

Anti-Semitism accusations against Corbyn aimed at criminalising the left

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Claims that Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has presided over a growth of anti-Semitism in the party, and is himself a closet anti-Semite, are baseless. They mark a return to efforts to remove Corbyn as leader, steering the party onto the favoured political course of the Blairite right.

This makes all the more damning Corbyn's swift capitulation to the provocation launched by the Board of Deputies of British Jews (BoD), the Jewish Leadership Council and a clique of over a dozen Labour MPs. In addition to betraying his supporters, it facilitates the efforts of the UK's political establishment, together with the State of Israel and the United States, to proscribe left-wing opposition to Zionism as "extremism" to justify its political suppression.

Monday night saw an unprecedented protest by no more than 200 people outside Parliament, mobilised by the BoD and JLC, dominated by Labour MPs who played a central role in 2016 in efforts to remove Corbyn as leader. Leading Zionist Labour MPs Luciana Berger, Ruth Smeeth and Louise Ellman were joined by the well-known crew of coup plotters. They included John Mann, who demanded Corbyn "must go" amid provocative chants of "Jeremy Corbyn is a racist," along with Wes Streeting, Chuka Ummuna, Stella Creasy, Liz Kendall, Ian Austin and John Woodcock.

Jewish Voice for Labour staged a counter-protest involving relatives of Holocaust survivors, opposing the vilification of their party as anti-Semitic. Yet the filthy display of right-wing venom by upper-middle-class protesters carrying Israeli flags and anti-Corbyn placards was universally portrayed in the media as the "voice" of the "mainstream Jewish community."

Neither this claim nor the accusations against Corbyn and the Labour Party stand up to genuine scrutiny.

The resurrection of charges of Labour anti-Semitism and of Corbyn being an apologist for anti-Semites, or even being "instinctively hostile to Jews," signals that the party's right wing will no longer be constrained by Corbyn's popular support. Forced to temper its attacks on Corbyn after Labour's gains during last June's snap general election, the right-wing wants Corbyn's scalp.

The prelude to this latest offensive was the vicious anti-Russian campaign triggered by the poisoning of double agent Sergei Skripal, during which the Labour leader was denounced

as an appeaser, unfit to hold office. The Blairites are convinced that the time is now ripe for a fresh assault on Corbyn, especially after his sacking of frontbencher Owen Smith on Friday for proposing the second referendum on Brexit they have long demanded. Denouncing his "weakness" on Russia, on Brexit and on Israel, Corbyn's opponents are demanding his "anti-Western" views on war, NATO and nuclear weapons be silenced.

Writing in the *Guardian*, Rafael Behr made explicit these connections stating, "On antisemitism, Russia and Brexit, [Labour] centrists might feel they're in the wrong movement."

With pro-European Tory rebel MPs "unhappy with Theresa May," Labour MPs have been "stirred awake ... If they think vital skills in a prime minister include recognising antisemitism at first sight, trusting UK security services over Vladimir Putin, and fearing that a hard Brexit is bad for Britain, they might be in the wrong party. Inevitably there is chatter about alternatives."

The Tory *Daily Telegraph* suggested to Labour MPs that the question for the party was "how another such scandal would play out with Corbyn sitting in 10 Downing Street."

The "scandal" is based on a tweet by Corbyn from October 2012 unearthed by Berger. Corbyn had responded to an appeal by street artist "Mear One," protesting plans to paint over an East London mural, accused by some of utilising anti-Jewish tropes with representatives of banking families playing monopoly on a table supported by the naked backs of workers.

Corbyn tweeted, "You are in good company. Rockefeller [sic] destroyed Diego [Rivera's] mural because it includes a picture of Lenin."

At the same time, right-wing Tory blogger Guido Fawkes revealed that Corbyn had been signed up—by supporters and without his knowledge—to two pro-Palestinian Facebook pages and had himself joined another, "Labour supporter," which included some posts accused of anti-Semitism.

Whatever might be said of the mural in question, this served as the flimsy pretext for an open letter by the BoD and JLC to the Labour Party. The thrust of their letter was to make an amalgam between anti-imperialist criticism of Israel's repression of the Palestinians and right-wing anti-Semitism.

Corbyn, as usual, first retreated to placate his critics, and

when this failed abandoned the ideological field of battle altogether. He first said he had been wrong to support Mear One before studying the mural, pronouncing it to be “deeply disturbing” and apologising for the pain caused by “pockets” of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party.

But Corbyn’s initial *mea culpa* only emboldened the self-described “leaders of British Jewry” to declare in their open letter that they were tired “of hearing that Jeremy Corbyn ‘opposes anti-Semitism,’” complaining of “repeated institutional failure to tackle anti-Semitism, with the Chakrabarti Report being the most glaring example of this.”

The Chakrabarti Report, led by the former director of human rights group Liberty, had in fact rejected claims of widespread anti-Semitism in the Labour Party. But Corbyn issued no defence of Chakrabarti who now serves as the party’s shadow attorney-general. In similar vein, he abandoned long-time ally and former Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, after he was smeared as an anti-Semite. Livingstone’s suspension from the Labour Party was renewed this month.

Corbyn, the letter continued, “did not invent this form of politics,” but “personifies its problems and dangers.” The type of politics identified was “a far-left worldview that is instinctively hostile to mainstream Jewish communities.” “At best” this derived “from the far left’s obsessive hatred of Zionism, Zionists and Israel.” “At worst,” it adopted “a conspiratorial worldview in which mainstream Jewish communities are believed to be a hostile entity, a class enemy.”

The BBC concisely summarised the open letter’s definition of what is to be considered “anti-Semitic” as holding a view “of Israel as a sort of neo-colonialist, Imperialist power oppressing Palestinians, associated with America ...”

Faced with the BoD and JLC open letter, Corbyn abased himself still further, declaring that anti-Semitism in the Labour Party had often been wrongly dismissed as “a matter of a few bad apples.” Action was promised to deal with all cases of anti-Semitic abuse.

The organisations and Blairite MP’s involved in this latest provocation have deep connections to Israel and the US and British intelligence services.

Labour Friends of Israel, of which most of the MPs at Monday’s protest are members, is dominated by the party’s right-wing. Its repeated charges of anti-Semitism during the attempt to remove Corbyn were levelled against his supporters and invariably focused on Internet posts opposing Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians. Their witch-hunting led to summary suspensions, part of a broader purge of tens of thousands of Corbyn supporters from the party by the National Executive Committee and the Compliance Unit.

Months later, in January 2017, a sting conducted by undercover reporters for *Al Jazeera* exposed just how extensive the intervention conducted by Israel in the Labour Party was.

Shai Masot, an Israeli embassy staffer in London, was secretly filmed explaining how he was plotting to “take down”

MPs perceived as hostile to Israel. The main undercover reporter posed as a Labour Friends of Israel member. Masot told the reporter of his plans to set up pro-Israeli groups within the Labour Party to undermine Corbyn’s leadership, in an operation allotted £1 million by Tel Aviv to wine and dine 60 Labour MPs.

The initial anti-Semitism campaign was tied to efforts to eliminate opposition to the international adoption of a new legal definition of anti-Semitism, drawn up by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. This criminalised political criticism of Israel by including as examples of anti-Semitism, “Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavour” and any comparison between “contemporary Israeli policy” and “that of the Nazis.”

The formula advanced is that Zionism is integral to the Jewish faith and culture, which is in turn inseparable from the State of Israel.

The treatment meted out to Corbyn and his supporters is intended to ensure that the Blairite right and the Board of Deputies and related groups, elected by a handful of synagogues, will assume the role of judge, jury and executioner over the Labour Party’s half a million members.

Jonathan Arkush, BoD president, told the *Guardian* he intends to set out his plans to drain “the political sewer” when he accepts an invitation to meet with Corbyn. These include the permanent expulsion of Livingstone from the party (“He will have to go,” Arkush decreed) along with Jackie Walker, the former vice-chair of the pro-Corbyn group Momentum, who is half black and half Jewish, and, as the *Guardian* comments, “scores of other long-running cases which have been mired in the party’s compliance procedures for many months.”

Arkush “would also like action to be taken against those who minimise reports of antisemitism, including the Unite general secretary, Len McCluskey, who suggested it was ‘mood music’ to undermine the leadership.”

Chillingly, he added that “antisemitism on social media,” i.e., criticism of Israel and, by extension, of the campaign now waged against Corbyn, must be “properly and energetically” shut down.



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