Antisemitism and the Labour Party

Edited by
Jamie Stern-Weiner

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VERSO

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Verso
UK: 6 Meard St, London, W1F 0EG
US: 20 Jay St, Suite 1010, Brooklyn, NY 11201
versobooks.com

Verso is the imprint of New Left Books

ISBN-13: 978-1-78960-671-3

'Corbyn Under Fire' and 'The Never Ending Story', © Daniel Finn 2018, first appeared in *Jacobin*. 'Jeremy Corbyn is an Anti-Racist, Not an Anti-Semite' © Jospehn Finlay, 2019, first appeared in *Times of Israel*. 'Smoke Without Fire: The Myth of the 'Labour Antisemitism Crisis' © Jamie Stern-Weiner and Alan Maddison, 2019. 'The Chimera of British Anti-Semitism (and How Not to Fight It if it Were Real)', first appeared on Verso Blog © Norman Finkelstein, 2019; '60 Times Jeremy Corbyn Stood with Jewish People' © @ToryFibs; 'Briefing for Canvassers: Challenging false allegations of antisemitism' and 'The Riverside Scandal' with permission from Jewish Voice for Labour; 'A Disinformation Campaign' © Media Reform Coalition, 2019; 'The Fake News Nazi: Corbyn, Williamson and the Anti-Semitism Scandal' from Medians © David Edwards, 2019; 'Is the Guardian Institutionally Antisemitic?' and 'Labour Party Conference or Nuremberg Rally? Assessing the Evidence' from author's blog, © Jamie Stern-Weiner 2019; 'Hue and Cry over the UCU' © Richard Kuper 2019; with permission of OpenDemocracy; 'Why the Labour Party Should Not Adopt the IHRA Definition or Any Other Definition of Antisemitism' from author's blog, © 2019 Norman Finkelstein, 2019; 'When Jews are Just Fodder for the Tory Propaganda Machine', © Antony Lerman 2019, with permission from Open Democracy; 'Antisemitism, Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Labour's "Old" and "New" Right-Wings', © Jeremy Gilbert 2019, with permission from OpenDemocracy; 'Critiques of Elite Power Aren't Antisemitic or Conspiratorial – They are Necessary' © Michaela Collard 2019, with permission from *Red Pepper*; 'Is the Labour Party against empirical sociology? Some Notes on Power, Elites and Anti-Racism' © David Miller and Tom Mills 2019, with permission of *Ceasefire*; 'Jews, Antisemitism and the Law', © Naomi Wayne, 2019; 'There is Another Way to Resolve Labour's Toxic Wrangles Around Complaints' © David Rosenberg 2019, with permission from *Morning Star*; 'Stereotypes Should Be Discussed Not Sanctioned', © Jamie Stern-Weiner and Alan Maddison 2019, first appeared on Verso Blog; The authors of the testimonies all retain their copyright.

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About the Contributors

Acknowledgements

The editor wishes to thank Norman G. Finkelstein, Célestine Fünfgeld, Leo Hollis, Alan Maddison, and Deborah Maccoby for their assistance in the preparation of this book and/or the development of the ideas that informed it. Special thanks, also, to those Jewish members of the Labour Party who gave permission to reproduce their testimonies.

Introduction

We are approaching the 2019 general election in bizarre circumstances. From the climate crisis to homelessness, Brexit to the NHS, the stakes could scarcely be higher. Yet a story about the Labour Party that has no basis in fact, is prima facie absurd, and whose partisan motivations are transparent is playing a significant role in our national conversation and might even influence the result. This story has dragged out for fully four years. Time and again, criticisms appear to have been answered, positions clarified, and measures implemented – only for the same allegations to not just resurface in, but return to dominate political discussion. Like a creature from a horror film, the 'Labour antisemitism' controversy just won't die.

The 'antisemitism' campaign is, in its profile and its protractedness, unprecedented in modern British political history. To find an analogy requires reaching back to those outbursts of collective madness which periodically stain the annals of human history and astonish all succeeding generations. If its consequences do not compare with those of the Salem Witch Trials or the McCarthyite purges, still, in its combination of cynical calculation, bottomless irrationality, and self-perpetuating moral hysteria, the propaganda offensive against Labour lies squarely in the trajectory of these infamous episodes.

It is a curious experience to write about the 'antisemitism' allegations against Labour, because there is barely anything of substance to

engage with. A miniscule proportion of the party's half-million members were found to have posted offensive remarks on social media; so far as can be told, the entire furore reduces to this. Were it not for the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans would have continued to suffer the rigid segregation, harsh discrimination, and routine brutality of the Jim Crow South. Were it not for the 'Labour antisemitism' campaign, a small number of questionable Facebook posts would have received less publicity. Indeed, this book might fairly have been titled, *A Comprehensive and Exhaustive Examination of Nothing*.

If Jeremy Corbyn's historic candidacy is defeated, it is likely that the 'antisemitism' charge will briefly take on renewed salience as factional opponents seek to engineer his ouster. If and when he is ejected, the whole issue will vanish overnight, consigned forever to Orwell's memory hole. What happens if Corbyn wins is less certain.[1] But his opponents will continue to have resort to the 'antisemitism' weapon, while there are already indications that the relentless smears have curtailed his radicalism.[2]

In any case, the 'Labour antisemitism' campaign set a template that is sure to be deployed against other popular movements of the left – as supporters of Bernie Sanders are beginning to discover.[3] It is therefore critical that the strange events that have warped British politics since 2015 are soberly examined and the truth about them established – not just for posterity, but to help kindred movements avoid repetition of Labour's mistakes. This volume brings together a selection of analytical writings[4] on the 'Labour antisemitism' affair as a contribution to this effort.

Jamie Stern-Weiner
21 November 2019

OVERVIEW

1

Corbyn Under Fire

Daniel Finn

JACOBIN, 9 APRIL 2018

The dominant narrative in the British media about Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour Party, and antisemitism is false and defamatory. Labour does not have a leadership that tolerates or encourages prejudice against Jews. It is not a safe haven for bigots. There is no evidence that antisemitic views are more prevalent in Labour than in other parties, or in British society as a whole.[1]

Anyone making those elementary points is likely to face an indignant response. Hasn't Corbyn himself admitted that Labour has a problem?[2] How can you deny the evidence staring you in the face?

The question 'does Labour have a problem with antisemitism?' has been posed incessantly to Labour politicians and to ordinary party members. It should be seen for what it is: a rhetorical trap with a built-in conclusion.

If they answer 'no', they will be ridiculed for suggesting that Labour is entirely free of antisemitic prejudice. If the party has even a single member with antisemitic views, that's a problem. Only a fool would claim that Labour has managed to eliminate every last trace of bigotry from its ranks.

But if they answer 'yes', that will be taken as an admission that the prevailing narrative is correct.

Take, for example, Corbyn's recent interview with *Jewish News*.[3] After speaking at length about his opposition to antisemitism and

the steps that would be taken to root it out, he was urged to 'call on your supporters to stop calling allegations of antisemitism smears'. For some, any talk of 'smears' is itself a form of antisemitism and should be sanctioned by the party.

In other words: if some allegations are valid, then every allegation must be valid. When put as bluntly as that, the absurdity of the argument becomes obvious, but some variation on that faulty logic has been ubiquitous in the British media over recent weeks.

So let's be clear. The charge against Corbyn's Labour Party is not that some party members have expressed antisemitic views, or that internal disciplinary procedures are not up to scratch, or that the leadership itself has been guilty of some failings on the issue.

Measured, proportional criticism of that kind is not a 'smear', and the vast majority of Corbyn supporters would have responded to it in good faith, if that was the main thrust of the argument.

Instead, they have been bombarded with hysterical claims that Labour under Corbyn is 'a cold house for Jews', riddled with antisemitism from top to bottom. It is said to have become a party 'for the many, not the Jew', with a leader who winks approvingly at bullies and bigots.

That is the smear, propagated tirelessly by a wide range of political actors united by their hostility to Corbyn's project.[4]

The effect of this defamatory campaign has been to make it harder for the Labour Party to solve the problems which do exist, since its supporters have been encouraged to look on all claims about 'Labour antisemitism' with intense distrust – not by the party leadership, but by its most implacable critics. This attitude is not healthy and has produced its own set of issues. But it is the predictable result of a malicious onslaught. When you're in a bunker, you develop a bunker mentality.

If Labour faces such intense criticism for its record on antisemitism today, it is not because of some drastic transformation in the party's character since Corbyn became leader. The main thing that has changed in comparison with past leaderships is the degree of scrutiny.

In October 2016, the UK Parliament's Home Affairs Committee published a report which found 'no reliable, empirical evidence to support the notion that there is a higher prevalence of antisemitic

attitudes within the Labour Party than any other political party'. With delicate understatement, the committee members declared themselves 'unaware whether efforts to identify antisemitic social media content within the Labour Party were applied equally to members and activists from other political parties'.[5] But having identified a disproportionate focus on Labour, they proceeded to replicate it by concentrating overwhelmingly on the party's shortcomings, real or imagined.

Richard Kuper, in a meticulous response, found it 'impossible to read the report without being struck by its all-too-often snide and judgmental tone, its cavalier use of evidence, its cherry-picking of statements made by witnesses to it, [and] its failure to challenge and test the assertions made' by critics of the Labour Party.[6] The same criticisms could be applied to media coverage of the issue in general.

'Cavalier use of evidence'? Take Howard Jacobson's article for the *New York Times* about last year's Labour Party conference, in which he asserted that 'a motion to question the truth of the Holocaust was proposed' from the conference floor.[7] There was no such motion: Jacobson simply made it up.

'Failure to challenge and test the assertions made'? In December 2017, the *Guardian* published an interview with Israel's public-security minister, Gilad Erdan, highlighting his claim to detect 'antisemitic views in many of the leadership of the current Labour Party'.[8] At no point was Erdan challenged to provide evidence for this claim, and readers were given no information that might shed light on his credibility as a witness.

Erdan is one of the most extreme, hawkish politicians in the most extreme, hawkish government in Israel's history. He calls openly for the annexation of settlement blocs in the occupied Palestinian Territories ('the time has come to express our Biblical right to the land … it doesn't matter what the nations of the world say'),[9] opposes the very idea of a Palestinian state,[10] and engages in racist incitement against Israel's Palestinian citizens.[11] Erdan is also the principal architect of Israel's campaign against Palestinian solidarity activists, and rejects any distinction between a boycott of Israel in general and a boycott of goods from illegal settlements in the West Bank[12] – a position that puts him at odds with liberal Zionists like Peter Beinart who oppose

the BDS movement.[13] By any objective standard, his slur on the Labour Party should be seen as an outburst from the lunatic fringe, not given pride of place in a liberal newspaper.

There is also the tactic of rhetorical inflation, where the definition of antisemitism is stretched well past breaking point. Writing in the *Times*, Philip Collins gave a list of 'recent examples' which 'shames the Labour Party'. It included the following transgression: 'The filmmaker Ken Loach said that Emily Thornberry, shadow foreign secretary, "didn't distinguish herself" when she praised Israel as a beacon of freedom'.[14] There you have it: anyone who denies that Israel should be seen as a paragon of democratic virtue is guilty of antisemitism.

Three examples from the past six months, selected more or less at random, that give an accurate flavour of the methodology used by Labour's critics, from innuendo to outright fabrication. For a true picture of reality, we have to look elsewhere.

Shami Chakrabarti's 2016 report has been relentlessly trashed by hostile critics, most of whom seem not to have read it.[15] The Labour MP Wes Streeting, whose own record of political achievement should not qualify him to lick the postage stamps on Chakrabarti's mail, derided it as a 'whitewash' last week.

In fact, the report was a model of clarity and good sense. Its opening paragraph insisted that Labour was 'not overrun by antisemitism, Islamophobia or other forms of racism', but noted that there was 'clear evidence (going back some years) of minority hateful or ignorant attitudes and behaviours … I have heard too many Jewish voices express concern that antisemitism has not been taken seriously enough in the Labour Party and broader left for some years'.

Chakrabarti warned that some forms of antisemitic prejudice – association of Jews with money, suspicions of 'dual loyalty', etc. – could still be found in left-wing circles: 'I am not saying that this is endemic, but any seasoned activist who says that they are completely unaware of any such discourse must be wholly insensitive or completely in denial'. She gave the examples of 'a Labour councillor who was told that he would be particularly good at a finance role' and 'an MP around whom rumours circulated that she was some kind of agent for Mossad', in both cases because of their Jewish heritage. The report concluded

with a set of recommendations that would improve the organizational climate if acted upon by party activists and officials.

It was precisely because Chakrabarti had delivered such a thoughtful and constructive report that her reputation had to be traduced by those hell-bent on defaming Labour. The Community Security Trust (CST) initially gave the report a cautious welcome, thanking Chakrabarti 'for her efforts and for her engagement with the Jewish community', and emphasizing that the 'final verdict' on her work would 'depend upon its implementation'.[16] Within months, the CST was describing the inquiry as 'wholly compromised', without ever having explained what was wrong with its findings. And as Richard Kuper pointed out, the Home Affairs Committee went out of its way to malign Chakrabarti on spurious grounds, while discreetly plagiarizing some of her recommendations.[17]

Another report, from the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR), gives some useful data on the prevalence of antisemitic attitudes on the British left, as measured by opinion surveys.[18] It found that 'the political left, captured by voting intention or actual voting for Labour, appears in these surveys as a more Jewish-friendly, or neutral, segment of the population'. The JPR considered 'the absence of clear signs of negativity towards Jews' to be 'particularly curious in the current context', since there were 'perceptions among some Jews of growing left-wing antisemitism'.

If we proceed from fact to opinion and not the other way round, it is surely the perceptions of 'growing left-wing antisemitism' that appear curious and in need of explanation, not the 'absence of clear signs of negativity'.

It may be argued that the JPR report measured the attitudes of Labour voters, not party activists, and thus cannot show whether antisemitic views are more prevalent among paid-up members than the wider left-wing electorate. One answer is to take the people who declare themselves to be 'very left-wing' – 3.6 percent – as a rough proxy for the Labour membership, which is about 1 percent of the adult population in Britain.

The JPR found this hard-left minority to be 'indistinguishable from the general population and from the political centre' in their atti-

tudes to Jewish people. The same was true for those who considered themselves 'fairly left-wing' or 'slightly left-of-centre'. Unless there is a yawning gulf between the Labour membership and every section of left-wing opinion in Britain, which seems most unlikely, the picture of a movement infested with antisemitic attitudes simply cannot be sustained.

It's worth noting the JPR's point that 'the very left-wing are, on the whole, no more antisemitic than the general population, but neither are they *less* antisemitic … one might assume that those on the far left of the political spectrum would be more likely to hold anti-racist ideas than the population as a whole, but we do not find this to be the case with antisemitism'.

This warning against complacency in left-wing circles should reinforce the points made by Shami Chakrabarti in her report. Of course, we need to put our own house in order, and shouldn't be satisfied if Labour's problem is no worse than that of the society in which it is embedded. As Chakrabarti argued, a left-wing party should hold itself to a higher standard and go the extra mile to create a welcoming space for people from all ethnic backgrounds.

But complacency is hardly the main danger for anyone who relies upon the British press to inform them. Wild exaggeration and bad-faith attacks[19] are the surest way to provoke knee-jerk dismissal by left-wing activists of all concerns about antisemitism – especially when those attacks come from pundits and politicians who are up to their necks in rancid bigotry.

If the evidence against the prevailing narrative is overwhelming, how has it managed to gain so much traction? For some of Corbyn's supporters, there's a simple explanation: the power of the 'Israel lobby' in British politics.

This is an argument that needs careful unpacking. There's no question that the attacks on Corbyn are linked to his support for Palestinian rights. It's best to see that position as just one strand of his heterodox line on foreign policy, and the ensuing attacks as part of a wider effort to drive Labour back into line.[20]

The concept of the 'Israel lobby' has been imported from the US, where it was the subject of a celebrated essay by John Mearsheimer and

Stephen Walt.[21] This is not the place to discuss whether Mearsheimer and Walt's thesis holds up in the light of subsequent developments. In the British context, we can identify several strands of pro-Israeli opinion whose combined weight is formidable. Whether those strands are best described as a coherent 'lobby' is not especially important.

First, you have campaigning groups like BICOM whose explicit purpose is to support Israel. They reinforce the diplomatic efforts of the Israeli state itself, which works tirelessly to influence Britain's political class in its favour.[22] Then there are organisations like the Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council (JLC) whose stated purpose is to represent the Jewish community in Britain, but which also campaign in support of Israel.

Finally there is a much wider layer of politicians, journalists, and other people of influence who take a pro-Israeli line, including the Labour and Conservative 'Friends of Israel' groups that count so many MPs among their adherents. For people in this cohort, support for Israel is usually not the core of their political identity: it's just one element in the mix. Pro-Israel Labour MPs, for example, tend to share a wider set of positions: pro-NATO, pro-Saudi, and pro-Trident. They also prefer the economics of George Osborne to those of John McDonnell (or even Gordon Brown).

There's no reason to doubt people in this third strand would still support Israel even if the first two were marginal or non-existent. The 'Israel lobby' is not a *deus ex machina* forcing British foreign policy onto a completely different path. If Israel had never existed, but all other things were equal, Britain would still pursue an aggressive, militarised, neo-imperial policy in the Middle East as a junior partner to Washington.

The 'friends of Israel' at Westminster give the same backing to Turkey in its oppression of the Kurds – or Saudi Arabia in its war on Yemen – as they give to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land, without any equivalent 'Turkish lobby' or 'Saudi lobby' to encourage them. Support for Ankara and Riyadh is part of the Atlanticist package, and that is the decisive factor.

What really sets Israel's British supporters apart is their capacity to smear critics of the foreign-policy consensus at Westminster.

This is where they provide an invaluable service for the conservative establishment.

Turkey's AKP regime routinely accuses its Western critics of Islamophobia and anti-Turkish racism, but if anyone tried to repeat those charges in a British context, it would sound very odd. In any case, there is no particular taboo against Islamophobia in the country's political culture: the ruling party can run an openly racist campaign against a Muslim candidate without facing any consequences, and the defence secretary can remain in his post after defaming a Muslim cleric as an ISIS supporter.[23]

Charges of antisemitism, on the other hand, are politically toxic. Pro-Israel groups take advantage of this to slander their opponents, and have their accusations signal-boosted by the right-wing press. To complete the loop, anyone who points this out is bitterly denounced as an apologist for bigotry.

Politicians who support Palestinian rights tend to be left-wing and critical of British foreign policy in general, so defenders of the status quo have every reason to assist the smear campaigns against them.

The alliance with Saudi Arabia is just as vital for Britain's power elite as the alliance with Israel, if not more so. But the attacks on Corbyn for his criticism of Riyadh are strikingly flaccid and ineffectual.[24] There are no pro-Saudi equivalents of Jonathan Arkush, the president of the Board of Deputies.

It was the Board of Deputies and the JLC that called the recent protest against the Labour Party on Parliament Square. When Jonathan Arkush attacked Corbyn, the British media largely accepted his claim to speak on behalf of Britain's Jewish community and denounced any criticism[25] of the protest as an attack on that community, even – or especially – when it came from British Jews.

This is a man who congratulated Donald Trump on his victory, bemoaned Theresa May's lost majority in the 2017 general election, and welcomed her alliance with the far-right Democratic Unionist Party.[26] Arkush is by any standards a deeply conservative, partisan figure, and his hostility towards the Labour leadership must be seen in that light.

With the power to condemn goes the power to absolve. Sometimes this means taking action, as with the message to Trump, glossing over

the antisemitic undertones of his campaign.[27] Sometimes it is enough to do nothing. When the *Telegraph* used its front page to promote lurid conspiracy theories about George Soros, Arkush was notably silent.[28]

Soros-mania is one of the main channels for the rehabilitation of traditional antisemitic tropes in Europe today. The *Telegraph*'s endorsement of those tropes was a very alarming development, but an attack on its editor for complicity with antisemitism is not the kind of story Britain's right-wing press is likely to embrace. Levelling the same charge against Jeremy Corbyn is a very different matter.

This is the real value of the 'Israel lobby' for Britain's conservative elite: its willingness to serve as a third rail for those who challenge Atlanticist orthodoxy. This ability to smear dissenters hinges on the support it receives from much more powerful interests in British politics and media. Israel's supporters are not an external force that has bent the British ruling class to its will. They are the outriders of that class.

Insinuations of antisemitism can be used, not merely to defame critics of Israel, but to discredit any radical critique of capitalism or imperialism in the modern world. That much is clear from reading the sleazy hit-job by two academics published in the *New Statesman*, dressed up in pseudo-Marxist verbiage to conceal its true purpose, like a bank robber in a clown suit.[29] This widely praised article depicted Labour's social-democratic reform program as a quasi-genocidal plan to 'identify the guilty parties held to be personally responsible for the current malaise, and to remove them from the organic community of the productive'.

The most important thing when faced with such tawdry attacks is to keep our nerve and refuse to be browbeaten. But there are other steps that can be taken too. Shami Chakrabarti's report contained some very sensible recommendations about language: she urged left activists to 'use the term "Zionist" advisedly, carefully and never euphemistically or as part of personal abuse', and to 'resist the use of Hitler, Nazi and Holocaust metaphors, distortions and comparisons in debates about Israel/Palestine in particular'.

If that advice had been taken to heart, some of the controversies of the past two years could have been avoided. In particular, everyone should read the article by David Rosenberg of the Jewish Socialists'

Group about the most virulent of those controversies, which was provoked by the former London mayor Ken Livingstone with his comments about Hitler and Zionism in 2016.[30] Rosenberg shows with great clarity why Livingstone's intervention was wrong, foolish, and politically disastrous. Anyone who wants to make the case for Palestinian solidarity can learn some wider lessons from that fiasco.

There have also been several articles by left-wing writers urging Labour supporters to up their game on antisemitism and learn about the ways it can be expressed in coded form.[31] This is all good advice, and would still be good advice if there had been no media furore to cope with.

But sometimes these arguments are accompanied by loose talk about 'cranks' with a 'fixation on Israel' who have to be 'rooted out' or 'marginalised'. I've seen this kind of language used by some Corbyn supporters on social media often enough for it to be worth addressing.

The problem with 'crankery', like its near-neighbour, 'sectarianism', is that it's very much in the eye of the beholder. Any left-wing argument, no matter how thoughtful, persuasive, and well-documented it is, will be derided as a 'conspiracy theory' by journalists who nonetheless see the hand of Russia behind everything they dislike, from Black Lives Matter to the Catalan independence movement.

Anyone who has not been involved in Palestine solidarity activism should be very cautious about applying the 'crank' label to those that have. There can be few fields of political activity where so much toxic – and highly personalised – abuse is directed at activists whose only motivation is to the support the democratic rights of an oppressed people.

I say this partly because I have some experience of working for the Palestine Solidarity Campaign in Ireland. The conditions for that work were unusually favourable, as support for Palestinian rights was considered perfectly legitimate in the political mainstream. If we wanted a meeting with politicians from the centre-right parties, we just had to ask, and they always gave us a respectful hearing. Even so, Israel's Irish supporters had untrammelled access to the national media whenever they wanted to slander us.

I can only imagine the strains of doing similar work in a country like Britain, where the mainstream consensus is strongly pro-Israel,

over a long period of time. It's bound to have a distorting effect on the perspective of many activists. Those distortions should be criticised when necessary, but always with a generous spirit, and a recognition that 'tone-deafness' comes in many different forms.

Just four days after the anti-Corbyn protest in London, the Israeli army carried out a bloody massacre of Palestinian demonstrators in Gaza.[32] The Board of Deputies rushed to blame the victims for the slaughter,[33] and the Labour MP Stella Creasy, one of Corbyn's most strident critics, gave her own version of the same line.[34]

It is some measure of Creasy's racist myopia that she seemed to think she had condemned the IDF by presenting its butchery as a 'response to violence' that may not have been strictly 'proportionate'.

Corbyn, on the other hand, did condemn the massacre: 'The killing and wounding by Israeli forces of civilians demonstrating for Palestinian rights in Gaza is appalling'.[35] His statement should have been more robust, and should have been accompanied by clear demands for action by the British government. But this is still the kind of language Israel's rulers aren't used to hearing from governments in the West.

On paper, Corbyn's position on Israel/Palestine isn't especially radical. His call for a two-state solution is supposed to be the mainstream view in Europe. But most politicians express that view in the most insipid language, refusing to call the occupation by its proper name. They urge the Palestinians to engage with a fraudulent 'peace process' whose only purpose is to allow Western governments to support Israel to the hilt while pretending otherwise. And they ignore every statement from Israeli politicians in which they spell out their determination to keep hold of the land that has been occupied since 1967.

A 'two-state solution' as envisaged by Israel and its Western allies would really be a 'one state, several Bantustans solution', with some pitiful fragments of the West Bank handed over to a supine Palestinian leadership to administer on Israel's behalf. The longer Israel is shielded from any kind of effective pressure by euphemistic phrase-mongering, the more likely this outcome will be.

A politician like Corbyn, who is willing to speak bluntly about 'the oppression of the Palestinian people',[36] poses a real challenge to this agenda. There is nobody in such close proximity to power in

a major Western state with a comparable record of support for Palestinian rights.

That's why Corbyn and his allies have been slandered so relentlessly for the past two years. The primary goal of this campaign is to destroy Corbyn altogether; the secondary goal is to deter him from talking about Palestine in terms that will discomfort the Israeli elite.

Corbynism is at a fork in the road. If it chooses the path of capitulation over Palestinian rights, some – though certainly not all – of the media attacks will abate.

For a taste of what would be required to make that happen, you need only read Emily Thornberry's dreadful speech on the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration last November, stuffed with talking points from Israel's foreign-affairs ministry.[37] Especially notable was her gushing praise for 'our friends in the Israeli Labour Party' – an organisation whose leader calls illegal West Bank settlements 'the most beautiful and devoted face of Zionism' and rules out any withdrawal from occupied Palestinian land.[38]

By hitching her wagon to a party that is uncompromisingly opposed to a just peace settlement,[39] Thornberry tacitly ruled out putting any kind of meaningful pressure on Israel to end its oppression of the Palestinians. The Israeli Labour Party can always be relied upon to denounce such pressure, and if good relations with 'friends' like Avi Gabbay are deemed essential, that means real action is off the table.

The movement behind Corbyn hasn't crossed that Rubicon yet. But his supporters should realise this is not just a marginal issue that can be ditched or downplayed for the sake of an easier life. It's a test of the movement's mettle.

If we can't hold the line in defence of Corbyn's eminently moderate stance on Palestine, we certainly won't be in any condition to resist the pressure that is still to come. Across a whole range of issues, from the Saudi war in Yemen to the privatization of the NHS, the ability to hold up under heavy fire will be essential. Things are going to get a lot harder. If we start retreating now, sooner or later there won't be anything left to defend.

2

The Never-Ending Story

Daniel Finn

JACOBIN, 11 JULY 2019

As Britain's Tories decide who to elect as their next leader, the Labour Party has to address two urgent dilemmas of its own. One is the question of Brexit. Should Labour, as prominent figures like Owen Jones have argued, now abandon the idea of an alternative, 'soft-Brexit' deal and campaign wholeheartedly for Britain to stay in the European Union?

Whatever view you take on that issue, it's clearly a matter of huge importance, not just for Labour, but for the future course of British politics.

Labour's second dilemma appears much more specific, and to a casual observer much harder to comprehend. How can it respond to allegations of pervasive, 'institutional' antisemitism levelled by hostile critics?

This issue has flared up periodically since Jeremy Corbyn became Labour leader four years ago. Already in the first six months of 2019, there has been a whole series of controversies, the gaps between them narrowing from months to weeks or even days.

For Corbyn's detractors, the explanation is simple: the Labour leadership's supposed failure (or worse, deliberate refusal) to get to grips with the problem.

But the truth is very different. We are in fact dealing with a meta-controversy, based on a false narrative. Unless they challenge

the underlying premises of that narrative, Corbyn and Labour will never be able to move on from this issue – hobbling their efforts to put forward a positive agenda.

The latest controversy involves the Labour MP Chris Williamson, who was suspended, readmitted, then suspended again in the space of a few days, after facing allegations of antisemitism and 'Jew-baiting'.

We'll get to Williamson later. One of the mistakes many people have made is to get bogged down in discussion of individual cases at the expense of understanding the bigger picture.

A narrative can still be false even if it contains truthful elements: in fact, there are very few that don't. Take the case of welfare fraud. One poll in 2013 found that the British public's perceptions of that issue were completely at odds with reality.[1] On average, people believed that welfare fraud cost the state thirty-four times more than it actually did (24 percent of the social-welfare budget, when the real figure was 0.7 percent).

That perception didn't drop out of the sky, of course: it came after a concerted effort by large sections of the British media to hype up welfare fraud. Their disinformation campaign often relied upon atrocity stories about individual welfare claimants that were accurate, but completely untypical.

The dominant media narrative about antisemitism in the Labour Party is also profoundly misleading, drawing false general conclusions from unrepresentative individual cases. In formulating this indictment, Labour's critics have employed several deceptive moves.

First of all, they hold the Labour leadership directly responsible for anything said by any party member – or even someone who claims to be a Labour supporter – on social media. Since there was never any chance that a party with half a million members would be entirely free of antisemitic attitudes, this move was enough to supply much of the initial fuel for the campaign. Labour's critics indignantly shouted down any attempt to quantify the prevalence of such attitudes, knowing perfectly well that they were not representative of the wider membership.

The party leadership has put a lot of effort into revamping Labour's disciplinary processes so that real cases of antisemitism can be dealt

with more quickly. Much of this work has been done since Jennie Formby took over as Labour's general secretary in April 2018, replacing Iain McNicol, who was bitterly hostile to Corbyn.[2] Some of the party officials who departed with McNicol had been slowing down the handling of cases, whether through incompetence or malice, knowing that Corbyn's team would get the blame from the British media.[3]

The second move was to redefine the whole concept of antisemitism so that it no longer referred simply to prejudice against Jewish people. This theme was present from the very start, but it took centre stage in the summer of 2018, when Labour came under intense pressure to adopt the IHRA 'working definition of antisemitism'[4] – part of a concerted effort to stigmatise all robust, hard-hitting criticism of Israel as being tainted by anti-Jewish prejudice.

The third move was inseparable from the second. Labour politicians have often said that their party needs to restore trust with Britain's Jewish community. Expressed in that way, nobody could disagree. However, since it is clearly impossible for every member of that community to speak with one voice, somebody has to be recognized to speak on their behalf.

That is where the problem begins. In Britain, as in other countries like the United States, there is no straightforward dividing line separating groups whose stated purpose is to represent the Jewish community and oppose antisemitism, and groups whose stated purpose is to campaign in support of Israel. Indeed, organizations like the Jewish Leadership Council (JLC) and the Campaign Against Antisemitism deny that any such distinction can be made.[5]

They follow the example of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, whose 'list of global antisemitic incidents', published every year, lumps together examples of violent prejudice against Jews with legitimate opposition to Israeli policy. Last year, Airbnb was included because of its temporary ban on listings from illegal West Bank settlements – as if that ban differed only in degree from the Pittsburgh synagogue massacre, which topped the list of hate crimes.[6]

Many Jews strongly dispute the claim that such groups accurately represent their opinions. But even if it could be shown that they spoke for a clear majority of Jewish people in Britain, it would still be wrong

to grant the JLC and its allies the power of veto over Labour's policy towards Israel. The people most affected by that policy are the Palestinians, and their democratic rights cannot be bargained away.

It is entirely fair to demand that criticism of Israel be expressed in a way that does not cross the line into antisemitism (for example, by holding Jewish people collectively responsible for what Israel does). It is a different thing entirely to demand that such criticism be toned down to the point where it becomes ineffectual. While groups like the JLC and the Board of Deputies know it would be counterproductive to state openly that their aim is to shield Israel from effective scrutiny, it is clearly what they want to achieve.[7]

Unfortunately, this sometimes gives people an exaggerated picture of the influence pro-Israel campaigning groups exercise over British politics. It's important to remember that those groups can only have such an impact because they're swimming with the tide. Political players whose influence is much greater – the Conservative Party, Labour's right-wing anti-Corbyn faction,[8] and the media outlets that support them[9] – take up their attacks on the Labour leadership, and amplify them to a deafening volume.

The final move is the simplest and builds upon the first three. Anyone who disputes the conventional wisdom about the Labour Party is accused of 'antisemitism denial'. By now, it is this kind of circular argument – which makes it impossible to question even the most egregious falsehoods – that probably accounts for the greater part of the ongoing controversy.

There is no way to break out of this cage without challenging all four premises. There will always be a Labour member who has made a questionable remark somewhere online (or a remark that can be presented as such, when it is ripped out of its original context). Even if there isn't, a ready supply of fresh material is guaranteed so long as the stigma of 'antisemitism' is maliciously attached to the view of Israel generally held in left-wing circles. Groups like the Board of Deputies and the JLC will never be reconciled to Labour as long as it has a left-wing leadership that supports Palestinian rights in both theory and practice. They will simply move the goalposts every time the party tries to address their previous demands. And any attempt

to establish Labour's innocence of the main charges against it will be taken as further proof of its guilt.

This is where the Chris Williamson row comes in. The case against the MP mainly rests on the people he has defended rather than the things he has said. On that count, the charge-sheet is very uneven: it is one thing to criticize Williamson for circulating a petition in support of Gilad Atzmon, a true example of a Jewish antisemite (Williamson said he was unaware of Atzmon's antisemitic comments, deleted his post, and apologised);[10] it is quite another to attack him for supporting Marc Wadsworth, a black Labour activist who was the victim of an unpleasant stitch-up.[11]

Overall, I find the arguments for his expulsion unconvincing and tendentious, even if you accept – as many of Williamson's defenders do[12] – that his interventions on the 'Labour antisemitism' controversy have often been clumsy, insensitive, and ill-judged. And to state a point that should be obvious: while some on the Labour left dislike Williamson and think he's a liability who does more harm than good, disciplinary action has to be based on clear-cut principles, not political expediency. Unless he's done something that clearly merits the harshest penalty, it should be up to Labour members in Williamson's constituency party to decide whether he continues to be their representative.

But what really matters is how this case fits into the overall picture. If Chris Williamson had never been a Labour MP, the basic structure of the controversy would be exactly the same as it is today. And if Williamson is expelled from the party, retires from political life, and never says a word in public again, the controversy will still grind on remorselessly, for all of the reasons stated above. Williamson himself would just become one more link in the chain of guilt-by-association ('X defended Y, who defended Z') that has become wearingly familiar.

There is clearly a section of the Labour membership that looks to figures like Williamson. An online poll by the website *LabourList*, in which 10,000 people took part, showed 61 percent support for the MP's reinstatement.[13] Of course, that wasn't a scientific survey of Labour members – but you don't have to spend much time in the left-wing end of Twitter to see that Williamson has people in his corner. Dis-

missing them all as paranoid cranks just makes it harder to grasp why that is. His popularity is a symptom of something quite important.

To begin with, his supporters can see the blatant double standards at work. Labour's parliamentary group is stuffed to the gills with MPs who have made or defended comments far worse than anything Williamson can be accused of, even on the most uncharitable reading of his record.

Tom Watson, for example, has appointed himself as the scourge of antisemitism in Labour ranks. In 2010, Watson's friend Phil Woolas ran an election campaign targeting Muslims in order to 'get the white folk angry' (as one of his team put it). It was so brazen that the courts soon ejected Woolas from the House of Commons for lying in his campaign literature – the first time in a century that such a thing had happened.[14] Watson composed a furious article, informing readers that he had 'lost sleep thinking about poor old Phil Woolas and his leaflets', making him feel 'like a piano has been dropped on my head' at the thought that a 'bright working-class lad done well' could be the victim of such glaring injustice.[15]

From Rachel Reeves[16] to Margaret Hodge,[17] the Parliamentary Labour Party is full of MPs who have made disgraceful race-baiting comments without facing any disciplinary sanction, let alone expulsion. And many of those MPs have been to the fore in demanding Chris Williamson's head. Unless you believe – as many of Corbyn's opponents evidently do – that some forms of racism are perfectly acceptable, that hypocrisy is bound to rankle.

There's another reason why a significant number of people have been rallying around Williamson, especially over the past year. The approach of the Labour leadership to the antisemitism controversy is visibly failing. More often than not, that approach has involved turning the other cheek[18] – or even giving credence to the false narrative with careless remarks[19] – instead of pushing back forcefully against the attacks.

It would be easier to hold people in line if this strategy was working and gradually defusing the issue. But that clearly isn't the case. The smears just keep escalating: at one time, Corbyn was merely accused of having a blind spot about antisemitism, now he's denounced as

a hateful bigot who would pose an 'existential threat' to Jewish communities in Britain if he ever became Prime Minister.

One shouldn't underestimate how frustrating and demoralising it must be for Labour members who got involved because they want to change society for the better, who see the British media slandering their party and its leaders week after week, and who just want someone to challenge that cynical frame-up in the strongest possible terms. Some are bound to think that a loose cannon is better than no cannon at all.

There will never be a time when Labour is allowed to move on from the controversy so it can prioritise other questions. Too many political actors are anxious to keep the pot on the boil. The problems Labour has faced over this issue aren't really a distraction from the party's wider agenda: in fact, the smear campaign encapsulates all the hostility of Britain's ruling class to the Corbynite agenda (and especially its departures from a stifling foreign-policy consensus).

The Labour leadership can't stop its political opponents from defaming the party with all the resources at their disposal. But it can still defend itself and its supporters by stating the facts: calmly, respectfully, but unequivocally. The longer it hesitates before doing so, the more damaging it will be.

EVIDENCE

3

Smoke Without Fire

THE MYTH OF A 'LABOUR ANTISEMITISM CRISIS'

Jamie Stern-Weiner and Alan Maddison

16 NOVEMBER 2019

It has been prominently and persistently asserted that there is a 'crisis' of antisemitism in the Labour Party. The charge-sheet comprises three main allegations: that antisemitism in Labour is *widespread*, that it has become *institutionalised*, and that elected party leader Jeremy Corbyn is himself an antisemite.

This last claim – a recent invention even in the context of the 'Labour antisemitism' campaign – is the most tenuous, flying as it does in the face of Corbyn's entire documented political career. From April 1977, when he helped organise the defence of Jewish-populated Wood Green from a National Front rally;[1] to the 1980s, when he headed Anti-Fascist Action and was arrested protesting apartheid in South Africa;[2] to June 2015, when he worked with antifascists to prevent a neo-Nazi march on Golders Green;[3] to his first day as Labour Party leader, when he spoke at a demonstration in support of refugees[4] – throughout his political life, Jeremy Corbyn has been a dedicated and principled anti-racist campaigner.[5]

The Jewish Socialists' Group recalls that it has 'worked alongside Jeremy Corbyn in campaigns against all forms of racism and bigotry, including antisemitism, for many years'.[6] From the other end of the political spectrum, distinguished British Jewish historian Geoffrey Alderman observes that, '[a]s a matter of fact, Jeremy Corbyn has an impressive demonstrable record of supporting Jewish communal ini-

tiatives'.[7] John Bercow, the Jewish former Conservative MP and Speaker of the House of Commons, testifies that, having known Corbyn over two decades, he has 'never detected a whiff of antisemitism' about him.[8] Joseph Finlay, one-time Deputy Editor of the *Jewish Quarterly* and founder of several grassroots Jewish organisations, noted in 2018:

> Many people at the heart of the Corbyn team, such as Jon Lansman, James Schneider and Rhea Wolfson are also Jewish. Ed Miliband, the previous party leader, was Jewish (and suffered antisemitism at the hands of the press and the Conservatives). I have been a member for five years and, as a Jew, have had only positive experiences … Jeremy Corbyn has been MP for Islington North since 1983 – a constituency with a significant Jewish population. Given that he has regularly polled over 60% of the vote (73% in 2017) it seems likely that a sizeable number of Jewish constituents voted for him. As a constituency MP he regularly visited synagogues and has appeared at many Jewish religious and cultural events … Whenever there has been a protest against racism, the two people you can always guarantee will be there are Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell … The idea that Britain's leading anti-racist politician is the key problem the Jewish community faces is an absurdity, a distraction, and a massive error.[9]

Prima facie, the allegation that Corbyn is an antisemite is a libel that may be dispensed with.

The remaining two accusations against Labour – concerning prevalence and institutionalisation – substantially overlap, since if antisemitism barely existed in Labour it could scarcely have become 'institutional'. The anti-Labour campaign therefore largely rests upon the empirical claim that antisemitism has become pervasive within the party's ranks.

Let's examine whether this allegation withstands scrutiny.

1. Is there an antisemitism crisis in Britain?

Allegations against Labour have gained force from and fed warnings of an antisemitism crisis in Britain more broadly.

But neither polls nor hate crime data reveal such a crisis.

Surveys consistently find that anti-Jewish animus in Britain is low relative both to other countries in Europe and to animus against other minority groups.

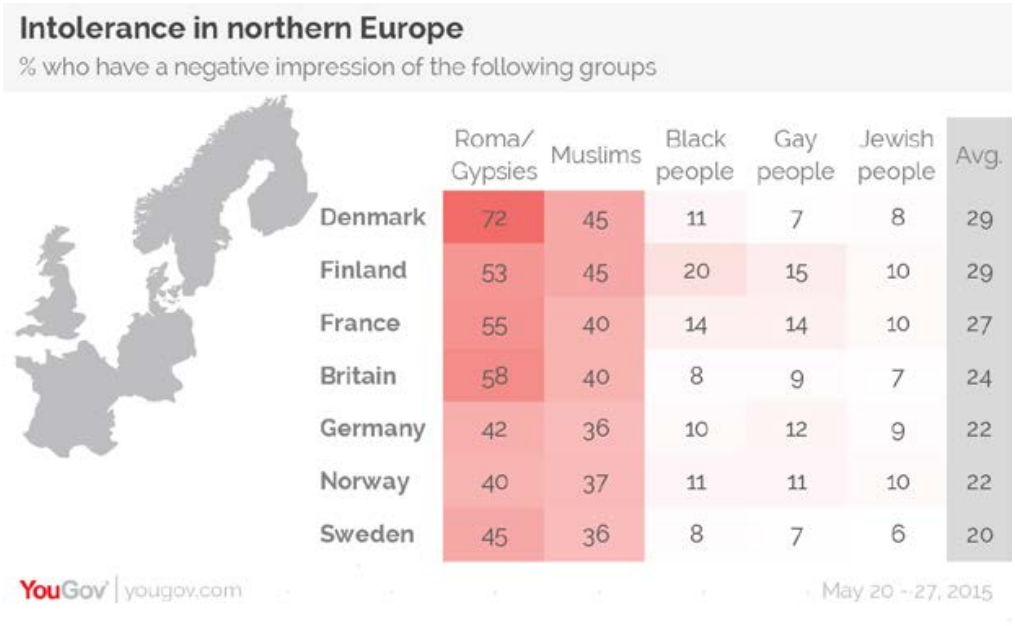


Fig. 1. YouGov survey, May 2015.

It has also been stable over time: annual Pew surveys between 2004 and 2016 show no increase in anti-Jewish sentiment throughout this period.[10]

Proportion of the British population with an 'unfavourable' opinion of Jews

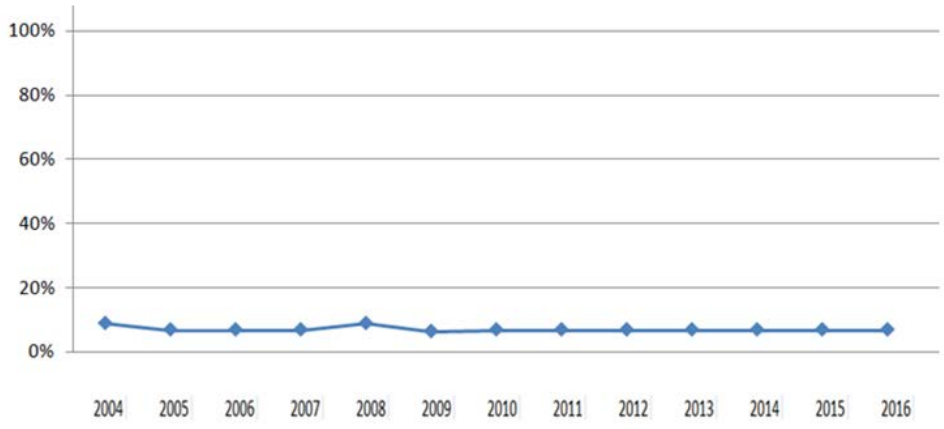


Fig. 2. Adapted from Pew Research Centre's Global Attitudes Project. Respondents were asked their opinions of Jews in general or, in 2009 and 2014–16, Jews in Britain.

Reviewing this data, the respected Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) emphasised in 2017 that:

> levels of antisemitism in Great Britain are among the lowest in the world. British Jews constitute a religious and ethnic group that is seen overwhelmingly positively by an absolute majority of the British population: about 70% of the population of Great Britain have a favourable opinion of Jews and do not entertain any antisemitic ideas or views at all.[11]

Such antisemitic attitudes as do exist in British society do not appear to translate into socioeconomic discrimination. Most British Jews recognise that being Jewish closes few if any doors in contemporary Britain[12] – on the contrary, relative both to the general population and to other ethno-religious minority groups, 'Jews are disproportionately wealthy, educated, and professionally successful'.[13] At the elite end of the spectrum, despite comprising just half of one percent of the population, British Jews made up around 10 percent of the 2014 *Sunday Times* Rich List[14] and are amply represented in our politics,[15] media,[16] and cultural life.

Nor are there rational grounds to fear the introduction of anti-Jewish policies in the foreseeable future. Quite the contrary. As former JPR director Antony Lerman writes, 'Jews are the most secure, establishment-protected, privileged, and assimilated of the country's minority communities', and benefit from many 'strong countervailing forces against antisemitism in the UK'. 'To ignore this', he argues, 'is to fail to recognise that there is probably no place more secure for Jews anywhere else in the world'.[17]

It is true that the number of reports of antisemitic hate crimes has increased in recent years, consistent with the trend for other forms of hate crime: the number of hate crimes of all types recorded by police more than doubled between 2012/13 and 2018/19, and the increase in the number of reports of antisemitic hate crimes appears to be in line with increases in the number of reports of other forms of hate crime.

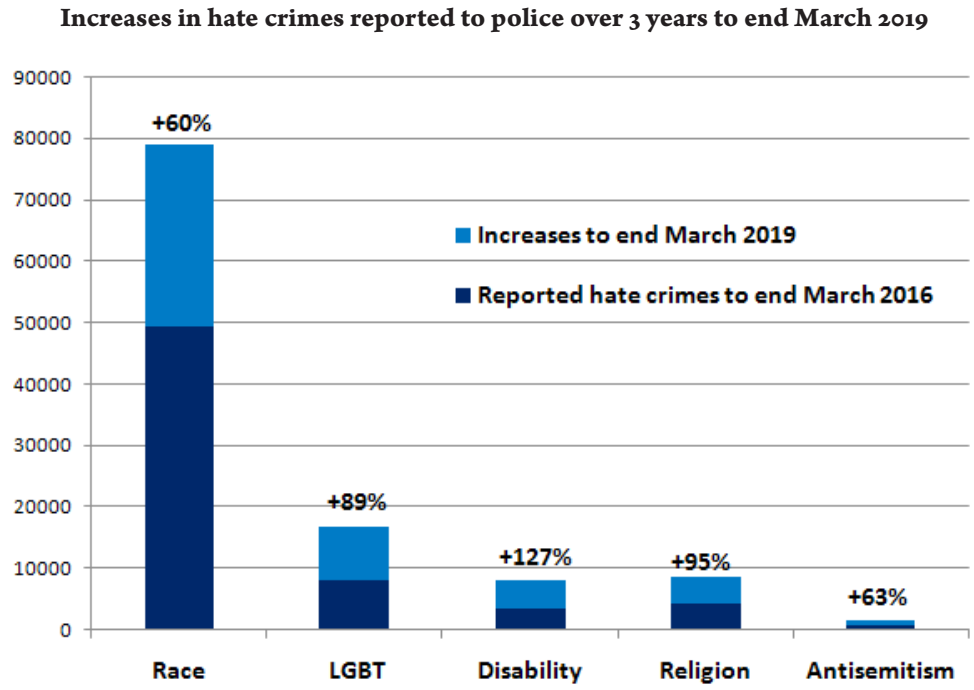


Fig. 3. UK Home Office hate crime data. 'Antisemitism' data is included in the 'Religion' category but also depicted separately.

But as with all forms of hate crime, one cannot assume that an increase in the number of reports means that there has been an increase in the number of real incidents. In fact, Crime Survey data 'shows a *fall* in hate crime over the last decade' and Home Office analysis concluded that the 'increases in [recorded] hate crime over the last five years have been mainly driven by improvements in crime recording by the police'.[18] It is reasonable to assume that the same applies to hate crimes against Jews.

2. Has Labour antisemitism increased under Corbyn?

The case against Labour is premised on the claim that its purported 'antisemitism crisis' coincided with Jeremy Corbyn's term as party leader. How else to explain what would otherwise appear a wholly opportunistic furore?

But no persuasive evidence has been presented to demonstrate that antisemitism within the Labour Party has increased since 2015.[19]

It might be argued that the frequency with which alleged instances of antisemitism within the party have been reported in the media and to Labour's disciplinary apparatus since 2015 testifies to an increase in

its prevalence. But, first, the increased frequency of allegations might simply be the result of the ongoing, concerted effort to uncover and publicise such evidence. Labour's general secretary Jennie Formby related that 'dossiers' of complaints had been submitted – most of which implicated individuals who turned out not even to be party members.[20] In addition, many of these allegations were made retrospectively about individuals who joined the party and/or comments made before Corbyn became leader. Already in June 2016, Shami Chakrabarti felt moved to urge 'a moratorium on the retrospective trawling of members' social media accounts and past comments'; in June 2019, Formby informed Labour MPs that '[m]any … complaints refer to social media posts that are up to 8 years old. One specific case … was a complaint … about someone who died in 2016'.[21]

It has been insinuated that far-left cranks signed up in droves to support the Corbyn leadership, and that antisemitism in Labour spiked as a result. But this has never been substantiated. The limited data at our disposal suggest that both halves of this claim are untrue: following the Corbyn surge, the average Labour member self-identified as fairly – not radically – left-wing,[22] while a 2017 survey (the largest of its kind ever conducted) found that '[l]evels of antisemitism among those on the left-wing of the political spectrum, including the far-left, are indistinguishable from those found in the general population'.[23]

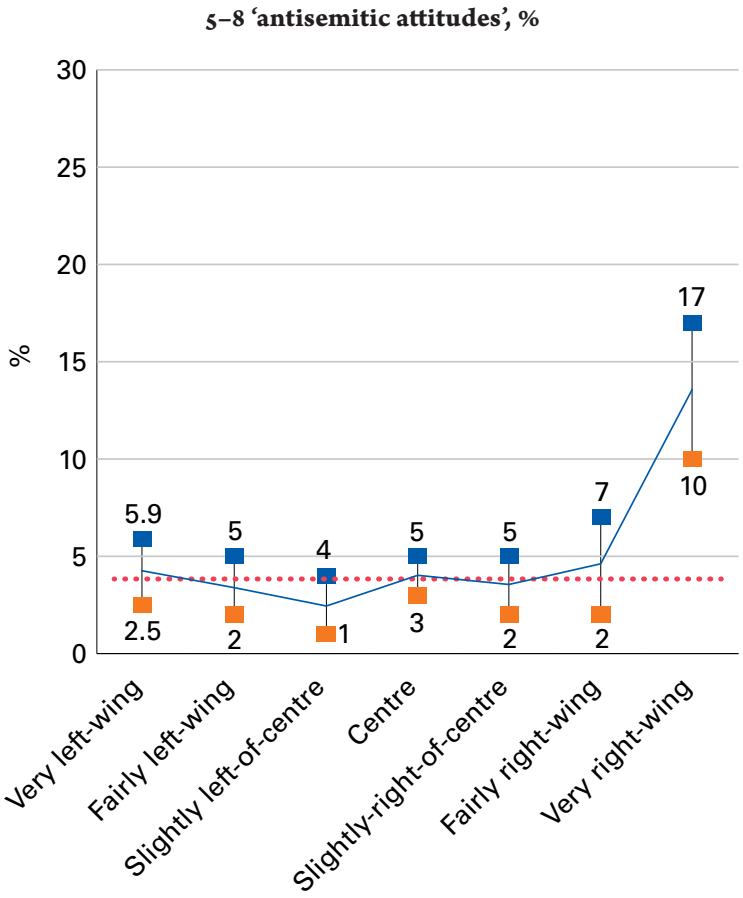


Fig. 4. Staetsky – JPR (2017).

And according to metrics[24] used by the Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA) – a group which has been highly critical of Labour – the prevalence of anti-Jewish prejudices appears to have declined across the political spectrum during Corbyn's time as leader.

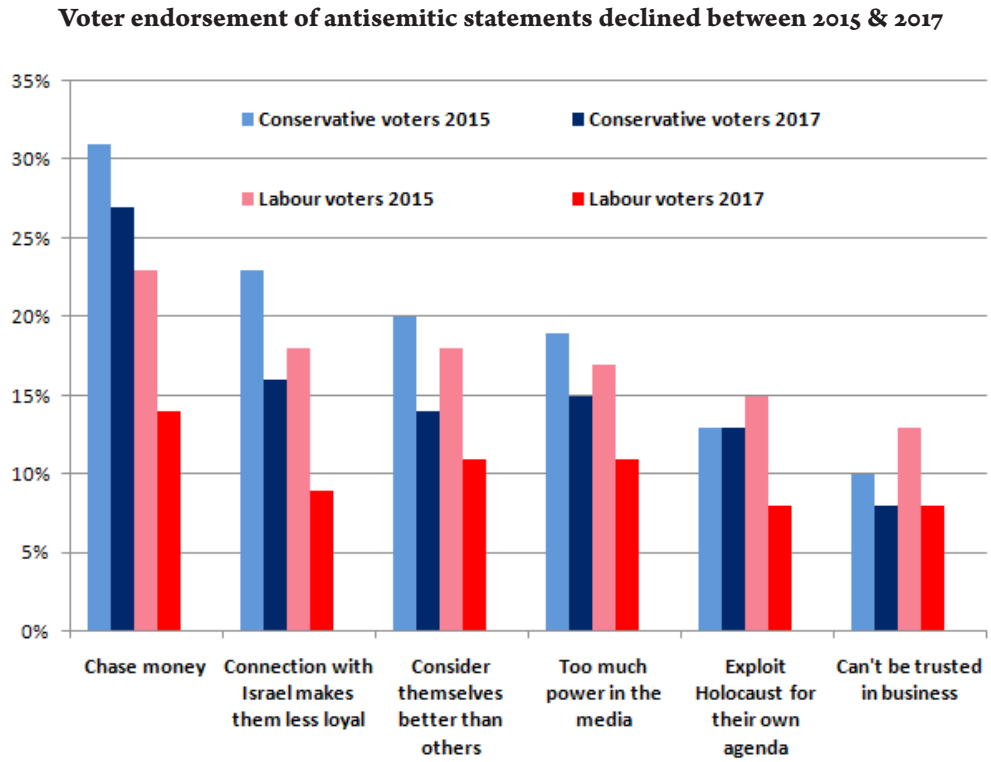


Fig. 5. Adapted from CAA/YouGov (2015) and CAA (2017). Survey questions were identical in 2016 and 2017; the 2015 survey used slightly different wording.

3. Is antisemitism worse in the Labour Party?

No survey measuring anti-Jewish prejudices among Labour and Conservative Party members has been published. Available data indicate that antisemitic attitudes are less prevalent on the Left and among Labour voters – from which constituencies Labour Party members are disproportionately drawn – than on the Right and among Conservative voters.[25]

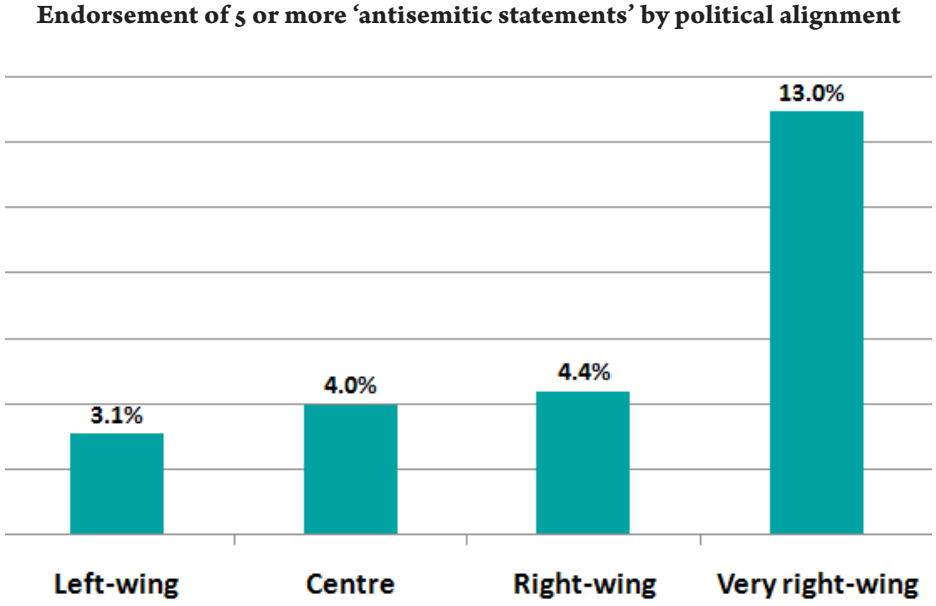


Fig. 6. Adapted from Staetsky – JPR (2017). 'Very Right-Wing' included in 'Right-Wing' but also depicted separately.

As the Home Affairs Committee – whose eagerness to malign Labour led it to misrepresent not just the facts but its own assembled testimony[26] – was therefore obliged to concede, 'there exists no reliable, empirical evidence to support the notion that there is a higher prevalence of antisemitic attitudes within the Labour Party than any other political party'.[27]

4. Is antisemitism widespread among Labour Party members?

No evidence has been presented in support of claims that antisemitism is widespread within the Labour Party, while the only inquiries conducted into these allegations to date reached the opposite conclusion:

- 'I have received no evidence that the [Oxford University Labour] Club is itself institutionally antisemitic' – *Royall Report*, May 2016;

- 'The Labour Party is not overrun by antisemitism, Islamophobia or other forms of racism' – *Chakrabarti Inquiry*, June 2016.

It might be argued that the perception among most British Jews that antisemitism is pervasive within Labour constitutes sufficient evidence. But since only a minority of British Jews have personal experience

inside the Labour Party, and since most British Jews opposed the party even when its leader was Jewish,[28] this perception more plausibly reflects the impact of consistently inaccurate and sensationalist reporting[29] on a constituency already disinclined to give Labour the benefit of any doubt.

Jewish members of the Labour Party are arguably in a better position to judge whether the allegations against it are justified. No survey of this group has been published, but it is clear that among them there is, at the very least, disagreement on the question. In written submissions collected over the course of a week in 2018, nearly 150 Jewish Labour members testified that the claims against Labour bore no relation to their own experiences in the party. Prominent 'Labour antisemitism'-mongers themselves avowed, as recently as 2016, that they had '[n]ever experienced any incidence of anti-Semitism from within the party'.[30] These testimonies are difficult to reconcile with allegations that the party is over-run with antisemitism.

The volume of antisemitism-related complaints against Labour members has been cited as evidence that antisemitic discourse in the party is commonplace. A March 2019 survey asked the public to estimate the percentage of Labour members against whom antisemitism complaints had been made. The average response was 34 percent.[31] In reality, as of July 2019, the proportion of Labour Party members subjected to disciplinary procedures – i.e., summoned for a hearing in response to a complaint, but not necessarily found guilty – amounted to *less than one-tenth of one percent*.[32] As noted above, this figure did not reflect cases that arose through spontaneous reporting by victims but was the product of coordinated efforts to trawl through members' social media histories for incriminating material.

Antisemitism: proportion of Labour members taken through disciplinary hearings over four years

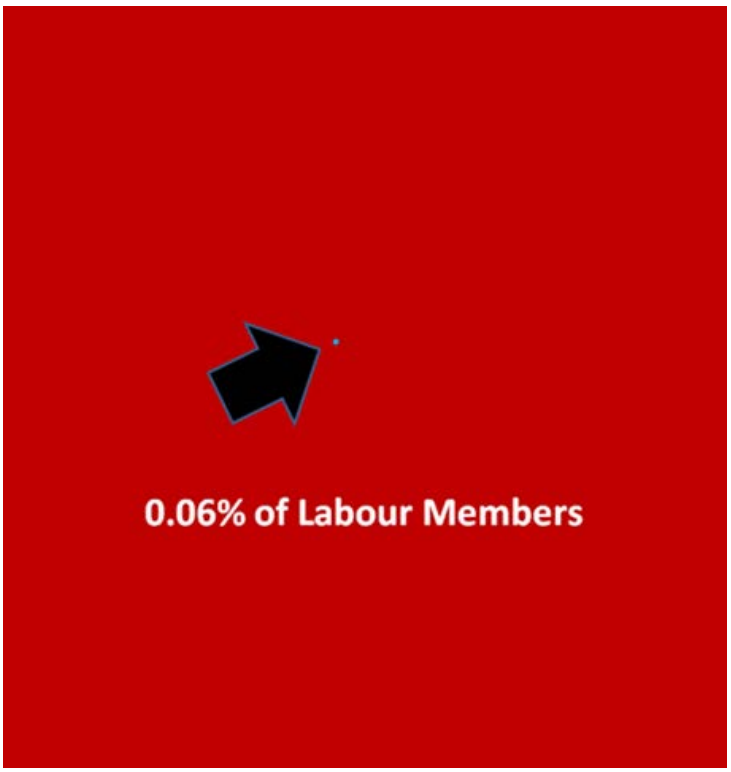


Fig. 7. According to Labour Party general secretary Jennie Formby, reporting in July 2019, 'Antisemitism-related cases that have been taken through the stages of our disciplinary procedures since September 2015 relate to roughly 0.06% of the Party's average membership during this time'.

5. Has the focus on antisemitism been proportionate?

The intense political and media focus on antisemitism – one study counted nearly 5,500 articles across eight national newspapers between June 2015 and March 2019[33] – has conveyed the impression that antisemitism in Britain and/or on the Left is particularly severe. But putting the data on antisemitism in context shows that this is untrue. Other forms of prejudice are more prevalent across the political spectrum while increases in hate crime reports have been recorded across the full range of protected characteristics. (Figs. 1 and 3 above, 8 below)

Percentage with prejudice towards minorities, according to political affiliation or voting preferences

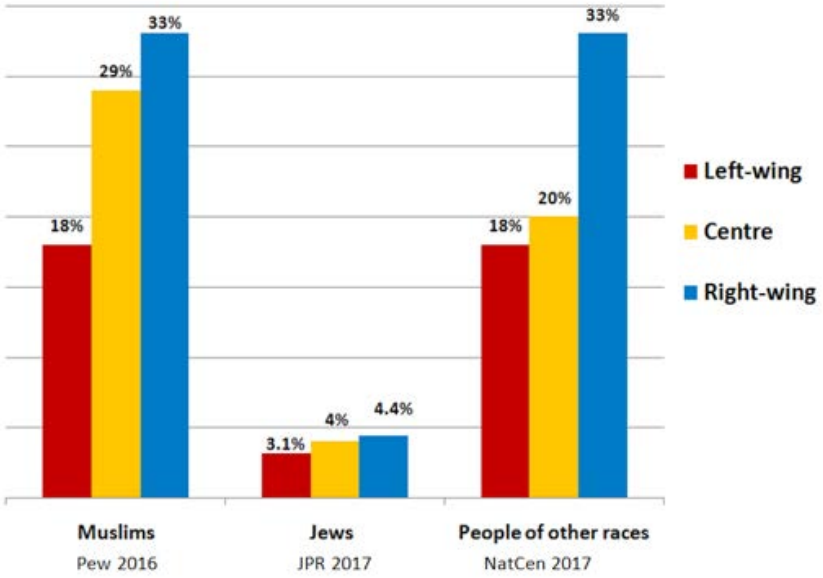
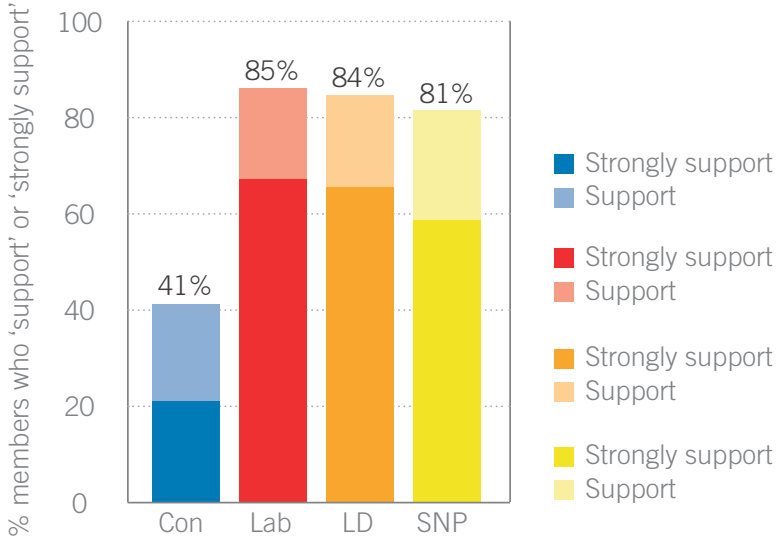


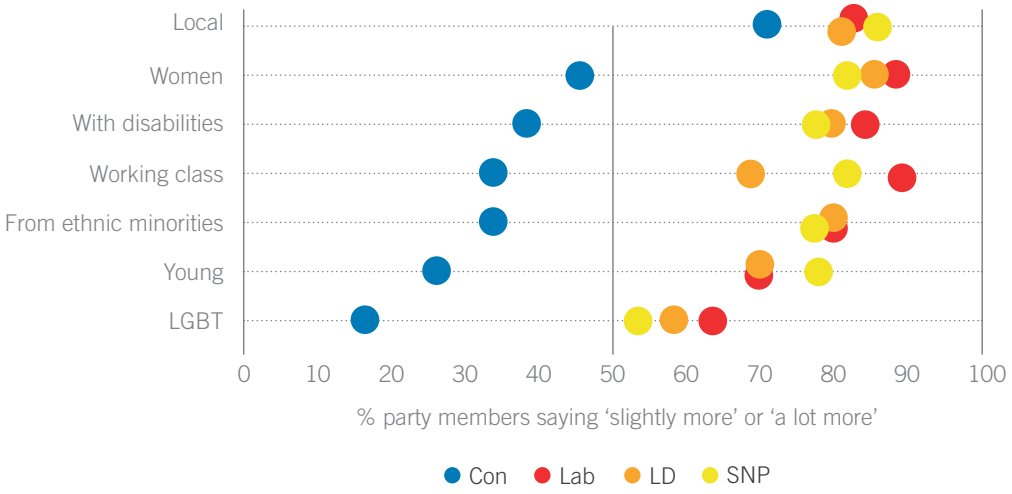
Fig. 8. Richard Wike et al., Pew Research Centre (11 July 2016); Staetksy – JPR (2017), endorsement of 5+ 'anti-Jewish' prejudices; Nancy Kelley et al., 'Racial Prejudice in Britain Today', NatCen (2017).

The limited data we have on party members' prejudices also indicates that racism and bigotry are likely to be more widespread in the Conservative Party than in Labour.

Party members' views on gay marriage



What sort of people would party members like to see more of in the Commons?



Figs. 9 and 10. Survey of party members by Bale et al., January 2018.

Yet within and in relation to the Labour Party, discussion and reform of complaints procedures appears to have been driven predominantly by antisemitism-related concerns. This same one-eyed fixation is evident in broader public debate: thus, even as the campaign to impose a Working Definition of Antisemitism upon the Labour Party generated a protracted national controversy, analogous efforts to promote a Working Definition of Islamophobia[34] attracted near-zero media interest. This despite prima facie credible allegations of institutional barriers to Muslim mobilisation within the Labour Party,[35] compelling evidence of anti-Muslim prejudice in the Conservative Party,[36] and authoritative findings of anti-Muslim discrimination in the UK more broadly.[37]

Disproportionate attention to antisemitism, even as other forms of racism are significantly more widespread, and on Labour, even as bigotry is worse in the Conservative Party, misrepresents the real distribution of prejudice and discrimination in Britain and fosters perceptions of an antisemitism 'crisis' which are wholly unwarranted.

Conclusion

It has never been in dispute that anti-Jewish attitudes exist within the Labour Party. Such attitudes – along with ten thousand other varieties of bigotry and prejudice – exist in every political party, as

they do in the society from which mass memberships are drawn. The recent heated debate has centred around the altogether more serious allegation that antisemitism in Labour has become *widespread* and *institutionalised*. Faced with claims that Labour antisemitism poses an existential threat to Jews, on the one side, and arguments that antisemitism is neither widespread nor institutionalised in the party, on the other, it might be tempting to split the difference and assume that the truth lies somewhere in between. But those who care about the fight against antisemitism and other forms of bigotry should avoid this lazy assumption and look instead at the data.

There were no witches in Salem; Jewish elders did not gather in a graveyard at night; a Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy did not target Nazi Germany. The allegation that Labour is rife with antisemitism is of a piece with these fantastic antecedents. To judge by the available evidence, the truth of this controversy lies not in the middle but at one pole: there is no 'Labour antisemitism crisis'. Should new evidence be unearthed which demonstrates that antisemitism is widespread within the Labour Party, the issue will doubtless warrant renewed attention. In the meantime, the rational response to a baseless allegation is to dismiss it.

4

The Chimera of British Antisemitism

(AND HOW NOT TO FIGHT IT IF IT WERE REAL)

Norman G. Finkelstein

VERSO BLOG, 21 AUGUST 2018

The current hysteria engulfing the British Labour Party resolves itself into a pair of interrelated, if discrete, premises:[1] Antisemitism in British society at large and the Labour Party in particular have reached crisis proportions. If neither of these premises can be sustained, then the hysteria is a fabrication. In fact, no evidence has been adduced to substantiate either of them; on the contrary, all the evidence points in the opposite direction. The rational conclusion is that the brouhaha is a calculated hoax – dare it be said, *plot*? – to oust Jeremy Corbyn and the principled leftist politics he represents from British public life. But even if the allegations were true, the solution would still not be to curb freedom of thought in the Labour Party. At its worthiest, the Left-Liberal tradition has attached a unique, primordial value to Truth; but Truth cannot be attained if dissentients, however obnoxious, are silenced. Given the fraught history of antisemitism, on the one hand, and its crude manipulation by Jewish elites, on the other, an objective, dispassionate assessment could appear beyond reach. Still, it must be attempted. The prospect of a historic victory for the Left might otherwise be sabotaged as, thus far, Corbyn's supporters, whether it be from fear, calculation, or political correctness, dare not speak the name of the evil that is afoot.

The degree of antisemitism infecting British society has been the subject of numerous polls over a sustained period of time. These surveys have uniformly, consistently, and unambiguously concluded that antisemitism (1) has long been a marginal phenomenon in British society, infecting under 10 percent of the population, (2) is far less salient than hostility to other British minorities, and (3) is less pronounced in the UK than almost anywhere else in Europe. One might suppose that settled matters. But in 2017 the British Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) published a study that purportedly refined conventional wisdom by measuring the 'elasticity' of antisemitism: that is, not just the percentage of confirmed antisemites, but also the prevalence of stereotypes that stigmatise Jews.[2] It found that, whereas a mere 2–5 percent of the British population can be reckoned antisemites, fully 30 percent harbour at least one antisemitic stereotype.

Before parsing the study's data, a couple of truisms warrant recalling. *First*, a generalisation is something that is held to be generally true; it evidently allows for exceptions. Although Engels the mill-owner generously subsidised his impecunious comrade, it didn't prevent Marx from generalising about capitalist 'vampires'. Were it not for the heuristic value of broad generalisations, the discipline of sociology would have to close up shop. Its mandate is to map and predict the behaviour, *on the whole and in the main,* of the multitudinous groups and subgroups crosscutting society. *Second*, every national/ethnic group is subject to generalisations: 'The French are', 'The Italians are', 'The Germans are', … These generalisations range from more to less flattering to downright vicious, from more to less valid to outright false. It also ought to be obvious that if most positive generalisations raise no hackles, then neither should most negative ones. The fact that stereotypes of Jews run the full gamut is scarcely cause for alarm; it would be surprising were it otherwise.

In fact, the JPR does not sound an alarm. Whereas some antisemitism-mongers have latched onto its findings, the researchers themselves sought to answer a different question: 'Why [do] the levels of anxiety found within the UK Jewish population about the scale of contemporary antisemitism appear to be so far out of sync with the low levels of antisemitic sentiment observed among the gen-

eral UK population?'[3] The study posits that, if British Jews express deep anxiety even as antisemites are going the way of the dodo, then it springs from the wider 'diffusion' in British society of antisemitic stereotypes: 'This [diffusion] goes a considerable way towards explaining contemporary Jewish concerns about antisemitism'.[4] But isn't that a hasty inference? If residents of Salem, Massachusetts, experienced deep anxiety about witches; if Americans experienced deep anxiety about Communists; if White southerners experienced deep anxiety about Black rapists; if Germans experienced deep anxiety about a 'Judeo-Bolshevik' conspiracy; and if, for that matter, Christians experienced deep anxiety about Jewish ritual child-murderers – if an anxiety is widespread, surely it doesn't necessarily, or even probably, follow that it is a rational fear. It could just as plausibly have been induced by powerful social forces standing to benefit from a deliberately contrived paranoia. Or, in the case at hand, it could spring from Jewish hypersensitivity – in light of historical experience wholly understandable – to a phantom antisemitism (see Woody Allen's *Annie Hall*).

The JPR study compiles a seven-item roster of stereotypes. If they are designated antisemitic, according to the researchers, that's because Jews find them hurtful: 'Some ideas are known to resonate with Jews as antisemitic, and this study adopts a Jewish perspective on what constitutes antisemitism as its starting point'.[5] But a generalisation can plainly be both hurtful *and true*, as in, truth is often a bitter pill to swallow. If the hurtful generalisation is true, then – inasmuch as the epithet *antisemitic* signals an *irrational* animus – it cannot be antisemitic. Some 20 years ago, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen wrote a book purporting that the Nazi holocaust originated in an ingrained German predisposition to murder Jews. Were it true, his thesis could not fairly be labelled anti-Teutonic: 'There are no prima facie grounds for dismissing Goldhagen's thesis', this writer observed at the time. 'It is not intrinsically racist or otherwise illegitimate. There is no obvious reason why a culture can't be fanatically consumed by hatred'.[6] Even as Germans might recoil at this depiction of them, indeed, find it singularly offensive, if the facts vindicated it, then it couldn't be said to be rooted in irrational malice. As it happened, the evidence adduced by Goldhagen didn't support his thesis, but that's a separate matter.

Consider now several of the stereotypes assembled in the JPR study to gauge the prevalence of British antisemitism:

Jews think they are better than other people. Between their secular success, on the one hand, and their theological 'chosenness', on the other, Jews themselves believe in their group superiority. Isn't that why they kvell over the Jewish pedigree of the seminal figures of modernity – Marx, Einstein, and Freud – as well as 20 percent of Nobel laureates? What a Jewish child inherits is 'no body of law, no body of learning, and no language, and finally, no Lord', eminent Jewish novelist Philip Roth once observed, 'but a kind of psychology: and the psychology can be translated in three words – "Jews are better"'. A prominent Jewish-American scholar shamelessly gushed: 'Jews would have been less than human had they eschewed any notion of superiority altogether', and 'it is extraordinarily difficult for American Jews to expunge the sense of superiority altogether, however much they may try to suppress it'.[7] A popular American publication, in an article under the headline 'Are Jews Smarter?', pondered the genetic evidence.[8] Lest this be pigeonholed as a peculiarly *American*-Jewish conceit, prominent Anglo-Jewish author Howard Jacobson speculates that at the heart of antisemitism lies Gentile *ressentiment* of Jewish smarts: 'Freud argues that Jews … over-evolved their mental and intellectual side … We all have our arrogances and that is a Jewish arrogance. But the idea of the Jew as over-evolved mentally is one of the reasons humanity is in a constant argument with us. We gave the world ethics, morals, the mental life, for which the physical world will never forgive us'.[9] If it's antisemitism to believe that 'Jews think they are better than other people', then most Jews would appear to be infected by this virus.

Jews exploit Holocaust victimhood for their own purposes. Voluble Israeli foreign minister Abba Eban is supposed to have quipped 'There's no business like Shoah business'. But when this writer published a little book in 2000 entitled *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*,[10] it evoked a torrent of ad hominem attacks. 'It is perhaps too easy to write off a critic like Finkelstein as a self-hating Jew', Jonathan Freedland opined in the *Guardian*, but

that didn't deter him from traversing this squalid path: 'Finkelstein does the antisemites' work for them', indeed, is 'closer to the people who created the Holocaust than to those who suffered in it'.[11] Unsurprisingly, Freedland is now among those leading the charge against Corbyn's alleged antisemitism. Be that as it may, nearly two decades have elapsed since the book's hostile reception, and by now its argument no longer even raises eyebrows as it has passed into a cliché. Whether it be to justify another war of aggression or another massacre of civilians, whether it be to market another schlock Holocaust film or another schlock Holocaust novel, Jews have not hesitated – on the contrary – to wrap themselves in the sacred mantle of Jewish martyrdom. A book by former speaker of the Israeli parliament Avraham Burg decrying Israel's fixation on the Holocaust casually refers to 'the Shoah industry'. It 'converts piercing pain into hollowness and kitsch', Burg observes, and extenuates Israeli crimes: 'American Jews, like Israelis, are … raising the Shoah banner high to the sky and exploiting it politically … All is compared to the Shoah, dwarfed by the Shoah, and therefore all is allowed – be it fences, sieges … food and water deprivation … All is permitted because we have been through the Shoah and you will not tell us how to behave'.[12] Is Burg guilty of antisemitism?

Jews have too much power in Britain. The three richest Brits are Jewish.[13] Jews comprise only 0.5 percent of the population but fully 20 percent of the 100 richest Brits.[14] Relative both to the general population and to other ethno-religious groups, British Jews are, in the aggregate, disproportionately wealthy, educated, and professionally successful.[15] These data track closely with the picture elsewhere. Jews comprise only 2 percent of the US population but fully 30 percent of the 100 richest Americans, while Jews enjoy the highest household income among religious groups.[16] Jews comprise less than 0.2 percent of the world's population but, of the world's 200 richest people, fully 20 percent are Jewish.[17] Jews are incomparably organised as they have created a plethora of interlocking, overlapping, and mutually reinforcing communal and defence organisations that operate in both the domestic and international arenas. In many countries, not least the US and the

UK, Jews occupy strategic positions in the entertainment industry, the arts, publishing, journals of opinion, the academy, the legal profession, and government. 'Jews are represented in Britain in numbers that are many times their proportion of the population', British-Israeli journalist Anshel Pfeffer notes, 'in both Houses of Parliament, on the *Sunday Times* Rich List, in media, academia, professions, and just about every walk of public life'.[18] The wonder would be if these raw data didn't translate into outsized Jewish political power. The Israel-based Jewish People Policy Planning Institute rhapsodises that '[t]he Jewish People today is at a historical zenith of wealth creation' and 'has never been as powerful as now'.[19] It is certainly legitimate to query the amplitude of this political power and whether it has been exaggerated,[20] but it cannot be right to deny (or suppress) critical socioeconomic facts. When virtually every member of the US Congress acts like a broken Jack-in-the-Box, as they give an Israeli head of state, who has barged into the Capitol in brazen and obnoxious defiance of the sitting US president, one standing ovation after another, surely it is fair to ask: *What the hell is going on here?*[21] Were it not for the outsized power of British Jews, it's hard to conceive that British society would be interminably chasing after a hobgoblin. True, although fighting antisemitism is the rallying cry, a broad array of powerful entrenched social forces, acting on not-so-hidden agendas of their own, have coalesced around this putative cause. It cannot be gainsaid, however, that Jewish organisations form the poisoned tip of this spear. It might still be asked, But is this 'too much' power? Consider these facts. Jeremy Corbyn is the democratically elected head of the Labour Party. His ascendancy vastly expanded and galvanised the party's ranks. Corbyn has devoted a lifetime to fighting racism; like eponymous labour organiser Joe Hill, *where workers strike and organise, it's there you'll find Jeremy Corbyn*. By British and even global leadership standards, he cuts a saintly figure. On the opposite side, mostly unelected Jewish bodies[22] have dragged Corbyn's name through the mud, slandering and defaming him. They have refused to meet with Corbyn, even as he has repeatedly extended olive branches and offered substantive compromises.[23] Instead they issue take-it-or-leave-it ultimatums. As it happens, Jews overwhelmingly do not support Labour,

even when the head of the party list is Jewish (Ed Miliband in 2015). Nonetheless, these pious-cum-pompous communal leaders do not find it unseemly or even amiss to dictate from afar and from above internal Labour policy. This writer's late mother used to muse, 'It's no accident that Jews invented the word *chutzpah*'. The transparent motive behind this cynical campaign is to demonise Corbyn, not because he's a 'fucking antisemite', but because he's a principled champion of Palestinian rights. However, Corbyn's candidacy is not just about Palestine or even the British labouring classes. It's a beacon for the homeless, the hungry, and the hopeless, the despised, the downtrodden, and the destitute everywhere. If Corbyn's traducers succeed, the glimmer of possibility he has held out will be snuffed out by a gang of moral blackmailers and extortionists. Is it antisemitism to believe that 'Jews have too much power in Britain' – or is it just plain common sense? (It is, to be sure, a question apart and not one amenable to simple solution how to rectify this power inequity while not impinging on anyone's democratic rights.) Still, isn't it antisemitic to *generalise* that 'Jews' have abused their power? But even granting that a portion have been manipulated or duped, it certainly appears as if British Jews in general support the anti-Corbyn juggernaut. If this indeed is a misapprehension, whose fault is it? The tacit message of the unprecedented joint editorial on the front page of the major Jewish periodicals was: *British Jews are united – Corbyn must go!* Is it antisemitic to take these Jewish organisations at their word?

The upshot is, the JPR study does not prove the 'elasticity' of antisemitism in British society. A couple of the incendiary propositions it tests do arguably indicate antisemitism – 'The Holocaust is a myth', 'The Holocaust has been exaggerated' – but only an infinitesimal portion of Brits (2 and 4 percent, respectively) subscribe to them. Antisemitism of course exists in British society but the JPR has stretched the evidence beyond the snapping point. There's no ground to doubt the conventional polling data that put its incidence at under 10 percent of British society.

Even if the JPR study withstood scrutiny, it still wouldn't prove that antisemitism threatens British Jews. Amidst the nauseating nonstop spectacle of solipsistic, narcissistic, self-pitying navel-gazing, a reality

check is in order. Were popular stereotypes plotted along a spectrum from benign to malignant, most antisemitic ones would fall near the benign end whereas those of truly oppressed minorities would cluster at the opposite end. Yes, Jews must endure the reputation of being stingy, pushy, and clannish – but Muslims are profiled as terrorists and misogynists, Blacks are despised as chronically lazy and genetically stupid, and Roma/Sinti are loathed as dirty beggars and thieves. Nor do Jews suffer the losses attending actual victimhood. How many Jews qua Jews have been refused a job or flat? How many Jews have been shot dead by police or railroaded into jail? Whereas being Black or Muslim closes doors, being Jewish opens them. If whites occupying seats of power discriminate in favour of other whites, and men occupying seats of power discriminate in favour of other men, it would be surprising if largely successful Jews didn't discriminate in favour of other Jews. Not only is it no longer a social liability to be Jewish, it even carries social cachet. Whereas it once was a step up for a Jew to marry into a ruling elite family, it now appears to be a step up for the ruling elite to marry into a Jewish family. Isn't it a straw in the wind that both President Bill Clinton's pride and joy Chelsea and President Donald Trump's pride and joy Ivanka married Jews? One British commentator grimaces that 'there's a very, very serious problem of antisemitism across British society'. Setting aside that he provides no basis for this pronouncement, the question comes down to this: Would he prefer to be ugly and bald or to be Jewish in Britain today? It's not a trivial or tongue-in-cheek query. The fact is, personally as well as professionally, these physical stigmata are ten thousand times heavier a cross to bear than to be born a Jew. If the nonproblem of antisemitism ranks a 'very, very serious problem' in the UK, then the British people are most fortunate. In fact, the Corbyn candidacy would be redundant as they will already have reached the Promised Land.

'Those who cannot remember the past', George Santayana famously warned, 'are condemned to repeat it'. In light of the catastrophe that befell them during World War II, shouldn't Jews assume and prepare for the worst and can they really be faulted for hypervigilance? Even if the indicators are for the moment faint, still it can't be denied that it *might* happen here. If the availability of resources, time, and energy

were infinite, such an argument could carry conviction. But they aren't. 'Economy of time', Marx observed in the *Grundrisse*, 'to this all economy ultimately reduces itself'. Whatever time is expended in one direction means less time expended in other directions. Can it seriously be contended that, in the face of the multiple domestic and global crises wracking British society – from homelessness, healthcare, and unemployment to Brexit, nuclear proliferation, and climate change – antisemitism looms large on the list of urgent matters demanding immediate attention; that the finite resources at Britain's disposal to fight here-and-now matters of life and death should instead be rechannelled to combating nebulous apocalyptic future scenarios? But the truth is, Jewish elites do not for a moment believe that antisemitism is a burning issue. If they truly feared that it posed a clear and present danger now or in the foreseeable future, they wouldn't be shouting from the rooftops that Corbyn was a 'fucking antisemite'. For, if the UK was awash with closet antisemites, then, logically, broadcasting this accusation would hand Corbyn free publicity as it would be dulcet tones to the ears of potential voters. Far from damaging him, its diffusion could only facilitate Corbyn's victory and pave the way for a second Holocaust. On the contrary, Jewish organisations know full well that vilifying Corbyn as an antisemite would drastically reduce his appeal, as antisemitism resonates only among assorted antediluvians, troglodytes, and fruitcakes. In other words, the irrefutable proof that Corbyn's pursuers don't believe a word they're saying is that by labelling him an antisemite they hope and expect to isolate him. However, as the accusation is manifestly a red herring, it's also possible that the current hysteria will pass most people by entirely, not because they are unconcerned by antisemitism but because it hardly occurs to them as an issue at all. If the controversy has an effect it will be restricted to exacerbating divisions in the Labour leadership and perhaps also adding to a more general perception that the stories promoted by mainstream media are fake news.

5

Sixty Times Jeremy Corbyn Stood with Jewish People

@ToryFibs

NOVEMBER 2019

1. April 1977: Jeremy Corbyn helps organise the defence of Jewish-populated Wood Green from a neo-Nazi march.[1]

2. 1985–1989: Corbyn is National Secretary of Anti-Fascist Action.[2]

3. 1987: Corbyn campaigns to protect Jewish cemetery from being sold to property developers.[3]

4. Early Day Motion (EDM) 3933, 7 November 1990: Corbyn signs motion condemning the rise of antisemitic publications.

5. EDM 356, 25 June 1992: Corbyn signs motion calling, 'in honour of the victims of the holocaust', for the cancellation of a 'fascist seminar' by David Irving.

6. EDM 435, 6 July 1992: Corbyn signs motion condemning the *Sunday Times* for purchasing the Goebbels Diaries from David Irving.

7. EDM 706, 2 November 1992: Corbyn is primary sponsor of a motion condemning a planned march by the National Front as 'an insult to the memory of all victims of the Nazi holocaust'.

8. EDM 1474, 25 February 1993: Corbyn signs motion urging the Prime Minister to prevent a planned pro-Nazi music gig.

9. EDM 1364, 21 June 1994: Corbyn signs motion expressing concern over rising antisemitism in Europe and praising the Institute of Jewish Affairs.

10. EDM 1413, 29 June 1994: Corbyn signs motion demanding the prosecution of those responsible for neo-Nazi publication *Holocaust News*.

11. EDM 634, 11 April 2000: Corbyn signs motion condemning David Irving for being a Holocaust denier.

12. EDM 1124, 6 November 2000: Corbyn signs motion paying tribute to 'British Schindler', Bill Barazetti, for saving the lives of Jewish children in World War II.

13. EDM 742, 28 January 2002: Corbyn signs motion praising football clubs for commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day.

14. EDM 1233, 30 April 2002: Corbyn is primary sponsor of a motion condemning antisemitic vandalism of Finsbury Park Synagogue. Corbyn also urges fellow MPs to visit religious buildings in their constituencies as a demonstration 'that we are not prepared to tolerate such attacks'.[4]

15. May 2002: Corbyn helps organise vigil for Finsbury Park Synagogue after antisemitic attack.[5]

16. EDM 1691, 23 July 2002: Corbyn signs motion condemning attack on a synagogue in Swansea.

17. EDM 123, 26 November 2003: Corbyn signs motion condemning attacks on two synagogues in Istanbul.

18. EDM 298, 16 December 2003: Corbyn signs motion commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day.

19. EDM 461, 21 January 2004: Corbyn signs motion condemning the French government's moves to ban religious symbols – including the Jewish kippa – in French schools.

20. EDM 646, 23 February 2004: Corbyn signs motion condemning annual rise in antisemitic incidents.

21. EDM 717, 26 February 2004: Corbyn signs motion praising Simon Wiesenthal for bringing Nazi perpetrators of the Holocaust to justice.

22. EDM 1613, 8 September 2004: Corbyn co-sponsors motion expressing concern over the future of the United Synagogue Pension Scheme.

23. EDM 1699, 11 October 2004: Corbyn signs motion condemning arbitrary attacks on civilians in both Israel and Palestine.

24. EDM 482, 12 January 2005: Corbyn signs motion commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day.

25. EDM 343, 16 June 2005: Corbyn signs motion condemning the desecration of a Jewish cemetery in West Ham.

26. EDM 1343, 11 January 2006: Corbyn signs motion commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day.

27. EDM 1774, 8 March 2006: Corbyn signs motion condemning an Iranian newspaper for soliciting cartoons about the Holocaust.

28. EDM 1267, 16 April 2006: Corbyn signs motion condemning Bryan Ferry for antisemitic remarks.

29. EDM 2414, 26 June 2006: Corbyn signs motion recognising the contribution of British servicemen during World War II 'to saving victims of the Holocaust'.

30. EDM 2705, 10 October 2006: Corbyn signs motion marking the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street.

31. EDM 271, 14 November 2007: Corbyn co-sponsors motion urging further efforts to address poverty and social exclusion in the Jewish community of East London.

32. EDM 1453, 12 May 2008: Corbyn signs motion saluting the memory of the Jewish heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

33. EDM 2350, 27 October 2008: Corbyn signs motion marking the 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht.

34. EDM 605, 27 January 2009: Corbyn signs motion welcoming action against antisemitism on university campuses.

35. EDM 917, 26 February 2009: Corbyn signs motion condemning antisemitism on the internet.

36. EDM 1175, 24 March 2009: Corbyn signs motion paying tribute to British citizens who rescued Jewish people during the Holocaust.

37. EDM 2145, 22 October 2009: Corbyn co-sponsors motion protesting BBC Question Time's invitation to 'holocaust-denying racists' the British National Party.

38. EDM 337, 2 December 2009: Corbyn signs motion condemning discrimination against minorities, including Jews, in Iran.

39. EDM 850, 9 February 2010: Corbyn signs motion calling for investigation into antisemitism on Facebook.

40. EDM 891, 22 February 2010: Corbyn co-sponsors motion urging the UK Government to re-settle Yemeni Jews in Britain.

41. EDM 908, 27 October 2010: Corbyn signs motion paying tribute to the late-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

42. EDM 1527, 3 March 2011: Corbyn signs motion condemning the antisemitic remarks of John Galliano.

43. EDM 2870, 14 March 2012: Corbyn signs motion condemning the sale of Nazi memorabilia at an auction in Bristol.

44. EDM 2866, 14 March 2012: Corbyn co-sponsors motion condemning antisemitism in Latvia.

45. EDM 2899, 20 March 2012: Corbyn signs motion condemning an attack on a Jewish school in Toulouse.

46. EDM 168, 12 June 2012: Corbyn co-sponsors motion condemning racism and antisemitism in Polish and Ukrainian football while urging protection for fans travelling to the Euro 2012 tournament.

47. EDM 195, 13 June 2012: Corbyn co-sponsors motion calling on the BBC to reverse its decision to drop a Jewish community programme ('Jewish Citizen Manchester') from its schedule.

48. EDM 1133, 1 March 2013: Corbyn signs motion condemning antisemitism in sport.

49. 1 October 2013: Corbyn is one of the few MPs to publicly defend the late-Ralph Miliband from *Daily Mail* antisemitism.[6]

50. EDM 932, 9 January 2014: Corbyn signs motion commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day.

51. June 2015: Corbyn participates in ceremony to commemorate the founding of the North London Synagogue in Islington.[7]

52. EDM 165, 22 June 2015: Corbyn signs motion condemning a neo-Nazi rally planned for Golders Green, where many Jews live, and calls for protection of local residents.

53. 25 June 2015: Corbyn is lead signatory to Unite Against Fascism call for a counter-demonstration in defence of Jewish residents in Golders Green. The neo-Nazi march is re-routed.[8]

54. 9 October 2016: Corbyn, close to tears, leads commemoration of the 1936 Battle of Cable Street.[9] He remembers how the lessons of that day were imparted to him by his mother, Naomi, who participated in the defence of the Jewish East End.

55. 3 December 2016: Corbyn visits Terezín concentration camp to commemorate Holocaust victims.[10]

56. 27 January 2018: Corbyn's Holocaust Memorial Day message quotes Roza Robota, a Holocaust resister murdered in Auschwitz; Szmul Zygielbojm of the Polish Bund; and Anne Frank, as it 'salutes the power of humanity and solidarity embodied in these words by our Jewish brothers and sisters'.[11]

57. February 2018: Corbyn supports Jewish campaign to speed up the issuing of death certificates by the North London coroner.[12] Recalling this, Jewish historian Geoffrey Alderman notes that 'Corbyn has an impressive record of supporting Jewish communal initiatives'.

58. 26 March 2018: The Jewish Socialists' Group issues a statement: 'We have worked alongside Jeremy Corbyn in campaigns against all forms of racism and bigotry, including antisemitism, for many years, and we have faith that a Labour government led by Jeremy Corbyn and Labour-led councils across the country, will be best placed to implement serious measures against all forms of racism, discrimination and bigotry'.[13]

59. 8 November 2018: Corbyn pens moving tribute to his friend, the Cable Street veteran and Jewish labour militant Max Levitas.[14]

60. October 2019: Corbyn records personal video message for Unite Against Fascism delegation to Krakow and Auschwitz.[15] 'Let us unite as a movement', he urges, 'let's unite as people to say we will not tolerate racism in any form whatsoever in our society, be it antisemitism … or any other kind of discrimination'.[16]

6

Briefing for Canvassers

CHALLENGING FALSE ACCUSATIONS OF RACISM

Jewish Voice for Labour

NOVEMBER 2019

A brief rebuttal of some common allegations levelled against Jeremy Corbyn. A one-page version of this rebuttal, for use by canvassers at the doorstep, is available on the Jewish Voice for Labour website.[1]

1. The Mural Debacle

The allegation

That in 2012, via a Facebook comment, Jeremy Corbyn defended what has since been described as 'a clearly antisemitic mural' on a wall in Tower Hamlets, East London.

A brief rebuttal

Back in 2012 even some leading right-wing commentators didn't think it was antisemitic![2] Corbyn's Facebook posting was concerned with freedom of speech; at the time he knew nothing of the antisemitism concerns expressed by some, and it isn't clear that he saw more than a thumbnail image of the mural on a mobile phone. In 2018, when the mural, antisemitism complaints about it, and the Facebook posting became headline news, Corbyn checked back, was horrified, and apologised.

More detail

1. There was no hysteria when the mural first went up in 2012, but the Tower Hamlets mayor responded to some antisemitism concerns by ordering it to be whitewashed.

2. *In October 2012*, the *Jewish Chronicle*'s Marcus Dysch opened his report about the mural with: 'A mural depicting money-grabbing bankers and highlighting Western imperialism conspiracy theories will be removed following complaints that it contains antisemitic undertones'.[3]

Even the fiercely right-wing anti-Corbyn critic at Harry's Place was originally uncertain that the bankers were meant to depict Jewish figures. He later changed his mind, but still said: 'I'd oppose the whitewashing of the mural …'

3. *In November 2015*, Dysch returned to the issue, reproducing Corbyn's Facebook comment for the first time.[4] Dysch merely said the mural 'was condemned as having antisemitic undertones'. The story was not taken up by anyone and died a death.

4. *Three further years later*, in March 2018, and on the day that Labour launched its local election campaign, Blairite MP Luciana Berger, who has since joined the Liberal Democrats, somehow 'discovered' Corbyn's tweet, and tweeted her outrage. *Now it became a story.*

5. A Labour spokesperson said: 'In 2012, Jeremy was responding to concerns about the removal of public art on the grounds of freedom of speech. However, the mural was offensive, used antisemitic imagery, which has no place in our society, and it is right that it was removed'.

6. Corbyn himself added: 'I sincerely regret that I did not look more closely at the image I was commenting on, the contents of which are deeply disturbing and antisemitic. The defence of free speech cannot be used as a justification for the promotion of antisemitism in any form. That is a view I've always held'.

More detailed accounts

Bob Pitt, 'Antisemitism, the Brick Lane Mural and the Stitch-Up of Jeremy Corbyn', *Medium*, 31 May 2018.

Marcus Dysch, 'Mayor: Tower Hamlets Mural "To Be Removed"', *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 October 2012.

Jonathan Cook, 'The Sharks Circling around Corbyn Scent Blood', *Jonathan Cook Blog*, 26 March 2018.

2. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Document on Antisemitism

The allegation

That Labour was antisemitic in trying to adopt an amended version of the IHRA's 'internationally recognised definition of antisemitism.'[5]

A brief rebuttal

The IHRA document comprises a 'working definition' and eleven 'examples'. In spite of deficiencies (described below), in July 2018, *Labour adopted the definition wording in full. Labour also agreed to adopt seven examples directly and amended the others* to ensure the document could be used in disciplinary cases without undermining debate and free speech around Israel/Palestine. (See Jewish philosopher Brian Klug for a comparison of the texts – reference below.)

Under huge pressure, Labour then abandoned its own version and incorporated the unamended IHRA document into its rulebook. Our view is that *the full IHRA document does undermine free speech* and Labour should not have adopted it at all, or else should have stuck to its own improved version. *In any event, nothing it did was antisemitic.*

More detail

1. Though described as an 'internationally recognised' definition of antisemitism, the IHRA document has been adopted by only eight of the IHRA's 33 members plus two of its nine observer states. The UK was the first to do so, though its announcement has no legal status. The UN, by the way, has 193 member states.

2. Reflecting on the fierce resistance to changing even a single word of the IHRA document, Brian Klug has written: 'In the Judaism in which I was nurtured and educated, there is only one text whose status is sacred; and it was not written by a committee of the IHRA'. That sacred text is the Torah.

3. Compare the vicious attacks on Labour for seeking to amend some IHRA 'examples' with the Tories' experience. When it was belatedly realised the Conservatives had not adopted the IHRA document, the Tories simply inserted an 'interpretation' clause into their rulebook providing: '*Discrimination* … because … of religion or belief [which should be interpreted as fully adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's *definition* of anti-Semitism]' (emphasis ours).[6] There is no mention of the eleven examples that caused Labour such trouble.

4.The 38-word IHRA 'definition', in retired Lord Justice Sir Stephen Sedley's view, 'fails the first test of any definition: it is indefinite'.[7] Its clumsy drafting leaves its meaning quite indeterminate. Plus, it is way too narrow, focusing on extreme antisemitism (hatred), whilst ignoring (so not protecting against) far more common forms, such as harassment, prejudice, hostility, and discrimination.

5. Though the IHRA 'definition' says it is about 'hatred towards Jews' (and expressly covers 'individuals', 'their property', 'Jewish community institutions', and 'religious facilities'), several of the most contested IHRA 'examples' are about something quite different, namely *political criticism of a country*.

6. Should we prohibit description of Israel's existence, the way it was founded, the ideas behind its foundation, the very idea of 'a Jewish state' as 'a racist endeavour' – as the most contentious IHRA 'example' of all seeks to do? What happens to discussion about Palestinian rights and experience if we do so? Whether Israel's foundation and existence was/is 'racist' (as we would say in more everyday English) is certainly contested. *But political debate has to be able to discuss dif-*

ficult, even upsetting and controversial, ideas: forbidding such discussion is a dangerous attack on freedom of speech.

7. Already, some universities that have 'adopted' the IHRA document have cancelled or obstructed student activities which support the Palestinians, while some local authorities have cancelled meetings out of a fear – with no reasonable basis – of what might possibly be said in them.

8. The IHRA document has been fiercely criticised by some of Britain's most senior lawyers, who fear that the *political nature* of its 'Israel examples' may seriously 'chill' political debate on Israel/Palestine. These critics include a Jewish retired Lord Justice of Appeal (Stephen Sedley); the foremost Jewish advocate on race and equality issues over the past half-century (solicitor Geoffrey Bindman); and leading human rights QCs (Hugh Tomlinson and Geoffrey Robertson), who have both written legal opinions tearing it apart. It also bears notice that the original author of what has since become the IHRA definition and examples – the American Jewish lawyer Kenneth Stern – is furious that *a document he wrote to assist the collation of international police statistics on antisemitism*, is now being used to regulate, chill, and potentially kill debate about Israel/Palestine.

More detailed accounts

Jewish Voice for Labour, 'Antisemitism: IHRA Definition and Labour Code of Conduct', *Jewish Voice for Labour*, July 2018.

Brian Klug, 'The Code of Conduct for Antisemitism: A Tale of Two Texts', *openDemocracy*, 17 July 2018.

Antony Lerman, 'The Labour Party, "Institutional Antisemitism" & Irresponsible Politics', *openDemocracy*, 21 March 2019.

David Pavett, 'The "Macpherson Principle"', *Jewish Voice for Labour*, 15 July 2018.

George Wilmers, 'Why the Man who Drafted the IHRA Definition Condemns its Use', *Jewish Voice for Labour*, 2 August 2018.

3. The 'Macpherson Principle'

The allegation

That in trying to amend the IHRA document against the wishes of the 'Jewish community', Labour went against the 'Macpherson Principle' that victims of racism have the right to define it.

A brief rebuttal

Apart from the false (even antisemitic?!) assumption that there is a single 'Jewish community', with a united view about antisemitism and Labour, this allegation *seriously distorts* the Macpherson Report.

Issued after the Stephen Lawrence murder, the report aimed to ensure that *incidents reported as racist by victims, are defined as racist in police records and are investigated as such. There is no 'Macpherson Principle' and the Macpherson Report does not give victims the final right to decide* whether a racist incident has occurred.

More detail

This was dealt with definitively by Professor David Feldman (Director of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism at Birkbeck College) in his *Sub-Report* (2015) to the All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism:

- 'It is sometimes suggested that when Jews perceive an utterance or action to be anti-Semitic that this is how it should be described. In the UK this claim looks for support to the 1999 Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, written by Lord Macpherson of Cluny. There Macpherson wrote that 'a racist incident' is 'any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person'. *If we look at the context in which this quotation appears, it is unambiguously clear that Macpherson intended to propose that such racist incidents require investigation. He did not mean to imply that such incidents are necessarily racist'*. (emphasis ours)

- '… if we rest our definitions of racism on the perceptions of minority groups then we open the way to conceptual and political chaos. For

if the identification of racism becomes a matter of subjective judgement only, then we have no authority other than the perception of a minority or victim group with which to counter the contrary subjective opinions of perpetrators who deny that they are racists. Without an anti-racist principle which can be applied generally, we are left in a chaotic situation in which one subjective point of view faces another. An equally damaging objection is that *Jews in the UK have diverse and, in some respects, contradictory perceptions of antisemitism. This gravely weakens any attempt to take Jews' perceptions as the basis for a definition of antisemitism.* None of this means that Jews' sense of offence, where it arises, is insignificant. But it does mean that *their sense of being offended should not be elevated so that it becomes the touchstone for judging whether or not something is antisemitic'.* (emphases ours)

More detailed accounts

David Pavett, 'The "Macpherson Principle"', *Jewish Voice for Labour*, 15 July 2018.

Antony Lerman, 'The Labour Party, "Institutional Antisemitism" and Irresponsible Politics', *openDemocracy*, 21 March 2019.

David Feldman, *Sub-Report Commissioned to Assist the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism*, 1 January 2015.

4. 'Irony' and Antisemitism

The allegation

That in 2013 Corbyn 'othered' Jews by saying of a group of British 'Zionists' that they 'don't understand English irony' despite 'having lived in this country for a very long time, probably all their lives'. Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi, said it was 'the most offensive statement made by a senior British politician since Enoch Powell's 1968 "Rivers of Blood" speech'.

A brief rebuttal

Corbyn was referring neither to Jews nor to Zionists in general, but to some particular right-wing Zionists in his audience, who habitually disrupt meetings and barrack speakers.

More detail

1. At a 2013 meeting in Parliament where Corbyn and the Palestinian ambassador, Manuel Hassassian, were on the platform, Hassassian, a fluent but non-native English speaker who was over 50 when he came to live in Britain, said:

> You know I'm reaching the conclusion that the Jews are the children of God, the only children of God and the Promised Land is being paid by God! … Maybe God is partial on this issue.

Some Zionists in the audience berated Hassassian after the meeting, apparently missing the ambassador's intended irony.

2. At a subsequent 2013 meeting, this time at the Palestinian Return Centre, Corbyn and Hassassian were again on the platform, and the same Zionists were in the audience being disruptive. Referring to that specific group of Zionists, Corbyn said:

> They clearly have two problems. One is they don't want to study history and, secondly, having lived in this country for a very long time, probably all their lives, they don't understand English irony either. Manuel does understand English irony, and uses it very effectively.

3. The allegation that Corbyn was attacking audience members because they were Jews was made in 2018 when the *Daily Mail* was given a tape of the meeting.

4. After the video came out, Corbyn explained he had meant to 'defend the Palestinian ambassador in the face of what I thought were deliberate misrepresentations' by people 'for whom English was a first language, when it isn't for the ambassador'.[8] Corbyn also said: 'I am now more careful with how I might use the term "Zionist" because a once self-identifying political term has been increasingly hijacked by anti-Semites as code for Jews'.

5. As Jewish commentator Jerry Haber put it:

in effect, he accused pro-Israeli members of the audience, whom he referred to as 'Zionists', which they are, and who argued with the Palestinian ambassador, with being humourless and misunderstanding history, compared with the Palestinian ambassador.

More detailed accounts

Larry Derfner, 'The Missing Information That Exonerates Jeremy Corbyn', *Forward*, 4 September 2018.

Richard Seymour, 'English Irony', *Patreon*, 27 August 2018.

5. Wreath-Gate

The allegation

That Jeremy Corbyn laid a wreath at the Palestinian Martyrs' Cemetery in Tunisia in 2014 to honour the founder of the Black September, the group that carried out the Munich Olympic massacre

A brief rebuttal

It is untrue.

Corbyn did indeed attend a wreath-lying ceremony in 2014 where victims of the 1985 Israeli airstrike against the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in Tunis were remembered – an attack that had been condemned at the time by the UN and by Margaret Thatcher. The attack killed around 50 people, mostly Palestinians, and injured many more.

While wreaths may also have been laid at other graves, Corbyn did not participate in these ceremonies. Nor are any of the graves those of Munich perpetrators, who are mostly buried in Libya. None is buried in Tunis.[9]

More details

The Labour Party has lodged a formal complaint with IPSO, the body that passes for a regulator for the main press titles, about the 'MSM's misrepresentation of Jeremy Corbyn's 2014 visit to the Hammam Chott Palestinian cemetery in Tunis'.

This story runs and runs, despite being simply untrue …

More detailed account

'2014 Palestinian Embassy Post Confirms: Corbyn There to Commemorate 1985 Victims', *Skwawkbox*, 16 August 2018.

6. 'Our Friends'

The allegation

Jeremy Corbyn welcomed terrorists from Hamas and Hezbollah, calling them 'our friends'.

A brief rebuttal

In the wake of Operation Cast Lead (December 2008–January 2009) and general outrage at the disproportionate use of force deployed by Israel, there was a widespread belief that Hamas and Hezbollah needed to be engaged in dialogue, as the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee was recommending. Corbyn's sin was to call the people he was meeting 'friends'. Of course, peacebuilding often means acquiring new 'friends' – as the iconic photograph of the Queen shaking hands with IRA leader Martin McGuiness underlines.

More details

1. This is what Corbyn said at the time:

> Tomorrow evening it will be my pleasure and my honour to host an event in Parliament where our friends from Hezbollah will be speaking. I've also invited friends from Hamas to come and speak as well … the idea that an organisation that is dedicated towards the good of the Palestinian people and bringing about long-term peace and social justice and political justice in the whole region should be labelled as a terrorist organisation by the British government is really a big, big historical mistake.

2. Giving evidence at the Home Affairs Committee in July 2016 Corbyn said he had used the phrase to describe the militant groups during a meeting in parliament in 2009:

> 'The language I used at that meeting was actually here in parliament and it was about encouraging the meeting to go ahead, encouraging there to be a discussion about the peace process', he said. Asked whether he still regarded Hamas and Hezbollah as 'friends', he said: 'No. It was inclusive language I used which with hindsight I would rather not have used. I regret using those words, of course'.[10]

3. Corbyn's March 2009 speech to a Stop the War rally just after Operation Cast Lead was intended as a corrective to the labelling of Hamas as a terrorist organisation. *At no time has Corbyn ever described Hamas as left-wing or progressive nor has he ever supported its founding charter which contains clear antisemitic elements.*

4. But he has never wavered from his view that

> There has to be talks, there has to be negotiations with all the Palestinian forces, as well as with all the Israeli forces … That means talking to Hamas, it means talking to Hizballah – does it mean that you agree with what they say on social issues, on the death penalty? No it doesn't, and you can make that clear to them in the discussion.

5. Talk of the need to engage with Hamas and Hezbollah was widespread at the time. It was in the same year that a Foreign Affairs Committee report, chaired by Labour MP Mike Gapes, reiterated its view that:

> … the Government should urgently consider ways of engaging politically with moderate elements within Hamas as a way of encouraging it to meet the three Quartet principles.[11]

6. And further:

> We welcome the Government's decision to open contacts with the political wing of Hezbollah, in line with the recommendation which we made in 2007.[12]

7. Failure to Deal with Antisemitism in the Labour Party

The allegation

Following the June 2016 *Chakrabarti Report* into racism and antisemitism in the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn did nothing. It was just business as usual and antisemitism went – and continues to go – unpunished.

A brief rebuttal

The Labour National Executive Committee (NEC) accepted Chakrabarti's main recommendations at the end of June 2016, almost immediately after their publication. However, implementation fell to the party machine, over which Corbyn had no control or influence as staff answered to the (then) right-dominated NEC. Yet the party machine, led by long-standing Blairite general secretary Iain McNicol, was the very body the *Chakrabarti Report* had found unfit for that purpose.[13]

The delays in dealing with complaints of antisemitism in this period are attributable to the activities of the party machine – which Corbyn and his supporters could do nothing about until the left won NEC control and Jennie Formby became general secretary.

More details

1. After Tony Blair's election as party leader in 1994, the party was re-fashioned, power was centralised, and members mostly side-lined. For over 20 years, employment in the party apparatus went almost exclusively to sympathisers of the Blairite agenda. (The same applied to most candidates selected for winnable parliamentary seats.)

2. When Corbyn was elected, centre/right bureaucrats still controlled the party machine. Only after formidable general secretary Iain (now Lord) McNicol was winkled out in March 2018 did the bureaucracy begin to change, though this is still a work-in-progress.

3. After Corbyn's election, complaints of antisemitism and other offences were soon launched in bulk against leftist/Corbyn-supporting/pro-Palestinian activists.

4. The most common next step was immediate suspension pending lengthy investigation. It isn't clear how many members were suspended, but it was in the thousands. This self-induced pressure massively overloaded the party's disciplinary procedures and left many suspended members in limbo for months, even years.

5. Since Jennie Formby's election as general secretary in April 2018, there has been rapid reform and substantial progress. Formby wrote to the Parliamentary Labour Party in February 2019:

> I had witnessed first-hand that our complaints and disputes procedures were not fit for purpose, with longstanding cases that hadn't been dealt with, alongside new cases coming in, especially in relation to appalling antisemitic tropes and conspiracy theories, mostly on social media … urgent action was needed to ensure our processes for dealing with complaints were robust, efficient and fair; to resolve outstanding cases; and to establish political education to deepen understanding about, and combat, antisemitism within our movement. Since then, we've made significant progress …

6. In February 2019, Formby released antisemitism case statistics starting from 10 days after she became general secretary (they weren't kept before!). These showed a total of 1,106 complaints of which 433 did not even relate to Labour Party members, with evidence against a further 220 too flimsy for a case to answer. That left 453 to investigate (0.08 percent of Labour's membership). The available evidence left a potential *maximum* of 212 determinations of antisemitism – under 0.04 percent of Labour's membership.

7. In May 2019 we learned the depths that the old bureaucratic right-wing rear-guard had apparently plumbed to undermine the Corbyn project: evidence emerged that in order to present Corbyn in the worst possible light, full-time party staff had been refusing to deal with allegations of antisemitism and had shredded thousands of crucial documents (while keeping personal copies with which they could embarrass the party after leaving their jobs).[14]

More detailed accounts

Alan Maddison, 'Antisemitism: No Justification for Singling Out Labour', *Jewish Voice for Labour*, 16 February 2019.

Jon Lansman, 'Jeremy Corbyn Pushed for Action on Antisemitism – But was Held Back by Bureaucracy', *LabourList*, 14 May 2019.

'Excl: Departing Right-Wing Labour Staff "Shredded" 1000s of Disciplinary Docs – But Gave Copies to Press', *Skwawkbox*, 20 May 2019.

Anushka Asthana, 'Corbyn Accuses Labour Officials of Suspending Party Members without Explanation', *Guardian*, 28 August 2016.

8. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Investigation into the Labour Party

The allegation

That the launch of this investigation into 'institutional antisemitism' in the Labour Party in mid-2019 proves there is a serious antisemitism problem in the Party.

Note to canvassers: All our other briefings have exposed facts and scotched lies. This one is different. The only 'facts' we have here are two texts – the immensely complex Equality Act and the incoherent Terms of Reference of the Investigation. Below we reveal what anyone can – and cannot – conclude from the launch of the Investigation.

A brief rebuttal

The first clue is in the name: the EHRC has launched an *Investigation*. Nothing is proved until the Investigation is complete.

Second, it's not an Investigation into 'institutional antisemitism' – or, indeed, any kind of antisemitism. The EHRC only has the power to investigate alleged 'unlawful acts' (i.e. 'racial or religious discrimination or harassment') as strictly defined by the Equality Act (2010). Some alleged antisemitism will fall under the Equality Act definition, and some will not.

The EHRC has made a dog's dinner of the Terms of Reference of its Investigation. This is not just a technical legal matter – it means we cannot be sure what the EHRC is investigating, or whether its investigation

is even legally valid. Is the EHRC simply investigating 'unlawful acts' under the Equality Act (which is its job) or is it tangled up in broader 'antisemitism' issues (which is not)?

In spite of the EHRC's own legal shortcomings, the Labour Party is cooperating fully with the Investigation. We doubt very much that Labour has broken the law – and *if the EHRC carries out its investigation as the law requires,* we expect to be proved correct.

More details

1. The EHRC Investigation was launched after it received a barrage of complaints about Labour antisemitism from the (self-described) Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA) and the Jewish Labour Movement (JLM).

2. The CAA claims to be non-party political. Its website review of the main political parties (excluding the Brexit Party) gives Labour a higher 'antisemitism' score than either the Tories or UKIP. The CAA's website discloses the full flavour of this organisation (which has somehow managed to maintain its charitable status).

3. The JLM's public statement[15] about its general election strategy shows its priorities: 'We will not be campaigning unless in exceptional circumstances and for exceptional candidates, like our Parliamentary Chair Ruth Smeeth, and members of the Parliamentary Labour Party who've been unwavering in their support of us. We will not be giving endorsements to candidates in non-Labour held seats'. The JLM has retained 'top law firm' Mishcon de Reya to pursue its allegations against Labour, launching an 'EHRC Fighting Fund' to pay for its costs.

4. We do not know what the CAA and JLM complaints comprise. More important: *though required to do so under the Equality Act,* the EHRC has not stated what are Labour's alleged 'unlawful acts' which supposedly justify the investigation. This means it is impossible to evaluate whether its investigation should be happening at all.

5. The EHRC appears to be investigating issues which are legally irrelevant. Its Terms of Reference provide that it 'may look at … the steps taken by the Party to implement the recommendations made in the reports on antisemitism by Baroness Royall, the Home Affairs Select Committee and in the Chakrabarti Report' and also 'may have regard to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism and associated examples, while recognising it is a non-legally binding definition'. None of these documents has any legal status – indeed, the IHRA document is expressly 'non-legally binding'. Only the Chakrabarti Report examines any legal issues at all – and these relate to the legal principles of 'Natural Justice', not to the Equality Act.

More detailed accounts

Jewish Voice for Labour, 'EHRC Investigation into the Labour Party – Evidence of Jewish Voice for Labour', *Jewish Voice for Labour*, 2 August 2019.

Naomi Wayne, 'Jews, Antisemitism and the Law', *Jewish Voice for Labour*, 15 August 2019.

REPORTING

7

Labour, Antisemitism, and the News

A DISINFORMATION PARADIGM – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Justin Schlosberg and Laura Laker

MEDIA REFORM COALITION, SEPTEMBER 2018

- Over 250 articles and news segments from the largest UK news providers (online and television) were subjected to in-depth case study analysis involving both quantitative and qualitative methods.

- 29 examples of false statements or claims were identified, several of them made by anchors or correspondents themselves, six of them surfacing on BBC television news programmes, and eight on TheGuardian.com.

- A further 66 clear instances of misleading or distorted coverage including misquotations, reliance on single source accounts, omission of essential facts or right of reply, and repeated value-based assumptions made by broadcasters without evidence or qualification. In total, a quarter of the sample contained at least one documented inaccuracy or distortion.

- Overwhelming source imbalance, especially on television news where voices critical of Labour's code of conduct were regularly given an unchallenged and exclusive platform, outnumbering those defending Labour by nearly 4 to 1. Nearly half of *Guardian* reports on the controversy surrounding Labour's code of conduct featured no quoted sources defending the party or leadership.

The Media Reform Coalition has conducted in-depth research on the controversy surrounding antisemitism in the Labour Party, focusing on media coverage of the crisis during the summer of 2018. Following extensive case study research, we identified myriad inaccuracies and distortions in online and television news including marked skews in sourcing, omission of essential context or right of reply, misquotation, and false assertions made either by journalists themselves or sources whose contentious claims were neither challenged nor countered. Overall, our findings were consistent with a disinformation paradigm.

We use the concept of disinformation to denote systematic reporting failures that broadly privileged a particular political agenda and ideological narrative. This does not mean that these failures were intentional or that journalists and news institutions were inherently biased. We recognise, for instance, that resource pressures combined with acute and complex controversies can foster particular source dependencies or blind spots.

Nor does our research speak in any way to allegations of smear tactics. To interrogate the root causes of disinformation would necessitate a far more wide-ranging study than was undertaken here. We start from the well-founded assumption that concerns about antisemitic hate speech within the Labour Party are genuine and not necessarily or entirely misplaced. There have been unambiguous examples of racist discourse invoking holocaust denial, generalised references to Jews in stereotyped contexts, and critiques of Zionists or Zionism that explicitly use the terms as proxies for Jews. Some of these cases have involved holders of official positions within the party, including local councillors.

Alongside such cases, there is a contested category of discourse that may be considered offensive or insensitive but not necessarily racist. Indeed, determining what counts as antisemitism lies at the heart of the wider controversy that has been played out in reams of column inches and air time since 2015, and with particular intensity during the spring and summer of 2018. We reserve judgement on this central point of contention but acknowledge legitimate views on both sides, as well as a spectrum in which relatively extreme and moderate positions are easily identifiable.

We recognise that this controversy – on the surface at least – involves prominent voices in a minority community accusing a major political party of harbouring racism directed towards them. What's more, these voices have been vocally supported by many high-profile Labour MPs. In such circumstances we expect journalists to take these concerns seriously, view them as inherently newsworthy, and not necessarily afford equal time and attention to contesting views. It is also important to stress that journalists must be allowed – on occasion – to get the story wrong: the public interest is never served by an overly cautious press.

But we do expect professional journalists to strive for accuracy, to establish essential contextual facts in any given story, and to actively seek out dissenting or contesting opinion including, in this case, within the minority group in question, within other affected minorities, and amongst relevant experts (both legal and academic). Nor do the particular complexities and sensitivities absolve journalists of their responsibility to offer a due right of reply to the accused or to interrogate contentious claims made by sources on all sides.

Overall, we found *95 clear cut examples of misleading or inaccurate reporting* on mainstream television and online news platforms, with a quarter of the total sample containing at least one such example. The problem was especially pronounced on television – which reaches far wider audiences by comparison – where *two thirds of the news segments on television contained at least one reporting error or substantive distortion.*

Underlying these figures was a persistent subversion of conventional news values:

- Several reports focused on a controversial social media post by Jeremy Corbyn omitted any mention that it was made six years ago, with some emphasising a sense of currency and recency that failed to make clear the historical context of the post.

- Journalists covering the launch of Labour's antisemitism report in 2016 routinely misquoted an activist in ways that were entirely removed from his original comment, in spite of a video recording of the event that was readily and immediately accessible.

- Above all, coverage of Labour's revised code of conduct during the summer of 2018 often entirely omitted critical discussion of the 'working definition' of antisemitism put forward by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), and wrongly characterised it as consensual and universally adopted.

In fact, we established through background case research that:

- Although the IHRA is an international body with representatives from 31 countries, only six of those countries have, to date, formally adopted the definition themselves.

- In spite of a call for local authorities to adopt the definition by the UK's central government in early 2017, less than a third of councils have responded and several of those have chosen not to include any of the controversial examples contained within the working definition.

- Several high-profile bodies have rejected or distanced themselves from the working definition, including the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency (a successor to the body that drafted the original wording on which the definition is based) and academic institutions including the London School of Economics and School of Oriental and African Studies.

- Mainstream academic and legal opinion has been overwhelmingly critical of the IHRA definition, including formal opinions produced by four leading UK barristers.

Virtually none of this essential context found its way into news reports of the controversy. Instead, the Labour Party was routinely portrayed by both sources and correspondents as beyond the pale of conventional thinking on the IHRA definition.

This matters because although the manifest issue at stake is not outwardly political in nature, the controversy is inextricably linked to a wider ideological conflict that has been playing out within the Labour Party for some years, and within British politics more broadly. To that extent, such controversies bring into sharp relief the news

media's role and responsibilities in nurturing inclusive public debate and contributing to an informed citizenry.

It also matters because the misreporting of antisemitism risks normalising or distracting attention from certain forms of antisemitic discourse. Distortions also risk stirring racial tensions by provoking counter-outrage that may be misdirected at Jews on either the left or right of the political spectrum. It is notable in this respect that in 2016, a *Daily Mail* columnist who has been outspoken on this issue described one Corbyn supporter as a 'useful Jewish idiot'; whilst in 2018, the Prime Minister's warm congratulatory words offered to her Malaysian counterpart – a leader who has openly described himself as an 'antisemite' – received barely no attention at all in mainstream news, despite antisemitism being such a salient issue on the news agenda at the time.

In sum, although our findings do not engage directly with the controversy – shedding no further light on what is antisemitism nor how prevalent it is within the Labour Party – we can say with some certainty that there have been prevalent errors, omissions and skews in the mainstream coverage.

This was no anomaly: almost all of the problems observed in both the framing and sourcing of stories were in favour of a particular recurrent narrative: that the Labour Party has been or is being lost to extremists, racists and the 'hard left'. Some of the most aggressive exponents of this narrative were routinely treated by journalists – paradoxically – as victims of aggression by the party's 'high command'.

During the summer of 2018, this controversy reached fever pitch amid claims that the Labour party had become 'institutionally racist' under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, and that the prospect of a Corbyn-led government posed an 'existential threat' to Jewish life in Britain. It has given rise to vocalised threats of a split within the party, further destabilising politics and signalling a potentially profound reshaping of the British political map. At a time when the country is entering the final stages of its negotiated withdrawal from the European Union, these findings warrant urgent attention from journalists, editors, policymakers and activists alike.

8

The Fake News Nazi

CORBYN, WILLIAMSON, AND THE ANTISEMITISM SCANDAL

David Edwards

MEDIA LENS, 13 MARCH 2019

One of us[1] had a discussion with an elderly relative:

'He can't be allowed to become Prime Minister'.
'Why not?'
'It's so awful … '
'What is?'
'The way he hates the Jews'.

The last comment was spoken with real anguish, the result of continuous exposure to just two main news sources: the *Daily Mail* and the BBC.

What is astonishing is that, just four years ago, essentially *no-one* held this view of Jeremy Corbyn.

Corbyn first became an MP in 1983. He stood for the Labour leadership 32 years later, in May 2015. We searched the ProQuest database for UK newspaper articles containing:

- 'Jeremy Corbyn' and 'anti-semitism' before 1 May 2015 = 18 hits;
- 'Jeremy Corbyn' and 'anti-semitism' after 1 May 2015 = 11,251 hits.

None of the 18 hits prior to May 2015 accused Corbyn of antisemitism. For his first 32 years as an MP, it just wasn't a theme associated with him.

We also searched the ProQuest database for UK newspaper articles containing:

- 'Labour Party' and 'anti-semitism' before 1 May 2015 = 5,347 hits;
- 'Labour Party' and 'anti-semitism' after 1 May 2015 = 13,921 hits.

The archive begins in 1980, which means that more than twice as many articles have included these terms in the last four years than in the 35 years from 1980 until May 2015 when Corbyn stood for the Labour leadership. A standard response to these findings runs along these lines:

> Irrelevant backbencher gets less Press attention than Leader of The Opposition SHOCKER. What's your next scoop, Water Wet, Sky Blue?[2]

But in fact, Corbyn was not an irrelevant backbencher. We found 3,662 hits for articles mentioning Corbyn before May 2015. Many of these are mentions in passing, but he had also long been a high-profile anti-war MP at a time of numerous wars. And he *was* frequently smeared, only *not* about his supposed antisemitism. Consider, for example, an article that appeared in *The Sun* in 1999, under a typically cruel title: 'Why did it take you so long to dump him, Mrs Corbyn?'[3]

The story:

> EXTREME Left MP Jeremy Corbyn has been dumped by his missus after an amazing bust-up over their son's education.

The key issue, according to *The Sun*:

> Now the question on everyone's lips is: Why did it take her so long to leave the loathsome Lefty, and more importantly, why is she only moaning about his choice of schools?

Because there was, apparently, plenty to moan about. *The Sun* described Corbyn as 'class crusader Jeremy – a rabid IRA sympathiser' who 'not only looks and dresses like a third-rate Open University lecturer, he

thinks like one too. In 1984 the Provo stooge invited twice-convicted terrorist and bomber Linda Quigley to the House of Commons just 13 days after the IRA's murderous attack on Tories staying at the Grand Hotel in Brighton'.

This was pretty brutal stuff. *The Sun* added of Corbyn's ex-wife:

> Claudia's saviour of the masses also suffers incredible delusions of grandeur. Communist states may be falling like dominoes, but raving Red Jeremy still believes his outdated views are relevant to modern-day Britain.

And:

> Not only is Jeremy a political coward who backs terrorists, he is also a self-confessed big girl's blouse.

And:

> Jeremy's mis-shapen suits, lumpy jumpers and nylon shirts are not exactly what the well-dressed radical is wearing in 1999 … Claudia should be aware her ex is irredeemably, unforgivably, annoyingly stupid.

Given the no-holds-barred nature of the smear, it is amazing that *The Sun* made *no mention at all* of Corbyn's vile antisemitism, viewed as his most obvious and dangerous defect now.

The reason is that, as this shows, *not even his worst enemies viewed him as an antisemite*. The extreme Tory press aside, the accepted view of Corbyn pre-2015 is indicated by a long, admiring piece in which Jewish journalist Deborah Ross, whose family members were murdered in Polish pogroms even before the Nazi Holocaust was unleashed,[4] interviewed him for the Independent in 2005. Ross commented:

> He is also, it is generally agreed, an exemplary constituency MP. Even my friend Rebecca, who recently sought his help on a local issue, and never usually has a nice word to say about anybody, which is why I like her, describes him as a 'totally genuine mensch'.[5]

Ross added:

> As *The Sun* would have it, Mr Corbyn is a 'beardy Bolshevik' and 'loathsome lefty' but he does not come across as either. He has strong opinions but does not demand you listen to them, if you don't want to.
>
> He is scandal free, unless you count the hoo-ha a few years back when it was revealed that Jeremy's oldest son would be attending a grammar school outside the borough.

Joseph Finlay is a former Deputy Editor of the *Jewish Quarterly*, who co-founded a range of grassroots Jewish organisations such as Moishe House London, Wandering Jews, Jewdas, and The Open Talmud Project. On 2 March 2018, Finlay wrote in his blog under the title, 'Jeremy Corbyn is an anti-racist, not an anti-Semite':

> Firstly we need to restore some perspective. The Labour party has thousands of Jewish members, many Jewish councillors, a number of prominent Jewish MPs and several Jewish members of its ruling council. Many people at the heart of the Corbyn team, such as Jon Lansman, James Schneider and Rhea Wolfson are also Jewish. Ed Miliband, the previous party leader, was Jewish (and suffered antisemitism at the hands of the press and the Conservatives). I have been a member for five years and, as a Jew, have had only positive experiences.[6]

Finlay added:

> Jeremy Corbyn has been MP for Islington North since 1983 – a constituency with a significant Jewish population. Given that he has regularly polled over 60% of the vote (73% in 2017) it seems likely that a sizeable number of Jewish constituents voted for him. As a constituency MP he regularly visited synagogues and has appeared at many Jewish religious and cultural events. He is close friends with the leaders of the Jewish Socialist Group, from whom he has gained a rich knowledge of the history of the Jewish Labour Bund, and

> he has named the defeat of Mosley's Fascists at the Battle of Cable as a key historical moment for him. His 2017 Holocaust Memorial Day statement talked about Shmuel Zygielboym, the Polish Bund leader exiled to London who committed suicide in an attempt to awaken the world to the Nazi genocide. How many British politicians have that level of knowledge of modern Jewish history?

Israel-based journalist Jonathan Cook notes that a recent Labour Party report[7] 'decisively undercut' the claims of Corbyn's critics 'not only of endemic antisemitism in Labour, but of any significant problem at all'. Cook summarised:

> Over the previous 10 months, 673 complaints had been filed against Labour members over alleged antisemitic behaviour, many based on online comments. In a third of those cases, insufficient evidence had been produced.[8]

The 453 other allegations represented 0.08 percent of the 540,000-strong Labour membership. Hardly 'endemic' or 'institutional', it seems.

He added:

> That echoed an earlier report by the Commons home affairs committee, which found there was 'no reliable, empirical evidence' that Labour had more of an anti-semitism problem than any other British political party.

In *Antisemitism in Contemporary Great Britain: A Study of Attitudes Towards Jews and Israel* by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, L. Daniel Staetsky found:

> Levels of antisemitism among those on the left-wing of the political spectrum, including the far-left, are indistinguishable from those found in the general population. Yet, all parts of those on the left of the political spectrum – including the 'slightly left-of-centre', the 'fairly left-wing' and the 'very left-wing' – exhibit higher levels of anti-Israelism than average. The most antisemitic group on the

> political spectrum consists of those who identify as very right-wing: the presence of antisemitic attitudes in this group is 2 to 4 times higher compared to the general population.

The report notes that 'the prevalence of antisemitism on the far right is considerably higher than on the left and in the political centre'.

Noam Chomsky has commented:

> The charges of anti-Semitism against Corbyn are without merit, an underhanded contribution to the disgraceful efforts to fend off the threat that a political party might emerge that is led by an admirable and decent human being, a party that is actually committed to the interests and just demands of its popular constituency and the great majority of the population generally, while also authentically concerned with the rights of suffering and oppressed people throughout the world. Plainly an intolerable threat to order.[9]

Suspending Chris Williamson

On February 27, a propaganda blitz was launched against anti-war Labour MP Chris Williamson who had been filmed saying that Labour Party responses to claims of antisemitism had exacerbated the crisis:

> I've got to say, I think our party's response has been partly responsible … Because, in my opinion, we've backed off far too much, we've given too much ground, we've been too apologetic.[10]

Williamson added:

> We've done more to address the scourge of antisemitism than any political party.

It is clear that Williamson was strongly endorsing the fight against antisemitism and was proud of the Labour Party's record. Actual antisemites talk of 'the scourge of Judaism'; Williamson talked of 'the scourge of antisemitism'. He was suggesting that the party had been too apologetic in responding to a cynical smear campaign attempting to destroy Corbyn by exploiting the issue of antisemitism.

Others chose to see it differently. *Guardian* columnist Owen Jones responded to Williamson's comments:

> This is utterly out of order. When does the left ever say we've been 'too apologetic' about fighting racism or bigotry? Why is he, a non-Jew, right and Jon Lansman – a Jewish socialist who founded Momentum and ran Corbyn's second leadership campaign – wrong about anti-Semitism?[11]

We replied:

> He's *endorsing* the fight against racism and bigotry. He's saying Labour has been too apologetic in responding to a cynical smear campaign to destroy Corbyn in the name of anti-racism.[12]

Ash Sarkar of Novara Media tweeted:

> Chris Williamson has been had the Labour whip suspended pending investigation, which I think is the right decision. But much more work must be done to proactively confront and dismantle conspiratorial and antisemitic thinking on the left, and it goes much further than expulsions.[13]

Aaron Bastani, also of Novara Media, wrote:

> I think media coverage of the 'Labour anti-semitism crisis' is completely disproportionate – primarily because it underplays problem more broadly across society.
>
> Equally, hearing & reading the things I have in recent days I wouldn't feel welcome in the party as a Jewish person.[14]

In our latest book, *Propaganda Blitz,* we noted a key factor driving home these smear blitzes:

> [W]hile a demonising propaganda blitz may arise from rightist politics and media, the propaganda *coup de grace* ending public doubt often comes from the 'left-liberal' journalists at the *Guardian,* the

> *Independent*, the BBC and Channel 4; and also from non-corporate journalists who crave acceptance by these media. Again, the logic is clear: if *even* celebrity progressive journalists – people famous for their principled stands, and colourful socks and ties – join the denunciations, then there *must* be something to the claims. At this point, it actually becomes difficult to doubt it.[15]

Foreign Wars – Racism Versus Speciesism

The truth of the corporate media's 'ethical concern' becomes clearer when we consider Corbyn's record on foreign wars. While the UK affects to care deeply about racism, Chomsky has noted that the West's endless 'intervention' – all reflexively supported by the same media damning Corbyn now – are manifestations of a prejudice, beyond even racism, that is a kind of speciesism:

> Namely, knowing that you are massacring them but not doing so intentionally because you don't regard them as worthy of concern. That is, you don't even care enough about them to intend to kill them. Thus when I walk down the street, if I stop to think about it I know I'll probably kill lots of ants, but I don't intend to kill them, because in my mind they do not even rise to the level where it matters. There are many such examples. To take one of the very minor ones, when Clinton bombed the al-Shifa pharmaceutical facility in Sudan, he and the other perpetrators surely knew that the bombing would kill civilians (tens of thousands, apparently). But Clinton and associates did not intend to kill them, because by the standards of Western liberal humanitarian racism, they are no more significant than ants. Same in the case of tens of millions of others.[16]

Even if Corbyn was an antisemite, a racist, he would still be a far safer ethical choice than Tory and Blairite speciesists who value human beings on the level of ants. After all, we find that Jeremy Corbyn:

> 'Consistently voted against use of UK military forces in combat operations overseas';

> 'Consistently voted against the Iraq war';

'… voted to say that the case for war against Iraq has not yet been established';

'… voted against a motion stating the Government should use all means necessary to ensure the disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Support for the motion by the majority of MPs led to the UK joining the US invasion of Iraq two days later';

'Generally voted for investigations into the Iraq war';

'… acted as teller for a vote on UK Air Strikes Against ISIL in Iraq';

'… voted against the establishment of a no-fly zone in Libya';

'… voted against the continued deployment of UK armed forces in Afghanistan';

'… voted to decline to authorise UK military action in Syria';

'… voted against UK airstrikes against ISIL in Syria';

'Generally voted against replacing Trident with a new nuclear weapons system.'[17]

Consider, by contrast, the record of the Labour MPs who have left the Labour Party, supposedly in protest at the rise of antisemitism, to form The Independent Group:

Chuka Umunna – 'Almost always voted for use of UK military forces in combat operations overseas'.

Angela Smith – 'Almost always voted for use of UK military forces in combat operations overseas'.

Mike Gapes – 'Generally voted for use of UK military forces in combat operations overseas'.

Chris Leslie – 'Almost always voted for use of UK military forces in combat operations overseas'.

> Luciana Berger – 'Generally voted for use of UK military forces in combat operations overseas'.
>
> Joan Ryan – 'Consistently voted for use of UK military forces in combat operations overseas', 'Consistently voted for the Iraq war', 'Consistently voted against investigations into the Iraq war'.
>
> Ann Coffey – 'Almost always voted for use of UK military forces in combat operations overseas'.
>
> Gavin Shuker – 'Voted a mixture of for and against use of UK military forces in combat operations overseas'.[18]

Not even his most extreme critics are suggesting that Corbyn is offering the kind of threat to Jewish people consistently offered by Tory and Blairite MPs to millions of people in countries like Iraq, Libya, Syria, Venezuela, Iran and Yemen. Even if Corbyn *had* erred in failing to perceive the ugliness of a mural declared antisemitic by the press;[19] even if he had been lax in taking action against party racists, and so on, how do these failings compare to the destruction of whole countries in lie-based wars of aggression?

Why do corporate media never make this moral comparison? Because *they are incapable of perceiving US–UK crimes against humanity as crimes;* a wilful moral blindness that renders them completely unfit to pass judgement on Corbyn. Especially as they are themselves, of course, complicit in these same war crimes.

Conclusion

The claim that Corbyn is an antisemite presiding over a surge in Labour Party antisemitism is fake news; it is a scam of the utmost cynicism and brutality. It should be viewed as the latest in a long line of attempts[20] to destroy Corbyn by all necessary means. He has been smeared for not bowing low enough, for not singing loudly enough, for hating women, for disrespecting gay people, for consorting with terrorists, for refusing to unleash a nuclear holocaust, for being a shambolic leader, for being a shambolic dresser, for leading Labour towards certain electoral disaster, for being a Putinite stooge,

for aping Trump, and so on. Now, finally, someone widely admired for thirty years as a decent, socialist MP, has been transformed into an antisemite; or as game show assistant and political commentator Rachel Riley implies, a 'Nazi'.[21]

Antisemitism does exist in the Labour Party, as it exists throughout UK society, and of course these delusions should be resisted and exposed. But the smear campaign against Corbyn is not rooted in concern for the welfare of Jewish people; it is not even about blocking a political leader who cares about Palestinian rights. It is about preventing Corbyn from undoing Tony Blair's great achievement of transforming the Labour Party into a second Tory Party, thus ensuring voters have no option challenging corporate domination, including the 'humanitarian interventions' for oil and other resources. The goal is to stop Corbyn letting democracy out of its box.

Stephen Law of Heythrop College, University of London, warns that cavalier accusations made 'on the basis of obviously flimsy or nonexistent evidence' are 'disrespecting the memory of the millions who were slaughtered by real antisemitism during the Holocaust'.[22] But in fact, it is worse than that. State propagandists and their corporate media allies are *exploiting* the suffering of these millions as part of an attack on British democracy. This is obscene. But it is not particularly shocking after the campaigns of deceit which, as discussed, knowingly risked and then shattered the lives of millions of innocent human beings in US–UK wars of aggression.

One thing is certain: if Corbyn and his style of socialism can be made to disappear, we'll hear no more about antisemitism in the Labour Party, just as we heard no more about Iraqi democracy after Saddam Hussein, or human rights in Libya after Gaddafi; just as we will hear no more about press freedom in Venezuela, if Maduro is overthrown.

As this article was being written, news emerged that Corbyn had been subjected to a physical assault in London,[23] to muted concern from almost all corporate media and journalists (compare 'mainstream' reaction to news that Conservative MP Anna Soubry had been called a 'Nazi'[24]). Journalists claimed Corbyn had merely had an egg thrown at him. Labour MP Diane Abbott tweeted:

> I was there. He punched Jeremy very hard. He happened to have an egg in his palm. But it could have been a knife. Horrible[.][25]

Perhaps journalists couldn't bear to express concern for a person they have so completely reviled for almost four years. Or perhaps they knew their smears of a thoroughly decent, well-intentioned man would be thrown back at them. More likely, they just didn't care. And that, finally, is the truth of their 'ethical concern' – they don't care.

9

Is the *Guardian* Institutionally Antisemitic?

Jamie Stern-Weiner

31 JULY 2019

Jonathan Freedland of the *Guardian* asks rhetorically:

> [W]hy would a party that defines itself as anti-racist have attracted antisemites in the first place?
>
> Some try to say that any mass membership organisation will always reflect the wider society, and since Britain includes antisemites, so too will the Labour party. But that doesn't wash. Britain includes a fair number of meat-eaters, but you wouldn't expect to find any in the Vegetarian Society.[1]

1. Freedland's analogy does not work. Whereas the Vegetarian Society is single-issue, Labour is a mass movement which stands for a multifaceted programme of social transformation. Labour, unlike the Vegetarian Society, therefore attracts people who support certain of its principles and policies while being ignorant of, indifferent to, or opposed to others. What's more, if someone harbours this or that anti-Jewish stereotype, it does not follow that antisemitism is what gets them out of bed in the morning – or, in the case at hand, that this stereotype is what determines their political affiliation. Is it not conceivable that, even as a single-mum struggling to provide for her kids thinks Jews are cheap, she might be supporting Labour because she lost her job, she can't pay her bills, and she's about to be evicted? In other words, the

fact that a Labour member happens to harbour a racist, sexist, ageist, ableist, homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic, or antisemitic prejudice doesn't prove that's why they joined the party.

2. If media coverage of Labour is to be believed, what surprises is not that Labour attracts so many antisemites but that it attracts so few. For more than three years, Labour has been depicted in the national media as an 'institutionally racist' party 'led by racists'.[2] If this description were true, one might have figured that antisemites would be flocking to Labour: here's their big chance to vote Hitler into power! Yet survey evidence indicates that antisemitism is no higher among Labour voters than among Conservative voters and the general public,[3] while, after years of organised efforts to expose 'antisemitism' within the party, the proportion of Labour members who harbour hatred toward Jews so far brought to light approximates to zero.[4] (Yes, *zero*.)

3. Shouldn't Freedland first direct this inquiry to his employer? Poll findings[5] indicate that the prevalence of 'antisemitic' stereotypes among *Guardian* readers approximates that among Labour Party voters.

'Antisemitic Statement'	Labour voters – 2017 General Election (% def/prob true)	*Guardian* readers – 2017 (% def/prob true)
'British Jewish people chase money more than other British people'	14	11
'Compared to other groups, Jewish people have too much power in the media'	11	12
'Jewish people consider themselves to be better than other British people'	11	8
'Having a connection to Israel makes Jewish people less loyal to Britain than other British people'	9	10
'Jewish people talk about the Holocaust just to further their political agenda'	8	8
'Jewish people can[not] be trusted just as much as other British people in business'	8	9

Number of 'Antisemitic Statements' Agreed With	Labour voters – 2017 General Election (% def/prob true)	*Guardian/Independent* readers – 2017 (% def/prob true)
1+	32	29
5+	3	2

Freedland might object that this criticism of the *Guardian* is selective to the point of misleading: the corresponding figures for right-wing newspapers were higher.

But Freedland already stated that such a defence 'doesn't wash' since 'Britain includes a fair number of meat-eaters, but you wouldn't expect to find any in the Vegetarian Society'.

Freedland's 'key question' must therefore be posed: *Why would a newspaper that defines itself as anti-racist have attracted antisemites in the first place?*

• • •

A key 'deceptive move' deployed in media coverage of antisemitism in the Labour Party has been to 'hold the Labour leadership directly responsible for anything said by any party member – or even someone who claims to be a Labour supporter – on social media':

> Since there was never any chance that a party with half a million members would be entirely free of antisemitic attitudes, this move was enough to supply much of the initial fuel for the campaign. Labour's critics indignantly shouted down any attempt to quantify the prevalence of such attitudes, knowing perfectly well that they were not representative of the wider membership.[6]

To judge by the survey figures above, it would be child's play to turn the same technique used by the *Guardian* and others to demonise the Labour Party against the *Guardian* itself: trawl Facebook and Twitter for damning quotes from that significant proportion of *Guardian* readers who harbour some or another stereotype about Jews, and drip-feed these to a hostile press to confect the impression of mounting crisis; dredge up and subject to the most sinister and

hysterical re-interpretation every high-profile historical allegation of antisemitism against *Guardian* staff (there have been many[7] – according to the Community Security Trust, in 2011, 'the *Guardian* faced more accusations of antisemitism than any other mainstream UK newspaper'[8]); condemn as 'part of the problem' every *Guardian* editor or journalist who denies that the paper is institutionally antisemitic[9] – not least among them the long-time senior *Guardian* reporter and editor Seumas Milne, who now figures prominently in media allegations against the Labour Party;[10] demand that any *Guardian* figure accused of antisemitism, or associated with someone accused of antisemitism, or 'in denial over' the *Guardian*'s institutional antisemitism, or associated with someone who is 'in denial over' the *Guardian*'s institutional antisemitism, be fired – and if they are not fired, consider this further proof that the entire *Guardian* edifice is 'rotten'; insist that the *Guardian* adopt a controversial and politicised definition of antisemitism and then use this definition to incriminate ever-wider swathes of *Guardian* readers and staff; demand that all *Guardian* journalists be subjected to 'training' delivered by Jewish communal organisations and insist that the *Guardian* hand control over the firing of staff members accused of antisemitism to an external body; flood the *Guardian* reader's editor with complaints about Facebook posts made by people who are or who claim to be *Guardian* readers and then cite delays in responding to these complaints as clinching proof of institutional antisemitism; finally, having pressed for procedural reforms to 'root out' antisemitism at the *Guardian*, proclaim in response to said reforms that the real problem is the *Guardian*'s 'culture' or 'worldview' and call for everyone involved in running it to be 'removed from any significant role in public life'.[11]

CASE STUDY: THE 2017 LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

10

Labour Conference or Nuremberg Rally?

ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE

Jamie Stern-Weiner

12 OCTOBER 2017

The 2017 Labour Party conference was a success for supporters of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination.

Party leader Jeremy Corbyn snubbed a reception held by Labour Friends of Israel, a group which lobbies for close UK–Israel relations.[1]

Delegates cheered as Corbyn pledged 'real support to end the oppression of the Palestinian people, the 50-year occupation and illegal settlement expansion and move to a genuine two-state solution of the Israel-Palestine conflict'.

Most significantly, the leader's office defeated a back-door attempt to neuter the party's support for Palestinian rights:

> The call for 'an end to the blockade, occupation and settlements' [and the pledge that a Labour government 'will immediately recognise the state of Palestine'] made in the 2017 election manifesto was outrageously omitted from the annual National Policy Forum report, which constitutes Labour Party policy once agreed by conference. On day one in Brighton, in the daily Conference Arrangements Committee report, the text mysteriously reappeared. While left delegates were delighted, no one knew quite how it had happened. In fact, the leadership, which was livid at the omission, had simply put its foot down. The bureaucracy may also have calculated that

had it not conceded, the section would have been challenged, or 'referenced back', by delegates in any case.[2]

More generally, conference marked the consolidation of Corbyn's leadership and the development of grassroots organisation within the party. Activists' enthusiasm was palpable, while the intellectual ferment, organisational competence, creativity, sense of purpose, and wealth of new talent on display were thrilling to behold. Alex Nunns, author of a brilliant analysis of Jeremy Corbyn's rise to power, concluded, 'This was the first Labour conference to bear the imprint of the Corbyn era. It was a confident first step on the path to a democratic party. And it was the delegates themselves that forced the pace.'[3]

'Labour Antisemitism': The Politics

Ever since Corbyn was elected Labour leader, the right-wing press has sought to depict him and his newly mobilised supporters as dangerous extremists.[4] A key plank in this public relations campaign has been the accusation that Corbyn and/or his supporters have a problem with Jews. In April and May 2016, Conservative, pro-Israel, and Labour rightist networks manufactured a 'Labour antisemitism' crisis ahead of the local elections to discredit the party and topple its leadership.[5] Lack of evidence did not prevent these allegations gaining media traction. As 2017 conference season opened with Labour resurgent and the Conservative Party in disarray, it was only to be expected that the Tory press would revive the smear campaign, and so it proved.

The tone was set by Andrew Percy, a former Conservative Minister, who branded Labour the 'new nasty party'. Percy claimed, in comments reported by the *Daily Mail*, that, 'What we are seeing is really dangerous': Corbyn supporters have established a 'cult of personality' that is 'deeply sinister, nasty and quite frightening. These people are genuinely extreme'.[6] Signal received, the right-wing press hammered home these attacks throughout the conference. Central to the campaign was the allegation that conference and its fringe events had played host to a 'surge of hatred' against Jews.[7] Between 23 and 28 September, *The Sun* and the websites of the *Times, Telegraph, Mail*

and *Express* ran between them more than 30 articles devoted to this theme. They were not subtle.

'Don't be a Jew in the Labour Party', warned Tony Parsons in *The Sun*. 'Labour seethes with an abundance of wild-eyed, mouth-foaming hatreds. The tumour of anti-Semitism that grows in the rancid guts of Labour moved centre stage at this week's party conference'.[8] Labour is 'shot through with anti-semitism', a *Sun* leader declared.[9] 'Corbyn's supporters abandoned all pretence of belonging to the political mainstream', the *Daily Mail* editorialised, 'and exposed Labour for what it really is: Westminster's nasty party'.[10] 'Holocaust denial, virulent anti-Semitism and Zionist conspiracy theories', read Richard Littlejohn's summary of the conference. 'The Fascist Left have [*sic*] been in full flow'.[11] 'If ever there was an example of farce combined with despicable antisemitism', Marcus Dysch fumed in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 'this was it'.[12] The 'ugly … phenomenon of left-wing antisemitism' was 'amply on display on the Labour conference fringe', claimed a *Times* editorial.[13] For Stephen Pollard, Labour was 'now the party of bigots and thugs, where Jew haters are cheered'.[14] Senior Conservative Party officials got in on the action, with Environment Secretary Michael Gove announcing that 'anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism' and Secretary of State for International Development Priti Patel describing Labour as 'the most antisemitic party … in generations'.[15]

The tenor of these attacks was so hysterical, the political agenda behind them so transparent, and the manipulation so blatant – to give one representative example, when Corbyn declined to attend the Labour Friends of Israel event, the *Sun* headline blared: 'New Jew Snub Row'[16] – that one might have hoped they would discredit themselves.[17] But the depiction of Labour's conference as a Nuremberg rally was given weight by less overtly partisan sources. The Board of Deputies of British Jews lamented the 'ugly scenes' and 'disgraceful anti-Jewish incidents at the Conference'.[18] The chairman of the Jewish Leadership Council claimed that 'anti-semitism … continues to engulf the party'.[19] The chief executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust was 'shock[ed]' to see 'antisemitism rearing its head at a mainstream party conference'.[20] The Jewish Labour Movement (JLM), a Jewish and pro-Israel affiliate to the Labour Party, responded to the success-

ful Conference launch of the rival group Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL) with charges of antisemitism, which were gleefully seized upon by the right-wing press as part of its own campaign.[21] Most astonishingly, the head of the Equality and Human Rights Commission declared that 'the Labour Party needs to do more to establish that it is not a racist party'.[22]

Allegations of antisemitism were also supported by certain quarters within the Labour Party. During the 2016 antisemitism witch-hunt, too, some Labour opponents of Corbyn had fuelled the smear campaign in order to discredit his leadership. But the internal politics heading into the 2017 conference were quite different. Labour's strong showing in the June election had vindicated Corbyn's position and united the bulk of the parliamentary party behind his leadership. Going into the conference, it seemed that this newfound unity might extend to the issue of antisemitism. The JLM, a pro-Israel affiliate to the Labour Party, had participated in the 2016 antisemitism smear campaign at a time when Corbyn was isolated and his demise looked imminent.[23] But after the 2017 election it was the JLM that was isolated, and it hoped to use the party conference to return to the fold. The party leadership also desired reconciliation for the sake of putting the recurrent antisemitism controversy to rest.

In 2016, the JLM had proposed a change to the Labour rulebook that would have provided for the expulsion of members found responsible for a 'hate incident', defined as 'something' that 'the victim or anyone else think … was motivated by' prejudice against protected characteristics. Opponents criticised this definition as overly broad, subjective, and open to abuse. Ahead of the 2017 conference, the JLM negotiated with Labour peer Shami Chakrabarti to water down its proposal and reach agreement on a rule change to put to delegates.[24] The agreed formulation was accepted by Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC). With the JLM, the NEC, Corbyn, and Momentum all urging support for the resulting motion,[25] it appeared that consensus had been achieved. In his speech to conference, JLM representative Mike Katz went out of his way to praise the 'clear leadership' and 'amazing' electoral performance of 'our leader Jeremy', and

explicitly thanked Chakrabarti, the author of an inquiry into allegations of Labour antisemitism which prominent Jewish activists had dismissed as a whitewash. For his part, Jeremy Corbyn presented the JLM with the Del Singh Memorial Award for best practice.[26]

Alas, some troublemakers insisted on spoiling the party. Not everyone was willing to so quickly brush aside the JLM's record. Difficulties began when the family of Del Singh, a campaigner for Palestinian rights and aid worker who was killed by the Taliban, demanded that the JLM's award be revoked on the grounds that the organisation 'opposed much of what Del stood for'.[27] Meanwhile, a number of Jewish members established an organisation – Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL) – to challenge the JLM's monopoly on representing Labour Jews. JVL's triumphant launch, apparently in the face of attempted sabotage, attracted a standing-room only crowd, and the organisation immediately gained the imprimatur of prominent figures (Palme d'Or and BAFTA-winning filmmaker Ken Loach, University of Oxford Professor Avi Shlaim, former Lord Justice of Appeal Sir Stephen Sedley)[28] as well as the backing of major unions (Unite, ASLEF).[29] When a Jewish delegate informed conference of JVL's launch and passionately repudiated the JLM's right to speak on her behalf, she received a standing ovation and was embraced by Unite leader Len McCluskey as she left the stage. On the second day of conference, another Jewish delegate rubbed salt into the wound: '[Jewish Voice for Labour] launched last night with a massive meeting … [W]e are many, and I think maybe they [implicitly: the JLM] are fewer than they say they are'. Humiliated, and desiring to discredit the JVL before it gathered momentum, the JLM hit back with charges of antisemitism, which were gleefully seized upon by the right-wing press as part of its own campaign.[30]

The upshot is, it has fast become conventional wisdom that the Labour Party conference witnessed an eruption of Jew-hatred.

For anyone sceptical of claims of endemic Labour antisemitism, the *Guardian*'s Jonathan Freedland had sharp words: 'the evidence was there in Brighton if you were willing to see it'.[31]

Was it?

'Labour Antisemitism': The Evidence

Those alleging antisemitism at Labour's conference all cite the same handful of incidents in support.[32] Strikingly, *virtually every allegation* concerns statements made by … Jews. Mike Katz of the JLM, in his address to conference, delivered a mangled version of the old cliché: two Jews, three opinions. But if the *Jewish Chronicle*, *The Times*, International Development Minister Priti Patel, the Board of Deputies, the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, et al., are to be believed, a modification is in order: two Jews, three antisemites.

If the claim that the Labour Party conference was terrorised by a thuggish vanguard of antisemitic Jews does not *prima facie* convince, investigation raises further doubts. In fact, *not one* of the specific allegations of antisemitism at the Labour Party conference withstands scrutiny. *All* either misrepresent events or impute antisemitism where none existed.

The allegations fall into three categories: *irrelevancies*, *fabrications*, and *fantasies*.

Irrelevancies

It was reported that Miko Peled, a prominent American-Israeli peace activist and son of a renowned Israeli general,[33] referred to Israel as 'the Zionist state', characterised it as a 'racist settler regime', and accused it of committing 'genocide' against the Palestinians.[34] Meanwhile, an activist with the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network reportedly characterised Israel as 'apartheid'.[35] Both speakers were Jewish and addressing a fringe event organised by the predominantly Jewish group Free Speech on Israel (FSOI). Assuming for the sake of argument that the quotations are accurate, they remain irrelevant to the matter at hand: none betray or necessarily reflect animus toward Jews. It was also reported with outrage that a speaker – the same Miko Peled – had compared 'Zionists' with Nazis. Peled reportedly said:

> Boycotting the state of Israel is not censorship – it's putting it in its place. We do not invite Nazis and give then an hour to explain why they are right. This is the same thing. You did not invite South Africa

> to explain why apartheid was good for the blacks. In the same way you do not invite the Zionists. It was a very similar thing.[36]

Let us again assume that the quotation is accurate. In my view, Peled's analogy was unhelpful: whereas 'Nazis[m]' and 'apartheid' unambiguously refer to extreme oppression, 'Zionism' might denote any one along a spectrum of beliefs ranging from the harmful to the benign (e.g., support for the right of Jews to collective self-determination). If politics is about uniting the many to defeat the few, it was also inept: a majority of British Jews identify as 'Zionists', even as they disagree over Israeli policies,[37] while a majority of the British public not only supports the right of the State of Israel to exist but views 'hating Israel and questioning its right to exist' as antisemitic.[38] Even so, there is nothing inherently anti-Jewish about analogising Israel to Nazi Germany,[39] while Peled's statement was evidently directed at supporters of Israel rather than Jews.

Fabrications

Holocaust denial. It was alleged that, at this same FSOI event, speakers doubted or urged debate over the reality of the Nazi Holocaust. Alex Wickham of *Guido Fawkes* reported on attendees 'talking about how we need to have a debate about whether the Holocaust happened';[40] John Crace informed *Guardian* readers that 'the Holocaust had appeared to be questioned';[41] Howard Jacobson claimed in the *New York Times* that '[a] motion to question the truth of the Holocaust was proposed';[42] Jonathan Goldstein, chairman of the Jewish Leadership Council, declared that '[o]ne speaker … had the audacity to ask openly: "The Holocaust: yes or no?"';[43] the Board of Deputies referred to 'those who have maliciously questioned the historical record of the Holocaust';[44] Richard Angell of Blairite groupuscule Progress claimed that 'there became this dialogue throughout the conference that there was a question mark about the Holocaust'; and Karen Pollock, chief executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust, found it 'shocking to see the Holocaust once again called into question … at a mainstream political party conference'.[45] These allegations referred again to remarks by Miko Peled. But Peled, who is

not a Labour Party member, did not engage in Holocaust denial, nor did he call for debate about whether the Holocaust happened, nor did any such debate unfold, nor was any Holocaust 'motion … proposed'. Peled merely called, in the Q&A session that followed his presentation, for freedom of speech for the 'entire spectrum' of issues, giving passing mention to the Holocaust as an example:

> This is about free speech. It's about the freedom to criticise and to discuss every issue, whether it's the Holocaust: yes or no, whether it's Palestine, the liberation, I mean, the entire spectrum. There should be no limits on the discussion.[46]

It is unclear from the excerpt posted online whether Peled was referring to the public sphere in general or Labour Party fora in particular. In either case, nothing he said was antisemitic. Peled subsequently explained,

> [t]he Holocaust was a terrible crime that we must study and from which we must all learn. I reject the idea that Holocaust deniers, foolish as they may be, should be treated as criminals and I doubt that supporters of Israel should be given the authority to judge who is or is not a racist and antisemite.[47]

This happens to be the position of John Stuart Mill, who warned that any belief 'not fully, frequently, and fearlessly discussed' will decay from a 'living truth' into a 'dead dogma'.[48] It was also the position of the preeminent scholar of the Nazi Holocaust, Raul Hilberg, who said of Holocaust deniers, 'If these people want to speak, let them … It only leads those of us who do research to re-examine what we might have considered as obvious. And that's useful for us'.[49] Pollock's contrasting opinion – that the Holocaust is a 'basic truth' that should be considered 'sacrosanct' – is more befitting a Church than an 'Educational Trust'.

A subsidiary controversy arose when BBC News anchor Jo Coburn challenged prominent filmmaker and Corbyn-supporter Ken Loach to condemn the 'fringe meeting … where there was a discussion about

the Holocaust, did it happen or didn't it'.[50] Loach responded, accurately, 'I don't think there was a discussion about the Holocaust, did it happen or didn't it'. Coburn replied, 'Well it was reported and it was on the fringe'. As we have seen, while it was indeed 'reported', including by Coburn herself, it was not at all 'on the fringe' or anywhere else. When Loach again demurred, Coburn pressed for a denunciation regardless: 'Would you say that was unacceptable?' Loach refused to play ball:

> I think history is for us all to discuss, wouldn't you? … History is for all of us to discuss … [A]ll history is our common heritage to discuss and analyse. The founding of the state of Israel, for example, based on ethnic cleansing is there for us all to discuss. The role of Israel is there for us to discuss. So don't try to subvert that by false stories of antisemitism.

It was perhaps clumsy to pivot from alleged Holocaust denial to Israel's record vis-à-vis the Palestinians. But Loach's disinclination to indulge a bad-faith inquisition was understandable while his refusal to issue the rote condemnation that was being demanded of him was surely justified given that he was being interrogated about an incident – 'a discussion about the Holocaust, did it happen or didn't it' – *that never took place*. Loach subsequently explained:

> I was asked about a speech I had not heard and of which I knew nothing. My reply has been twisted to suggest that I think it is acceptable to question the reality of the Holocaust. I do not. The Holocaust is as real a historical event as the World War itself and not to be challenged. In Primo Levi's words: 'Those who deny Auschwitz would be ready to remake it'. The first terrible pictures I saw as a nine-year old are ingrained on my memory as they are for all my generation.
>
> Like readers of this paper [i.e., the *Guardian*], I know the history of Holocaust denial, its place in far right politics and the role of people like David Irving. To imply that I would have anything in common with them is contemptible. The consequences of such a smear are obvious to all: let the poison escape and it will be picked

> up on social media and reputations may be tarnished for ever. A brief phone call would have clarified my position.[51]

The *Guardian*, which offered Jonathan Freedland a full column with which to accuse Loach of 'lending a spurious legitimacy to' and 'echoing … the language' of 'Holocaust denial', published only a single edited paragraph from Loach's response.[52]

Those condemning Loach would doubtless prefer him to have responded along the lines of Deputy Leader Tom Watson MP ('if there was Holocaust denial there, these people have no right to be in the Labour party, and if they are they should be expelled … It is disgusting to deny the Holocaust. These people are cranks') and Shadow Minister Jonathan Ashworth MP ('I think party members who make anti-Semitic remarks, who make some of these disgusting Holocaust denial statements, they shouldn't be in the party, they should be expelled').[53] But in their rush to denounce before checking the facts, Watson and Ashworth merely lent credence to false allegations, helping Labour's opponents to discredit the party and slander peace activists.[54]

On the evidence presented, the Nazi Holocaust was neither denied nor 'called into question' at the Labour Party conference. If Pollock et al. disagree with Peled's position on free speech and would prefer to see Holocaust denial criminalised, they ought to take it up with the law, while if they are upset that accusations of Holocaust denial are not always taken sufficiently seriously, they ought to stop levelling false accusations of Holocaust denial.

Quoting Nazis. According to Danny Stone, director of the Antisemitism Policy Trust, 'a Marxist newspaper was handed out which quoted Reinhard Heydrich, using the top Nazi official as a supposedly reliable source of information about the Holocaust'.[55] Dave Rich of the Community Security Trust similarly related that the leaflet 'quoted Reinhard Heydrich, one of the architects of the final solution, claiming that Nazism did not mean any harm to the Jews … Marxists quoting Nazis to slander Zionists – that pretty much sums up the left nowadays'.[56]

This distortion is particularly scandalous, not least because its victim was subsequently expelled from the Labour Party.[57]

The article in question was written by Moshé Machover, a veteran Israeli Jewish socialist, retired Professor of Philosophy at the University of London and founder of the Israeli Socialist Organisation, Matzpen. It quoted Heydrich speaking favourably of Zionism, not as a 'reliable source of information about the Holocaust' but rather as evidence that, in the years before Germany attacked the Soviet Union, the Nazi regime and the Zionist movement possessed an element of ideological and practical common ground.[58]

Machover argued that Nazi-Zionist collaboration in this period 'sounds more shocking than it is' because 'in the early days of the Nazi regime' the Nazis' anti-Jewish policies were 'similar to those of other anti-Semitic regimes', with which the Zionist movement had also been prepared to cooperate for instrumental purposes. The claim that there was a degree of cooperation between Nazi officials and the Zionist movement is in line with mainstream scholarship;[59] to present it as somehow pro-Nazi is a disgrace.

Fantasies (like 'Fabrications', only weirder)

Antisemitic trope – Jews and the media. Prominent Jewish activist Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi, founding member of FSOI and Jewish Voice for Labour, spoke before the conference to express qualified support for the rule change on discrimination agreed between the NEC and JLM. But, she added, 'the person who moved it from the Jewish Labour Movement [i.e., Mike Katz] would have a bit more credibility if his organisation did not spend so much of its time running to the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph* with stories …' She was interrupted at this point by loud applause. Wimborne-Idrissi's remark was condemned as 'an anti-Semitic trope' (Jeremy Newmark, JLM),[60] a 'trope' that is 'ludicrously anti-Semitic' (*Telegraph* editorial),[61] '[l]iterally an antisemitic trope' (Richard Angell, Progress),[62] a 'clear' trope (Ruth Smeeth MP)[63] and an 'age old stereotype[] and trope[]' (Michaela Vyse, Jewish Leadership Council).[64] But antisemitic propaganda has traditionally depicted Jews as *owning* the media, not *briefing* it, while Wimborne-Idrissi's accusation, and the rapturous applause it

received, most likely reflected the JLM's record of unfounded accusations of antisemitism against Labour members[65] rather than its being Jewish. Verdict: hocus-tropeless.[66]

Expelling Jews. At the FSOI fringe event, Michael Kalmanovitz from the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network reportedly called for the JLM and Labour Friends of Israel (LFI) to be kicked out of the party for supporting Israeli apartheid.[67] The *Mirror* quoted him as follows:

> The thing is, if you support Israel, you support apartheid. So what is the JLM and Labour Friends of Israel doing in our party? Kick them out.[68]

Jeremy Newmark, chair of the JLM, condemned the comments as 'hate speech', adding for good measure: 'This is a thinly veiled call to purge Jews from the party'.[69] Rebecca Hilsenrath, chief executive of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, stated, 'These comments by party members show more needs to be done to root out anti-Semitic views that clearly exist in the party. Any suggestion of kicking people out of any political party on the grounds of race or religion should be condemned'.[70] The Board of Deputies claimed that attendees had 'called for Jews to be purged from Labour'.[71] Ruth Smeeth MP asserted that, 'when a delegate stands up and says that the Jewish Labour Movement should be expelled from the Labour Party that, full stop, is calling for Jews to be thrown out of the Labour Party'.[72] *The Times* published an article headlined, 'Activists call for Jews to be expelled'.[73] Jonathan Freedland claimed in the *Guardian* that '[t]here were loud calls for the expulsion of Jewish groups'.[74] But nobody called for the Jewish Voice for Labour, for example, to be expelled from the party. The Jewish activist in question, speaking at a meeting organised by a largely Jewish organisation, was not demanding his own expulsion. Those Labour members who cheered him, many of them Jews, did not subsequently throw themselves out. The call was directed against two specific organizations, the JLM and the LFI, not 'on the grounds of race or religion' but on account of their support for the State of Israel.[75] Unless the JLM is coterminous with 'Jews' – and JVL and FSOI

were established precisely to demonstrate that it is not – then Newmark, Hilsenrath, Smeeth, and company have no case. For the record, Jewish Voice for Labour 'recognises the right of the JLM to organise in the party'[76] while conference delegate Leah Levane's speech to conference, which received a standing ovation, explicitly stated that the JLM has 'every right to organise inside this Labour Party'.

'Final Solution'. Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East published a tweet which read, '@labour Two-State solution will END the #occupation – our solution will be the final solution | #FreePalestine #EndTheSiege'.[77] When the unfortunate connotation of the phrase 'final solution' was brought to the group's attention, the tweet was deleted and an apology issued.[78] Some tried to exploit the gaffe, but given that the tweet was made in support of a political framework (the two-state solution) to which virtually everybody claims to subscribe, and with even *Guido Fawkes* acknowledging that it was '[d]umb rather than malicious', the incident was quickly forgotten.[79] (Not, however, before John Mann MP could demand that those responsible be expelled from the party.[80] You have to be pretty fast to beat that reflex.)

… undercounting Jews? According to Richard Angell of Progress, 'In a debate about tacking [*sic*] antisemitism in Labour one delegate said "the Palestians [*sic*] are the many" inferring Jews are "the few"'.[81] The delegate in question said: 'We have talked about injustice, we've talked about anti-racism, we've talked about being international, and we've talked about "the many, not the few". Well the Palestinians are "the many" and we have to stand with them'. This contribution was presented as supporting earlier comments made by (Jewish) activist Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi, who had emphasised the need for Labour 'to stand with the Palestinian people'. The contribution made no other mention of Jews; Angell's bizarre inference is all his own.

'Be careful'. The *Jewish Chronicle* claimed that 'a number of Jewish Labour delegates' said they 'did not feel safe' at the conference. To illustrate this hostile 'atmosphere', it reported the following threat: 'One

delegate warned those supporting tougher action on antisemitism to "be careful"'.[82] This claim of intimidation was repeated by Hope Not Hate chief executive Nick Lowles and by Stephen Pollard, who presented it as a 'sinister warning'.[83] The delegate in question was JVL founding member and Jewish Labour activist Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi. She began her remarks by declaring that she would 'not [be] opposing' the NEC rule change and praising 'the agonising work that NEC members have gone through to try and arrive at a good wording'. She then entered in a criticism of the proposed formulation, before concluding with, 'So be careful NEC, that's all I say'. There was no 'sinister warning' – just a note of caution to the NEC, for whose 'agonising work' she had just expressed fulsome appreciation, over the potential implications of their formulation.[84]

Jewish conspiracies. Finally, it was alleged that to doubt the truth of the above allegations, and to dare suggest that personal, factional and partisan motives might be driving them, was *itself* an 'anti-Jewish trope'.[85] According to Jonathan Freedland of the *Guardian*, to suppose that 'Jews invent stories of suffering to drive a secret political agenda' is to claim 'a Jewish conspiracy'.[86] Never mind that the allegations levelled by Freedland and others were all demonstrably false. Never mind that these fraudulent claims of antisemitism were targeted, almost without exception, at Jews. Never mind that the volume of such false allegations rises and falls in perfect rhythm with the political imperatives of Corbyn's opponents. Never mind that the false claims of antisemitism at Labour's conference emanated from a right-wing press that was manifestly in propaganda mode, as well as from a group within the Labour Party which had clear factional motives for seeking to discredit the FSOI and JVL (the two Jewish groups against which, to reiterate, the overwhelming majority of the antisemitism allegations were levelled). Never mind all this. According to Freedland, and others, to retain one's critical faculties when a charge of antisemitism has been levelled is itself an antisemitic act. Such self-righteous bullying can only trivialise the issue of antisemitism while breeding genuine resentment against those who allege it – and,

insofar as the latter's pretensions to representativeness gain traction, against Jews more broadly.

Conclusion

Widespread claims to the contrary notwithstanding, no credible evidence has yet emerged of even a single antisemitic incident at the Labour Party conference. Instead, the 'conference antisemitism' crisis formed an almost exact replay of the fraudulent 'Labour antisemitism' crisis of 2016.[87] In both cases, unprincipled partisans and headline-hungry journalists concocted between them a mélange of unwarranted inferences, half-truths and outright distortions, which were used to attack an elected party leadership and smear dedicated activists. In both cases, notoriously untrustworthy sources were ingenuously relied upon by mainstream outlets. In neither case did a single mainstream journalist investigate whether the accusations they were publicising were true.

Allegations of antisemitism ought to be levelled with care if they are to be taken seriously. Taking allegations seriously *means* investigating the facts of the matter and then following due process. The depraved spectacle documented above was not driven by over-zealous concern for Jews' well-being. On the contrary: false allegations of antisemitism enable the real thing by trivialising legitimate concern if and when circumstances warrant it. It's a classic instance of crying wolf one time – or, in the case at hand, a thousand times – too many. If some activists now greet each and every accusation of antisemitism with suspicion, even a yawn, this is the regrettable but inevitable result of the widespread abuse of the 'antisemitism card' as a rhetorical bludgeon. The contempt for truth displayed by those who orchestrated this latest iteration of the 'Labour antisemitism' smear campaign was matched only by their actual indifference to Jewish suffering, the moral currency of which they so recklessly and cynically debased.

CASE STUDY: THE IHRA WORKING DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM

11

Hue and Cry over the UCU

Richard Kuper

OPENDEMOCRACY, 1 JUNE 2011

The University and College Union (UCU) describes itself as 'the largest trade union and professional association for academics, lecturers, trainers, researchers and academic-related staff working in further and higher education throughout the UK'. If you are to believe recent bloggers it has moved definitively beyond the pale. For the UCU Executive has put a motion to its 2011 Congress asking it to endorse the view that a particular 'working definition of antisemitism', published on the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) website in 2005, confuses criticism of Israeli government policy and actions with genuine antisemitism, and is being used to silence debate about Israel and Palestine on campus. It called for the union to dissociate itself from it. On May 30, the motion was passed overwhelmingly.

Judging from the responses, you'd think this motion was a crime against reason itself as well as downright antisemitism. Eve Garrard, in calling for academics to leave the union, wrote that it is 'trying to change the definition of anti-Semitism in order to maintain a policy which discriminates against Jews'.[1] Mark Gardner of the Community Security Trust (the CST, which 'provides physical security, training and advice for the protection of British Jews' particularly in 'the fight against antisemitism and terrorism') accuses the UCU of seeking to 'ignore' a 'working definition' that it should naturally want to use if

it 'cared about its Jewish members'.[2] David Hirsh of Engage argued that the only way the UCU can avoid the charge of antisemitism 'is to change the definition … so that they fall outside of it'.[3] And on 26 May, representatives of the Jewish Leadership Council and the Board of Deputies of British Jews presented 'this motion as another example of entrenched institutional racism inside UCU'.[4]

It is all so much nonsense. The motion is about '*a* working definition' but for some of the critics above it has become simply '*the* definition'. It makes you wonder what happened before '*the* definition' was propagated in 2005 (when presumably no-one had a clue as to what antisemitism was, and without this particular document no-one now would have either). As I show below, this 'working definition' is a bad one that has led to endless, unproductive argument. Opposing its use does not mean one is opposed to fighting antisemitism, or happy to tolerate it. It is simply to point out that this definition does not help in that struggle; on the contrary, it sows confusion. It can only be understood in the context of a quite different agenda, that of a propaganda campaign by Israel and its supporters against the country's deteriorating public image.[5]

The dissemination of the draft 'working definition' of antisemitism in 2005 has proven particularly effective in this wider propaganda campaign. Always in draft, never formally adopted, it is not up for discussion by those who could change it. Yet it is increasingly presented today as *the* definition of antisemitism. It cannot bear this weight. It is being used, rather, in ideological battles on campuses to demonise robust criticism of Israel. This conflation, as the UCU motion suggests, 'confuses criticism of Israeli government policy and actions with genuine antisemitism' and makes the task of identifying genuine antisemitism and fighting it harder, not easier.

Let us look more closely at both the definition and its history. It came about in 2004 after the EUMC had published its valuable and sophisticated report, *Manifestations of Antisemitism in the EU 2002–2003*. As well as providing extensive discussion on debates about antisemitism, this document highlighted the need for an operational definition, 'in line with the theoretical arguments' in the report, to provide a common standard for data collection across the EU.

Eventually, the EUMC posted what was called a 'Working Definition of Antisemitism' on its website. But this definition was not 'in line with the theoretical arguments' in the report. Indeed, those experts cited in the original report who distinguished sharply between antisemitism and legitimate opposition to Israel were not included in its drafting. Instead, a document was produced behind closed doors after a consultation with Kenneth Stern of the American Jewish Committee and others.[6] This new document changes the whole tenor of how criticism of Israel is viewed.

Let's look at the document itself.[7] It is unclear whether 'working definition' means the whole document (which fills a single A4 sheet) or just this paragraph which is in ***bold italics*** and preceded by the phrase, 'Working definition':

> ***Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.***

If this is indeed the definition, it is so vague as to be useless as a practical tool. If the entire document is intended – headed 'Working Definition of Antisemitism' – then it is not only unwieldy but also untrue to the original report which clearly differentiates political criticism of Israel from antisemitism. The document leans towards conflating them. Following the quoted paragraph, it continues: 'In addition, such manifestations could also target the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity'. This single sentence has dominated the way the 'working definition' is read.

The use of 'could', here and later in the document, is loaded. Following six relatively unproblematic examples of antisemitism, the document again focuses on Israel and lists five ways in which antisemitism 'could' be manifested, which are both confused and tendentious. The text says that 'the overall context' should be taken into account. Yet, regardless of context, one of the examples – 'using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism' – could

hardly be anything *but* antisemitic. The other four examples, grouped around this one, are clearly tainted by association, the suggestion being that they could be antisemitic, 'just like the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism'.

In reality they can and often have been contested on grounds that have nothing to do with antisemitism.

Take, for instance, the example of 'Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination'. This *could* be antisemitic. Equally, denying that same right to Basques, Catalans, Scots or indeed the Zulu or Afrikaner nations/peoples, *could* be racist. But there are all kinds of non-racist reasons why someone might not support these national causes. The right to national self-determination is after all not *the* primordial right.

And even if it were, it should surely be possible to question whether 'the Jewish people' are a people in the secular-nationalist as opposed to the religious sense of the word (as the Israeli author Shlomo Sand has done most forcefully in his recent book, *The Invention of the Jewish People*). And even if they have a right to national self-determination would there be a right to exercise it in the *whole* of Palestine, as Zionism historically demanded? What about a Palestinian right to national self-determination? Would denying that the Palestinians had this right – as Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir did most forcefully after the 1967 war by denying that the Palestinians were a people – be the equivalent of antisemitism towards the Palestinians? Is the right of self-determination one that can be exercised by transferring others out of the territory in question (as would have been the case if the Bosnian Serbs had been accorded this right)? These are all legitimate questions which should not be censored by threats of antisemitic accusations.

Or consider another of the examples of what 'might be' antisemitic: 'Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel'. Of course this is wrong. It could be antisemitic. But no-one makes this accusation when Zionists routinely conflate Jews collectively with Israel. Indeed it is hard to have a discussion about Zionism *without* this notion coming up *positively*, expressed clearly in the idea of Israel as *the* Jewish state, acting on behalf of *all* Jews. Prime Minister Netanyahu was explicit about this when he addressed Congress on

24 May: 'I speak on behalf of the Jewish people and the Jewish state when I say to you, representatives of America, thank you.'[8]

The document is riddled with problems; this perhaps is why, contrary to what the European Forum on Antisemitism claims,[9] the 'working definition' was *not* adopted by the EUMC. As Beate Winkler, EUMC Director, said at the time, it 'should be viewed as "work in progress" … with a view to redrafting'.[10] To this day, the URL of the document on the web includes the word 'draft' in the title.

In fact, the document appears to be dead in the water as far as the Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the successor body to the EUMC, is concerned. They recently told me that feedback on initial testing of the document 'drew attention to a number of issues which impacted on its effectiveness as a data collection support tool'. In other words, it wasn't useful. 'Since its development we are not aware of any public authority in the EU that applies it', the FRA official added. Moreover, 'The FRA has no plans for any further development of the "working definition"'.[11]

The latest FRA publication on the topic[12] does not even mention the 'working definition'. It does complain that: 'Even where data exist they are not comparable, since they are collected using different definitions and methodologies'.[13] That was precisely the reason why an operational definition was called for in the first place. The 'working definition' clearly does not provide this.

None of this has stopped the perversely named 'EUMC working definition' from taking on a life of its own. The European Forum on Antisemitism has translated it into no fewer than 30 languages; in the United Kingdom an All-Party Parliamentary Enquiry into Antisemitism endorsed it uncritically (Sept 2006) [14] as did the National Union of Students (March 2007, reaffirmed in 2010).[15] The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights adopted the definition as a guide. The US State Department's 2008 report, *Contemporary Global Anti-Semitism*, regards it 'as a useful framework'. Careless bloggers now refer to it simply as *the* 'EU definition'[16] – the latest being Eve Garrard.

What is quite clear in all these contributions and debates about antisemitism is that it is only what is said about Israel that excites

and agitates. There does not seem to be sustained disagreement in any other area as to what constitutes antisemitism or about the need to combat it. But references to Israel in the 'working definition' are, say its supporters, merely examples of things that 'could, taking into account the overall context' be antisemitic. In principle, yes. But as I hope I've shown, the presumption inherent in how the document is drafted is that *they are likely to be* antisemitic; and in the rhetorical use of the document, like the recognition that it is no more than a draft, these qualifications have all but disappeared in practice.

This will no doubt meet with the approval of Kenneth Stern and his colleagues since in their *original* argument which the 'working definition' follows closely, the qualifiers ('could, taking into account the overall context') were not present at all![17] In it, antisemitism with regard to discussions about Israel is ever-present. Someone at the EUMC saved the organisation from considerable embarrassment by insisting that qualifications be inserted, changing the word 'are' to 'could, taking into account the overall context' be antisemitic. In other words for Kenneth Stern and his colleagues the link between criticism of Israel and antisemitism is much closer than in the final document, highlighting the original presumption that criticism of Israel on certain topics, no matter how carefully reasoned, was likely to be antisemitic by definition; and to put the onus on critics of Israel to prove their innocence on this matter.

In short: the EUMC working definition has little to do with fighting antisemitism and a lot to do with waging a propaganda war against critics of Israel. It is time it was buried and the UCU decision to take it on is hopefully a step in that direction. The fight against antisemitism should not be muddied by those who confuse criticism of Israeli violations of human rights and international law with hatred of Jews. It is clearly no such thing.

12

Why the Labour Party Should Not Adopt the IHRA Definition or Any Other Definition of Antisemitism

Norman G. Finkelstein

28 AUGUST 2018

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) supplements its definition of antisemitism with 11 illustrations.[1] Fully seven of them, however, home in not on antisemitism per se but instead on criticism of Israel. Natan Sharansky famously formulated a *3D Test of Antisemitism* that was later touted by Israel's supporters: *demonisation, double standards, delegitimisation*. Whatever the virtue of his inventory, it might be said that the IHRA illustrations constitute a textbook case of the *3S Test of Political Censorship*: *suppression, selective application, special pleading*. Before documenting this, however, the debate surrounding adoption of the IHRA definition and illustrations must be situated in a broader context.

The IHRA definition imposes constraints on speech in the Labour Party. In a word, it is censorship. It might be argued that the Labour Party is a voluntary organisation and as such has the right to set rules and parameters on its members' public utterances. But at its worthiest, the liberal-left tradition, of which the Labour Party is an offspring, has attached a unique, primordial value to Truth, and recognised that, in the search for truth, untrammelled open debate is essential.

In his classic exposition *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill posited that the utility of a belief was inseparable from its truth: 'no belief which is contrary to truth can truly be useful'. At the other end of the spectrum V. I. Lenin would draw on the power of truth to best his opponents: 'Facts are stubborn things, as the English say'.

To get a firm handle on truth, however, liberty of speech must not be abridged. When the young Karl Marx first made his name as a journalist, 'the English press', he approvingly noted, enjoyed 'the greatest freedom from restraint', whereas censorship was rampant in Germany. This infringement was officially rationalised on the grounds that it required intercession of a higher authority to separate out the 'good' from the 'bad'. If indeed censorship was designed to preserve what was valuable in speech, Marx rejoined, then this objective could only be attained by its opposite of unbridled criticism: 'Censorship is criticism as a monopoly of the government. But does not criticism lose its rational character if it is not open but secret … if it operates not with the sharp knife of reason but with the blunt scissors of arbitrariness, if it only exercises criticism but will not submit to it … if it is so uncritical as to mistake an individual person for universal wisdom, peremptory orders for rational statements, ink spots for patches of sunlight, the crooked deletions of the censor for mathematical constructions, and crude force for decisive arguments?'

When asked much later in life his favourite motto, Marx eschewed sacred, unassailable truths as he replied, '*De omnibus dubitandum*' ('You must have doubts about everything'). Echoing Marx, his otherwise liberal nemesis Mill observed that the only rational test of one's conviction was its capacity to withstand unhindered criticism: 'The beliefs which we have the most warrant for have no safeguard, but a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded'.

In her critique of the Bolshevik Revolution, Rosa Luxemburg presented a lyrical defence of unqualified free speech: 'Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party – however numerous they may be – is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently'. She upheld this principle, however, 'not because of any fanatical concept of "justice", but because all that is instructive, wholesome and

purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic, and its effectiveness vanishes when "freedom" becomes a special privilege'. In a passage that resonates as much today as when it was written a century ago, Luxemburg maintained that, if the path to socialism remains uncharted territory, then only free, open criticism from below can discover solutions to unforeseen challenges and correct the inevitable errors that attend its construction: 'The tacit assumption underlying the Lenin-Trotsky theory of dictatorship is this: that the socialist transformation is something for which a ready-made formula lies completed in the pocket of the revolutionary party, which needs only to be carried out energetically in practice. This is, unfortunately – or perhaps fortunately – not the case. Far from being a sum of ready-made prescriptions that have only to be applied, the practical realisation of socialism … is something which lies completely hidden in the mists of the future. What we possess in our program is nothing but a few main signposts which indicate the general direction … Socialism by its very nature cannot be decreed or introduced by *ukase* … Only experience is capable of correcting and opening new ways … The whole mass of the people must take part in it'.

It might be wondered, *What if the discovery of a truth contradicts the twin ideal of justice*? But this is a false opposition. Exactly as an ennobling end cannot justify ignoble means if the end is as pure as the means that bring it about, so the ideal of justice is as pure as the truth that informs it. If something is true, it is not only, per Mill, useful, it is also, and necessarily, just – or, in the words of Antonio Gramsci, 'To tell the truth, to arrive together at the truth, is a communist and revolutionary act'.

Only truth is useful; truth – fact – is dispositive in mental combat; truth can only emerge from unfettered speech; the index of free speech is its universality; a cacophony of competing 'truths' inevitably attends the trial and error of creating a just world; truths emerging from ruthless criticism cannot undermine justice because justice is grounded in truth – this is the historic legacy of the Labour Party. But it is now under attack as representatives of British Jewry press the party to adopt a censorial speech code.

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Faithful to its libertarian roots, the Labour Party up until recently did not curb speech but only conduct. Its rule book stated: 'No member of the party shall engage in conduct which in the opinion of the NCC [National Constitutional Committee] is prejudicial, or in any act which in the opinion of the NCC is grossly detrimental to the party … The NCC shall not have regard to the mere holding or expression of beliefs and opinions'. But in 2017, the party, acting apparently at the behest of the anti-Corbyn Jewish Labour Movement, transmogrified this rule as it inserted clauses deeply encroaching on speech. The rule currently reads:

> No member of the Party shall engage in conduct which in the opinion of the NEC [National Executive Committee] is prejudicial, or in any act which in the opinion of the NEC is grossly detrimental to the Party. *The NEC shall take account of any codes of conduct currently in force and shall regard any incident which in their view might reasonably be seen to demonstrate hostility or prejudice based on age; disability; gender reassignment or identity; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation as conduct prejudicial to the Party: these shall include but not be limited to incidents involving racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia or otherwise racist language, sentiments, stereotypes or actions, sexual harassment, bullying or any form of intimidation towards another person on the basis of a protected characteristic as determined by the NEC, wherever it occurs, as conduct prejudicial to the Party.* The NCC shall not have regard to the mere holding or expression of beliefs and opinions *except in any instance inconsistent with the Party's aims and values, agreed codes of conduct, or involving prejudice towards any protected characteristic.* (emphases mine)

None of the notoriously slippery terms in this restrictive speech code – 'racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia or otherwise racist language' – is defined, which in itself cannot but cast a pall on free speech: *Who is to determine and how is it to be determined that a redline has been crossed?* What's more, the rule bars, as a discrete subcategory, prejudicial 'sentiments'. If this denotes nonverbal sentiments (it would otherwise just

fall under 'racist language'), then Labour is now in the dreary business of controlling not just speech but also thoughts and feelings. If Comrade X refuses to date Asian guys, Comrade Y refuses to date Muslim girls, and Comrade Z only dates Jewish guys (she's Orthodox), will they be hauled before the NQSC (National Questionable Sentiments Committee)?

Even as the revised code of conduct explicitly outlaws antisemitism, representatives of British Jewry have issued an ultimatum to Labour: it must also incorporate the IHRA definition of antisemitism in all its parts – or else! It is, to begin with, unclear why Jews warrant special treatment. Indeed, of all the protected categories in the rule, British Jews are the richest, best organised, most strategically placed, and least subject to 'hostility and prejudice'. If Jewish communal organisations can so openly, brazenly, and relentlessly press this demand on Labour, it's because of the political muscle they can flex and the political immunity they enjoy. Further, the demand is on the unseemly side, as it implies that Jewish lives are somehow more worthy. It recalls the nauseating ethnic chauvinism at play in the stipulation that *The Holocaust* must be separated out from run-of-the-mill 'other genocides'.

It is yet more disturbing that the proposed definition bears so little on antisemitism per se and so much on Israel. It is often heard from Israel's defenders that the Jewish state should be treated and judged like every other state; indeed, that not treating and judging it like other states is antisemitic. But no other foreign state is accorded special dispensation in the Labour manual; indeed, no other state is even mentioned. Is British Jewry imposing on Labour an antisemitic coda? It is also cause for intrigue why Israel figures so saliently in a definition the subject matter of which is antisemitism. Consider this scenario. The Afrocentric, Jamaican-based Rastafarians worshipped Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. In the early 1970s, Selassie stood guilty of crimes against humanity as he presided over and concealed a mass famine in his country. If Rastas convened an International Slavery Remembrance Alliance, if this body then contrived a definition of anti-Rastafarianism that proscribed criticism of Ethiopia, would it be so hard to discern that the impetus was not fighting 'prejudice and

hostility' against Rastas but, instead, immunising their Holy State from deserved scrutiny?

The IHRA definition reads:

> Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

It is widely agreed that this incoherent, illiterate, clunky definition provides nil guidance as to what constitutes antisemitism. It is said to be a '*certain* perception', but this certainty turns out not to be so certain as it '*may* be expressed as hatred toward Jews' – which is to say it also may *not* be thus expressed. But the fact of the matter is, it's impossible to define antisemitism. Moreover, even if an intelligible definition were cobbled together, it would be of dubious utility save to be hurled as an epithet of abuse. It and cognate pejoratives do no real work. Put otherwise, their supplemental benefit, value-added is also nil; if dispensed with, no one would be the poorer.

The term antisemitism is commonly defined as 'hostility towards Jews as Jews'. But an antisemite would deny he hates Jews as Jews; rather, he would purport it's because this or that offensive trait – parsimoniousness, clannishness, arrogance – inheres in them. Ditto, the racist who hates Black people. She would undoubtedly object that her loathing springs not from the fact that they're Black but that they're robbers and rapists. The question is then empirical. In other words, the accusation cannot be refuted by 'you're a racist'. Such a retort shuts down discussion just at the point when it's most needed. Wouldn't it be a dereliction of duty if a teacher abusively labels a student who, for all anyone knows, in good faith utters a politically incorrect opinion? Not the least of a political party's functions is pedagogical, internally as well as externally. 'A man curses', Malcolm X surmised, 'because he doesn't have the words to say what's on his mind'. Something similar can be observed about he who reflexively reaches for epithets like antisemite and racist. It's an impoverished, ignorant, slovenly substi-

tute for rational dialectic. If he is so blessed as to possess the mental tools to engage in such a dialectic, it's also inexcusable.

It's probably right that the hard-core bigot is impervious to reason so it's futile trying to dissuade him. 'If you cannot convince a fascist', Leon Trotsky famously quipped, 'acquaint his head with the pavement'. But who is so perfect as not to harbour one or another 'local' prejudice? Surely it cannot be correct that irrational belief is by its essence reason-proof. 'The antisemitic passion', Jean-Paul Sartre said, 'precedes the facts that are supposed to call it forth'. Were that true, it would be pointless to counter with facts. But Sartre was drawing the internal portrait only of the hard core, for whom bigotry was the poisonous fruit of a 'comprehensive attitude … and conception of the world' born, ultimately, of a 'fear of the human condition'. In the ordinary course of events, among ordinary specimens of humanity, reason retains its persuasive power; or, at any rate, no *a priori* grounds exist to give up trying, let alone to replace point-counterpoint with wholly and inherently inadequate epithets.

In a refinement of the common definition, British philosopher Brian Klug proposes that antisemitism is 'a form of hostility to Jews as Jews, where Jews are perceived as something other than what they are'. Still, it turns on an empirical question requiring an empirical answer: whether or not Jews in general are something other than what they're perceived to be. But there's another wrinkle in Klug's definition. It is often alleged by Jews that the antisemite resents them because they're smarter and therefore more accomplished. In fact, Wilhelm Marr, who coined the term antisemitism, described Jews as 'flexible, tenacious, intelligent' (albeit in destructive excess). For all anyone knows, they and he might be onto something: Jews might be superior. The average IQ score of Ashkenazi Jews is significantly higher than that of any other ethnic group in the world. But if, per Klug, antisemitism is the perception of Jews as 'something other than what they are', then the antisemite seething with *ressentiment* of Jews couldn't be antisemitic.

The Labour Party's code of conduct hitherto faithfully honoured its libertarian legacy as it allowed every idea, however bizarre or noxious, to be mooted. Prodded by the anti-Corbyn Jewish Labour Movement, the party's leadership poured into the code a mass of verbal sludge

that polluted the venerable principle of free speech. Now British-Jewish elites are terrorising Corbyn to accept a purported definition of antisemitism that, *one*, is and couldn't but be gibberish, *two*, exemplifies ethnic special pleading, *three*, is not just pointless but also stifles vital debate, and, *four*, has nearly nothing to do with antisemitism and nearly everything to do with shielding Israel from deserved condemnation. The long and short of it is, to detoxify its code of conduct, Labour should junk the revised text, reject as a whole and in all its parts the IHRA text, and return to its radical roots.

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The IHRA definition of antisemitism includes 11 illustrative examples. Fully seven of them home in on criticism of Israel. If the Labour Party adopts these taboos, respected scholarship will be suppressed while Israel will become the beneficiary of a pernicious double standard. Consider these examples culled from the IHRA text:

- **Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.** But, according to Israel's leading historian, Benny Morris, 'transfer [i.e., expulsion] was inevitable and inbuilt into Zionism', while according to Israeli writer Ari Shavit, in his widely acclaimed bestseller, *My Promised Land*, 'If Zionism was to be, Lydda could not be'. The upshot is, if Israel's founding necessarily entailed ethnic cleansing of the indigenous population, then realisation of the Jewish people's right to self-determination must have been a racist endeavour.

- **'Applying double standards by requiring of it [Israel] a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation'.** But, far from holding Israel to a more stringent standard, overwhelmingly its critics have targeted Israel's immunity to *any* standard. For example, since 1979 the UN Security Council has repeatedly condemned Israel's policy of building settlements in occupied Palestinian territory as a 'flagrant violation' of international law, while in 2004 the International Court of Justice unanimously declared Israeli settlements 'in breach of international law'. Yet, Israel persists in its settlement

policy, while the UN, although repeatedly imposing sanctions on other member states, has not imposed any on Israel, even as its settlement policy constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

- **'Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterise Israel or Israelis'.** But Israeli *hasbara* (propaganda) itself promiscuously exploits the 'blood libel' charge (i.e., that Jews murdered Christian children for ritual purposes) in order to silence critics by reversing its sting. Thus, mere mention of Palestinian children killed by Israel typically prompts accusations of a 'Global Blood Libel against Israel'.

- **'Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis'.** But, on the one hand, Israelis across the political spectrum freely make such bone-chilling analogies, while, on the other hand, Israel has itself routinely depicted its antagonists, be it Nasser's Egypt or Saddam Hussein's Iraq, be it Iran, Hezbollah, or Hamas, as reincarnations of Hitler and Nazi-like. Indeed, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has – in certifiably mad defiance of every scrap of evidence – declared that Iran might pose an even greater threat to humanity than did Hitler and that not Hitler but a Palestinian leader masterminded the Holocaust.

- **'Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel'.** But, by representing itself as the Nation-State of the Jewish people, Israel itself collectively implicates Jews in its actions, just as Netanyahu collectively implicates Jews when he touts himself as the 'representative of the entire Jewish people'.

In sum, these examples of antisemitism allegedly hiding behind criticism of Israel comprise factually accurate depictions by Israel's critics (first bulleted example), factually inaccurate depictions of Israel's critics by its watchdogs (second bulleted example), and questionable practices of which Israel is as, if not more, culpable than its critics (third,

fourth, and fifth bulleted examples). If the Labour Party adopts them, it will become a willing dupe of Israeli *hasbara*; it will disgrace the party's noble traditions; and it will betray Jeremy Corbyn's promise to set the party on a new-old path of upholding Truth and Justice, wherever it may lead and whatever the price.

CASE STUDY:
LIVERPOOL RIVERSIDE CLP

13

The Riverside Scandal

LOUISE ELLMAN AND THE WAR ON RIVERSIDE LABOUR PARTY

Jewish Voice for Labour
16 OCTOBER 2019

One of many authoritative voices platformed on BBC 1's Panorama programme, *Is Labour Antisemitic?* screened on 10 July, was that of long-standing Liverpool MP Louise Ellman, interviewed at length describing her three-year battle with bullying, antisemitic, hard-left infiltrators in her Riverside constituency party. Ellman is often featured as one of a number of MPs targeted by leftists either for being Jewish or for standing up to antisemitism.

The Panorama programme provided very little context or background to the animosity between Dame Louise, a prominent pro-Israel advocate, and Corbyn-supporting, pro-Palestinian Riverside activists who include senior Jewish party members. None of the latter were interviewed by Panorama, just as none of the extensive mainstream TV, radio, online or print coverage of Ellman's charges against them since early 2016 has examined their viewpoint. Apart from occasional brief quotes in the *Liverpool Echo*, only the *Morning Star* has published their views.[1] Panorama did not mention Ellman's role as former chair of the Jewish Labour Movement, a Zionist affiliate to the Labour Party said to have been revived in 2015 explicitly to counter Corbyn's influence,[2] nor as Vice-Chair of Labour Friends of Israel, a lobby group for pro-Israel members of parliament. The group announced her appointment as its Chair on 7 August 2019.

What follows is an exclusive Jewish Voice for Labour report detailing what appears in our view to be a systematic campaign by Ellman and her anti-Corbyn allies to disempower and drive out members who back the socialist, internationalist politics of the Labour leadership.

This campaign includes:

- **Public denunciation of activists Ellman and her allies accuse of antisemitism, including veteran Jewish socialists who support justice for Palestine.** Lengthy investigations by party officials in 2016/17 unearthed nothing deserving sanction. One case of genuine antisemitism arose early this year and was promptly dealt with. But charges of wholesale hostility to Jews continue to circulate. Complaints against those making unsubstantiated allegations have been ignored.

- **Deployment of an anonymous 'dossier', posted on the far-right *Guido Fawkes* blog in September 2016, denouncing constituency members by name for bullying, intimidation, and entryism on behalf of far-left groups.** Members' rebuttals have been given no public airing.

- **De facto suspension of the constituency party by the National Executive Committee (NEC) for a period pending investigation.** The Constituency Labour Party (CLP) was forbidden to hold its AGM for eight months, until a report was produced but never shown to members of the CLP.

- **Persistent exploitation of their positions by anti-Corbyn CLP officers** in order to block discussion and decision-making by members.

- **Misrepresentation of a veteran trade unionist accused of falsifying her date of birth and her parentage.** Expert investigation of the taped radio interview used as source material indicates that the recording had been tampered with.

- **Suspension on 16 April 2019 of John Davies, chair of the largest branch in Liverpool Riverside CLP** and initially the only pro-Corbyn member of the executive committee. He was reinstated on 23 July.

- **Inclusion in the Panorama programme of allegations by a member of the national party staff that he was subjected to antisemitic abuse** while conducting interviews in Riverside in December 2016. Recordings made at the time, investigated by the *Canary*, suggest that there was no such abuse.[3] The allegation appears to be based on an innocent question from an elderly Jewish woman member who was unaware that the member of staff concerned was Jewish.

Much of the detail is fleshed out in interview transcripts, statements, and letters from members whose voices have not previously been heard on national platforms. They are published as appendices to this report.[4]

Early Days

The whole affair began at a meeting of Riverside CLP in April 2016 with a discussion about antisemitism. Helen Marks, who introduced herself as someone from a Jewish family, suggested that if there had been a rise in antisemitism, particularly in the Labour Party, as Ellman had argued, this might be due in part to the actions of the Israeli government towards the Palestinians.

A local councillor, Nick Small, protested at this suggestion. Neither the chair nor anyone else present suggested anything antisemitic had been said, but two days later Small tweeted about 'abhorrent' views in Riverside. He alleged that CLP members had said 'Israel set up ISIS' and that Israel was 'behind rise in antisemitism'.

The next day he came back with a specific charge of antisemitism and Ellman suggested that the problem was widespread in the Labour Party.

Soon the allegations, with embellishments, appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle*, quoting Small and referring to comments Ellman had made elsewhere.[5] Riverside members were accused of being antisemitic infiltrators and hard-left activists who were creating 'an "intimidating and hostile" atmosphere for Jewish members'.

No mention was made of the fact that Helen Marks is herself Jewish. Small's complaints all referred to remarks made about Israel or Palestine, not about Jews.

John Davies, writer and actor, and at that time the CLP's trade union liaison officer, asked officers for clarification about the allegations in the media. The chair replied that 'a number of complaints' would soon be put before a meeting of the CLP executive.

In May, five members sent a formal complaint to the North West Regional Labour Party,[6] accusing Small of breaching party rules by making public allegations about a private party meeting, without first raising them internally.

They said Small had made 'various false allegations' to the *Jewish Chronicle* and other media, making the CLP 'a very unsafe place in which to conduct legitimate political debate'. His allegations had been 'repeated in other press reports and social media exchanges as though they were statements of truth'.

Small himself made a formal complaint[7] alleging that three questions addressed to Ellman by Marks and two others in different CLP meetings early in 2016 went 'way beyond legitimate criticism of the

actions of the Israeli government [using] Israel and Israeli citizens as proxies for attacks on Jewish people'.

One of Small's complaints referred to Helen Marks's question mentioned above, suggesting that rising antisemitic attacks might be linked to Israeli attacks on Palestinians. (The Community Security Trust which monitors antisemitic incidents noted a 500 percent rise following Israel's assault on Gaza in 2014.) Another related to a question about Ellman's support for airstrikes on Syria. The third was to do with a comment by Ellman about 'Gaza terror tunnels'. The questioner pointed out that populations under siege, like Palestinians in Gaza, have often resorted to digging tunnels, and the Warsaw Ghetto was one such instance.

Some of the questions could have been better expressed, but all three of those accused vehemently deny antisemitism. They point out the questions were addressed to Ellman in the only discussion forum available to them – CLP meetings at which the MP read out reports of her activities. Routinely, these failed to mention the Israel advocacy work she does outside the constituency. Hence the questions to her on this subject.

On 1 June, the Riverside executive voted to take no action on the complaint members had made against Small, but to forward Small's allegations to the next members' meeting.

When this took place on 1 July 2016, the agenda made no mention of the allegations, no executive committee minutes were attached, and no discussion of Small's complaints occurred.

It later emerged that the antisemitism allegations against the three CLP members had been sent straight to national head office without being discussed at a members' meeting, as the executive committee had originally agreed they would and as was required under party rules.

Davies, then the sole left member of the executive, wrote repeatedly to officers asking for clarification but received no answers.[8]

The Dodgy Dossier

The allegations resurfaced in September 2016, when the *Guardian* published an interview with Ellman in which she again said that

antisemitism was rife in Riverside.[9] Asked for details, she referred back to the *Jewish Chronicle* piece citing Small.

Later that month the right-wing *Guido Fawkes* website published an anonymous dossier, titled *An investigation into far-left infiltration of the Labour Party in Liverpool since September 2015*,[10] alleging that the 'hard left', organising through the pro-Corbyn grassroots Momentum movement, were trying to take over the constituency with the aim of deselecting Ellman. The dossier accused several activists by name and spun a giant conspiracy theory out of a few emails that had circulated on the left.

It alluded to the same accusations of antisemitism discussed above, providing no additional evidence. It said that veteran trade union activist Audrey White is the daughter of former MP Eddie Loyden. She isn't (though it is noteworthy that she has been separately accused of claiming that she is in the doctored audio tape mentioned below). The dossier said that Loyden and Jeremy Hawthorn, a current member of the CLP, had been members or supporters of the left-wing Militant grouping in the past. They were not.

The dossier made a point of identifying the three members accused of antisemitism as members of Liverpool Friends of Palestine. The material in the dossier in effect made clear that Louise Ellman faced challenges from the left because of her opposition to Jeremy Corbyn's leadership and her support for the state of Israel and its treatment of Palestine and Palestinians – not because of her being Jewish. Nonetheless it was presented as if it revealed a sinister, antisemitic, Trotskyite plot, justifying Ellman's public campaign against members of her own CLP. Media reports persistently suggested that Jewish members were under attack from the left, without acknowledging that several prominent left-wingers were Jews, including one of the three accused of being an antisemite.

No one has admitted authoring the dossier, which was greeted enthusiastically by Councillor Small who tweeted about it within hours of publication.

The story was taken up by the *Times* and in various forms by the *Telegraph*, the *Liverpool Echo*, Sky News, and *Mail Online*, among others. Ellman took to Twitter the same day to say, 'It is shocking to read that members of the Momentum group have been working to subvert not only the local Labour Party but also to undermine the admirable work of Labour-led Liverpool City Council …'

In late September, Sky News quoted Ellman saying she was sending the dossier, now described as 'her evidence', to Jeremy Corbyn and Labour's NEC. 'She insists she will fight any attempts by her left-

wing opponents to deselect her', Sky News said.[11] The *Liverpool Echo* reported her calling for the suspension of her own constituency party even as it prepared to host Labour's national Annual Conference on the Liverpool waterfront.[12]

A formal complaint against Ellman's behaviour in deploying the anonymous dossier was made to the NEC by Audrey White in a letter addressed to General Secretary Iain McNicol in October 2016.[13] It was followed by a supportive letter from 46 members of the CLP.[14] There was no response to either of these.

Far from heeding what White and others were saying on behalf of many members of Riverside CLP, Labour's NEC Disputes Panel, then dominated by right-wingers, decided to launch an investigation not into Ellman's or Councillor Small's behaviour, but into the CLP as a whole. This resulted in its de facto suspension for several months. No AGM could be held and no new officers appointed while the investigation went on. The Corbyn-supporting members who were the focus of the investigation submitted a *Contribution to the Investigation into Liverpool Riverside Constituency Labour Party*[15] explaining in detail how anti-Corbyn, Ellman-supporting CLP officers had made persistent use of their positions to block discussion and decision making by ordinary members.

The Westerman Report

In November 2016, six Riverside members, including Davies, White, Marks, and Dave Hookes – a party member of some 50 years standing – were summoned for interview by Ben Westerman, a member of the disputes team staff. Verbatim transcripts of their interviews,[16] based on recordings made by the interviewees, seem to suggest that he struggled to deal with intricacies of the problems he had been sent to investigate. John Davies's transcript is particularly illuminating thanks to the intervention from veteran Jewish activist Sam Semoff, who accompanied Davies to the interview despite being seriously ill. He died in March 2018.[17]

After her interview, Helen Marks wrote to Ben Westerman with further comments she had not been able to include at the time. Marks explained how distressing it was for her to face antisemitism allega-

tions, given her experience as a British Jew whose ancestors had fled bigotry and violence in Russia and Poland before World War I and whose father had lost most of his extended family during the Nazi Holocaust.[18] 'I feel silencing is what has been happening to people, like myself, critical of Israel's actions towards the Palestinians, and this has sadly been done by members of the Labour Party who have equated such criticism with antisemitism', she wrote. Audrey White wrote her own email to the NEC before they gave their ruling on Westerman's investigation.[19]

CLP members were never granted sight of Westerman's report. A leaked version[20] was finally published by the *Jewish Chronicle*, in March 2019, appended to a story headlined 'Plot to oust MP Ellman spearheaded by a former member of the Trotskyist Militant Tendency'.[21] The subject of this story was Audrey White – named earlier in the year by BBC Radio 4's Today programme as one of the '100 most influential women of the century'. In the 1980s she had led an industrial dispute against sexual harassment in the workplace.[22] It led to changes in the law and was turned into a movie, Business as Usual, starring Glenda Jackson.

The allegations against White were worthy of a cheap spy thriller – they included that the date of birth she provided to the Labour Party had been falsified by 44 years, and that she had said on a radio phone-in programme that she was the daughter of a former local MP. She affirms that she didn't and expert investigation of the audiotape of the interview indicated that it had been tampered with.[23] White understands that the doctored recording was sent to Westerman anonymously.

Westerman's report[24] brushed aside members' concerns that the investigation gave undue prominence to the anonymous dossier promoted by anti-Labour *Guido Fawkes*. Davies, White, and other leading left members say the report uncritically repeats allegations without factual evidence, disregards their refutations, and also disregards their own charges concerning Councillor Small's behaviour and the non-functioning of the CLP Executive.

The Aftermath

Westerman's investigation led to no finding of antisemitism against any Riverside member, including the three accused by Small.

It did result in a reorganisation of the CLP, imposed by the national executive, taking effect in June 2017. From being a CLP with an all-member monthly General Meeting, it was obliged to adopt a branch structure with a delegate-based General Committee – a move which initially benefited Louise Ellman's anti-Corbyn faction. (All-member meetings of growing size had been voting with increasing majorities for pro-Corbyn motions.) The imposed delegate-based system facilitated manipulation of delegations from a wide range of affiliated organisations.

For example, one of these organisations, Scientists for Labour (SfL), seems never to have fulfilled the requirement of having a functioning local branch qualified to send delegates to the CLP. Its delegate was appointed by SfL nationally.

At the AGM in June 2017, delegates present voted in an anti-Corbyn executive. However, if the shift to a delegate structure was intended to entrench the long-term control of Ellman and her supporters in the CLP, it backfired. Pro-Corbyn members say many affiliate delegates failed to attend or participate once they'd cast their votes at the AGM. As a result the CLP voted in March 2018 to affiliate to Jewish Voice for Labour – a network for Jewish members of the party who support Corbyn's socialist project.[25] At the AGM in June 2018, left delegates won the majority of seats on the Riverside CLP Executive.

Media reports continue to assert that Ellman is subjected to 'obsessive' monthly interrogations about Israel-Palestine. In fact, members say, the subject has only been mentioned six or seven times in the last three years.

However, they say Ellman's own behaviour has unavoidably appeared on the agenda at some meetings because of her persistent defence of Israel's interests, for example calling for the cutting of British aid to Palestinian schools.[26]

In February 2019, Riverside CLP agreed a motion in support of neighbouring Wavertree CLP, which was also facing antisemitism allegations comparable to those from which they had suffered, which

Riverside members considered totally unjust. A *Mail Online* story with a headline saying Ellman was 'tipped to be the next to defect from party amid anti-Semitism row' quoted the MP calling the vote 'shameful'.[27] The *Mail* said she had been barracked by Corbyn loyalists at the meeting and quoted an Ellman ally, Councillor Malcolm Kennedy, comparing the atmosphere to a 'Soviet show trial'.

However, a recording made available by members does not support the allegation that Ellman had been 'barracked' at the meeting in question.[28] Ellman gave her report as item 5 on the agenda, after visiting trade union speakers had finished. The recording, which members made because there had been so many inaccurate media reports of previous meetings, indicates that she was asked one respectful question during her report and a couple afterwards.

Ellman's allies have sustained their attacks on the left. In April this year Councillor Kennedy, a former Mayor of Liverpool, was quoted in the *Jewish Chronicle* calling the left members of the CLP '[t]his assorted bunch of Trotskyites, Communists and outright antisemites'.[29] The main target was John Davies, a former Hollyoaks actor who was briefly suspended from the party, accused of antisemitism and bullying.

On the day Davies heard of his suspension, 17 April 2019, the *Jewish Chronicle* published a long article about it accusing him of antisemitic behaviour.[30]

Davies says: 'Amongst the numerous unsubstantiated allegations it contained was that I had "questioned the loyalty of Jewish MPs to the UK". I have never done this. The most serious allegation was that I was a Nazi apologist'.

The article quoted Ellman's fellow anti-Corbyn MP Ruth Smeeth saying of Davies: 'This man and his vile views have no place in the party that I have dedicated my life too [sic]'.

She accused him of 'traditional anti-Jewish tropes about dual loyalty and the disgusting justifications of Hilter's [*sic*] stance towards Jews'.

Following a Labour Party disciplinary investigation, Davies's suspension was lifted on July 23. He has enlisted the press regulator IPSO in calling on the *Jewish Chronicle* to retract Smeeth's allegations, but the paper has so far refused, saying she stands by her original comment.

'It has failed to produce any material showing why Ms Smeeth came to this conclusion about me. I await a decision', Davies said.

Ellman is one of many pro-Israel MPs backing an ongoing campaign to exclude Corbyn ally, Derby North MP Chris Williamson, from the party following his suspension in February 2019.[31] In June she was among those who successfully demanded the overturning of a disciplinary panel decision to lift his suspension.[32] The furore about his reinstatement was a matter of grave concern to party members.[33] Riverside's Left Executive, however, took care to abide by an edict from the General Secretary warning CLPs not to discuss live disciplinary cases.[34]

Panorama Allegations

Davies and others on the left do not dispute the presence of some antisemitism in Labour's ranks, including in Riverside. There has been one case, in a 2,500-strong constituency, which occurred earlier this year and swiftly resulted in disciplinary action. They vehemently deny allegations made against them, over the last three and a half years, of antisemitism, bullying, intimidation, and entryism. These allegations were repeated yet again in the Panorama documentary in July as though they were fact.

They are most incensed about former staffer Ben Westerman's charge during the Panorama programme that, as the only Jewish member of the party's disciplinary staff, he was subjected to antisemitic questioning at the end of one of his interviews while investigating the CLP. Although he has made no formal complaint against any of those present, Westerman told Panorama reporter John Ware he had been asked if he came from Israel. About 21 minutes into the programme,[35] Ware says Westerman was 'confronted with the very antisemitism he had been sent to investigate'. Riverside members who were at the interviews, either as interviewees or witnesses, have provided recordings and transcripts as well as a video explanation supporting their testimony that no such question was asked by any of them before, during or after any of the interviews.[36] None of them had any idea that Westerman was Jewish. There was one conversation towards the end of Helen Marks's interview which bore some resemblance to the inci-

dent Westerman described to Ware. An elderly Jewish woman, acting as a silent friend for Helen Marks, asked Westerman conversationally which Labour Party branch he belonged to. He declined to answer. Neither the recording nor the recollections of Riverside members present bear out the suggestion that any reference to Israel was made. Helen Marks contacted the BBC seeking to put the record straight, given that the allegation had been broadcast without any attempt at corroboration. She was told that was how Westerman recalled it and the programme makers accepted what he said.

'For this innocent incident to be turned into an entirely groundless allegation of hostility towards someone because he was Jewish, and for it to be broadcast by the BBC without any corroboration, demonstrates how the one-sided narrative of Louise Ellman and others who share her perspective has come to dominate debate about Labour and antisemitism', said Davies.

POLITICS

14

When Jews Are Just Fodder for the Tory Propaganda Machine

Antony Lerman

OPENDEMOCRACY, 9 NOVEMBER 2019

In calmer times, I like to think, a senior, mainstream politician's ostensible expression of concern for the security of the UK's Jewish population which at its core contained the antisemitic assumption that all Jews are rich, would have been exposed for its hypocrisy.

But such times are a receding memory. General alarm and media concurrence, rather than reasoned scepticism, met Tory Party chairman James Cleverly's comment in a *Sunday Telegraph* interview that Jewish 'individuals and groups, including entrepreneurs and other business figures' – people he had known 'much of my life' – were planning to leave the country if Labour won the forthcoming General Election.[1] The paper's front-page editors didn't hesitate before turning the people Cleverly knows into an unlimited number in their banner headline: 'Jews will leave if Corbyn wins' – a statement that, given the paper's leading role in fanning the flames of a nasty English nationalism, could easily be read as assuming that those clever rootless cosmopolitans, interested only in turning a profit for themselves, can shift their assets and homes around the globe at will.

Michael Gove then took to social media to urge Jeremy Corbyn and some of his high-profile supporters to condemn a tweet from a user claiming to be a member of Labour and Momentum, saying 'we can't trust Jews'. Both organisations confirmed that the account 'Joe Woods #JC4PM' did not belong to any of their members. Mr Gove

was attempting to 'smear us through association', Momentum said.[2] It seems that cabinet ministers are licensed to say anything outrageously untrue to smear Jeremy Corbyn and Labour as antisemitic, and that Jews are just fodder for the Tory propaganda machine.

Were Cleverly and Gove more concerned, they might have stepped up when Jacob Rees-Mogg in the Commons Brexit debate on 3 September, castigated Sir Oliver Letwin and Speaker John Bercow for blocking Brexit. Here was a man who prides himself on his unparalleled and comprehensive knowledge of the meaning of words, referring to two fellow Tories of Jewish background, as 'Illuminati who are taking powers into their own hands'. The historian of antisemitism, UCL's Michael Berkowitz, pointed out that this was a stereotype of 'Jewish criminality' – an antisemitic trope – used by the Nazis and their accomplices.[3] Yet Rees-Mogg made no apology for this smear and when Boris Johnson and other senior Tories were asked to condemn him, they were silent.

To get away with dog-whistle antisemitism and at the same time in the chase for votes shamelessly exploit Jewish fears is quite something.

But even I am tempted to say – Who can blame them? – when the weaponisation of antisemitism has become commonplace, for reasons that have very little to do with serious concern for the welfare of all Jews. And when Jewish leaders have been conniving in the stoking of Jewish fears. As it happens, the Cleverly intervention hit the headlines immediately after the *Jewish Chronicle* gave front-page coverage to a letter senior Reform Rabbi Jonathan Romain wrote to his entire Maidenhead congregation, warning them that a 'Corbyn-led government would pose a danger to Jewish life as we know it … whether it be utterances that cause Jews to feel victimised, less secure and no longer at ease … or maybe even legislation that restricts Jewish life or relations with Israel in some way, then you may wish to vote to ensure that Labour does not gain your local seat'.[4]

The *JC*'s editor, Stephen Pollard, whose hawkish exaggeration of the threat of antisemitism pre-dates Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour leader by many years, was given a platform by the *Sunday Telegraph* to double down on the fearmongering.[5] Labour's 'so-called moderates [have chosen to] throw Britain's Jews under a bus … The simple truth

is that every Labour member who campaigns for their party to win is sticking two fingers up to Britain's Jews'. The piece is a sad reprise of Pollard's 'Greatest Hits' album. In it, he cites the 47 percent of Jews in a Survation poll who said they would 'seriously consider' emigrating if Labour won, the 87 percent of Jews who say Corbyn is antisemitic, the 88 percent of potential Labour voters who say 'Labour's antisemitism is not a problem' and a list of unsubstantiated examples of Corbyn's own alleged expressions and legitimization of antisemitism.

Pollard simply does not understand why his Jeremiads about Labour have not resulted in the party's demise or the demise of Corbyn, even though the truth is staring him in the face. This has been a matter of self-fulfilling prophecy. He is responsible, together with Jewish establishment leaders and deeply misguided politicians, for leading the charge in generating, justifying, and encouraging such reported sentiment among Jews. If you keep banging on about the threat to Jewish life from a mass membership party, especially at a time when there is widespread confusion about what constitutes antisemitism, it's absurd to be shocked when some people seem to want to leave the country. The shock comes tinged with a kind of self-congratulatory triumphalism.

From Pollard, one expects such irresponsible ravings. But Rabbi Romain, in my experience, is different: he has been a liberal, progressive, and balanced voice, never taking part in moral panics. How is it then that he doesn't give a moment's thought to the many thousands of non-Jewish constituents in his parish who, during ten long years of austerity, have suffered at Tory hands from poverty, deprivation, discrimination, a struggling NHS, and watching billions of pounds that could have been invested in social care poured down the Brexit plughole? These are the people who might understandably and finally look in hope for the brighter future promised in the policies of a reforming and transformative Labour government. People who simply haven't got the luxury of dreaming about some better bolthole to which they can escape. Since when has it been kosher for Jews to abandon social responsibility in favour of selfishness grounded in baseless fears? (Thankfully, at least one of his fellow rabbis, Howard Cooper of the Finchley Reform synagogue, has called Romain out.)[6]

The growing numbers of far-right, white supremacist, and neo-Nazi extremists in the UK must be delighted at this state of affairs: Jews, the Tory leadership, much of the mainstream media are combining to do their work for them. With friends like Cleverly, Gove, and the deeply confused former Labour MP John Mann who sees no irony in being appointed 'Antisemitism Tsar' by Boris Johnson, we Jews don't need enemies.

Given powerful living memory of the collective trauma of the Holocaust and the decades and centuries of persecution that preceded it, it's not surprising that invoking current existential danger might turn our thoughts instinctively towards a safer haven. But is it mature, considered, wise leadership to both generate and promote the notion that Jews in the UK are on the brink of being subjected to a Yellow Star regime? To do this uncritically? Yet this is what Romain, Pollard, and many other senior communal figures, on Twitter and elsewhere, are either doing or implying they agree with. When the president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Marie van der Zyl, told us in August 2018, that 'Corbyn has declared war on the Jews', what else are we expected to think?

Reasons for Feeling Secure

The recently published co-authored book *Bad News for Labour: Antisemitism, the Party and Public Belief* (2019), to which I contributed a chapter, has revealed the stark contrast between public perceptions of the scale of the problem of antisemitism in Labour and the evidence-based reality. A national Survation poll showed that on average people believed that a third of Labour Party members had been reported for antisemitism, when the actual figure was far less than 1 percent. The book clearly states that 'the issue of antisemitism in the Labour Party should not be minimised', but that there was no 'army of antisemites' (*Sunday Times* headline, 7 April 2019) and that the party is not 'riddled' with antisemitism.

Mistakes have been made in tackling the problem, but these are largely to do with institutional dysfunction. They are not evidence of institutional racism. Rabbis and sensible leaders do not have to be supporters of the Labour Party to understand that in the wors-

ening climate of racism both here and abroad, it's vital that a party that has been in the forefront of fighting racism for decades should be given positive encouragement to renew its role. As the book's academic authors conclude: 'the constant attacks for other purposes on its leader and the traducing of the membership as a whole is in the end counterproductive. It weakens the forces on which all minorities including Jewish people will depend for their security in the conflicts that lie ahead'. It may be a tough struggle stemming the tide of moral panic and collective hysteria among many Jews in the UK, but by standing one's ground rather than feeding feelings of insecurity, working together across communities rather than being seduced by the notion of Jews as 'a people that dwells alone', it can be done.

When you look soberly across the world, is the idea of flight to safety realistic? In the United States, 11 Jews were murdered by a neo-Nazi in their synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018, the President promotes white supremacism, defends antisemites, stokes enmity against minorities, and attacks liberal Jewish critics of Israel as false Jews. In Israel, seven Israeli citizens were killed in the West Bank in 2018, your children could be put in harm's way if eligible to serve in the Israel Defence Forces, and you would be choosing a society seeking to maintain a Jewish majority in perpetuity in the entire Israel-Palestine area by restricting and denying the rights of the Palestinians. In France, Jews have been murdered in recent years just for being Jews and, although no one knows exact figures, a flow of Jews to other countries, particularly Israel, has been under way for some time. But many are returning to France in greater numbers thanks to the pull of their French identity, which allows for their Jewish faith to be treated as a private matter, in contrast to that of a society where religion plays a central public-political role and values are very different from those in France.[7] The rise of far-right populism, nativist nationalism, and a backlash against immigrants is common to so many countries, it is morally indefensible to give credence to flight. Moreover, it only validates the antisemitic charge: Jews don't belong.

How is it that the manifest virtues of life in the UK for British Jews are so lightly discarded by the likes of Rabbi Romain in the face of a confected threat? This isn't a question of degree, as if there

were a certain percentage chance of Labour in government singling out Jews for discriminatory treatment, official abuse, the denial of rights, the suppression of Jewish religious practice, the imposition of a pernicious tax regime targeting Jews – whatever Pollard's febrile imagination envisages. This kind of speculation is bizarre and completely without foundation. Were a Labour government to pursue a foreign policy more critical of Israeli human rights abuses and more focused on securing equal rights for the Palestinians, surely British Jews who object to such a move know full well that engaging in discussion and reasoned argument through the political process is the sensible way of making their views known, rather than levelling accusations of antisemitism at the policy-makers.

Moreover they are simply ignoring the strong countervailing forces against antisemitism in the UK: financial support for security at Jewish institutions; very close ties between the Community Security Trust, the private Jewish charity monitoring and combating antisemitism on behalf of the organised community, and the government and police; an official willingness to adopt and propagate the so-called 'new' IHRA definition of antisemitism (a deeply flawed document in my view) notwithstanding little inclination to do the same for Islamophobia; the funding and construction of a new Holocaust memorial and education centre right next to parliament in Westminster; the media's widespread and continued sensitivity to the issue of antisemitism; and the freedom Jews enjoy to express their religious and cultural Jewishness. To ignore this is to fail to recognize that there is probably no place more secure for Jews anywhere else in the world.

There is really no excuse for the lachrymose exceptionalism James Cleverly would have us embrace for the grubby purpose of giving the Tories electoral advantage. Now more than ever, at this decisive moment in the country's history, we should be looking beyond the selfish obsessions of so many religious and secular Jewish leaders and focusing on the needs of others, recognising the continued reality of anti-Black racism, the pervasiveness of Islamophobia – the truth, as Fope Olaleye reminds us[8] – that racism is about power, not a perception of negative sentiment that only the group affected is supposedly allowed to define.

Our Fellow Citizens

Not that Pollard shows any signs of ceasing to serve the Tories' interests. As if it were not more than enough that he preaches to Jews about how they should be voting, he devoted the front page of the 8 November *JC* to addressing a similar message to 'all our fellow British citizens'. He essentially asks them to believe the calumny that Jeremy Corbyn is a racist and that putting him in No. 10 would send a stark message to Jews that their 'dismay' and 'fears of where that will lead, are irrelevant', that they 'count for nothing'. So it's not enough to insult the intelligence of the Jews he purports to defend: he's now repeating the affront in his appeal to the wider population.

These are divisive, bitter and angry times, but we must be vigilant against the unconscious use of antisemitic stereotyping to demonstrate concern for Jews. It's been happening a lot recently. Other minorities experience a similar racist framing, for example: 'concern' for the state of fatherless black families, as the 'cause' of the disproportionate involvement of black youth in knife crime; 'concern' for Muslim women subjected to conservative dress codes cited as a reason for Islamic terrorism; 'concern' for immigrants and asylum seekers who fail to learn English because they are harming their opportunities to integrate. However, whilst the framing is similar, the unconscious bias in these unfounded and therefore racist assertions is far more damaging for the groups in these examples than the unconscious Cleverly stereotyping is for Jews.

The current prioritising of antisemitism as a special case of racism, something sought by so many Jewish leaders, opinion-formers, public intellectuals, and their non-Jewish supporters, legitimises and reinforces a privileged exceptionalism; the unconscious bias against other victims of racism leads to the reinforcement of their exclusion. The former is dangerous because it's a kind of self-inflicted othering: it may feel good in the short term, but it's not a recipe for a good Jewish future in an open and liberal society.

Tory politicians may think riding these two horses – the 'good Jews' and the 'bad others' – works for them politically. But we shouldn't allow them to get away with this divisive politics of

belonging – another reason why Jews must work with other minorities to fight real racist abuse, discrimination, and demonization which, so obviously today, comes from its traditional source: the right and beyond.

15

Antisemitism, Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Labour's 'Old' and 'New' Right-Wings

Jeremy Gilbert

OPENDEMOCRACY, 14 APRIL 2018

There is no more antisemitism in the Labour Party than in the rest of society, but there should be much less. There has been a lot of excellent commentary published over the last few weeks discussing this issue, as well as the broader socio-political relationships between the Labour Left, different sections of the Jewish community, and the pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian lobbies. I'm not going to rehearse those discussions again here.[1]

However, very little attention has been paid to the specific question of why the Labour Right has been so vocal on this issue in particular. This is a crucial issue and thinking about it carefully can shed considerable light on the current state of Labour Party politics.

So why has antisemitism become the issue around which the anti-Corbyn elements of Labour have converged so determinedly? The initial thing to understand is that the Labour right is composed of two distinct traditions, whose main organisers are currently committed to co-operating with each other, but who actually have very little in common. These two groups – the 'Blairites' and the traditional Labour right rooted in the Labour bureaucracy – have their own distinctive reasons for wanting to promote the idea that the radical left is inherently antisemitic.

The Blairites

The notorious Blairites, organised mainly by Progress, have a negligible organisational base in the party membership or the unions, and are not even particularly strong within the Parliamentary Labour Party. But they have the closest links to the media of any faction (especially the BBC and Guardian Media Group). They also include the MPs from the 2010 intake who received the most positive press coverage during the period 2010–15, and who therefore believed themselves to be in contention for the party leadership once the Corbyn project collapsed. They confidently expected this collapse to occur immediately after the 2017 election. It didn't. So unless something very unexpected indeed happens, none of them is now ever likely to become Prime Minister.

This fact has been apparent for less than a year. It is therefore unsurprising that most of these MPs and their immediate hangers-on – including their friends in the press – have not come to terms with it, or with the extent to which the political world now looks very different from how they always assumed that it was always going to look. It is also true that the most rational response to their situation would probably be to try to form a new party. Such a party would never form a government, but it would at least not force the Blairites to accept the leadership of the radical Labour left, whom they detest more than they do almost any other political tendency (in any party).

We all know the systemic obstacles to such a new party having any success under our electoral system, and there is no reason for thinking that such a party could take any seats from Labour at a general election. But if the Tories implode over Brexit, might such a party be able to pick up a few Conservative-held seats in affluent, pro-Remain areas: enough to provide a life-raft for the 20 or so most anti-Corbynite Labour MPs, as well as Tory allies like Anna Soubry? As tricky as it could be, there's some psephological evidence that it might,[2] and no shortage of offers of funding.[3]

But the Blairites have a more fundamental problem than their lack of support among the public or the weakness of their political position. It is in fact an existential problem: What are they for? Why do they exist at all?

Before July 2017, they all seemed to firmly believe that it was simply not possible for a Labour Party led from the left to do well at an election. They therefore never really needed to ask themselves what their politics actually were, whose interests they actually served, or why they did what they did. They believed that the difference between them and even the most radical left-winger was not really one of ideology – we all want to change the world, after all – but one of pragmatism and political competence.

The Blairites were the people, or so they seemed to think, who understood the limits of achievable reform in our epoch, who understood that what the left calls 'neoliberalism' was simply the way the world works in the twenty-first century. They were unencumbered by nostalgia for the 1945 welfare-state settlement. So they were able to propose types of social reform that might actually have a chance of winning elections, and of not alienating business interests, and therefore of actually being implemented. Immediately to their left in the Labour Party, the members of 'soft left' tradition represented by Ed Miliband more or less agreed with this assessment, although they always suspected that Blair and his followers had gone further than strictly necessary in embracing a neoliberal agenda, and that an embrace of it was regrettable, if largely unavoidable.

The June 2017 election result has scuppered this idea. So a significant section of the soft left, among the membership and the parliamentary party, have now abandoned the Blairites and more-or-less enthusiastically embraced Corbyn's leadership (including many who supported Owen Smith's leadership challenge in 2016). This leaves the Blairites isolated, and forced to ask themselves what exactly they do stand for; if it is not, after all, true that their agenda is the most left-wing one that ever had a hope of being implemented.

The answer they have come up with is more less the same as that of the Clinton Democrats. The true-believers in both camps still tell themselves that the progressive outcomes of Bill Clinton's, New Labour's and Obama's terms of office counterbalanced the less progressive outcomes. But the fact is that during those periods, inequality continued to rise while the overweening power of finance capital wasn't seriously checked at all, and everyone can see the consequences.

As a result, large sections of the left-leaning public in both countries don't share their positive assessment.

Under these circumstance, the only claim to progressiveness that these centrists can credibly make lies in their sustained commitments to social liberalism, open borders and cosmopolitan culture. They may have let the City and Wall Street run riot over the culture, trashing what remained of the post-war settlement and taking inequality back to late-nineteenth century levels. But at least they didn't demonise immigrants, single mothers or gay people.

Of course the problem here is that historically, if you wanted to ally yourself with forces that have been internationalist, anti-racist, pro-feminist and pro-queer, then you would be more likely to have thrown in your lot with the radical left than with the liberal 'centre' and its technocratic leaders. This fact must be fiercely disavowed if the belief in the progressive character of the Third Way is to be in any way sustainable. So painting the left as, contrary to all real historical experience, in some way *more* prone than they are to misogyny, racism, or even forms of nationalism becomes essential to the discourse of these neoliberal centrists. It is the only way that they can sustain the fantasy of their progressiveness: if only in their own minds.

The result is a narrative according to which the Blairites' commitments to globalisation, financial deregulation and their inevitable cultural concomitants somehow makes them heirs to the progressive tradition of Martin Luther King and Sylvia Pankhurst; whereas everyone to their left is a proto-Stalinist, and probably an antisemite. Obviously the politics of Brexit lends all of this a new urgency. The hardcore Remainers are able to tell themselves a story according to which they are the heroes, making a last courageous stand against the 'forces of conservatism',[4] defending open borders, open culture, feminism, and multiculturalism before the Stalinists and Ukippers conspire to plunge the world into darkness.

If this is a story that you are trying to tell yourself, then believing that your opponents are antisemitic (or at least pretending that you believe it) is very convenient indeed. Antisemitism has traditionally often been couched in terms of hostility to cosmopolitanism in general. A key figure of antisemitic discourse at the turn of the twentieth

century was the 'wandering Jew', the ultimate 'rootless cosmopolitan'. The basic claim of the Blairites has always been that enacting a policy agenda that turned us all into rootless cosmopolitans, whether we want to be or not – is in fact liberatory and progressive. This is exactly what the Leave vote was a protest against.[5] So if you are a Blairite who is in total denial about the extent to which your own policy agenda helped to produce the Brexit reaction, and who thinks that Corbyn's supporters are all reactionary populists – mindless thugs motivated by resentment and intent on some hideous revenge – then on some level you almost *have* to believe that they are probably also antisemitic (if only in some elusive, structural or institutional way).

If they're not, then you really have a problem. Under such circumstances, you might, for example, have to accept that it was your leaders' advocacy for the deregulation of European labour markets that helped push the English working class into voting for Brexit. Having accepted this fact, you might have to acknowledge that all critics of that policy were not mindless nationalists or 'forces of conservatism'. And that in particular left-wing critics of that policy agenda – those who decried the Blair/Brown government's unerring role as the mouthpiece for the 'Washington Consensus' within the EU,[6] those who pointed out the ways Blair and Brown worked to reduce protections for workers across Europe where they could, and defended UK opt-outs from measures such as the Working Time Directive when they couldn't[7] – might have had a point. As might those who pointed out the entirely predictable effects on the working lives of many people.[8]

At that stage, you might even be forced to face up to the fact that your policy agenda was never actually motivated by a proud belief in cosmopolitan liberalism at all, given that its long-term effect was to undermine support for British EU membership. Having arrived at that realisation, it might become apparent that New Labour's rhetorical embrace of openness and multiculturalism was in fact a convenient justification for a programme that was overwhelmingly determined by the interests of finance capital. And facing up to all that is the very last thing that the Blairites, or their supporters at the *Observer*, want to do.

And this is not the only motivation for the Blairites embracing the Corbyn-as-antisemite narrative. The other is that despite their

hypothetical commitment to the EU, Atlanticism has always trumped Europhilia in determining their attitudes to foreign policy. And being a good servant of the US has always meant endorsing America's position on Israel, which means de facto accepting the Israeli nationalist justification for the occupation of the occupied territories and the treatment of the Palestinian people. It is really impossible to accept any of that without embracing the broader narrative according to which Israel is an oasis of democracy in the Middle East, to be supported at all costs against all of her enemies, and that anyone who disagrees with this view can only do so because they are secretly hostile to liberal democracy as such, or to Jews, or to both.

The Old Right

The other main tradition on the Labour right is the traditional, non-Blairite tendency that traces its roots back to the debates between the left and right of the parties as far back as the 1940s. Let's call them the old right. Organised primarily by Labour First, this tendency has a more extensive network of supporters in the trade unions, the party bureaucracy, local councillor networks, and the grassroots membership than do Progress and the Blairites.

It is this network that was being routinely used to try to formally exclude Corbynites from the party until just a few weeks ago, when a string of resignations of senior party bureaucrats – including General Secretary Ian McNicol[9] – marked the effective surrender of the right at the level of the national party organisation. The old right remains organised, active, and thoroughly hostile to Corbyn and *Momentum* at constituency and regional level in many places. But there will be no more suspensions of party members simply because they support Corbyn and the party machinery think they can get away with suspending them. Notably, Tom Watson, the old right's main figurehead and most powerful member, has already signalled to his own supporters that following the June 2017 election result, he regards any further attempts to undermine Corbyn's leadership as futile for the foreseeable future.[10]

The old right therefore find themselves in a peculiar situation. Like the Blairites, the June 2017 election result presents them with some-

thing of an existential conundrum. Also like the Blairites (well like everybody, to be fair), the old right have a distinctive theory of history. The New Labour view of history is linear – Blair and his followers still think of themselves as leading the charge into the future, sweeping before them all obstacles to progress (i.e., to neoliberalism and globalisation), except when ugly populists get in their way.

But the old right theory of history is cyclical. They believe that every time a Labour government has lost an election, the party has swung to the left as its members expressed frustration with the inevitably limited nature of the reforms that the outgoing government was able to make. According to this narrative, such swings to the left inevitably lead the party into electoral oblivion, and it is always up to them, the dogged soldiers of moderation, ultimately to save the party and bring it back to power. This is what they think happened in both the 1951–64 period and 1979–97.[11] Until the 2017 election, they were quite sure that history was repeating itself again. The fact that it obviously isn't is more than a little disconcerting for them.

They have different explanations for what is going on. Some of them think that the Tories performed so badly in June that Labour should have won by a landslide, and Labour under Corbyn will never improve on that result. But this isn't a very easy position to sustain if you claim to be a hard-headed realist with one eye always on the historic precedents. No party has ever achieved a swing such as would have been needed to form a Labour government in June 2017, and few oppositions have made gains on the scale that Labour did then, without then going on to form the next government.

Some of the old right have convinced themselves that in fact they supported Corbyn all along, and are merely organised in opposition to the dangerous subversives of Momentum, and to Corbyn's cabal of unwise counsellors (Seamus Milne, Andrew Murray), etc. Many of them seem to be fixated on the mythical deselection threats to their own local MPs and the defence of said MPs from those threats: an obvious displacement activity, preventing them from having to ask themselves why they are even bothering to organise against Momentum now that Momentum has turned out to be better than they are at winning elections for Labour.

In fact what most of them are preoccupied with is defending their own jobs and positions – and those of their friends – as local councillors and party bureaucrats, rightly judging that in many cases, there are Corbyn supporters who would be willing to displace them. But the fact that their motives are so self-interested would be an uncomfortable truth for most of these people to have to admit to themselves, given that they are also, mostly – unlike most Blairites – good-hearted and dedicated servants of the Labour cause, rather than merely opportunistic careerists. So in finding an ideological justification for their continued hostility to Corbynism, most of them have taken the most obvious route open to them. They have increasingly fixated on the one point of actual ideological difference between themselves and the Corbynites: foreign policy.

This is a point about the old right that is often very poorly understood by Labour members to their left: their commitment to NATO, the nuclear deterrent and Israel is deep, heartfelt, ideological, and goes back to the post-war moment. Theirs is a mentality and worldview born in the first years of the Cold War. As I often like to point out, it arose at the moment when the Cold War was a matter of rivalry between a United States led by the New Deal administration, and a USSR led by Stalin. This wasn't the Cold War of Gorbachev vs. Thatcher that still informs the imagination of much of the radical left. From this perspective, it is easy to see how a commitment to liberal democracy and 'western values', even to unswerving Atlanticism, could seem to be consistent with a commitment to gradualist social democracy at home and enmity to tyrants all around the world.

This was also a historical moment when the overwhelming consensus amongst the international left was pro-Israel, and political forces allied to the left were hegemonic within Israel itself. It's easy to see why many on the Labour right concluded that the pro-Russian, Communist-fellow-traveller left was a threat not just to liberal democracy but to enlightened socialism itself. It's also easy to see why Israel would inspire real loyalty amongst the same constituency. What's more of a mystery is how this mentality survived the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. But the fact is that it did, providing the rationale for that section of the left that supported the Iraq war (as a war against tyranny

and against an enemy of Israel) in the early 2000s,[12] and is still providing the rationale for those who think that attacking Corbyn for his supposed pro-Putin sympathies is somehow an urgent moral duty.

All of this produces a situation in which being pro-Israel, and being willing to believe that anyone to your left is an enemy of liberal democracy and a covert supporter of tyrants, is pretty much the only thing that the old right and the Blairites have in common. The old right have never been cosmopolitan, have included in their number a fair few Eurosceptics, and have never shown much interest in social liberalism (their last Prime Minister, James Callaghan, was a clear enemy of the 'permissive society'). They were never that keen on the marketisation of public services or the Private Finance Initiative. In fact there is nothing in their history to suggest any good reason for them opposing any element of Corbyn's domestic agenda. As such, one really has to wonder if the old right has much future as a political formation at all.

For those among its leaders and key organisers who are desperate to keep it alive, there is nowhere else for them to go except to keep attacking Corbyn on foreign policy. But an aggressively and explicitly pro-Israel, pro-Atlanticist policy agenda is going to be very difficult to sell to any section of the British left today, even among centrist liberals. So it is only by claiming that somehow Corbyn's foreign policy agenda is implicated in his supposed wider sympathy for (or, at least toleration of) authoritarian and illiberal tendencies within the party, that they are likely to be able to win any support for their positions at all.

This is why I do not think that there is much that the leaderships of Momentum or Labour can do to slow down the onslaught of accusations against Corbyn and against his supporters. There may well be real antisemitism and unconscious racism in some sections of the party, and if there is then there is every reason to work against it. But that is not why the Blairites and the old right have been pushing this line. They have been pushing it because in fact it is one of the few issues on which they can authentically converge, allowing them both to claim the mantle of liberal cosmopolitan progressiveness and to paint their opponents as illiberal reactionaries, while acting in a way which is persistently calculated to attract the sympathy of the pro-Israel lobby, and the funding that it has traditionally bestowed upon politicians that it likes.

How to Respond?

The question all this leaves open of course, is how the left ought to respond. One response has been to declare our commitment to rooting out antisemitism while acknowledging that the attacks on Corbyn have been opportunistic. This is fine so far as it goes. But it remains reactive in nature, addressing an immediate issue, and the tone of the response so far has been authoritarian, promising a programme of re-education to root out 'unconscious bias'. I'm all for consciousness-raising;[13] but assuming the authority to tell other people what's going on in their unconscious is always a dangerous business. (Granted, much of this article has consisted of speculation as to what's going on in the unconscious of various sections of the Labour right, so perhaps I shouldn't push this argument too far.)

This authoritarian tone has been typical of Labour pronouncements on social issues in recent years, with a tendency to emphasise what we are against. We are against racism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia and antisemitism. But what are we *for*?

Labour needs a positive vision. Such a vision would not only borrow from the language of liberal identity politics, promising to enforce it more rigorously than the right. It would also seek to connect Corbyn's Labour with the history and the values of the movements that began the fight against those forms of oppression: women's liberation, gay liberation, civil rights, black power, etc. Those movements were not just *against* things: they were animated by a vision of human freedom and self-organisation that exceeded the limits imposed on them by patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism.

At the moment of Brexit, it is more crucial than ever for the radical left to assert its commitments to internationalism and cosmopolitanism, while stressing the differences between our cosmopolitanism and that of the neoliberal centrists. We believe in a society in which cultural differences are neither suppressed nor imposed, but become the basis for a productive and creative expression of human potential. There can be no room for antisemitism in such a society. And nor can there can be any question of allowing finance capital to continue to organise social life to its own advantage.

Cosmopolitan Class Consciousness

This is a crucial point to take on, because there can be little doubt as to what the next stage of the right-wing attempt to weaponise antisemitism and claim the mantle of cosmopolitanism will be. A couple of weeks ago, I remarked to my partner that I thought the next stage would see the right-wing attempting to claim that *any* criticism of finance capital in general – any reference to 'parasites' or 'greedy bankers' – should be characterised as implicitly antisemitic. It is certainly true that antisemites have often tried to win support by eliding mistrust of financiers, speculators and rentiers with hatred of Jews. This doesn't mean we should deny the fact that financiers, speculators and rentiers deliberately exert influence when they can, to maximise their own interests at the expense of others. Quite the opposite: it means that we should stress very strongly that the problem with capitalists is their complicity with capitalism, and not their religious or ethnic identity.

But at least one recent contribution to the debate has indeed already put forward the view that any form of political discourse that 'personalises' the analysis of capitalism is always-already complicity with antisemitic discourse.[14] This analysis seems to suggest that any view of capitalism that takes account of any form of agency or interests being at work in any situation is inherently 'conspiratorial' in nature, and hence guilty of the crimes of both populism (assumed to be a bad thing) and implicit antisemitism.

This is a fallacious argument on two counts. On the one hand it amounts to a mere argument from resemblance: because anti-capitalist discourse and antisemitic discourse share some structural features, they are fundamentally the same. This type of argument has been recognised as a logical fallacy for millennia.

On the other hand this argument fundamentally misunderstands how ideology functions and what the purpose of ideology-critique is. Ideology very rarely creates a picture of the world that bears no resemblance to reality. It is far more effective when it presents a picture that is close enough to reality to resonate with the lived experience of the people that it is trying to convince, while distorting key elements of that reality to protect the interests of the powerful. Under

such circumstances, the role of critical analysis is not to identify and fetishize the formal similarities between different discourses – it is to identify the differences between them, however small they may appear, in order to reveal the power relationships at work in the distortions that they produce, and to identify those that are closer to and further from the truth.

The role of critical intellectuals is not to denounce anti-capitalism because it structurally resembles antisemitism. It is to differentiate the one from the other and to help others to make the same differentiation. Our task is to unmask the fact that the fundamental purpose of antisemitism is always to cover up the truth of power relations, driving wedges between Jewish and non-Jewish communities who should be united in the assertion of their common collective interests.

In the end what this comes down to is a rather banal and predictable observation: but one that radicals will need to keep making no doubt for many years to come. It is that the best cure for antisemitism is not just re-education or disciplinary hearings. It is the positive raising of class consciousness. The more people are enabled to understand the extent to which disparities of wealth and power are what really shape political and social outcomes in the world, the more they are enabled to realise the extent to which they share material interests with millions of others around the world – irrespective of ethnicity or religion – the less susceptible they will be to antisemitism, conspiracy theory, or racism of any kind. This is the response that centrist liberalism cannot make, which is why its response to antisemitism can never be adequate to its task.

16

Critiques of Elite Power Aren't Antisemitic or Conspiratorial – They Are Necessary

Michaela Collord

RED PEPPER, 3 APRIL 2018

The *New Statesman* has published a piece with an arresting title, 'To combat left anti-semitism, Corbynism must change the way it sees the world'.[1] The article, by Matt Bolton and Frederick Harry Pitts, quickly started racking up shares on Facebook and Twitter.

As a supporter of the Corbyn project, the past week[2] has proved variously upsetting and confusing. After several faltering starts, the comments from the party leadership point us towards a constructive way forward.[3]

But there remain many unconstructive paths we could go down, ones that would do nothing either to combat antisemitism or to advance the cause of the left.

Bolton and Pitts' article goes down just such a path.

Their piece suggests that the 'deep seated theoretical underpinnings of left critique of capitalism' have 'anti-semitism as their logical consequence'. Corbyn, meanwhile, is supposedly blind to these consequences and instead continues to condemn a 'rigged system'.

The answer, according to Bolton and Pitts, is to move away from 'personalised critiques' focused on the 'machinations of the 1%'. Instead, we should adopt a reading of Marx focused on how 'capitalist social relations fundamentally shape the way in which we live'.

This dichotomy, though, is utterly false.

Leaving aside crude readings of Marx, there is nothing inconsistent about a critique[4] that appreciates both the fundamental inequalities built into capitalist social relations *and* the role of elite power in making those inequalities worse.

Conspiracy theories about Jewish bankers are disgusting, obscurantist, and obviously false. Elite power is not a matter of a religious/ethnic minority secretly orchestrating global finance – that implication has had murderous consequences. But in pushing back against racist stereotypes,[5] we should not cast aside entirely the vital point that people with power and wealth try and defend that power and wealth, and that these efforts have a huge impact on global politics. Conspiratorial tropes are not the same as criticism of an elite concentration of wealth and power as well as its implications for our democracy.

If conspiracy and critique were the same, then it wouldn't just be Jeremy Corbyn or left-wing cranks who had something to answer for. Many of the leading journals in sociology and political science would also be in the dock.

Indeed, the high-ranking journal, *Perspectives on Politics*, in 2014 published a widely cited article indicating that economic elites and organised groups representing business interests have a significant impact on US government policy.[6] Average citizens and mass-based groups, meanwhile, have little to none. These results, according to authors Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page of Princeton and Northwestern University respectively, present a major challenge to much-touted theories of US democracy as majoritarian and inclusive.

Another top-ranking journal, the *American Political Science Review*, in 2009 published an article demonstrating how Conservative MPs in post-war Britain profited after leaving office largely through lucrative outside employment they acquired due to their political connections.[7]

This is the 'rigged system' peer reviewed and published.

But it isn't just that an analysis of elite power can pass academic muster. We clearly don't need experts to tell us what the Occupy movement was perfectly capable of discerning for itself in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

What's so critical – and refreshing – about a left critique of elite power is that it's properly *political*.

Yes, a capitalist system will itself generate certain automatic and inegalitarian outcomes. But that analysis is not enough. We also need to understand past and present struggles to 'tame' capitalism, or indeed, attempts to unleash it and let it run wild.

This is fundamentally a story about political organisation and influence, and over the twentieth century, it's a story of truly great transformations, to borrow from the brilliant Mark Blyth.[8]

In industrialised democracies, we saw various coalitions first mobilise to construct the welfare state, to push for more progressive taxation, a more stringent regulatory regime, and the like. We then saw, especially since the 1970s, a different business-centred coalition consolidate and roll back those earlier gains, using their political influence to improve their ability to accumulate, unfettered (or often abetted) by the State itself.

Back to 'Corbynism', whose mission it is to bring about nothing short of the next great transformation.

This project certainly does not ignore problems to do with a capitalist system, for instance, through policies advocated in Labour's Alternative Models of Ownership report.[9]

It also does not shy away from the political realism needed to recognise that, in many ways, our system is rigged. How else – as revealed last week and condemned by Corbyn – could Google pay a UK tax bill of only £50m despite nearly £6b of sales in the country?[10]

So, returning now to Bolton and Pitts, do they just have a strange reading of Marx? Possibly, but that alone wouldn't matter very much.

What matters is that, by conflating left critiques of power with antisemitic conspiracy, they collapse boundaries and help further delegitimate a kind of left analysis that is already widely viewed as suspect. Hence the routine attacks on Corbyn as populist, pandering, even Trumpian (as in the Bolton and Pitts piece).

But we need Corbyn's 'rigged system' narrative for the left to be politically effective. Because, yes, political and economic elites wield disproportionate and largely self-serving influence. And, yes, that influence comes from pouring immense resources into political organising,

lobbying, and the purposeful undermining of left interest groups like unions.

If we abandon that perspective, it wouldn't just be Corbyn changing his worldview. We'd lose the power of the Corbyn project: its willingness to hold elites to account.

17

Is the Labour Party Against Empirical Sociology?

NOTES ON POWER, ELITES, AND ANTI-RACISM

Tom Mills and David Miller

CEASEFIRE, 13 AUGUST 2019

As part of its efforts to deal with allegations of antisemitism in the party, the Labour leadership recently launched an antisemitism mini-site offering advice and educational resources to party members.[1] In our view, this may signal a potentially more fruitful approach than the often haphazard and opaque disciplinary procedures that have predominated until now. Several years of significant disinformation and factional political manoeuvring seem only to have deepened the crisis in Labour and, if anything, weakened the fight against antisemitism.[2] But we have serious concerns about the contents of the advice, which we think is sociologically problematic and has the potential to weaken the Corbyn project.

In this article, we want to take issue with one key aspect: the section that addresses the question of conspiracy theory. The advice warns Labour members against seeing capitalism and imperialism as the product of 'plots by a small shadowy elite rather than a political, economic, legal and social system'. This, it says, is 'just one step away from myths about Jewish bankers and a secret Jewish plot'.

In associating any analysis of actual elites with antisemitic conspiracy theory, this one sentence not only threatens to undercut a significant body of empirical research in sociology and history, but also undermines our ability to deal with current political realities.

To take the latter problem first, we agree with Aditya Chakrabortty when he argues that 'whatever the critics might allege, Jeremy Corbyn's complaints about a rigged economy aren't populism at all; they are a fundamentally accurate depiction of a vastly unpopular system'.[3]

On the question of social systems, the obvious issue here, as one of us has argued previously,[4] is that such systems (capitalism, feudalism, fascism) don't exist merely in the abstract. This is clear in Marx's writings, which combine an analysis of the abstract dynamics of capital accumulation with very specific analyses of political struggles and crises.

Social systems like capitalism, are developed and managed – and, in the case of feudalism and fascism, ended – by the actions of actual human beings; though perhaps not, as Marx famously wrote, in circumstances of their own choosing. So whilst capitalism is, of course, as the Labour Party advice puts it, 'a political economic, legal and social system', this does not in the least invalidate the idea that it is shored up or changed as a result of practical actions by particular people and groups in specific contexts.

In sociology, the academic discipline in which we both work, the question of the relationship between structure and agency is a foundational puzzle.[5] How should we understand the relationship between individual, and indeed collective, social action, on the one hand, and the rigid, seemingly unchanging brute facts of hierarchy and inequality on the other?

There is a long and venerable tradition that examines the structure of power in society, as well as how this changes or remains the same. Setting aside the work of Marx and most Marxist sociologists – and, for that matter, those working in the Weberian tradition – are we now to ignore or hold in suspicion widely recognised classic works such as C. Wright Mills' *The Power Elite* (1956) or, in the same tradition, William Domhoff's *Who Rules America?* (1967), whose sixth edition was published in 2017?

Here in Britain, eminent sociologists have trodden a similar path. John Scott has devoted much of his career to examining the ruling class. In his landmark work, *Who Rules Britain?* published in 1991, his conclusion, agree with it or not, was that:

> Britain is ruled by a capitalist class whose economic dominance is sustained by the operations of the state and whose members are disproportionately represented in the power elite which rules the state apparatus. That is to say, Britain does have a ruling class.

Such a statement, if we are to take the Labour Party's new advice seriously, must now be seen as being one step away from antisemitic conspiracy theory.

Another great sociologist who wrote about such matters was of course Ralph Miliband, the father of the former Labour leader, Ed Miliband. His excoriating study of the Parliamentary Labour Party, *Parliamentary Socialism* (1961), is still relevant today, and the arguments sparked by his *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969), a study of the British 'state elite' influenced by C. Wright Mills, remain a point of departure in sociology degrees up and down the country. Are we now to disregard influential works by this Jewish refugee from Nazism as part of the fight against antisemitism?

The tradition of examining power structures in sociology continues to this day, with most of the running being made by studies that grapple with the arguments over the extent of the transnational nature of economics and politics. We can note the work of the celebrated sociologist Leslie Sklair, who followed in Miliband's footsteps working at the London School of Economics. His very widely cited book, *The Transnational Capitalist Class,* examines the role of 'social movements for global capitalism'[6] in many of the transformations of recent decades, including neoliberal reforms and, of course, the formation and development of the European Union. Are we also to disregard the books of this eminent sociologist, a Glaswegian Jew by origin?

As both Miliband and Sklair's works show in some detail, capitalism is managed by actual human beings. Today these include politicians, corporate executives, central bankers, lawyers, investors, technocrats, lobbyists, and PR people. Some are capitalists in the sense of owning, controlling or managing capitalist enterprises, but most are simply aligned politically with capitalists through their material stake in the system. This, incidentally, is why the term 'elite' (if used with sufficient clarity and precision) is useful, since it allows us to analyse capitalism

not merely as an economic system composed of two classes, but as a complex social system organised in large part via states.

Many of the powerful people in the capitalist and imperial power structures in the UK and beyond are well-known, but some are indeed 'shadowy' in the sense that they have a relatively low public profile. Moreover, even the very public members of the elites (e.g., government ministers) have stage-managed public personas and will make key decisions in private when they feel they can. Noting this is obviously not antisemitic, and nor is it a step towards antisemitism. Neither, for that matter, is discussion of 'bankers' or 'financiers', who are obviously central to contemporary capitalism.

Finally, it is worth mentioning specifically the role of certain organisations and groups usually referred to as 'Zionists' or the 'Israel lobby'. That such organisations and groups in fact exist, and have, as we have previously shown,[7] a certain amount of influence in some contexts, is obvious enough, and is something that can, and should, be examined empirically. Indeed, it is important we don't find ourselves in a position where any mention of Zionism as a political movement,[8] or the Israel lobby as a set of actually existing organisations,[9] is immediately assumed to be an oblique or dishonest reference to antisemitic notions of Jewish power. The Israeli state, like any other, acts in line with its own perceived interests, and does so in alliance with other states, organisations and movements. The challenge is to integrate an understanding of such organisations into a wider analysis of contemporary capitalism and imperialism, and of course not to conflate them with Jewish people as a group or to allow other racist ideas to cloud our thinking.

The Labour mini-site warns against 'theories [that] ascribe to Israel influence on world events far beyond any objective analysis'. This sounds reasonable enough, but who then should be the judge of what is 'objectively' acceptable? More research on this topic would likely help the movement to navigate such questions for itself, but this has only been made less likely and more difficult in the febrile political atmosphere that has taken hold around this issue.

PROCESSES AND PRINCIPLES

18

Jews, Antisemitism and the Law

Naomi Wayne

JEWISH VOICE FOR LABOUR, 15 AUGUST 2019

Since Britain first introduced legislation prohibiting unlawful race discrimination over fifty years ago, Jews have been protected, though the method used has been not a little questionable. While religious discrimination was outlawed in Northern Ireland from 1976, there was no comparable protection in Great Britain. So when British courts chose to protect Jews (and Sikhs) against race discrimination, they did so by acknowledging that discrimination against both groups was rarely on the grounds of *religious belief*. Instead they squeezed us in under the race relations laws' rather dubious categories of 'race' or 'ethnic origin'. When, in 2003, prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion or religious/philosophical belief was extended to Britain via the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations, Jews acquired this additional and alternative protection.

Current British anti-discrimination law is to be found in the Equality Act 2010. This prohibits 'discrimination' on the grounds of a range of 'protected characteristics. These are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. We are only concerned in this article with 'religion or belief' and with 'race', which 'includes colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins'.

'Discrimination' encompasses several forms of wrongdoing:

- *direct discrimination*: treating a person less favourably on the grounds of a 'protected characteristic' – here a person's race or religion;
- *indirect*: imposing requirements which have a disproportionately adverse effect on individuals or groups who possess a protected characteristic;
- *victimisation*: treating badly a person who has challenged discrimination simply by alleging it has happened, or by lodging a grievance or legal complaint;
- *harassment*: creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment or violating a person's dignity via conduct which is unwanted, and which relates to a protected characteristic.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has oversight over all British equality legislation, and hence over unlawful racial or religiously discriminatory acts committed against Jews as Jews. But it has no remit in relation to general behaviour no matter how unfair or obnoxious. Consequently, the EHRC's powers regarding acts which are said to be 'antisemitic' may be exercised only insofar as such acts constitute unlawful race and/or religious discrimination. This means that 'antisemitism' per se has no specific legislative definition, and the so-called 'adoption' of the IHRA 'Definition' and 'Examples', whether by the government or by other organisations and institutions, carries no legal implications.

Indeed, for purposes of determining whether the Labour Party has committed breaches of the Equality Act against Jews, the term 'antisemitism' is seriously unhelpful, and is far better not used. Like members of all other 'racial' or 'religious' groups, the legal question in respect of Jewish complainants has always been, and continues to be: has this person suffered unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race and/or religion?

The EHRC has various mechanisms for conducting its oversight role. In the case of the Labour Party, it is deploying its power under the 2006 Equality Act to carry out an 'Investigation' as to whether the party (and/or its employees, and/or agents) has committed an 'unlawful act'. To start this off, the EHRC had to draw up Terms of Reference

(ToR) specifying '*the nature of the unlawful act which the Commission suspects*'. It had to give the person or organisation being investigated notice of the proposed ToR, allow a chance to make representations, consider (and if need be, amend the ToR) and publish whatever it decided the final ToR should be.

In spite of this perfectly clear legal framework, the final ToR of the Investigation into the Labour Party remain opaque.[1] We do not know what representations, discussions, to-ing and fro-ing there may have been between the EHRC and the Labour Party before the final ToR were issued. *But we do know precisely what we don't know – the nature of the 'unlawful acts' which the EHRC 'suspects' the party 'may have committed'*. Even more remarkable, the Investigation, we are told, will '*focus on a sample of complaints of alleged unlawful acts*'; again nothing on the acts themselves, what the size such a 'sample' might be, or how it might be selected.

The EHRC further proposes to look at the Labour Party's rulebook and its internal disciplinary procedures, to see whether they 'have enabled' or 'could enable it' to deal 'efficiently and effectively' with complaints of any of the four kinds of race and/or religion or belief discrimination, including whether 'appropriate sanctions have been and/or could be applied'; and also, 'whether the Party has responded to complaints of unlawful acts in a lawful, efficient and effective manner'. It would be neither surprising nor unreasonable to find the EHRC looking at the party's rules and procedures if we had been told what suspected unlawful acts were the cause of the Investigation. But trawling a political party's rulebook to see if it '*could enable* (the party) to deal efficiently and effectively' with discrimination complaints, when the nature of those complaints remains shrouded in mystery … On this basis, why indeed single out the Labour Party rulebook? Does anyone imagine the Tories or the Lib Dems have state-of-the-art rules and procedures to tackle race or religious discrimination?!

But of course, there *are* clues in the previous paragraph of the ToR issued by the EHRC. Thus, it proposes to examine 'the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in [three reports]'. And what unites those reports is that *they are all concerned with allegations of antisemitism in the Labour Party*.

The first is Baroness Royall's Report,[2] which contains the findings of a longstanding Labour Party back-room operator, without legal training or expertise, who was sent off to investigate goings on in the Oxford University Labour Club (OULC). Drafted without a nod to discrimination law, Royall's Report relays her confused and desperate efforts to locate antisemitism in the OULC (with the results: 'some incidents of antisemitic behaviour' but no hard evidence of 'intentional or deliberate acts of antisemitism' and certainly no 'institutional discrimination').

Next comes the Home Affairs Committee Report,[3] another document about 'antisemitism', not race or religious discrimination, without a shred of legal status in respect of the Labour Party, and where incoherence and special pleading are the chief qualities on display. Neither this nor Royall have any conceivable relevance to the EHRC legal role of investigating possible unlawful acts of race or religious discrimination in the Labour Party, rather than allegations of 'antisemitism'.

Finally, the Chakrabarti Inquiry Report into antisemitism,[4] which last, is at least written by someone who is legally literate, and which contains useful guidance incorporating the rules of natural justice into Labour's disciplinary procedures. If the EHRC investigation uncovers the way the Labour administration prior to Jennie Formby's appointment responded (or rather, didn't respond) to Chakrabarti, then it will be time well spent – though the relationship of a report on antisemitism to the commission of unlawful acts of race or religious discrimination is likely to remain tenuous.

Most peculiarly, right at the end of the Terms of Reference, a final clause appears to have been tacked on. This provides that the Investigation 'may' also 'have regard to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism and associated examples, while recognising it is a non-legally binding definition'. This is baffling. An EHRC Investigation is a legal process, not a jaunt around any issues the EHRC might think interesting. So the value to its Investigation of having regard to a non-legally binding definition of a phenomenon – antisemitism – which itself is not unlawful, is impossible to locate. Even sloppier, if the EHRC really

intends to 'have regard to' the IHRA's 'associated examples', it will be wading into a quagmire whose depths will know no limits.

In spite of these problems with the way the EHRC has set about things, a few points of general principle can be made.

In the current atmosphere, it seems (surprisingly) necessary to point out that, whatever the Labour Party may or may not have done, its legal responsibility does not extend to the words or actions of non-members! Why underline this? Well, Labour Party General Secretary, Jennie Formby reported, for example, that the great majority of complaints of 'antisemitism' brought to her office by Margaret Hodge MP relate to non-Labour Party members.[5] Many complaints from others seem to relate to social media postings, without any evidence that they are directly attributable to Labour Party members.

As the Labour Party is a political organisation, its business, both internally and externally, is political discourse: words, statements, arguments, expressions of belief and conviction, etc. While such words etc may be expressed strongly, even unpleasantly, and their content may be upsetting or 'offensive', this is recognised to be a routine part of political exchange, and not amenable to legal intervention, without evidence of potential unlawfulness over and above its manner of expression or the upset its content may cause.

Whilst only a decision at first instance, the Employment Tribunal discussion in *Fraser v University and College Union* is enormously useful for its provision at para. 156, of an unequivocal statement of legal distaste for adjudicating political disagreements, together with equally clear acknowledgment of the legal constraints on interfering in freedom of speech:

> … context is critical. The Claimant is a campaigner. He chooses to engage in the politics of the union in support of Israel and in opposition to activists for the Palestinian cause. When a rugby player takes the field he must accept his fair share of minor injuries … Similarly, a political activist accepts the risk of being offended or hurt on occasions by things said or done by his opponents (who themselves take on a corresponding risk). These activities are not for

> everyone. Given his election to engage in, and persist with, a political debate which by its nature is bound to excite strong emotions, it would, we think, require special circumstances to justify a finding that such involvement had resulted in harassment … Secondly, the human rights implications of the claim must not be overlooked. As we have noted, Article 10(2) of the Convention countenances limitations on freedom of expression only to the extent that they are necessary in a democratic society. The numerous authorities under domestic and Community jurisprudence … emphasise repeatedly that freedom of expression must be understood to extend to information and ideas generally, including those which offend, shock or disturb society at large or specific sections of it.[6]

What *may* be unlawful within a political party are words or policies deployed in order to discriminate (within any of the four legal meanings) against a member or members of that party, who are also member(s) of a racial or religious category of people, *provided* the discrimination is attributable to the racial or religious category these member(s) inhabit.

Discrimination is a complex legal concept, as the four categories listed earlier show. In real life, it is even more multi-layered. Why do people discriminate? They may have no idea they are doing so: that's what indirect discrimination is about. Thus, a political party in an area with few Jewish residents, may not understand when its first Jewish (and observant) member objects to it holding party social events on a Friday night: 'It's the way we've always done it. It's the night that suits everyone else'.

Even when people *intend* to treat someone Jewish 'less favourably' (direct discrimination), what do they aim to achieve? To stop the victim acquiring a benefit (e.g. golf clubs in pre-Race Relations Act days which routinely 'blackballed' Jewish applicants for membership); to make the victim go away because they can't bear the hostile behaviour; to relieve their own feelings of anger or hate? The possibilities are endless, and perhaps more appropriate for elaboration by a psychologist, a historian or a social scientist. The point is, any example of an actual alleged discriminatory event is just an example: it still

has to be shown to have happened in fact, and that it fits into a legal category of discrimination.

So, for example, unlawful *direct* discrimination may be provable in a particular instance or set of instances if *evidence* of the following can be produced:

- one or more acts of discriminatory behaviour, or a pattern of discriminatory behaviour by a Labour Party member or members including words or statements or operation of policies, *plus*
- this behaviour being designed to achieve, say, some form of 'exclusion' of Jewish people. For example:
  - preventing Jews generally or a specific Jewish person or persons from becoming Labour Party members
  - Jews generally, or a Jewish person or persons deciding to leave the Labour Party, or not participating fully in its activities, including speaking at meetings, seeking political office, attending social events etc
  - ensuring Jews generally, or a Jewish person or Jewish persons do not secure political office,

plus

- the motivation of those engaging in such behaviour being a person or persons' race or religion.

Apart from indirect discrimination where the test is objective (behaviour having a disproportionately adverse impact), in all cases where discrimination is alleged, motivation on grounds of race and/or religion – not merely political disagreement, no matter how ferocious – must be demonstrable. It is far from clear that, in many of the complaints subject of the current allegations about 'antisemitism' in the Labour Party, any or all of the requirements above have been satisfied.

Next, a comment about one word that has surfaced frequently: that complainant members have found words/statements, etc., used by other Labour Party members 'offensive'. At first sight the Equality Act's

prohibition of 'harassment' which includes 'creating an … offensive environment' may appear to apply here.

However, as with other forms of discrimination, designating words/statements, etc., as 'antisemitic' (and hence 'offensive') will tell us little in legal terms. There will still be no unlawful discrimination unless three key criteria are met. The perpetrator must have engaged in unwanted conduct; the conduct must have been related to their victim's race or religion; and it must have resulted in the creation of an environment which is 'intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive'.

But just how do you know if the law will treat an environment as offensive? Here, the victim's emotional response is only one component in the mix. The Equality Act 2010 again lays down three tests. The first is subjective – 'the perception of the complainant' – but the next two are objective – 'the other circumstances of the case' and 'whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have that effect' (of creating … an offensive environment).

Let's return to the *Fraser* case, where the complainant asserted that political debates *about Israel* at his trade union conference were antisemitic, and caused him hurt. Without needing to evaluate his claimed emotional reaction, the Tribunal found it was outweighed by other factors. As he was 'an old hand' at trade union and wider political activism, and had voluntarily chosen to become involved in the debate integral to a union conference, it was clear he was pretty much complicit in the situation in which he found himself.

Of course each case is dependent on its facts, how they mesh together, what else is going on, etc. Had Fraser's union clearly tolerated *hatred of Jew*s at the conference podium, and expected its Jewish conference delegates to put up with *abuse aimed at their Jewishness*, then, irrespective of Jewish delegates' voluntary presence and understanding of how the conference was likely to pan out, the outcome of the case would have been very different.

Which brings us back to that EHRC formal investigation. What will count here will be facts, *demonstrable evidence* of wrongdoing which fits under one or more of the Equality Act's definitions of *discrimination*, and for which it can be shown that the Labour Party has

legal responsibility. Neither 'antisemitism' nor any of the twelve IHRA 'examples 'which may serve as illustrations' of antisemitism should form part of the EHRC's considerations.

In spite of the serious deficiencies in its Investigation's 'Terms of Reference', if, in carrying out the Investigation, the EHRC remembers what its role is, and does its job competently and according to the law on race and religious discrimination, then whatever its findings, it will do the Labour Party and Jewish people in this country a service. If it forgets itself and wades enthusiastically into the morass of Labour antisemitism fever whipped up since Corbyn was elected, then it will harm Jews as well as Labour, and destroy its own credibility forever.

19

There is Another Way to Resolve Labour's Toxic Wrangles Around Complaints

David Rosenberg

REBEL NOTES, 24 JULY 2019

Charles Wegg-Prosser, a law graduate and product of Downside Independent Catholic School, enthusiastically joined the British Union of Fascists (BUF) in 1934, taking at face-value Oswald Mosley's propagandist arguments about how he would build 'A Greater Britain'. Wegg-Prosser believed that the fascist movement was a radical force for social progress and national unity. At one time he was director of its large Shoreditch branch and later stood as a BUF candidate for Limehouse (another of its strongholds) in the 1937 local election. Labour won the seat comfortably as a very strong fascist campaign was decisively rejected. Wegg-Prosser left the fascists later that year. He wrote this to Mosley:

> Your methods have become increasingly dictatorial … You are sidestepping the whole issue of social betterment by the anti-Jewish campaign … You introduce a movement imitating foreign dictators. you run it as a soulless despotism, you sidetrack the demand for social justice by attacking the Jew, you give people a false answer, and unloose the lowest mob passions.

Many people who have given their heart and soul to a cause, and then discover there is poison running through it, retreat into political paralysis or become cynical. To his credit, Wegg-Prosser did not. He made discreet contacts with anti-fascists and then spent the last years of the 1930s vigorously campaigning against the BUF, in particular by exposing and opposing their anti-Jewish hatred. After the war he was active in the Labour Party and stood unsuccessfully four times at elections for the Labour Party in Paddington South. He continued his legal career and became the first chair of North Kensington Law Centre – an institution that has done so much to support migrants, refugees, the vulnerable and powerless.

He was not alone in switching sides in the 1930s. One of the very impressive achievements of the anti-fascist movement in Britain in that period was its record of winning individuals away from fascism and persuading a number of them to join the ranks of the anti-fascists. They were able to do that because they understood that *fascism*, rather than individual fascists, was the core of the problem. They recognised that people who travelled on a journey towards fascism were in many cases not motivated by hate (though no doubt their leaders and a hard-core around them definitely were). They were often people with real difficulties in their lives socially, economically, and psychologically, who were desperately looking for solutions but could not see them coming from mainstream politicians they feel had let them down. Ever more hopeless and embittered, they were becoming easy prey for far-right demagogues pushing solutions based on blaming the Jews.

But a number were persuaded, especially by anti-fascists in the Communist Party, to switch sides and gain a new understanding of the forces really responsible for their problems. People do change, given the space to change. And sometimes, like Charles Wegg-Prosser, they show deep remorse. Up to a certain point on their journey people are receptive to alternative, better arguments. In 2010, four years after the British National Party (BNP) won 12 council seats in Barking and Dagenham, they not only lost every seat, but lost a significant number of votes in every ward. This despite a higher voter turnout. Many first-time BNP voters changed their minds and returned to the Labour fold.

We live in different times to the 1930s: social media times. This can be very useful for identifying particular patterns of behaviour. But at the same time, we are more likely to damn people forever – to typecast them as a dyed-in-the-wool racist/Islamophobe/antisemite/homophobe/etc. and dismiss them as totally irredeemable – for one thoughtless post, however isolated or seemingly out of character.

There has recently been a focus, once again, on Labour's procedures for handling complaints of antisemitism. Jeremy Corbyn steered a careful path, which won support from the Shadow Cabinet and then the National Executive Committee (NEC). It defended the improvements since Jennie Formby became General Secretary and agreed an approach that involved tightening and speeding up the procedures and acting decisively in the most absolutely clear-cut cases, while protecting rights of appeal and allowing people to show remorse.

In a rebuff to the venomous behaviour of Deputy Leader Tom Watson, many members of the Parliamentary Labour Party gave Formby a standing ovation earlier this week. The usual gaggle of pro-Zionist Jewish Labour MPs, together with the obsequious non-Jewish members desperate to stay close to very right-wing and anti-Labour Jewish 'leaders', are fuming: 'not enough expulsions', 'we need an independent process', 'we need to involve the Jewish community' – which for them means its right-wingers, who claim to speak for the rest of us.

They have been pushed back. The detail will be discussed further and refined before Labour Conference. And it has been confirmed that antisemitism will not be separated out, but that these processes will apply to all complaints of discrimination/abuse across the range of protected characteristics. Good. But this is a time when Labour members need to get their voices heard. We need to be stressing the need to resurrect an important document that has gotten more and more obscured – Shami Chakrabarti's excellent report from 2016.

That report contained many key principles and firm recommendations. For example, she argued that although 'expulsion may no doubt be necessary in some cases of gross, repeated or unrepentant unacceptable behaviour', her clear preference was for resorting to a greater 'range of disciplinary sanctions short of expulsion', using education.

She argued that,

> It should also be possible (in the interests of proportionality) for some concerns to be addressed informally without the need (at least initially) to set in train a formal investigation. Some members may have used inappropriate language in complete ignorance of its potential harm. An informal discussion may create an opportunity for resolution and learning in such circumstances.

She sought to replace the paranoid and toxic atmosphere that was felt at times in the party, with an atmosphere 'for learning, positive consensus and progressive change' where members 'discussed and debated difficult issues and differences, in an atmosphere of civility and a discourse of mutual respect'. For her that also meant 'a moratorium on the retrospective trawling of members' social media accounts and past comments'.

And in relation to those seemingly desperate to expel as many members as possible, as quickly as possible, and whose actions facilitate trial-by-media, she wrote:

> The Labour Party should seek to uphold the strongest principles of natural justice … it is important to remember that the beginning of an investigation into alleged misconduct is just that. The making of a complaint marks the beginning, not the end, of a hopefully fair process that might end in a warning, admonishment, some further sanction up to and including expulsion from the Party, or exoneration and no further action whatsoever.

She urged party disciplinary bodies

> to consider greater use of a wide and creative range of sanctions. These may include a warning, the requirement for apologies and/or some other form of sensitive reparation to another member or person or persons, a public warning or reprimand.

In cases where such measures were considered insufficient, then disciplinary bodies may have resort to 'suspension from the Party for up to two years, and expulsion'. But, Chakrabarti added, 'I do not recommend lifetime bans from the Labour Party. Present or future members of the NEC should not be robbed of their discretion to consider how someone may have changed their attitude'.

These are very wise words. And as the discussions continue on Labour's policies for handling complaints it is time to rehabilitate the central themes of the Chakrabarti Report. I suspect the one-time fascist, Charles Wegg-Prosser, who gave three of his years to Oswald Mosley, but decades afterwards to the Labour Party and to the defence of the rights of the most vulnerable, would strongly agree.

20

Stereotypes Should Be Discussed, Not Sanctioned

Jamie Stern-Weiner and Alan Maddison

VERSO BLOG, 19 JULY 2019

Over the course of the 'Labour antisemitism' controversy that has raged these past few years, the party's readiness to sanction or expel members who have expressed 'anti-Jewish' stereotypes has become the litmus test of its commitment to combating antisemitism.

Pundits and political actors have lined up to demand ever harsher and swifter sanctions against members 'guilty' of having at some point in their lives uttered one or more negative stereotypes about Jews. Groups trawl private Facebook pages and Twitter feeds for incriminating statements, reaching years into the past. Targets find themselves exposed in the press and hauled before party tribunals to account and atone for their deviant thoughts. Senior Labour figures now demand automatic expulsions for members found guilty of antisemitism.[1] Former prime minister Gordon Brown declares that Labour must not fail to take action against 'even … a single case of abuse'.[2] Jewish groups demand, and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn pledges, 'zero tolerance' for antisemitism.[3]

When Labour's general secretary equivocates from this line, and notes that it is 'impossible' to entirely eradicate antisemitism from a mass movement, she is furiously condemned.[4] Every last antisemite and trace of antisemitism in the party must be 'stamped out', 'rooted out', 'kicked out', 'eradicated', and 'expelled'.

Amid this persecutory hysteria, elementary truths have been forgotten – truths that pertain not merely to the cases in hand, but to the nature of stereotypes in general.

First, stereotypes are not individual aberrations or eccentric deviations. Rather, they reflect prejudices and associations that are deeply embedded in wider culture, tradition, and history.

Second, and as a result of this, no-one is immune from stereotypes – be they antisemitic, racist, xenophobic, sexist, homophobic, or ableist. We all harbour them because we are all products, however uneven, of society.

Third, harbouring a positive stereotype need not indicate love of the group in question, while harbouring a negative stereotype need not indicate animus toward the group in question. If I believe that Chinese people are good at maths, or that Jews are smart, it does not mean I love the Chinese or the Jews. By the same token, if I believe that Jews are cheap, it does not mean I necessarily harbour hatred toward them. Negative stereotypes about Jews are then not in and of themselves examples of antisemitism.

This last, critical point is recognised in – of all places – the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism, which the Labour Party was steamrollered into adopting in 2018. The IHRA produced a list of 'illustrative' examples of antisemitism. But it pointedly did *not* present these examples as self-evidently or inherently antisemitic. On the contrary, the IHRA stated that such stereotypes 'could' constitute antisemitism, 'taking into account the overall context'.

In other words: for a negative stereotype about Jews to be judged as manifesting hatred of Jews – certainly if this judgement is to be 'irrefutable'[5] – additional evidence of antisemitic motivation is required.

The IHRA defined antisemitism as a 'perception … which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews'. If this definition is applied to survey data on antisemitism, it becomes clear that the IHRA was right to distinguish between holding stereotypes about Jews and harbouring hatred toward them.

For example, a poll conducted by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) found that fully 30 percent of UK adults harboured

this or that stereotype about Jews.[6] However, if we use the IHRA's definition ('*hatred* toward Jews') then at most 2.4 percent of UK adults are antisemitic.[7]

That is to say, *fewer than one in twelve* people who harbour an 'anti-Jewish' stereotype can be plausibly described as antisemites.[8]

The *overwhelming majority* of those who harbour an 'anti-Jewish' stereotype do not bear hatred toward Jews.[9]

This distinction between stereotypes and hatred is common-sensical. Does every man who believes that women are bad drivers hate women? Plainly not. Yet by the standards now being bandied about, every Labour member who harbours this stereotype about women would have to be ejected from the party.

In this way, the 'Labour antisemitism' controversy has unmoored us from a reasonable, everyday perspective on how to deal with these issues.[10] To illustrate, consider one of the IHRA's examples:

> Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective – such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.

A 2018 YouGov survey commissioned by Hope Not Hate found 13 percent of the UK population in agreement that 'Jewish people have an unhealthy control over the world's banking system'[11] – a belief encompassed by the IHRA example above. Given that at most two percent of Labour voters harbour hatred toward Jews,[12] and assuming the figure above is the same for Labour voters as for the population as a whole, *fewer than one in six* Labour voters who harbour a belief in disproportionate or unhealthy Jewish control over world finance also feel hatred toward Jews.[13]

A Campaign Against Antisemitism survey found that 11 percent of Labour voters (as against 15 percent of Conservative voters) agreed that '[c]ompared to other groups, Jewish people have too much power in the media'[14] – another statement covered by the IHRA example above. Again, given that a maximum of two percent of Labour voters har-

bour hatred toward Jews, it follows that *fewer than one in five* Labour voters who harbour a belief in disproportionate Jewish power in the media will also feel hatred toward Jews.

Consider, in this respect, a 1993 survey interrogating Israeli Jews about Diaspora Jews and antisemitism. The survey found significant proportions of Israeli Jews in agreement that '[t]he Jews have a lot of economic power (money) and political influence in their country of residence' (72 percent), '[i]n general, Jews are more talented and successful than non-Jews' (69 percent), 'Jews are noisy and impolite' (34 percent), 'Jews are conceited, keep to themselves, and are disrespectful toward non-Jews' (29 percent), 'Jews cannot be trusted (dishonest, cunning)' (14 percent).[15]

The JPR's finding that one-third of UK adults agreed with at least one 'anti-Jewish' stereotype was adduced by media commentators as evidence that the UK was awash with antisemitism. By this logic, the antisemitism crisis in 1990s Israel was much more serious. It also bears notice that, to judge by the findings of that 1993 survey, most Israeli Jews would be expelled from the Labour Party for antisemitism.

Two conclusions follow from this discussion.

1. Antisemitism exposed in the Labour Party is even lower than disciplinary figures suggest

Since September 2015, approximately 0.06 percent of Labour Party members have been 'taken through the stages of our disciplinary procedures' over alleged antisemitism.[16]

This figure does not represent cases that arose 'organically' but is the product of organised and protracted efforts to flood Labour's disciplinary system with complaints.

From this already minuscule fraction must be subtracted false allegations; people who, at the time the complaint against them was filed, no longer believed the stereotype(s) they once shared; and people who never did believe it/them.

This leaves party members who, at the time a complaint was filed against them, still believed the 'antisemitic' stereotype(s) they had previously expressed. But as this discussion shows, the vast majority

of people who harbour at least one 'antisemitic' stereotype do not feel hatred toward Jews. The chances are therefore high that most party members who expressed one or more such stereotypes did not do so on the basis of anti-Jewish animus.

The proportion of Labour Party members who harbour hatred toward Jews so far brought to light rapidly approaches zero.

2. The censorial approach to Labour antisemitism is wholly misplaced

As Nadine Strossen, long-time former president of the American Civil Liberties Union, observes: 'speech that reflects discriminatory stereotypes can often result from ignorance or insensitivity rather than malevolence'.[17] It is certainly plausible that this statement applies to the vast majority of those who believe one or more stereotypes about Jews, particularly in the case of left-wingers, Labour voters, and Labour Party members.

The correct approach to such stereotypes remains that put forward by one of the giants of the left-liberal tradition, John Stuart Mill, in his classic work *On Liberty*: full, frequent, and fearless discussion. Free and unfettered exchange holds out the possibility that those who hold negative stereotypes can be persuaded out of them; those who do not hold such stereotypes can consider, refine and practice articulating their own views in light of them; and everyone can gain a truer understanding of the people around them.

As Strossen also writes, among the most effective means to reduce group prejudice is direct contact. This is one of the salutary functions of a mass party: to erode and overcome inter-group suspicions, misapprehensions, and antipathies – which *everyone* in the real world harbours – by bringing together people from all walks of life in common struggle for shared objectives.

In a futile effort to appease bad-faith opponents, Labour has betrayed the libertarian socialist tradition that represents the best of its intellectual and political heritage. From '*the Truth is revolutionary*' (Gramsci) and '*Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently*' (Luxemburg), the Labour bureaucracy is degenerating into a machine for thought-control.

Labour's critics maintain that anything other than a harsh punitive and censorial approach to 'anti-Jewish' stereotypes is evidence that the party is prioritising public relations over anti-racism. Precisely the reverse is true. Surveilling, investigating, and sanctioning members for deviant expressions may make for good press (albeit all the evidence suggests otherwise), but it does nothing to reduce antisemitism.

TESTIMONIES:
LABOUR JEWS SPEAK UP

On 1 August 2018, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) announced that it had launched 'an investigation into allegations of antisemitism in The Labour Party'.[1]

Later that month, a Call for Testimonies to be submitted as evidence to the EHRC investigation was circulated online.

In little over a week, testimonies were submitted by 143 Labour members of Jewish heritage, who had collectively been in the Labour Party for more than 1,300 years.

Several of these testimonies follow.[2]

Rica Vivien Bird

CLP: Wirral South
Time in Labour Party: 6 years

I have been a member of the Labour Party since January 2016, and previously between 1999 and 2003, and a Labour Party supporter throughout my adult life.

My political activities, including non-party political activities in the wider labour movement, have arisen from my concerns about various issues. These have included equal rights for women, nuclear disarmament, promotion of securing peace in those parts of the world suffering armed conflict, extending provision for the under-5's, support for women experiencing domestic abuse, campaigning for retention of community NHS services, welfare rights services for those in receipt of state benefits, opposing Apartheid in South Africa, standing up for human rights with those experiencing oppression in any part of the world, trade union defence of members at home and abroad, and campaigning on behalf of Labour in local and national elections.

Throughout these activities over many years, my experience is that fellow Labour Party activists of any faith, or none, have always been respectful and comradely towards me, taking my Jewish heritage into account. I have been involved in many disagreements with fellow activists, some of them very harsh indeed, but never because those opposed to my viewpoints were antisemitic. It's precisely because I feel secure that members of the Labour Party will respect my heritage, as I do theirs, that I am able to continue my membership, and activities in the Labour Party, with sustained confidence.

31 August 2018

Andrew Feinstein

CLP: Cantelowes
Time in Labour Party: 3 years

I am a Jew, the son of a Holocaust survivor who lost almost 30 members of her family in Auschwitz and Theresienstadt. I was also the first MP to introduce a motion on the Holocaust in the South African parliament. I have written about genocide prevention and lectured on the same topic at Auschwitz for the Auschwitz Institute.

I have never experienced a hint of antisemitism in the Labour Party. In fact under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership I believe the party has become a champion of anti-racism in all its forms, including fighting antisemitism.

I have been deeply angered and saddened by some of the comments made by Labour MPs and the media who conflate legitimate criticism of Israel with antisemitism.

Margaret Hodge's comparison of her disciplinary process with the feelings of her family fleeing the Nazis were deeply repulsive to me as they trivialised the experience of my own family, so many of whom died at the hands of the Nazis.

Such behaviour and comments actually inhibit the struggle to eliminate antisemitism and all racism.

24 August 2018

J.G.

CLP: Rugby
Time in Labour Party: 40 years

I am a 70-year-old Jew living in the Midlands. My mother was a Kindertransport refugee, most of whose family, including her parents, were murdered by the Nazis. My father was the grandson of refugees from Czarist pogroms. Both my parents were active members of the Labour Party continually from the time they left the Communist Party in the 1950s until their deaths in 2013 and 2017. Neither of them ever mentioned to me any antisemitic experiences in the Labour Party.

I have been an active member of the Labour Party since the mid-1970s, in four different constituencies. In my 40 years in the party I have never experienced or witnessed any antisemitism beyond the very occasional bad taste remark and that's not happened for at least 20 years. Furthermore, when I have asked my Jewish friends and relatives who are Labour Party members whether they have experienced antisemitism in the party the answer is the same: no.

The accusations against Jeremy Corbyn and the Left in the Labour Party are false and unjustified. To describe the Labour Party as institutionally antisemitic is absurd and betrays a complete misunderstanding of the term 'institutional'. This is not to deny that there is revolting abuse on social media, some of it antisemitic and some of it from self-styled supporters of Jeremy Corbyn, but most of it from avowedly right-wing people. Very rarely is there is any evidence that antisemitic abuse is coming from Labour Party members. Where such evidence exists, I am confident that the offenders can and will be disciplined by the party, especially now that it has finally set up effective procedures under its new General Secretary appointed under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership.

Accusations against the Labour Party of antisemitism are driven almost entirely, in my opinion, by a burning desire to topple Jeremy Corbyn from the leadership and/or to damage the Labour Party in order to perpetuate Conservative rule.

31 August 2018; revised 31 July 2019

Dr Sam Glatt

CLP: Sunderland South
Time in Labour Party: 46 years

Editor's Note: Sam Glatt passed away in 2018. A tribute to him written by a close friend follows his testimony.

Dear Sir or Madam,

I would like to say that I am appalled to learn that Jeremy Corbyn has yet again been unfairly accused of antisemitism and my Labour Party of institutionalised antisemitism. I find this ludicrous.

I am Jewish, a 92-year-old Labour Party member, and supporter of Jeremy Corbyn. I was brought up in the East End of London in the 1930s so I know what real antisemitism is, and I learnt to recognise our true friends within the Labour movement.

It is ridiculous to allege that there is now any significant antisemitism in the Labour Party. My 70 years in the Labour movement confirms this and that includes recent meetings with members of Momentum who I found very welcoming.

I believe the problem is rather coming from those anti-Corbyn groups who wish to conflate anti-Zionism with antisemitism, and silence critics of Israeli Government policies. This distortion promotes the false concept that Corbyn and Labour are not in favour of a secure state of Israel. This in turn feeds into the understandable, sometimes subconscious fear of many Jews living here, that their safe refuge in the event of another genocide risk could be under threat.

My hope is that you will carefully review the evidence for these unfounded claims against Corbyn and Labour, reject these allegations, and reassure Jewish residents on all sides of the political spectrum, that they will be safe with a Labour Government led by Jeremy Corbyn.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Sam Glatt

Saying Farewell to Sam Glatt
Alan Maddison
Political Sift, 25 November 2018

My dear friend Sam Glatt passed away at home 5th October 2018, aged 92.

On Friday 23rd November I joined others in paying tribute to this remarkable man, at an event organised by his daughters, Cathy and Helen.

Speaking with other guests that evening, with medical colleagues, political comrades, friends and family, the common thread about Sam was his intelligence, kindness, humour, gentleness, his political activism and a strong drive to help others.

Sam had been born (1926) and raised in the East End of London. In his early years he lived through the depression, the rise in fascism with Mosley's marches and the Battle of Cable Street, and then World War 2.

After the war he joined the Communist Party, saying they had done more than any other left-wing party to protect British Jews, like himself, against fascism.

An Asian medical colleague took the microphone and told us that after qualifying at Sheffield University Sam took up general practice in a small mining village near Sunderland. For the patients, he earned respect for being a good doctor, but also their appreciation for understanding and caring about the problems and hardships the miners, and their families, had to face. He became part of that solidarity characteristic of many mining communities. Sam also had many Asian and Muslim friends and had done a lot to help poor Bangladeshi immigrants living in the area.

The retired MP and friend, Chris Mullin, talked of Sam's activism in the Labour Party after he joined in 1972. A passion shared with his late wife Joan. Chris shared some amusing anecdotes. On one occasion when they were door-knocking together, a young lad answered the door to Sam and the father asked from upstairs who it was. When the boy replied it was somebody from Labour the father cried, 'Tell him to F**K OFF!' As Sam was walking away the father came running

down the path and said, 'Eeh am reelly sorry Dr Glatt, ah didn't kna it was you … ye'll have me vote Thursdah, nee worry!'

Another fellow GP Labour activist told us that in the '70s and '80s Sam had given talks on various, sometimes controversial, medical issues, such as abortion or contraception, to groups of Labour members. In particular, he had been keen to increase awareness of a little publicised report by Sir Douglas Black of the Royal College of Physicians. This report was produced in 1980, and demonstrated that widening differences in ill-health and death rates were not down to NHS treatment but to social inequalities. A subject dear to Sam's heart if not that of Margaret Thatcher.

More recently, Sam welcomed the arrival of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party, feeling Labour had previously shifted too far to the right. He was dismayed at the unfounded antisemitic smears against Corbyn and his supporters. Sam said that personally he had never experienced antisemitism in his almost 50 years in the Labour party, though he felt it may exist in a minority of members. He said the real threats of antisemitism came from the extreme right, not from disagreements with the left on the Israeli Government policies concerning equal rights for Palestinians. Sam understood the importance of Israel for many British Jews, but said he wanted an Israel that did not punish Palestinians for something German fascists had done to European Jews over 75 years ago.

In 2016 Sam wrote an open letter to John Mann MP criticising him for his attacks on Corbyn and Labour members who supported him. He defended Ken Livingstone and Dr Jacqueline Walker and questioned Mann on the political motivations behind his deliberate conflation of anti-Zionism and antisemitism. Many Corbyn supporters had been suspended and deprived of their vote in the second leadership campaign of that time. For Sam this was a disgraceful use of false allegations employed to oust Corbyn and silence support for Palestinian rights.

When my turn to speak came, I talked of how Sam, even in his nineties, was still very much engaged in Labour politics, and support for Jeremy Corbyn. Sam was well read and when he first met my French wife, Françoise, we were surprised when he spoke to her

in fluent French. We discovered that he also spoke Spanish and Russian. We both found Sam to be excellent company, with wonderful stories, intelligent insight, wisdom, and a great sense of humour. He was always thoughtful, courteous, and gentle.

Many times we were stopped in the street by grateful patients, despite his having been retired for some time. But after a lifetime of helping others he found it hard to accept his gradual loss of independence and the support he needed, even if it was so willingly offered. He missed his wife Joan terribly, but was proud and happy to have their two lovely daughters and their grandchildren.

It was a privilege for me and Françoise to have been Sam's friends, and to share so many interesting conversations. I ended my talk on one discussion we had about the importance of 'kindness'. Sam quoted a short poem which I have included below, for I can see why he, in particular, appreciated it.

Question not but live and labour,
till your goal be won.
Helping every feeble neighbour,
seeking help from none.
Life is mostly froth and bubble,
two things stand in stone,
kindness in another's trouble,
courage in your own.

Adam Linsday Gordon, 1866

Murray Glickman

CLP: Ilford South
Time in Labour Party: > 35 years

I am a Jewish 71-year-old. I am a Labour Party member and have held a party card for most of my adult life. I can say categorically that I have never encountered antisemitism in the party and would not expect ever to do so. I have had more conversations than I can recall with other party members, Jewish and not Jewish, in which one of us has asked the other: 'Have you ever come across antisemitism in the party?' The other has replied: 'No, have you?' to which the answer is 'No'. At that point we both shrug shoulders in speechless bemusement.

That said, I am someone who knows what antisemitism is. I remember a number of painful personal experiences in my younger years. I vividly recall what my father and grandfather told me about the antisemitism they suffered. I lost family in the Holocaust. I am also reasonably well read in Jewish history. I think I am therefore qualified to insist that, far from antisemitism, what pervades the Labour party is a strong and conscious anti-racist ethos – never more so than at the present time. I feel valued and totally comfortable and welcome within the party.

My immediate reference point whenever the issue of antisemitism arises is my father's experience as a young man in the East End of London in the 1930s and in particular something he never forgot – the two letters, 'P' and 'J'. These were daubed on walls all over the East End by members of the British Union of Fascists; they stood for *Perish Judah*. They were a channel for expressing direct violent hostility towards every Jewish individual who chanced to see them. And the fascists made sure to target streets which Jewish people could not avoid. For the rest of his life, my father carried with him the sense of existential threat these letters induced. When compared to the real experience of antisemitism, such as this, the allegations of 'antisemitism' within the Labour Party over which such a furore has been generated are to me frankly ridiculous, even we take them

at face value. More than that, they are an insult to the memory of the countless victims of real antisemitism through the centuries.

Equally, I judge claims that the party is overrun by antisemites by reference to the real thing: John Tyndall, the first leader of the BNP, or Colin Jordan come to mind. But there is simply no one in the party who remotely resembles either of them. Nor are there any wannabe David Irvings in party circles with a mission to 'prove' the Holocaust never happened. In fact, it would be difficult to think of less fertile terrain than the Labour Party for anyone with serious ambitions to foment antisemitism in British society.

What we do have in the party is a large number of people (including many Jews) whose humanity makes them passionate about the continuing oppression of the Palestinian people and angry at the aggressive variant of Zionism which loudly denies that there is any such thing. On the other hand, we have a significant number of Jews who do not separate their Jewish identity from their Zionist outlook and feel real personal hurt when the case for Palestinian rights is robustly made. There is no easy reconciliation here, no more than there is in the case of other long-running political conflicts. However, what is not acceptable are manoeuvres to disqualify as racist those who stand on one side of the argument and the political case that they make. The present complaint to the EHRC is in my view one such manoeuvre.

28 August 2018

Mike Howard

CLP: Hastings & Rye (and five previous CLPs)
Time in Labour Party: 35 years

I am writing to object in the strongest terms to the allegation made by the 'Campaign Against Antisemitism' (CAA) that the Labour Party is guilty of institutional antisemitism.

I am a Jewish working-class socialist from an East End of London and Glaswegian family who escaped from the antisemitic pogroms in Russia and Poland and travelled to Britain in the early twentieth century to save their lives.

This however did not stop my family having to actively campaign against racism in the UK, which in our experience has always come from right-wing forces.

Whether it was battling with Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists in 1936 at the Battle of Cable Street when he tried to march through our East End neighbourhood, or when they tried to rabble rouse post-war in our Hackney locality, or against the National Front or British National Party when they continued their vile peddling of hatred, our family and friends have always had to campaign – often against the advice of the Jewish establishment to stay indoors and not get involved.

In my youth at school I was called a 'fat Jew boy' and attacked.

I know what real antisemitism looks like.

All my immediate family have been members of the Labour Party and my parents and I have also been active in our trade unions, including as representatives/branch officers.

In my case, I am also a retired life member of Unison, having worked for over 30 years in local government and education up to a senior level including as an Assistant Director at a London-based university.

Given that the authorities I have worked for have often been in inner-city areas with very diverse populations, I am professionally also very well aware of equal opportunity policy, appropriate conduct, and what constitutes real discrimination.

Since first joining in 1970 I have been an active member and officer of six Constituency Labour Party's in various parts of the UK, a National Committee member of the National Organisation of Labour Students, and most recently a Labour Councillor, including as Vice Chair of Hastings Borough Council's Scrutiny Committee for the previous six years.

I am also proud to be a member and officer of Hastings & Rye Constituency Labour Party from whom our ex-Labour MP Michael Foster, as Equalities Minister, oversaw the passing of the Equalities Act 2010 by the previous Labour Government.

It is from this background that I am able to contribute this testimonial.

In all these years I have never heard or heard of one antisemitic comment in party circles that involves insulting Jews because they are Jews by a Labour Party member with appropriate details that would stand up to proper scrutiny by independent knowledgeable minds or a court of law.

In addition, given that the allegation that the Labour Party is 'institutionally antisemitic' is very recent, it presumes that we have suddenly attracted a whole cohort of racist people *and* that our party is not only doing little or nothing about it, but actually encouraging it by inaction.

With well over 500,000 members, the largest political party in Europe, it is always possible that we may have one or two misguided people who need re-educating, but that does not make us 'institutionally antisemitic'.

I would also hope that the EHRC is aware of the context within which the allegation sits: that of the deliberate conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism with regard to the activities of the Israeli government. Their mistreatment of Arab Israelis, Palestinians, Gazans and oppositionist Jews is in my view understandably causing an increasing number of people to become stressed to the point of outrage.

From its inception in the late-nineteenth century many Jews like my immediate family have considered Zionism to be a reactionary nationalist political movement to be challenged. It has often used violence against opponents, done what it can to get us to leave our homes in other countries to live in Israel and since that State's inception, developed institutional discrimination via its Constitution, laws, and state organisations against non-Jews.

In contrast, since its creation in 1900, our party has often been at the forefront of campaigning for civil and human rights for all people.

In my view, it is that activity, particularly if Labour becomes the next government, that the CAA and their friends fear.

I am sure that the Commission is as well aware as other appropriate bodies of the party's publicly available and well-publicised anti-racist and equality policies, rules of conduct, and actions.

I consider the allegation and action by the CAA to be a vexatious and dangerous action by a small group of right-wing people, backed by our political opponents, including those in the Jewish establishment such as the Conservative Party-supporting leaders of the undemocratic, unrepresentative Board of Deputies, certain Rabbis, and the Jewish and mainstream media.

They appear to be doing everything in their power to attack Jeremy Corbyn, dictate how our party operates, and hamper the democratic election of an alternative Labour government led by him.

I am also aware that the CAA is registered as a charity and that this status is being challenged on the basis that their politically biased activities are forbidden under Charity Commission rules.

May I suggest that your time might be better spent scrutinising, investigating, and pursuing the alleged racism and other discriminatory activities by members of ultra-right wing groups, UKIP, and the Conservative Party – as, for example, publicised by people such as Baroness Warsi, when she resigned as a Government Minister.

29 August 2018

Stephen Kapos

CLP: Holborn & St. Pancras (Kentish Town)
Time in Labour Party: approx. 40 years

My name is Stephen Kapos and I am a child survivor of the Holocaust.

I was seven years old in Hungary, in 1944 briefly in a camp in Budapest, had to wear the yellow star, and later in hiding on false papers.

I have been an active member of the Labour Party for the last some 40 years.

I have never experienced or witnessed antisemitism within the Labour Party.

I think that the antisemitism charges against Labour are false and are weaponised by the right against the policies and leadership of the party.

The party should stick to its version of the IHRA definition including its own version of the related examples.

With best wishes,
Stephen Kapos

24 August 2018

Agnes Kory

CLP: Hampstead & Kilburn
Time in Labour Party: > 2 years

I am a Holocaust child survivor and a member of the Labour Party as well as Momentum. I am also a Holocaust researcher.

At no stage or point have I experienced or even noticed anti-semitism in the Labour Party.

I am deeply saddened by the weaponising of such an important issue, possibly for hidden political agendas.

24 August 2018

Emeritus Professor Frank Land (London School of Economics)

CLP: Totnes (former branch chair, South Woodford)
Time in Labour Party: > 3 years

Professor Frank Land (right), receiving his OBE.

I am, and have been a member of the Labour Party for many years and have served as branch chair (South Woodford) for a considerable period in the 1950s and 60s. I am an 89 year old Jew, refugee from Nazi Germany in April 1939, and as such very sensitive to real antisemitism. I lost a number of relatives in the holocaust and other members of my family are scattered throughout the world, including Israel.

Like many of my fellow refugees I am critical of some aspects of Israel's conduct vis-á-vis Palestinians and Israel's own Arab minority. That does not make me an antisemite or what defenders of all Israel's actions term 'a self-hating Jew'.

I can say with total confidence that the Labour Party does not harbour institutional antisemitism and that its leader Jeremy Corbyn is not an antisemite. There is no widespread antisemitism in the Labour

Party or any evidence of such, though, of course, as with any population, there are pockets of antisemitism. When individuals are identified they are suspended from the party. As a Jew who has lived through and witnessed real antisemitism, I bitterly resent the attempt to conflate a critique of specific Israeli policies and actions with antisemitism.

We as Jews, victims of the holocaust, should be the most sensitive to the suffering of other oppressed people. As such we should be in the forefront in confronting oppression from wherever it comes.

23 August 2018

Bernice Laschinger

CLP: Brent North
Time in Labour Party: 2 years

I am a Jewish member of the Labour Party. In the current context in which the tragedy of the Holocaust has been 'weaponised' to justify the oppressive policies of the Israeli occupation, it is perhaps pertinent for me to mention that my grandparents and many members of my extended family perished in the Latvian holocaust.

I grew up in a small South African mining town under apartheid and therefore have a clear understanding of the horrendous consequences of racist policies, thinking, and insults.

I would like to state clearly and firmly that I have never experienced antisemitism in the Labour Party. I have no doubt about the existence of antisemitism, which is probably endemic to most Western cultures, but I do not believe that it is a problem specific to the Labour Party. Indeed I feel there may be a greater level of consciousness of its malign effects within the Labour Party than in the wider community. There is also a greater consciousness of the suffering of the Palestinian people under the Israeli occupation. I feel the current allegations are based on the conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism.

However, I feel it is vital for the Labour Party to support the Palestinian people and to criticise their oppressors. While much is made of this alleged 'antisemitism' in the media, it is striking how restrained is the focus on the daily killings of innocent civilians in the occupied territories.

I feel that a smear campaign is being waged against Jeremy Corbyn, particularly because the current support of the Boycott and Divestment campaign against Israel is gaining greater momentum. A number of commentators have astutely pointed out that the daily attacks on Corbyn bear all the hallmarks of a centrally directed operation.

28 August 2018

Rachel Lever

CLP: Hastings & Rye
Time in Labour Party: > 3 years

My family had come from north-eastern Europe, then settled in the English north-west. Two grandparents were native Russian speakers. We ate kosher, observed the Sabbath, fasted at Yom Kippur. And when I was four (in 1947) the whole family upped and moved to Palestine. Some are still there.

My young childhood was aware of the Holocaust. Three uncles by marriage had 'got out' in time. Hebrew stories I read were suffused by it.

Though secular by conviction, I feel especially relaxed and comfortable around other Jews and have a strong pull towards the culture and traditions of Judaism, the sound of Yiddish, the paintings of Chagall. As a socialist I am proud that my people pioneered the universalism that marked the founding declaration of the United Nations.

I feel a little bashful in the Labour Party about saying I am Jewish. Far from meeting with hostility, people treat me as special. It helps that I am very strongly for free speech on Israel, as is also my local party. But notably, one of our members who does advocate for Israel was adopted as a Council candidate and supported to win the seat.

I can say that in my own hearing and experience, while Jews as such are never held to be responsible for Israel, Labour members (Jews and non-Jews) who do advocate for Israel might get treated with some caution and this will no doubt grow as a result of the 'antisemitism' campaign against Corbyn. Such people also treat me as the lowest form of human life.

I have yet to meet anyone, Jewish or not, Labour or not, who believes a single word of the press outcry or has seen anything remotely resembling the antisemitism it alleges. Not a single one of the high-profile cases and expulsions have been other than a planned and rehearsed theatrical performance intended to create the illusion of a crisis.

I have, however, encountered some online comments (mostly from abroad, so not Labour members) that show ignorance or prej-

udice, or credulity around conspiracy theories and dark warnings about Mossad, Jewish lobbies, and Rothschild money.

I do not feel in the least threatened or outraged, but I do always make a point of calling it out and explaining why this is wrong and unhelpful and asking them to stop. I believe that any Labour members who stray into this kind of speech should not be punished, suspended or expelled but dealt with in a thoughtful manner as outlined in the NEC Code and the Chakrabarti Report.

I do feel threatened by the sudden rise of the ultra-right and neo-Nazis since June this year, and astonished that instead of focusing on that, the Jewish press has decided that the 'existential threat' is from Jeremy Corbyn. Not only is that absurd and slanderous, it is dangerous.

Non-abusive free speech is not just a right, it is an absolute necessity. It is the antidote to the ignorance that fosters antisemitism and other, far more prevalent, forms of racism.

The attack on free speech by the IHRA (a pseudo-legal set of codes that is neither holy writ nor the world-agreed 'definition' it is claimed to be) is deeply damaging to our national and academic discourse and political life. It has been casually adopted, often on the nod as 'virtue signalling' by universities, local authorities, and police forces in opposition to our democratically enacted human rights law, and is being used in a blatant attempt to remove the elected leader of the Labour Party.

23 August 2018

Moshe Mankoff

CLP: Gateshead
Time in Labour Party: 3 years

I am a visibly Orthodox Jew who joined the Labour Party in 2015 to support Jeremy Corbyn's left-wing leadership. I have attended many meetings and encountered no antisemitism of any kind.

21 August 2018

Angie Mindel

CLP: Nottingham East (Sherwood Branch)
Time in Labour Party: > 2.5 years

I welcome this opportunity to give my testimony as a Jewish member of the Labour Party.

My grandparents came to the UK in the early 1900s escaping the pogroms in Lithuania and I was brought up in an orthodox Jewish Community. I was an active member of the Labour Party during the 1980s but left as I didn't like the direction in which the party was going. I re-joined once Jeremy Corbyn was elected as leader. I am now a CLP delegate and a member of the Local Campaign Forum.

In all my time in the Labour Party I have never experienced or witnessed any antisemitism at Labour Party meetings or gatherings, or from Labour Party members. There is an evident ethos of antiracism, which includes fighting antisemitism, and positive encouragement to those of all faiths and none. I am sure there is some antisemitism in the party, as there is in all other parties and society at large, and this needs to be dealt with robustly, but the data shows that this is a very tiny percentage in a party of half a million members. I also condemn the nasty online antisemitic abuse that some Jewish MPs have received and this must be dealt with. However there is no evidence that this abuse comes from Labour Party members and possibly not even Labour Party supporters. It has been demonstrated that Diane Abbott MP receives more online abuse than all the other MPs put together. It is a modern challenge as to how to deal with all online abuse that often manifests as both racist and misogynist.

The Labour Party has procedures to deal with allegations of abuse. Unfortunately, under the previous General Secretary, the system was opaque, with many unsubstantiated allegations being left uninvestigated for long periods of time. I believe that some of these allegations were malicious and designed to curtail free speech on Israel and Palestine, which I will come back to later in this submission. I welcomed the Chakrabarti Report which proposed that all cases should be dealt with transparently and with due process. For a party that advocates

human rights around the globe, it should deal with its own members properly, respectfully, and with due diligence. I am hopeful that the new General Secretary will now implement the recommendations swiftly.

The so-called 'crisis of antisemitism' is not in fact a crisis of antisemitism within the party or by its members, given my caveat above of the small percentage of cases. This crisis has been created deliberately, largely from those outside the party – the Board of Deputies (BoD), Jewish Leadership Council, Zionist Federation UK, CAA, etc. – abetted by some within the Parliamentary Labour Party and others within the party who want to remove Corbyn as leader. This is because he is a socialist and also – mainly – because he supports the rights of Palestinians to live their lives free of oppression in their own land. Those who are bombarding him with allegations – some of which I believe are libellous – are in the main Conservative Party supporters and donors and/or advocates for the Israeli Government. The media have picked up on this as if the Jewish Community is of one mind and allegiance and that the BoD et al. speak for all UK Jews. This is most definitely not the case – they certainly do not speak for me or for many Jewish people. Stating that all Jews support Zionism is extremely dangerous as it equates support for Israel – and its actions – with all Jews. Similarly that those of us who oppose Zionism are 'the wrong kind of Jew' and that our voices should not be heard. I and many Jews say, 'Not in my name'.

Jeremy Corbyn is a lifelong antiracist campaigner, and there is ample evidence of his campaigns against antisemitism and his support for the Jewish community in various forms over the years. I find it offensive that he should be being accused of antisemitism, including by those like Margaret Hodge who saw fit to scream abuse at him in Parliament and likened her own treatment to that of Jews in the holocaust.

Many of us have had meetings with Palestinian speakers disrupted and intimidated by members of the Zionist Federation and it was these individuals who had shouted down a Palestinian speaker who Corbyn was referring to in the latest manufactured incident.[3] His words should not be taken out of context. The subsequent attack by

Lord Sachs – former Chief Rabbi – comparing Corbyn with Enoch Powell and the 'Rivers of Blood' speech is not only libellous but is offensive to all those who have suffered racist attacks over the years arising out of Powell's speech.

We are currently witnessing the most horrific daily human rights abuses against the Palestinian people, with illegal land grabs, humiliation and intimidation, imprisonment of children, innocent protestors being killed and maimed in cold blood with live fire, and a regime that has just passed Nation State laws giving citizenship rights only to Jewish people that are reminiscent of those in Germany in the 1930s. It is incumbent upon all of us to shout out loud and clear that this must be stopped, to call for Government sanctions against such a regime, and, yes, to be able to call it out as racist and make any historical comparisons that are relevant. It is not antisemitic to be anti-Zionist. Zionism is a political ideology – also held by many Fundamentalist Christians – that has been opposed by many Jews since its inception in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

What should be investigated at this time, in addition to those actions of the Israeli Government classed as illegal under International Law, is the interference by a foreign state – Israel – in all our political parties, with its influences on MPs and Labour Party members. It could start by investigating both Labour and Conservative Friends of Israel – where their funding comes from and what it is being used for. There is ample evidence out there, e.g. from the Al Jazeera's undercover filming of 'The Lobby'.

In addition, an investigation should take place into the so-called Campaign Against Antisemitism, whose charitable status should exclude them from participating in any political activity but who have stated that they aim to take Jeremy Corbyn down. Their recent online petition, on Change.org, is deeply offensive and is in fact an incitement to violence against Jeremy Corbyn, the threat of which is, as we know following the murder of Jo Cox MP, a dangerous reality.

In conclusion, I believe the current crisis is being whipped up by those who want to silence criticism of Israel and to topple the Leader of the Opposition. The Labour Party stands proudly for Free Speech

and human rights, as well as antiracism in all its forms, and we must be able to stand up to these bullies and continue to speak out.

I welcome the opportunity to give testimony to this enquiry and hope that my voice will be heard.

30 August 2018

Elizabeth Morley

CLP: Ceredigion
Jewish heritage: Yes
Time in Labour Party: 3 years

I am Jewish. I am 72 years old. I have been a Labour Party member for three years. I joined because I have always respected Jeremy Corbyn's politics, above all his socialist-inspired advocacy of religious, racial, ethnic, and every other type of equality in our country and in the wider world. I cannot understand how a party led by one of the least racist politicians in the world could be called racist and accused of 'institutional antisemitism'! It would be laughable if it were not so serious and dangerous.

I and my Jewish Labour friends would have been among the first to notice if there really was antisemitism in the party. We can only assume that these smears are a cover for something else. We are sad and angry that our voices are drowned out in the media by those who want to destroy Mr Corbyn. Whoever they are they have demonstrated that they don't care if in the process they destroy one of the great historical parties of this country.

It is dangerous and disgusting that the Campaign Against Antisemitism are using the weapon of antisemitism to get rid of one of the most decent politicians in the country. It risks a backlash of real antisemitism because more and more people are realising that this is nothing but a political witch-hunt pretending to be about protecting Jewish people. It is time to bring sanity back to this country.

23 August 2018

Sonia Routledge

CLP: Islington North
Time in Labour Party: 4 years

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am a Jewish member of the Labour Party.

I re-joined the party after the 2015 general election, though before it became clear that I would have the opportunity to vote for a true democratic socialist as party leader – i.e., Jeremy Corbyn. When that became clear I felt real hope for change for the first time in decades and I have voted twice for Jeremy as party leader. I am privileged to have him as my MP too, and I will always stand by him.

After I re-joined the party in 2015 I started attending my local ward group meetings (Junction Ward). I have participated in canvassing with other local activists from my ward group. I have attended social/fundraising events with my ward group and our neighbouring ward group (St George's). I have attended a CLP meeting too. I have experienced *no* antisemitism at all in the context of these meetings and activities.

Unsurprisingly, given the progressive nature of the Labour Party and its long-established credentials as an anti-racist party, I find my fellow party members are extremely respectful of one another. Several other regular attendees at our ward group meetings are also Jewish.

It may well be that when I first started attending meetings, etc., not many of my fellow local party members were aware I am Jewish. My Dad isn't Jewish and I have his family name. But I do wear a Star of David quite often. This is my way of keeping in mind the family I never met, and to remember my maternal Grandmother who thankfully escaped to Britain in time from Czechoslovakia. But over time I think more people have become aware, through me getting to know my fellow party members better, and the conversations we have had. Also, perhaps, because earlier this year (2019) I drafted a letter to send to Jeremy Hunt about the appalling and very upsetting comments he had made in an interview with the *Jewish News*, implying that our MP is somehow a threat to Jews in the same way as the Nazis were. I told my

ward group I would be doing this and offered to share the letter with any of them who might want to sign up to it, which some of them did.

I do not believe that the Labour Party is an antisemitic party. I do not believe our leader, Jeremy Corbyn, is an antisemite. I think that nothing could be further from the truth. As has been said many times, in a party with such a large membership, it is probably sadly inevitable that there will be a handful of people who have unacceptable views about the Jewish people. But I believe that the party, under the stewardship of Jennie Formby, is trying hard to address this. What has been extremely painful is what I believe has been the exploitation of the issue of antisemitism for political purposes by people within and outside the party. It is hard to describe the hurt one feels when the memory of those we lost in the most appalling circumstances is invoked for cynical political ends, as I made clear in my letter to Jeremy Hunt.

To reiterate, I have never experienced antisemitism in the Labour Party and I am aware of no evidence whatsoever that would cause me even to begin to think that Jeremy Corbyn might hold antisemitic views.

29 August 2018; revised 11 November 2019

Mike Scott

CLP: Rushcliffe
TIME IN LABOUR PARTY: 3 years (plus five years in the 1960s)

I am a Jewish member of the Labour Party and currently Press Officer for the Rushcliffe CLP, one of the largest in the East Midlands. I have had a lifetime of activism in the Labour Party, the Trade Union movement, and innumerable national and international campaigns, and was employed as a fulltime TU Organiser until my retirement. I have also lived in several different parts of the country, including London, Birmingham, Brighton, and Nottingham, my present home.

I believe this breadth of experience makes me particularly well able to comment on the current allegations against the Labour Party in general and Jeremy Corbyn in particular.

In terms of antisemitism generally, I have personally experienced this in the past, from being physically threatened as a child to hurtful and inaccurate stereotypes as an adult. Those in the recent past have been very much rooted in ignorance rather than outright racism and those responsible have often been shocked to realise how their words could be interpreted.

At this point, I need to say quite unequivocally that I have never had an antisemitic statement made either to me or in front of me by any member of the Labour Party. Does this mean there are no antisemites in the party? No, it doesn't: there are antisemites everywhere and antisemitism isn't going away anytime soon. What it does mean is that it is extremely uncommon in the party and certainly not 'institutional'.

It is my strongly held view, borne out by direct observation, that the 'crisis' in the Labour Party has been created by an assortment of people with a range of ulterior motives, using antisemitism as a battering ram. Some of these are clearly related to a fundamental antipathy to the party, particularly the allegations from the Jewish Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council (JLC). It is telling that the former Chair of the JLC is now the Chief Executive of the Conserva-

tive Party and also worth noting that the antisemitic attacks on Ed Miliband (and his father) came from the political right, not the left.

Other current allegations come from people who are extreme pro-Zionists or are strongly opposed to any leftward movement by the Labour Party. In other words, this issue is about politics, not antisemitism. It is absolutely crucial that the distinction between criticism of the Israeli government's treatment of the Palestinian people and outright antisemitism is maintained; they are not the same thing, despite the possibility of some overlap. Allegations of racism of any sort are very powerful and must not be made without supporting evidence or as a means of closing down an important political debate.

24 August 2018

Jenny Secretan

CLP: Newcastle-upon-Tyne Central
Time in Labour Party: 2 years

I have never ever experienced or witnessed antisemitic comments or actions from anyone at all in the Labour Party. I am 64 years old, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor from Vienna, and Jewish. I have always found Labour to be welcoming and anti-racist. If Jews were under threat in this country it would be Labour that I would look to for protection. My fears are of the far-right, not in the least from Labour. Please be clear about this!

23 August 2018.

Roger Silverman

CLP: West Ham (lead delegate to 2019 Labour Party conference)
Time in Labour Party: > 30 years

I would like to submit the following points to the National Executive Committee (NEC) before it takes a decision on its definition of antisemitism.[4]

I have some credentials on this question. My grandparents were penniless refugees from pogroms in the Tsarist Russian empire, driven from their homes by riots, slaughter and arson. Soon afterwards, my maternal grandfather was the victim of an antisemitic murder in Liverpool.

My father Sydney Silverman was a left Labour MP for 33 years until his death, personally responsible for introducing the historic private member's bill which abolished capital punishment. At the time of the holocaust, he was a Zionist. In 1940 he was elected chair of the British section of the World Jewish Congress, and in this capacity he was among the first to warn the world about Hitler's 'final solution of the Jewish question' and to mount a desperate worldwide campaign to save European Jewry from genocide. Three days after my birth, he visited the newly liberated Buchenwald and Belsen Nazi concentration camps as a member of a parliamentary delegation. He supported the establishment of a Jewish state as a homeland for displaced holocaust survivors, but he was later to fiercely oppose Israeli participation in the Suez war in 1956, and died in 1968 outraged at the Israeli occupation of the West Bank after the 1967 war.

In my early teens, as well as a member of the Young Socialists I was also a member of Hashomer Hatzair, a socialist Zionist youth organization. I joined the Labour Party at the age of 15 and have been a member all my life, with the exception of the long 'New Labour' years. I have encountered occasional manifestations of antisemitism in my life, but never within the Labour Party.

The charge that the Labour Party and specifically Jeremy Corbyn are soft on antisemitism is outrageous. It is the latest and most bizarre of a series of monstrous smears by the right-wing establishment. If we were to believe them, then Corbyn is somehow simultaneously a pacifist, a terrorist, a Stalinist, and a Czech spy. Now this lifelong campaigner against racism is branded an antisemite too. One wonders when he has the time to tend his allotment.

I wouldn't blame the Israeli diplomatic service for promoting such accusations; it is their job to use every means at their disposal to avoid the election of a British government sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. In this case the smear campaign has been taken up by the British establishment, and unfortunately endorsed by that wing of the Parliamentary Labour Party opposed to Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, because of the failure of its earlier palpable slanders.

This campaign is even dirtier than the 'Zinoviev letter' faked by MI5 to damage Labour in the general election of 1923, or than Churchill's lie in 1945 that if Labour won the election, it would establish a Gestapo police state. It is of course the Tory party that is riddled with racism. It was a Tory government which introduced the 1905 Aliens Act that blocked Jewish immigration from the East European pogroms, and it was a Tory MP who founded the Right Club in the 1930s to 'expose the activities of organised Jewry'. British immigration policy throughout the Nazi period was designed to keep out at least ten times as many Jews as it allowed in. During that period, it was the *Daily Express* which carried the infamous headline 'JEWS DECLARE WAR ON GERMANY' and the *Daily Mail* which screamed 'HURRAH FOR THE BLACKSHIRTS!' Churchill personally made repeated racist comments against Jews.

Only three years ago, it was the *Mail* which made a thinly veiled antisemitic attack on Ed Miliband's father, while the *Sun* published an unflattering picture of Ed Miliband eating a bacon sandwich – another antisemitic jibe.

No party has done more to resist all forms of racism than Labour. It is significant that no other parties have come under any similar pressure to adopt any such charter as the IHRA document.

I believe that the IHRA definition of antisemitism is deeply flawed. It is clearly designed to protect the Israeli state from legitimate criticism. It is also inconsistent. For instance, it argues that it's antisemitic to 'deny the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavour'. In that case, how then can it also be antisemitic to 'accuse Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel than to the interests of their own nations'? Either Israel is a homeland for Jews worldwide, in which case it has a right to expect their loyalty, or Jews have an obligation to give prior loyalty to the country in which they live. The IHRA apparently wants it both ways.

I should add that I reject any comparison of such crimes as the current atrocities in Gaza to those of the Nazis as grossly disproportionate and provocative. By implication it mitigates the crimes of imperialism as a whole. Israel is not engaged in systematic genocide: it is not rounding up Palestinians, cramming them into concentration camps and gassing them by the thousands. It is practising the standard brutal murderous repression of all imperialist powers, regional or global. The hands of American imperialism in Latin America and South-East Asia, or of French imperialism in North Africa, or of Belgian imperialism in the Congo, or of the South African apartheid state at Sharpeville, are also dripping with blood. British imperialism also has on its hands the deaths of hundreds of peaceful demonstrators mown down in the Amritsar massacre, systematic torture and mutilation in Kenya's Hola death camp, and the gunning down of peaceful demonstrators in Northern Ireland on Bloody Sunday. There is no need to invoke the Nazis: it's quite enough to condemn Israel for behaving like the British.

I urge the NEC to stand by its current definition of antisemitism and to resist the caterwauling of proven racists to adopt a definition which would brand as antisemites legitimate critics of Israeli government policy. It is time to fight back against the establishment's lies.

2 September 2018; author details updated 18 November 2019.

Professor Emeritus Annabelle Sreberny

CLP: Islington North
Time in Labour Party: 3 years

I understand that the 'Campaign Against Antisemitism' (whoever they are) has referred the Labour Party to the EHRC because of its so-called 'institutional antisemitism'. I find this an absurd and reprehensible act for reasons that I explain below.

a) My mother Margot Sreberny was a Jewish child refugee from Germany who came to Britain on the Kinderstransport. She was a teacher and a long-standing member of the Labour Party in Hackney. She became a local activist, helping to establish the Finsbury Park Action Group, and worked very closely with Jeremy Corbyn and Diane Abbott on many different north London campaigns throughout the 1980s and 1990s. She and Jeremy became close friends and he gave a eulogy at a public ceremony to celebrate her life. He is not an antisemite. There was never any inkling, any mention, of antisemitism in the party in all her years of involvement.

b) I, obviously a Jew, joined the Labour Party (Islington North) when Corbyn was elected leader. I was delighted that the party was moving away from Blairite neo-liberalism and had chosen a man of integrity and vision who would maintain social democratic values and policies, especially against the despicable austerity path that the Tories had chosen. His approach resonates with that of Harold Wilson in the 1960s and is not 'hard' left – as the mainstream media insist on describing him – but democratic socialist. He has always been active in combatting all forms of injustice and racism and has one of the best parliamentary records of fighting antisemitism which is a form of racism. I value his anti-war positions on foreign policy issues and the vexed question of rights and justice for the Palestinians, which he has always vocally supported.

c) I have never come across any antisemitism within the party. Necessary criticism of actions by Netanyahu's right-wing government in Israel is not in itself antisemitic; rather, it is necessary that all people of conscience, Jews and non-Jews, speak out against an injustice that needs to be remedied.

d) I consider the recent incessant noise about 'antisemitism in the Labour party' to be a cynical and deliberate attempt to remove a progressive, decent man from office since this seems to be the only charge against him that can be made to stick through false accusation and repetition. Different groups profit from these accusations. There is evidence that the *hasbara* of the Israeli government has been actively fomenting them; see, for example, the Al Jazeera documentary series 'The Lobby'. The right-wing of the Labour Party are worried about Corbyn's popularity. The Tories, far more deeply antisemitic and Islamophobic than Labour, are delighted by this campaign. Why does the media not call this out? Why is there no EHRC investigation of them, including the current Prime Minister, for their egregious racist comments?

e) Almost no evidence has been produced about this story. The media report outrageous comments by individuals as fact, with no evidence produced by the individuals concerned and none produced by the media. Margaret Hodge's comment that the situation is as bad as in Nazi Germany was reported as if true, rather than a traducing of the experiences of my family and so many others who did not live to speak. Stories from years ago are dredged up again and again as if they have not already been dealt with, explained, even apologised for. Much of the supposed antisemitic comment has been circulated across the internet, often by people who have nothing to do with the Labour Party. The party has put a process in place to deal with antisemitic and racist speech, more than any other political party has done. There is no new evidence of antisemitism let alone 'institutional antisemitism' yet the story runs and runs. Little wonder that the general public is confused about the matter.

f) Since my submission to the EHRC a group of academics have published a book on the subject: Greg Philo et al., *Bad News for Labour* (Pluto Press, 2019). Their research shows that this is a 'media panic' fomented by continued uncritical reporting by and exaggerated headlines and stories from the media; around 5,500 stories in the British press between 15 June 2015 and 31 March 2019. The issue has actually involved less than 0.1 percent of a party of half a million members. Little wonder that public opinion hugely overestimates the extent of the matter, so that the average estimate given in focus groups is that 34 percent of party members are antisemitic. This moulding of public opinion has potentially enormous consequences for the future of progressive politics and the British electoral process.

Obversely, the rise of the Far Right in the UK, the US, and in much of Europe, with its deep antisemitic sentiment and actions, gets short shrift in the press while such populism undermines the core of democracy as a hospitable environment for all.

g) Israel is a powerful state in the Middle East with a tough right-wing government. That government does not act in a way that all Israelis approve of, nor in a manner that all Jews around the world support. Indeed, the political debate inside Israel is vigorous and wide-ranging. The Israeli government does *not* speak in my name, as a British Jew. Netanyahu's attempts to equate criticism of Israel with antisemitism does not wash. Israel deserves to be criticised for its violent actions against innocent Palestinians, its destruction of Palestinian infrastructure, its continued policy of land incursions and settlement building and its crass indifference to the suffering it causes. The use of the antisemitism accusation against Corbyn and the progressive elements in the Labour Party is a ploy to protect Israel from criticism. The IHRA with its crude examples also plays to the stifling of debate about Israeli government policies and Palestinian rights.

In short, I have not heard of or experienced antisemitism within the Labour Party. Antisemitism is not to be equated with criticism of Israel. Such criticism and support for Palestinian rights is not antisemitic

unless it manifests a hatred of Jews as Jews. This is a baseless witch-hunt and I urge the EHRC to throw the complaint out.

28 August 2018; revised 30 October 2019

Family tea with Jeremy at Westminster, circa. 1989.

Ruth Steigman

CLP: Islington North
Time in Labour Party: > 20 years

I have been a member of the Labour Party for most of the past 40 years.

I have *never* encountered antisemitism in the Labour Party, and by the way, I live in Jeremy Corbyn's constituency. I know him very well, and he's always been a good friend to me and my family. I presume you are aware that Momentum, the group set up to support Jeremy as Leader, is headed by a Jew, Jon Lansman, and that several UK and Israeli Jews have been suspended/expelled by the Labour Party for supposed antisemitism.

The insane accusations against Jeremy and Labour are purely politically motivated, because he's a Socialist and thus a threat to the status quo, and because he supports Palestinian rights. Read *A Very British Coup* and you will find there chapter and verse on what happens when a Socialist leader emerges in the UK. Jeremy has been called unelectable, a Soviet spy, responsible single-handedly for Brexit [even though it's in fact David Cameron who's the one single-handedly responsible], and now an antisemite. What next I wonder?

The EHRC should turn its attention to the Conservative Party, where it will find the sort of people that I *have* encountered antisemitism from.

In case you are not aware of the fact, the IHRA definition of antisemitism only appeared *after* Jeremy was elected Leader of the Labour Party: I do not believe that this was a coincidence. The IHRA is a tiny organization based in Germany, with a staff of five. Before this furore was whipped up, nobody had ever heard of it – I certainly hadn't. It is being cynically and wickedly used because it has the word 'Holocaust' in its title. Shame on those who are prepared to do this, with absolutely no concern for the consequences.

Kenneth Stern, the Jewish Zionist who drafted the original definition in 2005 for the EU (where it was not adopted), has recently voiced his concerns that his text is being used in a *'chilling McCarthy-like' fashion in the UK*.

For the first time since I was a child, when I knew people with numbers tattooed on their arms, I *do* now feel fearful as a Jew in this country. This is partly because of the rise of the far-right under Tommy Robinson (encouraged by Conservative policies, and ignored by those intent on unseating the twice democratically elected Labour Leader), but mostly because of this relentless focus on Jews, and on blatantly fabricated antisemitism. People who call themselves Jews are now threatening my position in this country: I am 70 years old – shame on them.

23 August 2018

Daniel Vulliamy

CLP: East Yorkshire (Chair)
Time in Labour Party: > 30 years

My mother was a Jewish refugee from Hitler.[5]

I have been a member of the Labour Party since 1968, except for a few years after the invasion of Iraq. I am currently Chair of East Yorkshire Labour Party. I do not see myself as a Corbynista.

I have never experienced or witnessed antisemitism in the Labour Party, either from the left, right or centre.

The accusations made against Corbyn are ridiculous and owe most to the government of Israel's concerns that a Labour government might support Palestine, to right-wing Labour MPs seeing an opportunity to get rid of Corbyn, and to mainstream media fears of a left-wing Labour government.

Before retirement, I was an academic employment lawyer, who received assistance from EHRC and its predecessors and respected its output. I was worried by the Chief Executive's irresponsible comments about the Labour Party and antisemitism in 2017, and hope and trust that this inquiry will be rigorous.

2 September 2018; revised 23 October 2019

About the Contributors

Michaela Collord is a Labour Party member and Junior Research Fellow in Politics at the University of Oxford.

David Edwards is co-editor of Media Lens (www.medialens.org). His most recent book is *Propaganda Blitz: How the Corporate Media Distort Reality* (Pluto, 2018).

Daniel Finn is Deputy Editor of the *New Left Review* and the author of *One Man's Terrorist: A Political History of the* IRA (Verso, 2019).

Norman G. Finkelstein is a leading scholar of the Israel-Palestine conflict and the politics of antisemitism. His books include *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (Verso, 2000), *Gaza: An Inquest into Its Martyrdom* (University of California Press, 2018), and, most recently, *I* ACCUSE*! Herewith a Proof Beyond Reasonable Doubt that* ICC *Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda Whitewashed Israel* (OR Books, 2019).

Jeremy Gilbert is Professor of Cultural and Political Theory at the University of East London. His publications include *Common Ground: Democracy and Collectivity in an Age of Individualism* (Pluto, 2013) and the translation of Maurizio Lazzarato's *Experimental Politics* (MIT

Press, 2018). He edits the journal *New Formations* and has written and spoken widely on politics, music, and cultural theory.

Richard Kuper is a founding member of Jews for Justice for Palestinians and Jewish Voice for Labour.

Jewish Voice for Labour is a network for Jewish members of the Labour Party, which champions universal human rights and dignity, justice for all, freedom of expression, and democracy in the Labour Party. www.jewishvoiceforlabour.org.uk.

Laura Laker is a freelance journalist specialising in cycling and urban transport. She has written for a variety of news and specialist publications, from the *Guardian* and *Good Housekeeping* to *road.cc* and *Total Women's Cycling*.

Antony Lerman is Senior Fellow at the Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue in Vienna and Honorary Fellow of the Parkes Institute for the Study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations at Southampton University. He is the author of *The Making and Unmaking of a Zionist: A Personal and Political Journey* (Pluto, 2012) and co-author of *Bad News for Labour: Antisemitism, the Party and Public Belief* (Pluto, 2019).

Alan Maddison is a Strategic Analyst and associate member of Jewish Voice for Labour.

David Miller is Professor of Political Sociology at the University of Bristol. He is a founder director of Public Interest Investigations and a director of the Organisation for Propaganda Studies. He is the author of *Thinker, Faker, Spinner, Spy* (Pluto, 2007), *A Century of Spin* (Pluto, 2007), and, with others, *Bad News for Labour: Antisemitism, the Party and Public Belief* (Pluto, 2019).

Tom Mills is a socialist and lecturer in Sociology and Policy at Aston University. His book, *The BBC: The Myth of a Public Service* (2016), is published by Verso.

David Rosenberg is an educator, writer, and tour guide of London's radical history. An activist with the Jewish Socialists' Group, the second edition of his *Rebel Footprints: A Guide to Uncovering London's Radical History* was published this year by Pluto. www.eastendwalks.com.

Justin Schlosberg is Senior Lecturer in Journalism and Media at Birkbeck, University of London. He is a former Chair of the Media Reform Coalition and Network Fellow at the Safra Center for Ethics, Harvard University. He is the author or co-author of several books about the media including, most recently, *Bad News for Labour: Antisemitism, the Party and Public Belief* (Pluto, 2019).

Jamie Stern-Weiner is a PhD candidate at the University of Oxford and the editor of *Moment of Truth: Tackling Israel-Palestine's Toughest Questions* (OR Books, 2018).

@ToryFibs is a grassroots Labour rebuttal account with over 100,000 followers on Twitter.

Naomi Wayne was Chief Enforcement Officer for the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland.

Notes

Introduction

1 Albeit certain posited scenarios – that most Jews would flee Britain, or that a Corbyn Government would implement anti-Jewish policies – are so fantastical that they can be excluded from serious discussion.

2 In a revealing exchange during the campaign, Andrew Marr asked Corbyn if his government would sell arms to Saudi Arabia. Corbyn responded unequivocally: 'We've said quite clearly that we would not sell arms to Saudi Arabia whilst they continue the bombardment of Yemen'. And would a Corbyn government sell arms to Israel? 'I would bring back into play the House of Commons Committee which is able to oversee arms sales in relation to human rights and the use of them and I would ask them to make a view on it first'.

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4 The editor is grateful to the contributors and their publishers for permission to reproduce the articles in this book. Contributors should not be assumed to agree with this Introduction or with each other.

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8 https://twitter.com/toryfibs/status/1192553878807621635. Against this clear and consistent record, Corbyn's critics muster a handful of alleged infractions which comprise, in their totality, hypocritical smears-by-association, out-of-context remarks that are open to benign

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> [C]an you explain to me why two million people in Gaza have to live without clean water? … Can you explain why that's OK? Can you explain why a child in Gaza with a curable cancer will die, while a Jewish child five minutes from Gaza who was born as an Israeli will live? Can you justify, can you explain that? Can you explain dropping millions of tonnes of bombs on Gaza? Can you explain thousands of political prisoners? And on and on and on. And I think what this does, it diminishes the antisemitism claim and it puts the burden on *them* to explain this …

But silence over claims of 'antisemitism' may read as guilt, while rebutting allegations is a laborious process that inevitably distracts from and obscures Israel's crimes against the Palestinians. Activists tempted to indulge in gratuitously incendiary rhetoric, such as analogising 'Zionists' to Nazis, ought to reflect on whether this contributes to the struggle for justice in Palestine, or whether, on the contrary, it makes life easier for Israel's apologists.

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graph instead of Sky News? See 'Corbyn's Day of Disaster', *Daily Mail* (27 September 2017).

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63 Arj Singh, 'Jewish Labour Movement Calls for Action over "Anti-Semitic Trope"', *Press Association* (26 September 2017)

64 Michaela Vyse, 'I Was Shocked at Intimidation Faced by My Jewish Friends', *Jewish News* (29 September 2017).

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67 LFI is not in fact in the Labour Party. Subsequently, a conference delegate stated that, 'We can't be a party that has groups that support an apartheid state, wherever that apartheid state is'. This was apparently a reference to the JLM and LFI. The delegate in question nowhere advocated that 'Jews' be expelled; on the contrary, she presented her contribution as supporting one made the previous day by a Jewish Labour activist.

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9 This majority is even greater in the case of left-wingers and Labour voters.
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