

Jews, Jewish Nationalism, and the Labour Party



MOST JEWS are Jewish nationalists – that is they combine their loyalty to the country in which they live with their loyalty to Israel. They are for the most part Zionists as is anybody, Jew or Gentile, who supports, in all eventualities, the continued existence of the state of Israel. They believe, that regardless of their outrage or otherwise concerning the conduct of Israeli governments, regardless of the disputes surrounding Jewish settlements in Samaria and Judea (the ‘West Bank’), regardless of the oppression and displacement of Palestinians, they believe that Israel must continue to exist as a national homeland for the Jews.

This is because, Zionists of all stripes, from the extreme left to the far right, know that Israel and Jewish nationalism is the product of the failure of Jewish emancipation in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Modernising Jews had, for the previous hundred years supported demands for equal civil rights for Jews within the countries in which they

lived, and had in fact achieved this *on paper* by 1900 (with the exception of Russia, Romania, Spain, and Portugal). As a consequence, when the Zionist movement arose during the fifteen years leading up to the first Zionist Congress in 1897, it remained a distinctly minority trend within Jewish communities throughout Europe.

However, as modern antisemitism began to emerge as a powerful political current among Europe's intellectuals, peasants, and urban workers, from Odessa and Vilnius in the East, to Paris in the West, support for the foundation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine began to grow. From the late nineteenth century systematic discrimination, and waves of pogroms, resulted in widespread brutalisation and murder of Jews for decades in Romania, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, Belorussia, and Ukraine, which terminated throughout Europe and the Soviet Union in the Holocaust of 1941-45.



As a consequence of this experience and of post-war pogroms in Poland and the continued antisemitism sponsored by Joseph Stalin, Zionism became a majority trend within Jewish communities worldwide.

Therefore it is Zionism that lies at the heart of the present strife between the majority of Britain's Jewish communities and the modern Labour Party. The rise of the left since 2015 has brought the struggle between Zionists and anti-Zionists in the Labour Party to the fore.

Most people on the left in Britain have been at pains to distinguish Jews in general from Zionists in particular, but this strategy inevitably comes crashing against the reality that most Jews are, resolute Zionists. As a result anti-Zionism and antisemitism have, despite the best terminological efforts of intellectuals and activists on the left, become inextricable. Despite the best efforts of Seumus Milne and Baroness Chakrabarti in laying the ghost of Jew-baiting and Jew-hatred to rest, anti-Zionism and antisemitism have, in practice, become irretrievably muddled up.

Labour's recently adopted code of conduct on antisemitism employs a definition, which is in most respects, indistinguishable from that used by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, including most of the eleven illustrations of antisemitic manifestations which accompany the IHRA's definition.

The Labour Party even accepts that "the Jewish people have the same right to self-determination as any other people." Labour's NEC goes further, saying that: "To deny that right [to self-determination] is to treat the Jewish people unequally and is therefore a form of antisemitism."

So it is difficult to understand the row in and around the Labour Party – plainly textual analysis of competing documents does not reveal the nature or content of the dispute, particularly if "the Jewish people have the same right to self-determination" as everybody else.

Here, we come to the bad faith and dissimulation about Zionism employed by many in the leadership of the Labour Party and more widely on the British left.

The vast majority of Labour Party members and the broad left accepts the right of the state of Israel to exist and suggests that a 'two-state' solution will provide the only acceptable way out of the present impasse in Israel-Palestine. However, this virtuous ambition is accompanied resolutely by pro-Palestinian sentiment and support for the 'right of return' of Palestinians (and their descendants) driven out of Israel in 1948.

This attempt to reverse the effects of the ethnic cleansing carried out by Jewish armed forces during the establishment of the state of Israel – this refusal to accept the outcome of the war of 1947-1949 – is an outright rejection of the legitimacy of the Jewish state. This is because if the 'right of return' is granted to the descendants of the 800,000 Palestinians driven out at the proclamation of the Israel's independence the Jewish state would cease to exist.

Indeed this is the objective of Hamas, an organisation that enjoys wide support throughout the Labour Party. Hamas aims to pursue what it calls "phased liberation" in which it intends to create an Islamic polity across all the territory of Israel and Palestine:

The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgement Day. It, or any part of it, should not be squandered: it, or any part of it, should not be given up. Neither a single Arab country nor all Arab countries, neither any king or president, nor all the kings and presidents, neither any organization nor all of them, be they Palestinian or Arab, possess the right to do that. Palestine is an Islamic Waqf land consecrated for Moslem generations until Judgement Day. This being so, who could claim to have the right to represent Moslem generations till Judgement Day?

This is the law governing the land of Palestine in the Islamic Sharia (law) and the same goes for any land the Moslems have conquered by force, because during the times of (Islamic) conquests, the Moslems consecrated these lands to Moslem generations till the Day of Judgement.

It happened like this: When the leaders of the Islamic armies conquered Syria and Iraq, they sent to the Caliph

of the Moslems, Umar bin-el-Khatab, asking for his advice concerning the conquered land - whether they should divide it among the soldiers, or leave it for its owners, or what? After consultations and discussions between the Caliph of the Moslems, Omar bin-el-Khatab and companions of the Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him salvation, it was decided that the land should be left with its owners who could benefit by its fruit. As for the real ownership of the land and the land itself, it should be consecrated for Moslem generations till Judgement Day. Those who are on the land, are there only to benefit from its fruit. This Waqf remains as long as earth and heaven remain. Any procedure in contradiction to Islamic Sharia, where Palestine is concerned, is null and void.

“Verily, this is a certain truth. Wherefore praise the name of thy Lord, the great Allah.” (*The Inevitable* - verse 95).

There are certain infelicities in this translation of the 1988 Hamas Covenant or charter, published online by the Avalon Project at Yale. For example bin-el-Khatab is both “Umar” and “Omar”, but I think we can assume that the text is broadly accurate. One could, of course, quote murderous passages from this document concerning the Jews and their sinister control over world politics and finance, worthy of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, but without resorting to this, it is plain that Hamas is an Islamist organization that believes all civil law and the conduct of government should be subordinated to simple interpretations of the Quran and the doings of the Prophet of God, Muhammad.

The aim of all the principal Palestinian organisations supported by the Labour Party, and the Palestine Solidarity movement here in Britain, is the demographic destruction of the Jewish state, by ensuring that Palestinian Arabs are allowed to establish a majority within the borders of the Zionist state. Overwhelming the Jewish population numerically (by winning the Arab ‘right of return’) would be a prelude to the removal of Jews from Palestine; this is what is sought by Hamas and Hezbollah, and also by the more moderate Palestinian organisations.

For seventy years Palestinian institutions in association with all Arab states have insisted upon maintaining the refugee status of Palestinians driven out of Israel, including that of their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, born in the decades after 1948. They have always rejected integration of this 'refugee' population as full citizens in the neighbouring Arab states.

By contrast, Jews in Israel who are descendants of those expelled, in the clothes they stood up in, from North Africa, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, in the nineteen forties and fifties have been granted full citizenship of Israel, and are no longer regarded as refugees by anybody. Alternatively, the political strategy of refusing integration of Palestinians as citizens in neighbouring Arab lands is a means, deliberately employed by Palestinian institutions and their allies, of keeping open the wound of 1948. It is a way of challenging the legitimacy of the Jewish state and seeking its destruction by all means possible.

The fourteen-year-old kids and others being shot dead on the Gaza border by Israel Defence Force soldiers are not attempting to enter Israel in order to go shopping – these crowds are demanding the 'right of return'. They are rolling burning tires towards the fence, attempting to set fire to the crops in nearby Israeli farms, and very occasionally killing Israeli soldiers, in pursuit of the 'right of return'.

The Labour Party and the broad left, for the most part, supports these type of intifada demonstrations, and consistently applauds the Palestinian 'David' battling heroically against the Israeli 'Goliath'.

They do this because Israel is a "colonial project" – the "last of its type" in the world, and as good anti-imperialists everyone on the left must surely award priority to the Palestinian 'right of self-determination' over and above the 'Jewish right of self-determination' because the Jews are colonial interlopers in the Arab lands.

On the face of it, this is, of course, entirely true. Apart from the very small Jewish population that had

lived in Jerusalem for many centuries, European Jews did not start arriving in Palestine until the 1880s. The numbers of Jewish settlers in Palestine grew in response to the repeated outbreak of murderous antisemitic pogroms in Tsarist Lithuania, Belorussia, Ukraine, and Poland, and in the eastern territories of the Hapsburg Empire. By 1920 Jewish communities in Mandate Palestine (then ruled by the British), were sufficiently developed to begin the formal establishment of Jewish representative and military institutions in order to support further Jewish settlement, and to contend with the anti-Jewish violence promoted by Arab notables and by the Arab population at large.

The incipient war between Arabs and Jews for the possession of Palestine became more intense during the thirties as the British authorities in Jerusalem attempted to keep Jewish refugees out, while simultaneously suppressing Arab resistance with martial law and the exiling of Arab leaders. Matters came to a head with the departure of the British in 1948, and Jewish victory in what Israelis call 'the war of independence' (1947-1949) against Arab militia and the armies of Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and others, who attempted to strangle the Jewish state at birth.

This dismal attempt by Israel's Arab neighbours to crush the Zionist entity was followed by the wars of 1956, 1967 and 1973, the intifada of 1987-93 and 2000-2005, by the Gaza war with Hamas of 2008-2009 up to and including the present bloody strife.

The Jews are fighting to hang on to the Hebrew-speaking homeland they've created in response to the failure of Jewish emancipation in Europe and across the Arab world, while the Palestinian Arabs are fighting for possession of the same rather small tract of land.

Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party are in hot water because they've decided to support the Palestinians in this struggle on the grounds that the Arabs were there first, and the Jews, as late 'colonial' arrivals, have a much more tenuous claim to the land than the Arabs. Consequently, Labour supports the

establishment of a two-state solution while also supporting the 'right of return' of Palestinians that would, if achieved, result in the disappearance of Israel as a Jewish state.

In the competition between the 'Palestinian right of self-determination' and the 'Jewish right of self-determination' the Labour Party gives practical priority to the Arabs in Palestine. Labour accepts the Jewish right to self-determination in theory, but in practice refuses to accept the legitimate existence of the Jewish state that actually exists. Labour calls for the recognition of a Palestinian state, and supports Palestine Solidarity demands for the 'right of return' to what is now Israel of the descendants of those Palestinians driven out of the country in 1948.

This is why it is reasonable to conclude that whatever Labour's small print says, it does not believe in the right of Jews to self-determination, or in the legitimacy of the Jewish state. Labour's opposition to Jewish nationalism in practice, is expressed in its virulent opposition to Zionism, its endorsement of Moshé Machover's view of Israel as the "Zionist project of colonisation", and the left's unwavering support for the project of 'Free Palestine', and the liquidation of the Jewish state.

The charges of Labour's antisemitism flow directly from the clear preference on the left for the claims of Arabs over those of the Jews in Palestine. Labour's dishonesty resides in accepting, in theory, the Jewish right of self-determination, while in practice rejecting its Zionist expression in the modern state of Israel.

It goes without saying that criticism of Israeli governments or Israeli policies is not antisemitic, but challenging the existence of the state by supporting the 'right of return', and organisations like Hamas, that are explicit in their intention of ridding Palestine of Jews, clearly is.

For a more detailed discussion of these issues
see *Zionism* at
www.studiesinanti-capitalism.net