

Sunday Times uses dirty tricks, slander and lies to tar Labour's pro-Corbyn left as anti-Semitic

Robert Stevens, Chris Marsden
4 April 2018

On Sunday, three national newspapers devoted their front pages to attacking Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn for his supposed refusal to tackle anti-Semitism in the party.

Leading the pack baying for blood was the *Sunday Times*, which published the results of an investigation into what it called “Corbyn’s hate factory.”

The *Sunday Times* investigation is a dubious exercise in McCarthyite witch-hunting, which has produced nothing whatsoever to substantiate allegations of widespread anti-Semitism in the Labour Party.

Seven years ago, Rupert Murdoch’s News International was forced to close the *News of the World* to limit the damage from revelations that it had employed phone hacking “on an industrial scale” and other illegal methods infringing on personal privacy.

The *Sunday Times*, which barely differs from its former sister paper regarding journalistic standards, now boasts that its two-month investigation involved “whistle-blowers working with the *Sunday Times* in the groups, who gained access to restricted membership groups.”

Who these “whistle-blowers” are and how they secured access to “restricted” Facebook pages is not explained. But had they found anything of substance to reveal, they would not have been forced to rely on trawling through every posting in 20 “pro-Corbyn” Facebook groups.

After this Herculean effort of monitoring the online activity of close to half a million people, the *Sunday Times* claims to have found “thousands of anti-Semitic, misogynistic and violent messages,” and examples of “Holocaust denial and wild conspiracy theories linking the Rothschild family and Israel with Isis terrorists” appearing “routinely.” Yet it manages to report only a handful of genuinely anti-Semitic posts and one example of Holocaust denial, while portraying several others as anti-Semitic that are nothing of the sort.

Not a single posting cited is attributed to Corbyn, or to the dozen people in his immediate circle the newspaper accuses of being members of groups supporting their party’s leader! For the most part, an outraged reaction is expected regarding things such as personal abuse levelled against Jonathan Arkush, president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and a prominent witch-hunter of the Labour left, or to the posting by a non-Labour Party member of a picture superimposing a swastika on an Israeli flag in protest at the treatment of the Palestinians.

Only someone wholly ignorant of social media could lend credence to such nonsense. Unless carefully moderated—which is the exception, not the rule—there is no way of knowing who has posted a comment or their political affiliations, let alone to claim broader support for the views expressed.

Instead, we are told that the *Sunday Times* has conducted an “analysis of a sample of the two biggest groups”—what sample and what analysis is not explained—proving that their members are “more likely than the general population to be ‘paranoid’ and agree with statements condoning violence against female politicians; half of them ‘definitely’ believe the world is controlled by a secretive elite.”

The other leg, as they say, should be pulled as it has bells on.

Significantly, a good portion of the *Sunday Times*’ coverage is given over to disparaging those within the Labour Party who have described the “complaints about abuse and anti-Semitism within the party” as an orchestrated effort to “stifle legitimate debate about Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories” as the work of “agents provocateurs” of a “very powerful special interest group” and an alliance of the party’s Blairite wing with Conservatives, “Blairite to far-right,” seeking

to “defame Jeremy.”

Ridiculous—except that all the leading figures involved in this rotten campaign are Blairites and Tories—slandering not just Corbyn but hundreds of thousands of Labour members and supporters as anti-Semites, misogynists, National Socialists or worse to delegitimize and defame the entire left.

In a *Mail on Sunday* article, for example, Blairite Dan Hodges stated that “Corbyn’s party isn’t as bad” as the fascist National Front, the British National Party and the English Defence League, “It’s far, far worse. None of those repugnant organisations have ever held any prospect of securing office. Labour does. And as a result, it has now become the largest, most high-profile racist organisation in the nation.”

Blairite businessman Alan Sugar retweeted to his 5.5 million followers a photoshopped picture of Corbyn sitting in a car with Hitler at a Nuremburg rally, alongside the comment, “Many a true word spoken in jest Corbyn.”

The same holds true for the official mouthpiece of the Blairites, the *Guardian* and its Sunday sister paper, the *Observer*. Having played a key role in whipping up feigned outrage over anti-Semitism on “the left,” the *Observer* joins the *Sunday Times* in insisting that no one must be allowed to identify the obvious political pedigree and intentions of those involved. It editorialises, “This has been too common a response from the left: to argue claims of anti-Semitism are being ‘weaponised’ by Labour’s opponents.”

To this the *Observer* replies, “So what? It is not for those who have committed grave failings to speculate on the motivations of those who call them out. And any hint that the Jewish community itself might be politically motivated in protesting against anti-Semitism in Labour is itself anti-Semitic.”

In response to this coordinated attack, Corbyn and his backers have, once again, retreated every step of the way. In a video message for Passover last Friday, Corbyn declared, “It is easy to denounce anti-Semitism when you see it in other countries, in other political movements. It is sometimes harder to see it when it is closer to home.”

Begging Alan Sugar to take down the concocted photo of Corbyn and Hitler, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell pleaded, “We all desperately need to bring people together now. We can hold strong views about each other’s politics, but now is the time to learn from each other and unite people.”

It is of some interest that the timeline given by the *Sunday Times* indicates that its investigation was launched

shortly after supporters of Corbyn secured a majority on Labour’s National Executive Committee (NEC)—the party’s controlling body—for the first time since his election as leader in September 2015. Those elected included Jon Lansman, who controls the pro-Corbyn Momentum campaign group. He won against comedian Eddie Izzard—who was supported by the anti-Corbyn Labour First and the Blairite think-tank, Progress, but who received just 39,000 votes.

Christine Shawcroft, a director of Momentum and an NEC member for 19 years, also took over the disputes committee post from Ann Black—who had previously voted to bar 130,000 supporters of Corbyn from voting in the Labour leadership election.

This week Shawcroft was forced to step down after 39 right-wing MPs wrote to Corbyn demanding her dismissal after she opposed the suspension of a local council candidate, Alan Bull, who is accused of anti-Semitism and who strenuously denies the charge. Izzard has automatically replaced Shawcroft on the NEC. His first public act was to give credence to the campaign against the left by declaring, “We must stamp out completely the stain of anti-Semitism.”

On Monday evening, Momentum’s National Coordinating Group issued a statement expressing its own belief that “accusations of anti-Semitism should not and cannot be dismissed simply as right-wing smears nor as the result of conspiracies.”

It added, “Current examples of anti-Semitism within the Labour Party are not only a problem of a few, extreme ‘bad apples’ but... is more widespread in the Labour Party than many of us had understood even a few months ago.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact