Bogus anti-Semitism campaign against Corbyn and the “left” escalates

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The publication by Britain’s three leading Jewish newspapers of a joint statement describing a Labour government led by Jeremy Corbyn as an “existential threat to Jewish life” is the low point of a despicable right-wing slander campaign led by an alliance of Labour’s Blairite right wing, Zionist groups linked directly to the State of Israel and the Conservative Party.

This right-wing alliance has three interrelated objectives:

The attack on Corbyn and his supporters centres on measures that would criminalise criticism of the State of Israel for its persecution of the Palestinians as a form of anti-Semitism, shifting political discourse sharply to the right in line with US President Donald Trump’s aggressive policies in the Middle East.

Secondly, with the prospect of an early general election precipitated by the possible meltdown of Prime Minister Theresa May’s bitterly divided government, Labour’s right wing is working directly with the Tories to ensure the electoral defeat of their party.

Thirdly, a definition of anti-Semitism that includes criticism of Israel provides a legal mechanism for censoring, silencing and criminalising left-wing views and organisations, while whipping up and legitimising anti-Muslim sentiment.

It will, in addition, fuel the anti-Semitism it purports to oppose by linking Jews to the crimes perpetrated by the Israeli state.

Amid the feigned outrage and slanders targeting Corbyn and the “left,” including the apocalyptic warning that Jews would have to emigrate from the UK if he came to power, the joint editorial, “United We Stand,” by the *Jewish Chronicle*, *Jewish News* and *Jewish Telegraph* makes clear this underlying political agenda.

It speaks of a “Corbynite contempt for Jews and Israel” to create an amalgam between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionist critiques of Israel. It also declares, “With the government in Brexit disarray, there is a clear and present danger that a man with a default blindness to the Jewish community’s fears, a man who has a problem seeing that hateful rhetoric aimed at Israel can easily step into antisemitism, could be our next prime minister.”

The “clear and present danger” that truly exercises the right wing is their understanding that Corbyn’s rise to leadership was the product of growing popular left sentiment among workers and youth that must be combated.

Bogus charges of anti-Semitism have been a feature of the campaign by Labour’s right wing to remove Corbyn since he was swept to leadership by a flood of new members into the party in 2015.

Dozens of ordinary members supportive of Corbyn were removed from membership through the simple expedient of trawling through their online accounts for criticisms of Israel. Most notably, the campaign claimed the political scalps of two of Corbyn’s leading allies, Ken Livingstone and Marc Wadsworth.

Corbyn has no intention of fighting the right wing and therefore no genuine intention of honouring his pledges to oppose austerity and militarism.

As on so many previous occasions, he has done nothing other than seek to placate his right-wing opponents, defending none of those who have been witch-hunted. But every concession made has only ceded the political initiative to a vicious anti-working-class cabal.

In line with his policy of retreat, then retreat again, Corbyn agreed to adopt the definition of anti-Semitism drawn up by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in Labour’s new code of practice. This definition describes criticism of Israel as anti-Semitism, most notoriously in a list of eleven “examples” including describing the establishment of Israel as a “racist endeavour.”

The Corbyn leadership adopted the IHRA definition in

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its entirety but balked at the "racist endeavour" example that would likely lead to the expulsion of thousands of Labour members.

Amid wall-to-wall supportive media coverage of those demanding the full and unconditional acceptance of the IHRA definition, there is scarcely any mention of the fact that Israel has just passed the "nation-state" law. This makes explicit what has long been implicit, that Israel is a nation-state for the Jews alone, with the declaration, "The right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people." It demotes Arabic as an official language, while sanctioning the construction of yet more Jews-only communities and proclaiming "Jewish settlement" on Palestinian land "a national value."

Moreover, no one cares to mention that Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu has no qualms about associating with the most rabid and genuine anti-Semites, most recently welcoming Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who praised Miklós Horthy, Hungary's ruler during World War II, who introduced anti-Semitic laws and collaborated with the Nazis.

In the context of such measures and Israel's decades of brutal subjugation of the Palestinians, numerous legal sources have rejected the IHRA definition. Even its lead author, Kenneth S Stern, a US attorney and special advisor to the defence in the *David Irving v. Penguin Books and Deborah Lipstadt* trial, repudiated it as the legal basis for anti-Semitism in 2013 that would curtail free speech.

Writing in the *Guardian*, a newspaper that stands four-square behind the witch-hunt, Geoffrey Bindman, QC, described the IHRA definition and examples as "poorly drafted, misleading, and in practice [having] led to the suppression of legitimate debate and freedom of expression…

"Clearly, hostility to Jews could be the motivation for criticism of Israel and the fact that Israel identifies itself as a Jewish state no doubt encourages antisemites to attack Jews through their association with Israel. It is equally clear, however, that the policies and practices of Israel, a sovereign state, must be open to criticism and debate."

The howls of outrage that greeted Labour's proposed code of practice came from forces including Blairite Labour MP Margaret Hodge, who cornered Corbyn behind the Speaker's chair in Parliament and screamed in his face, "You're a fucking anti-Semite and a racist."

It was Hodge, a supporter of Labour Friends of Israel, who triggered the 2016 failed bid to oust Corbyn as Labour leader by submitting the motion of no confidence that led to a leadership contest, which he won with an increased majority. This multimillionaire did not seek the renewal of her position as chair of the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee after it became known that her family's company "pays just 0.01 per cent tax on £2.1bn of business generated in the UK," and that she had benefited from transactions effected through the tax haven of Lichtenstein.

The day after Hodge's outburst, arch-warmonger John Woodcock resigned as a Labour MP to stand as an independent. Woodcock, who is suspended and faces allegations of sexual harassment, wrote that he had become an MP "to promote a credible alternative government … through strong defence and national security. I now believe more strongly than ever that you [Corbyn] have made the Labour Party unfit to deliver those promises and would pose a clear risk to UK national security as prime minister."

His militarist tub-thumping was combined with the claim that "Antisemitism is being tolerated and Labour has been taken over at nearly every level by the hard left…"

Instead of rejecting the Jewish newspapers' slanderous editorial out of hand, Labour's response was to issue a pusillanimous statement recognising the concerns raised by the "Jewish community."

Labour has promised a "review" of its new code of conduct, while Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell has called for the investigation into Hodge's slanderous attack on Corbyn to be dropped. Trying to kick the dispute into the long grass, a vote on whether to adopt the full IHRA definition has been delayed until parliament resumes in September. But the internal warfare continues unabated. The Jewish Labour Movement is reportedly "still weighing up" whether to take legal action against the Labour Party under the European Convention on Human Rights and the Equality Act.

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