

LABOUR'S PANORAMA



JEWISH VOICE FOR LABOUR, the pro-Corbyn pressure group is entirely right about the recent Panorama programme, “Is Labour Antisemitic?” It was biased, slipshod with the facts, and extraordinary in that it did not interview anybody who disagreed with the thesis that Labour is institutionally antisemitic; the single exception was Andrew Gwynne MP. Gwynne simply reiterated bland denials on behalf of the leadership, but no Corbynista was asked any detailed questions at all. So, it seems that JVL’s basic allegation is correct:

It is shameful that the BBC has joined in an orchestrated campaign whose principal aim is quite clearly to prevent Jeremy Corbyn becoming Prime Minister of a Labour government committed to socialism.

Looked at more dispassionately, what was truly remarkable about the programme was that it did not give any prominence, although it was mentioned in passing, to the elephant that proved not to be in the room. JVL's article on the programme made a similar error, but at least did make one reference to the absent pachyderm:

However what is obvious to many in the Labour Party, but not seemingly to Panorama or reporter John Ware, is that many of the alleged instances of antisemitism are not what they seem.

Many are quite evidently statements that members have made about the Israeli state or Zionism, twisted athletically to assert that their criticism is directed at and insulting to Jews.

Here we come to the nub of the issue which was more or less absent from the Panorama programme and from most discussions of Labour's antisemitism.

Zionism is the issue. The idea and fact of the Jewish state lies at the heart of Labour's problem.

This did not become evident until the balance of the Labour Party's membership shifted decisively to the left with the election of Jeremy Corbyn in 2015. Consequently, Panorama's focus upon administrative shenanigans at Labour HQ draws us into assertions and denials concerning procedures and party rules – the plausibility and political outlook of 'whistle-blowers' – and away from a thoroughgoing discussion of the most salient political issue underlying discussions of antisemitism in the Labour Party: Israel and Palestine.

It is true that antisemitic tropes, bankers with big noses, the hidden hand of the Rothschild's 'in the affairs of men', 'the Jewish Lobby' in Washington and New York, and belief that Jewish office staff at the Twin Towers all took the day off on nine-eleven. are rife throughout society, and not uncommon on the broad left, or amongst Corbyn's most avid supporters.

However, the allegation of Labour's antisemitism cannot rest upon crude hatred of Jews or upon the spreading of tales of Jewish criminal conspiracies culled from *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1903), still widespread throughout the Muslim world, and on the Internet. This kind of antisemitism is entirely foreign to most Labour members and certainly has little or no part in the political history or outlook of Jeremy Corbyn or his political milieu.

Indeed, this accounts for the repeated denials and assertions of lifelong antiracism issuing from Corbyn's mouth and his office. Most people on the left are indignant and upset by suggestions that they are anything other than saints when it comes to loving all of mankind – or humanity (to be precise, and remain in step with the ethos of the Corbynistas).

Consequently, it is most certainly absurd to suggest that Corbyn, or any of his circle, hates Jews. What they hate is Zionism. Both the idea and fact of Jewish nationalism and of the Jewish state. What they love is Palestinian nationalism, and invariably side with Palestinian Arabs in their struggles against the Jews of Israel. Here, Labour's left makes a nice distinction between Jews and Zionists, arguing that anti-Zionism has got nothing to do with being anti-Jewish.

Well, yes . . . this might be so, but the problem is that most Jews throughout the world are Zionists. They may be dismayed by the behaviour of Israel's right-wing governments, and the overwhelming violence of the Israel Defence Force, but they remain convinced that Jews have a right to a state and a right to defend that state against all-comers. There is, of course, a small minority of Jews who are anti-Zionists and it is these Jews that the Corbyn left relies on to dispel assertions that it is antisemitic.

No matter what tangles of nomenclature the left gets itself into Jews cannot be separated from Zionism. This is because, of the failure of Jewish emancipation in Europe in the period 1881 to 1953. The bitter truth is that it was the failure of the mass working class movement to defeat the antisemitism of the Roman

Catholic Curia, or that of the fascists and Stalinists throughout this period, that resulted in Zionism being the default position for Jewish survival.

This truth is particularly painful for a left which prides itself upon being resolute and effective anti-fascists. They like to avoid the fact that national-socialism and clerical fascism were finally defeated, not by class solidarity, or by the internationalist socialist movement, but by the armies of Zhukov and Eisenhower – by the imperialists in Washington and London, and the state-socialist empire-builders of Moscow.

It was in these circumstances, in the face of the veritable tsunami of murders and massacres of Jews throughout the period 1881 to 1953, that the Jews sought to look to their own defence, and Zionism became the dominant trend in Jewish political thought throughout the world. The establishment of Israel and of the emergence of the Jewish state in 1948 – after a fairly lengthy process of institutional development begun in Mandate Palestine in 1920 – lies at the heart of this row about antisemitism on the left.

Because the left has a long and honourable tradition of supporting anti-colonial movements, support for Palestinian nationalism is *de rigour* for Corbyn and his circle. Their view is that the foundation of Israel was a colonial venture, and many go so far as to claim that Zionism is to all intents and purposes a racist endeavour which established an apartheid state.

Now, there can be little doubt that Israel was founded upon the violent displacement of at least 800,000 Palestinian Arabs who were ethnically cleansed during the war of 1948. It is also indisputable that the Six-Day War of 1967 which saw the Israelis once again defeating the armed might of a large coalition of Arab states resulted in Israel taking full possession of the Sinai Peninsula, Jerusalem, and the West Bank of the Jordan, which prior to the outbreak of the war, was ruled by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, based East of the Jordan in its capital, Amman.

This struggle between Jews and Arabs for the possession of Mandate Palestine has been incessant

since 1920 or thereabouts and has resulted since 1948 in the invariable victory of the Jews against the Arabs. From being 'David', Jews have become the 'Goliath' of the region.

Although Poland, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Turkey, Israel, and Pakistan, amongst others, became modern states, and assumed their present frontiers, in the process of extensive ethnic cleansing, the left remains either ignorant or unconcerned. It is only the Jews (or Zionists of the Jewish state) who are arraigned for ethnic cleansing. The left's obsession with Israel takes some explaining – because of course there is bloodshed, and ethno-religious cruelty, all over the world – why, one has to ask, are the Jews singled out for condemnation and prominent campaigns run by the left for the boycotting and cultural isolation of the Jewish state?

I suspect that it is because once the Jews of Israel, are characterised as a 'colon' population, in struggle with anti-imperialist Arabs, it is a 'no-brainer' that "we on the left" must support the oppressed, "we must support those fighting against the colonial and imperialist power". This is how we arrive at an outlook in which the dominant position of the Corbynite left is to support the Islamists of Hamas and Hezbollah, and the irredentists of Ramallah. These forces have never accepted the establishment of the state of Israel, and even when there is nominal acknowledgement of the Jewish state's existence, it is accompanied by demands for the 'right of return' to Israel of all those Arabs expelled during the war of 1948 and of their descendants. These demands are supported by Palestinian organisations, and by the Palestinian solidarity outfits beloved of the Labour left, in the full knowledge that granting 'the right of return' to Israel of millions of Arabs of Palestinian descent would result in the destruction of the Jewish state.

Suggestions of a 'single state of Arabs and Jews', or of a 'two-state solution', usually advocated along with the 'right of return', demanded by both the Islamists of Hamas and Hezbollah, and of the Palestinian

authorities in Ramallah, all amount to demands for the destruction of the Jewish state.

This is why I think that Corbyn's Labour Party is institutionally antisemitic.

If Labour and the left stuck to criticising and condemning Israeli governments and the Israel Defence Force for specific crimes and outrages all would be well, but the left invariably accompanies its moral condemnation of the government in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv with demands which would, if achieved, result in the destruction of the Jewish state.

Labour is antisemitic because it denies the right of Jews, amongst all the peoples on the planet, to be nationalists, and to found a national home. It is antisemitic because it repeatedly insists that because Jews and Zionists are not synonymous it can say what it likes about Zionism without regard to Jews or Jewish sensibilities.

Until Jeremy Corbyn comes out in speeches and articles and unequivocally rejects Palestinian demands for the 'right of return', and unequivocally defends the legitimacy and continued existence of the Jewish state of Israel, he and his party will be associated with the anti-Jewish tropes, which arise spontaneously within the labour movement from Labour's uncritical support for pro-Palestinian campaigns and movements.

**For a more detailed discussion
of these issues see [Zionism](#)
at www.studiesinanti-capitalism.net**