the Third Way into practice, cutting corporation tax to help business".
(Tony Blair: *ibid.*; p. 7).

and saying in Tokyo in January 1996:

"I want the Labour Party to be seen as the party of business".
(Tony Blair: Speech in Tokyo, 5 January 1996, in: Iain Dale: 'The Blair Necessities: The Tony Blair Book of Quotations'; London; 1997; p. 108).

Business tycoon Anthony (Cob) Stenham writes in 'New Labour, New Britain':

"The strategies put forward by Gordon Brown and Tony Blair have totally convinced me that serious and forward-looking business people should back New Labour".
(Cob Stenham, in 'New Labour, New Britain', Autumn 1996; p. 7).

So, in contrast to the old image of partnership with the trade union movement, 'New Labour'

" . . . has embraced business wholeheartedly and distanced itself from the trade unions".

(Paul Anderson & Nyta Mann: op. cit.; p. 383).

Indeed, since the beginning of the 90s the influence of the trade unions over the Labour Party has been significantly reduced:

"In the 1970s the trade union block vote had amounted to no less than 90% of the votes cast at the annual Conference. Any one of the big three unions possessed a vote larger than the constituency parties put together. . . .

Now, however, the trade union block vote was reduced to 70% and the upsurge in membership meant that this would automatically be slimmed down to 50%. In February 1996 it was also agreed that unions would discontinue their sponsorship of individual MPs in favour of advancing money to various constituencies".

(Andrew J. Davies: op. cit.; p. 443).

Finally, with the temporary liquidation of socialism in the world, the Labour Party felt it had no need of the false 'socialist' image projected, for anti-communist motives, in its constitution of 1918. Thus, attempting to succeed where Gaitskell had failed, at the Labour Party conference in October 1994, therefore,

" . . . the recently elected leader Tony Blair outlined his desire to see a revision of the party's constitution. . . .

This was universally taken as involving an implicit intention to revise Clause Four, one of the few areas of the constitution setting out Labour's philosophy and policies. Unchanged since 1918, it committed the party to 'the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service'"

('Keesing's Record of World Events', Volume 40; p. 40,239).

As the 'Economist' said:

"If politics were entirely about substance, this (the dropping of Clause Four -- Ed.) would mean nothing. Labour had no intention of putting Clause Four into practice. But in politics, symbols matter. Clause Four stands for Labour's intellectual debt to Marx, for its origins as a party of struggling proletarians, for the politics of protest and confrontation. It also stands for Labour's ability to lie to itself, and to the electorate -- a tendency that Mr. Blair explicitly named and denounced".

('Economist', 8 October 1994; p. 15).

In April 1995,

" . . . a Special Conference of the Labour Party . . . voted 65.23% in favour of ditching Clause Four".

(Harpal Brar (1995): op. cit.; p. 120).

Brar correctly comments on the motives for this change:

"The Labour Party must not only champion the interests of British monopoly capital . . ., which it has always done, but must also be seen to be doing so. As Clause Four obscures this perception, at least on the

part of dull-witted bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and labour aristocrats, it must be consigned to the grave".
(Harpal Brar (1995): *ibid.*; p. 118).

The new Constitution pledges Labour to work for

" . . . a dynamic economy serving the public interest, in which the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition are joined with the forces of partnership and cooperation to produce the wealth the nation needs and the opportunity for all to work and prosper, with a thriving private sector and high quality public services, where those undertakings essential to the common good are either owned by the public or accountable to them".

(Labour Party Constitution, 1995, Clause Two, in: 'Times', 14 March 1995; p. 9).

Blair's tactics resulted, for example, in Murdoch's 'Sun', which had claimed that its support had been responsible for Thatcher's election victory in 1992, publishing an election eve message to its readers entitled:

"WHO BLAIRS WINS",
('Sun', 30 April 1997; p. 1).

and a leading article declaring:

"We urge you to vote Labour".
('Sun', 30 April 1997; p. 6).

In the 1997 General Election campaign,

" . . . the faltering campaign of the Conservatives was in sharp contrast to what was widely seen as an efficient, disciplined and highly professional campaign by the Labour Party. Spearheaded by the party leader, Tony Blair, Labour targetted middle-class voters and marginal constituencies. Blair emphasised that the party, increasingly styling itself 'New Labour', had thrown off much of its socialist past and was now a party of economic caution".
('Keesing's Record of World Events', Volume 43; p. 41,600).

On 1 May 1997,

" . . . the Labour Party won an emphatic victory in a general election . . . , thereby ending 18 years of Conservative Party government".
('Keesing's Record of World Events', Volume 43; p. 41,646).

The Marxist-Leninist Attitude to Social-Democracy

Lenin was insistent that the only correct attitude to social-democracy is to expose, and not to conceal, the fact that its policy is one of betrayal of the interests of working people:

"By exposing the fact that the opportunists and social-chauvinists are in reality betraying and selling the interests of the masses, . . . that they are really allies and agents of the bourgeoisie, we teach the masses to realise their true political interests, to fight for Socialism and for the revolution. . . .

The only Marxist line in the world labour movement is to explain to

the masses the inevitability and necessity of breaking with opportunism, to educate them for revolution by waging a merciless struggle against opportunism, . . . exposing all the vileness of national-liberal labour politics, and not . . . concealing it".

(Vladimir I. Lenin: 'Imperialism and the Split in Socialism', in: 'Selected Works', Volume 11; London; 1943; p. 762-63).

In the preface to his -- on the whole -- excellent book 'Social-Democracy: The Enemy within', Harpal Brar quotes the words of Lenin approvingly:

"The task of the communists -- revolutionary Marxist-Leninists -- is . . . to fight against the 'bourgeois labour party', to explain to the masses the inevitability and the necessity of breaking with opportunism, . . . and to unmask the hideousness of National-Liberal-Labour politics and not to cover them up. . . .

Marxist-Leninists alone are capable of accomplishing this task. They can and must do it. The formation of a truly Marxist-Leninist party in Britain would be a first, and very important, step in the accomplishment of this historic task".

(Harpal Brar (1995): Preface to: 'Social-Democracy: The Enemy within' (hereafter listed as 'Harpal Brar (1995); op. cit.; p. xi).

And in the preface to his later book 'Bourgeois Nationalism or Proletarian Internationalism?', published in 1998, Brar again quotes this passage from Lenin,

(Harpal Brar: Preface to: 'Bourgeois Nationalism or Proletarian Internationalism?' (hereafter listed as 'Harpal Brar (1998)'; Southall; 1998; p. xliii).

and calls for

" . . . only the most resolute adherence . . . to the ideological and organisational principles of Marxism-Leninism, only the pursuit of Bolshevik revolutionary tactics".

(Harpal Brar (1998): ibid.; p. xliii).

The Socialist Labour Party

The Socialist Labour Party (SLP)

" . . . was formed on 1st May 1996".

(Introduction: Election Manifesto: The Socialist Labour Party'; n.p.; 1997; p. 3).

led by Arthur Scargill, President of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Its foundation was welcomed by Brar:

"One cannot but welcome the emergence of the Socialist Labour Party".

(Harpal Brar (1998): op. cit.; p. xxxix).

Perhaps, therefore, the SLP is the revolutionary, Marxist-Leninist, party for which Brar had been calling, the kind of party which alone (according to Brar in 1995) could lead the working people to socialism?

Certainly, the formation of the party represented

" . . . a definitive organisational break"
(Harpal Brar (1998): op. cit.; p. xxxix).

with the Labour Party. Did it, however, signify, as Brar claims,

" . . . a definitive organisational break with social-democracy"?.
(Harpal Brar (1998): op. cit.; p. xxxix).

One must note that the stimulus for the formation of the new party was

" . . . New Labour's decision to ditch its constitutional commitment to common ownership".
(Introduction: Election Manifesto: 'The Socialist Labour Party'; n.p.; 1997; p. 3).

But in 1995 Brar was saying:

"Clause Four has little to do with socialism. On the contrary, it was an anti-communist provision born out of specific historical circumstances ushered in by the October Revolution. . . .

Through Clause Four which it had no intention of taking seriously let alone implementing, the Labour leadership through Arthur Henderson and Sidney Webb, both imperialist and racist to the core and authors of Clause Four . . . made vague promises to dupe . . . the working class so as better to assist British imperialism in its counter-revolutionary vanguard role against Soviet Russia".
(Harpal Brar (1995): op. cit.; p. 83, 84).

and was calling upon Scargill to

" . . . say good riddance to this stinking corpse called the Labour Party and help build a revolutionary party of the British proletariat which truly represents the interests of the British working class".
(Harpal Brar (1995): op. cit.; p. 104).

Since, as Brar correctly states, the presence or absence of Clause Four makes no difference to anti-socialist character of the policies of the Labour Party, the SLP's restoration of the equivalent of Clause IV in its Constitution is of no significance. It represents merely a rejection of 'New Labour' in favour of a revival of 'Old Labour'.

The objects of the SLP are defined in its Constitution as:

"To secure for the people a full return of all the wealth generated by the industries and services of our nation on the basis of the common/social ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange of each industry and service and to implement the most effective system of administration, control and accountability of each industry and service by the people".
(Socialist Labour Party: Constitution 1997; Barnsley; 1997; p. 4).

This is similar in principle to the aims of 'Old Labour' as expressed in Clause Four of its 1918 Constitution, which read:

"To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service".
(Labour Party: Constitution and Rules; London; 1929; p. 3).

Is it true, therefore, as Brar claims, that the SLP

" . . . has made a definitive organisational break with social-democracy"?
(Harpal Brar (1998): op. cit.: p. xxxix).

Is the SLP really a revolutionary, Marxist-Leninist party of the type that Lenin (and Brar in 1995) called for?

An essential principle of Marxism-Leninism is the objective of achieving working class political power, the dictatorship of the proletariat:

"A Marxist is one who extends the concept of the class struggle to acceptance of the dictatorship of the proletariat".
(Vladimir I. Lenin: 'State and Revolution: The Marxist Doctrine of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution', in: 'Selected Works', Volume 7; London; 1946; p. 33).

But in the Constitution of the SLP, the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat is not merely unmentioned; it is explicitly repudiated. The 'socialist system' envisaged by the SLP is one

" . . . whose institutions represent and are democratically controlled by, and accountable to, the people as a whole".
(Socialist Labour Party: Constitution 1997; Barnsley; 1997; p. 4).

This, however, is not Marxism-Leninism, but what Brar has in the past correctly denounced as Khrushchevite revisionism:

"In our country, for the first time in history, a state has taken place which is not a dictatorship of any one class, but an instrument of society as a whole, of the entire people.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is no longer necessary".
(Nikita S. Khrushchev: Report on the Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 22nd Congress; London; 1961; p. 57, 58).

Brar defends his support of the SLP by insisting that

"The SLP proudly pledges itself to the ideology of Marxism. . . .
The SLP . . . proudly defends the earth-shattering achievements of the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union and their monumental successes in every field".
(Harpal Brar (1998): op. cit.; p. xl).

Brar gives no evidence for this surprising statement, and in fact, there is no mention at all of Marxism or the Soviet Union in the SLP's Constitution, in its election manifesto or in any issues of its journal which are available in the British Library.

From the evidence available, it seems incontrovertible that the SLP is

not a Marxist-Leninist Party, but another social-democratic party --
albeit one which stands to the left of the Labour Party.

As long ago as September 1928, the Communist International, in its programme adopted at its 6th Congress, characterised 'left' social-democracy as follows:

"In systematically carrying out this counter-revolutionary policy, social-democracy makes use of its two wings: the right, overtly counter-revolutionary wing is indispensable for negotiations and direct contacts with the bourgeoisie, while the 'left' is used to execute particularly subtle manoeuvres for deceiving the working class. . . . It is therefore the most dangerous fraction in the social-democratic parties".
(Programme of the Communist International, in: Jane Degras (Ed.): op. cit., Volume 2; p. 483-84).

CONCLUSION

ON THE EVIDENCE AVAILABLE, THE SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY (SLP) IS NOT A MARXIST-LENINIST PARTY BUT A 'LEFT' SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

WHILE IT MAY BE TACTICALLY CORRECT FOR MARXIST-LENINISTS TO COOPERATE WITH THE SLP OR ITS ORGANS ON QUESTIONS OF POLICY ON WHICH THEY ARE IN AGREEMENT, AND IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES EVEN TO JOIN THE PARTY FOR THE PURPOSE OF EXPOSING ITS TRUE CHARACTER, TO SUPPORT THIS PARTY IS TO DECEIVE THE WORKING PEOPLE, WHICH IS IMPERMISSIBLE FOR MARXIST-LENINISTS.

IN SHORT, THE TASK OF MARXIST-LENINISTS IN RELATION TO THE SLP IS THEREFORE NOT TO SUPPORT IT, BUT TO WORK TO EXPOSE IT AS A PARTY WHICH SERVES CAPITAL, WHICH SERVES THE ENEMIES OF THE WORKING CLASS.

APPENDIX

SLP VOTING FIGURES AT GENERAL ELECTION

At the general election in May 1997, the Socialist Labour Party contested 64 seats -- 56 in England, 5 in Wales and 3 in Scotland. The Party's candidates, together with the number of votes they received and the proportion of the electorate this represented, are shown in the following table:

Constituency	Candidate	Votes received	Proportion of Electorate
BARNSLEY EAST & MEXBOROUGH	K. Capstick	1,213	1.8%
BETHNAL GREEN & BOW	A. Hamid	413	0.6%
BIRKENHEAD	M. Cullen	1,168	2.0%
BIRMINGHAM SPARKBROOK & SMALL HEATH	C. Wren	483	0.7%
BLACKBURN	h. Drummond	637	0.9%
BOLTON NORTH EAST	W. Kelly	676	1.0%

BOLTON WEST	D. Kelly	1,374	2.2%
BRADFORD WEST	A. Khan	1,551	2.2%
BRENT EAST	S. Keable	466	0.9%
BRIGHTON KEMPTOWN	H. Williams	316	0.5%
BRISTOL EAST	P. Williams	766	1.1%
BRISTOL NORTH WEST	G. Shorter	482	0.6%
BRISTOL WEST	R. Nurse	244	0.3%
CAMBERWELL & PECKHAM	A. Ruddock	685	1.4%
CAMBRIDGESHIRE NORTH EAST	C. Bennett	851	1.1%
CANNOCK CHASE	M. Conroy	1,120	1.5%
COLNE VALLEY	A. Brooke	759	1.0%
COVENTRY NORTH EAST	H. Khamis	597	0.8%
COVENTRY NORTH WEST	D. Spencer	940	1.2%
DONCASTER CENTRAL	M. Kenny	854	1.3%
DON VALLEY	N. Ball	1,024	1.6%
DUDLEY NORTH	M. Atherton	2,155	3.1%
EALING, ACTON & SHEPHERD'S BUSH	J. Gilbert	635	0.9%
EALING SOUTHALL	H. Brar	2,107	2.6%
EAST HAM	I. Khan	2,697	4.1%
EREWASH	M. Simmons	496	0.6%
HORNSEY & WOOD GREEN	P. Sikorski	586	0.8%
ILFORD SOUTH	B. Ramsey	868	1.2%
KNOWSLEY NORTH & SEFTON EAST	C. Jones	857	1.2%
LEEDS CENTRAL	D. Rix	656	1.0%
LEEDS NORTH EAST	J. Egan	468	0.7%
LEEDS NORTH WEST	R. Lamb	335	0.5%
LEICESTER EAST	S. Sidhu	436	0.7%

LEICESTER SOUTH	J. Doohar	634	0.9%
LEICESTER WEST	D. Roberts	452	0.7%
LEWISHAM DEPTFORD	J. Mulrenan	996	1.7%
LEWISHAM WEST	N. Long	398	0.7%
MAIDSTONE & THE WEALD	M. Cleator	979	1.4%
MANCHESTER CENTRAL	F. Rafferty	810	1.3%
MANCHESTER GORTON	T. Wongsam	501	0.8%
NEWBURY	K. Howse	174	0.2%
NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME	B. Bell	1,082	1.6%
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE EAST AND WALLSEND	B. Carpenter	642	1.0%
NORWICH NORTH	J. Hood	495	0.7%
OLDHAM EAST & SADDLEWORTH	J. Smith	470	0.6%
OLDHAM WEST & ROYTON	G. Choudbury	1,311	1.9%
POPLAR & CANNING TOWN	J. Joseph	557	0.8%
ST. HELENS NORTH	R. Waugh	832	1.2%
SCUNTHORPE	B. Hopper	399	0.7%
SEDFIELD	B. Gibson	474	0.7%
SHEFFIELD BRIGHTSIDE	P. Davidson	482	0.8%
SOUTHAMPTON ITCHEN	K. Rose	628	0.8%
STOCKPORT	G. Southern	255	0.4%
VAUXHALL	I. Driver	983	1.4%
WOLVERHAMPTON SOUTH EAST	N. Worth	689	1.3%
WYTHENSHAW & SALE EAST	J. Flannery	957	1.3%
<u>WALES</u>			
CARDIFF CENTRAL	T. Burns	2,230	3.7%

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LLANELLI	J. Willock	757	1.3%
NEWPORT EAST	A. Scargill	1,951	3.8%
PONTYPRIDD	P. Skelly	380	0.6%
SWANSEA WEST	D. Proctor	885	1.5%

SCOTLAND

CUNNINGHAM NORTH	L. McDaid	501	0.9%
CUNNINGHAM SOUTH	K. Edwin	494	1.0%
MOTHERWELL & WISHAW	C. Herriot	797	1.5%

('Whitaker's Almanack: 1999'; London; 1998; p. 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 259, 261, 262, 263, 264, 266).

The SLP vote thus ranged from 174 (0.2%) in Newbury to 2,697 (4.1%) in East Ham.

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