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Institutionally Antisemitic

**Contemporary Left Antisemitism
and the Crisis in the British Labour Party**

Professor Alan Johnson

A Fathom publication

‘A compelling and comprehensive read that focuses on precisely the reasons we have referred the Labour Party to the EHRC for institutional racism.’

– Peter Mason, National Secretary, Jewish Labour Movement

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‘Prof Johnson’s report is an authoritative and compelling analysis of Contemporary Left antisemitism and the Labour Party. It is a sobering read and one which gives real academic justification of the positions that the Jewish community has increasingly taken in relation to the Labour Party in recent years.’

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‘An excellent evidence-based report on the systemic failure of the Labour Party to combat antisemitism within its ranks’

– Associate Professor Philip Mendes, author of *Jews and the Left: The rise and fall of a political alliance*, Palgrave

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– Dr Nick Dyrenfurth, Executive Director, John Curtin Research Centre

‘Alan Johnson fuses his political commitment and intellectual understanding in this compelling account of Labour’s transformation from an inclusive, anti-racist party to one now stricken with “institutional antisemitism.”’

– Ben Cohen, co-editor *The Norman Geras Reader*

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- 'Hadi Never Died: Hadi Saleh and the Iraqi Trades Unions', (Co-authored with Abdullah Muhsin), TUC, 2006.
- 'Aurum de Stercore: anti-totalitarianism in the thought of Primo Levi', in *Thinking Towards Humanity. Themes from Norman Geras*, Manchester University Press, 2012.
- 'Jeremy Corbyn is not antisemitic but the left should beware of his friends', *New Statesman*, 2015.
- 'An Open Letter to Jeremy Corbyn', *Left Foot Forward*, 2015.
- 'The Left and the Jews: Time for a Rethink', *Fathom*, Autumn 2015.
- 'Intellectual Incitement: The Anti-Zionist Ideology and the Anti-Zionist Subject', in *The Case against Academic Boycotts of Israel*, eds. Cary Nelson and Gabriel Noah Brahm, New York, 2015.
- 'Antisemitic anti-Zionism: the root of Labour's crisis. A submission to the Labour Party inquiry into antisemitism and other forms of racism', BICOM, 2016.
- 'From Cable Street to Raed Salah, Labor Must Understand Antisemitism Has Shape Shifted', *The Times of Israel*, 15 June 2016.
- 'Labour Party's antisemitism inquiry findings show Labour has failed to learn', *Haaretz*, 1 July 2016.
- 'Antisemitism in the Guise of Anti-Nazism: Holocaust Inversion in the

United Kingdom during Operation Protective Edge, in *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: The Dynamics of Delegitimization*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld, Indiana University Press, 2019.

- 'Denial: Norman Finkelstein and the New Antisemitism' in Jonathan Campbell and Lesley Klaff eds. *Unity and Disunity in Contemporary Antisemitism*, Academic Studies Press, Boston, 2019.
- 'Leon Trotsky's Long War Against Antisemitism', *Fathom*, Spring 2019.

‘The concept of institutional racism, which we apply, consists of: The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. It persists because of the failure of the organisation openly and adequately to recognise and address its existence and causes by policy, example and leadership. Without recognition and action to eliminate such racism it can prevail as part of the ethos or culture of the organisation. It is a corrosive disease.’

– The Macpherson Report, 1999.

‘Antisemitism is the most protean of hatreds and it has shape-shifted again. Labour does not have a neo-Nazi problem. It does, however, have a problem with a modern anti-Zionism of a particularly excessive, obsessive, and demonising kind, which has co-mingled with an older set of classical antisemitic tropes, images and assumptions to create antisemitic anti-Zionism. ... In short, that which the demonised Jew *once was* in older forms of antisemitism, demonised Israel *now is* in contemporary antisemitic anti-Zionism: all-controlling, the hidden hand, tricky, always acting in bad faith, the obstacle to a better, purer, more spiritual world, uniquely malevolent, full of blood lust, uniquely deserving of punishment, and so on.’

– Professor Alan Johnson, submission to the Chakrabarti Inquiry into Antisemitism in the Labour Party, 2016.

‘The Parliamentary Labour Party is dismayed that there remains such a backlog of antisemitism cases that are still to be investigated and ... that a number of cases of alleged antisemitic activity from high-profile members have been dropped. The PLP calls on the party leadership to adequately tackle cases of antisemitism, as a failure to do so seriously risks antisemitism in the party appearing normalised and the party seeming to be institutionally antisemitic.’

– Motion passed unanimously by the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), 4 February 2019.

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Introduction: Labour's last chance?

'This really has the potential to destroy us.' Senior Labour Party official investigating cases of antisemitism, speaking to *The Guardian*, 3 March 2019.¹

This report finds the Labour Party is now 'institutionally antisemitic' as the term is defined in the Macpherson Report: 'the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin.' Specifically, the party has failed to:

- Understand contemporary antisemitism.
- Prevent the party becoming host to three different forms of antisemitism.
- Develop 'appropriate and professional' processes to deal with antisemitism and safeguard members.
- Eradicate the party's culture of antisemitism denial and victim-blaming.

The Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) unanimously passed a motion on 4 February 2019 warning the Labour leadership that it 'seriously risks antisemitism in the party appearing normalised and the party seeming to be institutionally antisemitic.'

Peter Mason, National Secretary of The Jewish Labour Movement (JLM), an affiliated society of the Labour Party for the last 99 years, has said 'it is absolutely clear to us that the Labour Party have institutionally failed to tackle antisemitism'.² The JLM considered disaffiliating from Labour in protest, but on 6 March 2019 they voted to stay *for now*, in order to fight antisemitism.

When nine Labour MPs left the party on 18 February 2019, each cited the antisemitism in Labour Party ranks as a major reason for their decision.

Jewish Labour MP Luciana Berger said 'I cannot remain in a party that I have today come to the sickening conclusion is institutionally antisemitic.' She explained: 'The leadership has wilfully and repeatedly failed to address hatred against Jewish people within its ranks. And it is for these reasons and many more that I have made this decision today. I am leaving behind a culture of bullying, bigotry and intimidation.'

Anne Coffey, a Labour MP for 27 years, also resigned, saying 'Any criticism of the leadership is responded to with abuse and accusations of treachery. Antisemitism is rife and tolerated.'

Mike Gapes MP, a Labour member for 50 years and respected across the party, said, 'I am sickened that the Labour Party is now a racist, antisemitic party.' He felt he had to leave to retain his 'moral integrity'.

Ian Austin MP, the adopted son of a Holocaust survivor, said he was resigning because 'I am appalled at the offence and distress Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party have caused to Jewish people. It is terrible that a culture of extremism, antisemitism and intolerance is driving out good MPs and decent people who have committed their life to mainstream politics. The hard truth is that the party is tougher on the people complaining about antisemitism than it is on the antisemites.'

The Chair of the Community Security Trust (CST), the UK Jewish community's antisemitism monitoring and defence organisation, said simply that Labour antisemitism was the 'biggest political defence issue our community has faced for decades'.³

Labour's Deputy Leader, Tom Watson, noted that Ms Berger was 'a pregnant young MP bullied out of her own party by racist thugs' and said 18 February 2019 was 'the worst day of shame in the party's 120-year history'.

Labour Mayor of London Sadiq Khan said 'It's devastating so many Jewish people feel that Labour is unwilling to tackle antisemitism. Every Labour member, supporter and politician now bears a serious responsibility.'

Jon Lansman, a member of Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) and Chair of the Corbyn support-group Momentum, admitted in February 2019 that antisemitism was a far more 'widespread' problem in the party than he had previously realised and said he felt 'regret, sadness and some shame' at the decision of the Jewish MP Luciana Berger to quit the party.

On 1 March 2019, over 1000 Corbyn-supporting Labour members signed a collective letter of apology to the Jewish community: 'We have seen antisemitism from Labour members and supporters, online or offline. We recognise that as a movement we have been too slow to acknowledge this problem, too tolerant of the existence of antisemitic views within our ranks, too defensive and too eager to downplay it.' The statement continued: 'We sincerely apologise to the Jewish community, and our Jewish comrades in the party, for our collective failure.'

Whilst the letter is welcome, if very late in the day, its *content* confirms that the Labour Party is, for now, institutionally antisemitic: i.e. its 'processes, attitudes and behaviour' are such that there is no possibility of 'an appropriate

and professional service' for Jews.⁴

A chorus of voices are warning that the party's very existence is now at stake.

The Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, Tom Watson, has warned that the entire party may 'disappear into a vortex of eternal shame and embarrassment'. He was attacked as being in the pocket of rich Jews for saying so, proving his point.

John Mann MP, long-time Labour MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Antisemitism and author of *Antisemitism: The Oldest Hatred*, says British Jews believe that the Labour Party has 'declared war' on them. In 2018 the veteran Labour MP Frank Field resigned the Labour whip, saying the leadership had become 'a force for antisemitism in British politics.' The former Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, has said 'the soul' of the party is at stake.

The despair is felt equally strongly at the grassroots, with long-standing members voicing their disgust. Russell Smith-Becker, a Labour Party member for 28 years and Treasurer for the Islington North Constituency Labour Party (CLP), where Jeremy Corbyn has been MP for 35 years, resigned saying 'The Labour Party has become somewhere antisemites feel comfortable and where many Jews feel uncomfortable'. Smith-Becker said he was 'no longer sure that the Labour Party is a force for good.'⁵

Hannah Rose, President of the Union of Jewish Students and a member of Hertsmere CLP and Bristol Labour Students, resigned in September 2018, saying 'I cannot, in good faith, continue as a member of a political party which has deliberately and recklessly allowed antisemitism to emerge, and even more concerningly, flourish. The Party has made clear through its actions that I am not welcome.'⁶

When Adam Langleben, a former Labour Councillor in Barnet, resigned in February 2019, he wrote an open letter to Jeremy Corbyn. 'My wife and I are having our first child in two weeks' time. One day my son may ask me what I did to stop you from ever becoming Prime Minister. Well, this is a small act, but it's what I can do. I will no longer pay subscriptions to an antisemitic movement. I will sign one pledge, and that is to stop a party led by antisemites from ever gaining power in this country. I will continue to live by the values on the back of my now torn-up membership card.'⁷

In an unprecedented act of unity, 68 British Rabbis from all strands of British Judaism wrote to Jeremy Corbyn in anger and desperation: 'Antisemitism

within sections of the Labour Party has become so severe and widespread that we must speak out with one Jewish voice. The Labour Party's leadership has chosen to ignore those who understand antisemitism the best, the Jewish community'.⁸

The crisis has drawn in public authorities and watchdogs. In 2018 the Met Police became involved, opening a criminal investigation into incidents catalogued in a leaked internal Labour Party report. In March 2019 the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) announced a probe into the question of antisemitism in the party.

The general public looks on aghast. When asked the question in a poll 'Do you believe Mr Corbyn is antisemitic?', 27 per cent of respondents said 'yes' and 38 per cent said they 'didn't know'. Astonishingly, then, almost two-thirds of voters, when asked if they think the Leader of the Labour Party is a racist, cannot simply answer 'no'.⁹

A culture of antisemitism denial and victim-blaming exists in the Labour Party, from top to bottom, stopping the problem from being understood and acted on. In March 2018 a YouGov poll showed that 77 per cent of Labour members believed the charges of antisemitism to be deliberately exaggerated to undermine the leader or stop criticism of Israel – only 19 per cent said it was a serious issue.¹⁰

To make things worse, there is little or no trust in the Labour Party's internal processes to deal with complaints of antisemitism when they (all too often) arise. Hundreds of cases are piled up. Some cases go unresolved for years. Party members who mock the very idea that Labour has a real problem with antisemitism are elected onto the very body (the National Constitutional Committee) charged with tackling the problem. Suspended members guilty of egregious antisemitic statements are quietly reinstated. The culture of denial at the grassroots is curdling into something dark: a branch of Stockton North CLP rejected a motion to condemn the antisemitic massacre in Pittsburgh because, as one member said, it had heard enough of 'antisemitism this, antisemitism, that'. Wirral Labour Councillor Jo Bird mutters about 'Jew process' replacing due process. The dismissal of antisemitism as a 'smear', a 'plot', 'contrived', is heard from not only from neophytes, but also from MPs, Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs), councillors, trade union leaders, members of the National Executive Committee, Labour frontbenchers and staff in the Leader's Office.

The myth of 'The Smear'

So prevalent is the idea that the antisemitism scandal is a 'contrived' 'smear' to 'stop criticism of Israel' or to 'get Jeremy' that it is important this report refutes these claims at the very outset. **It is a myth** – examined in more detail in part four of the report – **and it is itself a form of denial and victim blaming, and a central component of the new antisemitism.**

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Definition of Antisemitism, eventually adopted by the Labour Party in 2018, is clear that 'criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.' The truth is that Labour's antisemitism crisis has *nothing* to do with an effort to block 'criticism of Israel'. *No one's* 'free speech on Israel' has been threatened. Palestine is *not* being silenced.¹¹

To be as clear as possible, let us look at four kinds of sharp criticism of current Israeli government policy, none of which fall foul of the IHRA definition of antisemitism:

- It is not antisemitic to criticise Israel's occupation of the West Bank, to call for its withdrawal or to call for the creation of a Palestinian State alongside Israel;
- It is not antisemitic to criticise the expansion of settlements in the West Bank;
- It is not antisemitic to criticise Israel's efforts to deter Hamas rockets and terror as 'disproportionate';
- It is not antisemitic to criticise the inequality and discrimination faced by the Arab minority within Israel.¹²

Even if a person making one or other of those criticisms does so in a one-sided, unfair or inaccurate way – let's say by ignoring the Hamas rockets and terror tunnels intended to kill Israeli civilians, or Hamas's solemn commitment, written into its Charter, to obliterate Israel as an Islamic duty – that person is being one-sided, unfair or inaccurate, not antisemitic. Not a single person has been suspended for making these kind of sharp criticisms of Israel, and nor should they be.

But as long as the culture of denial and victim blaming persists, as long as it is acceptable to dismiss the problem as a 'smear' made by 'Israeli stooges', Labour's crisis will never end, because the problem will not be seen as what it really is – antisemitism.

The author

I am a former academic and Professor of Democratic Theory and Practice, who is currently the editor of the online journal *Fathom*. I am a non-Jewish socialist and Labour Party member who has stood for the democratic ‘two states for two peoples’ solution and against left antisemitism for 35 years. David Hirsh described me in his 2018 book *Contemporary Left Antisemitism* as ‘a long-time supporter of Palestinian statehood’. I first fought left-wing antisemitism alongside the Union of Jewish Students as part of the democratic socialist left in the mid-1980s, when we defeated the drive by parts of the far-left to *ban Jewish societies* on UK university campuses. I have written this pamphlet because while I will not be leaving the party, I do not believe it will deserve support for much longer unless the antisemitism, and the culture of denial and victim-blaming is driven out.

Structure

Part One explains that Labour has failed to tackle the crisis because it has failed to understand contemporary antisemitism. I define antisemitism and explore its core demonology and several historical forms. I also examine the nature of *contemporary* antisemitism, which the historian – and no friend of Israel – Eric Hobsbawm once called antisemitism ‘dressed up’ as anti-Zionism. One form of dressing up antisemitism as anti-Zionism is the use of ‘the Nazi analogy’, in which Israel is framed as the ultimate evil, the modern Third Reich, and that is also discussed.

Part Two says that the Labour Party has become host to three types of antisemitism. First, there is what has long been called ‘the socialism of fools’, i.e. seeing capitalism or globalisation or the banks as in some way ‘Jewish’. When you hear talk of ‘Rothschild capitalism’ you know you are listening to the socialism of fools. Second, there is ‘classic racial antisemitism’, sometimes but not always informed these days by Islamist ideas about Jews.¹³ Third, there is antisemitism dressed up as ‘anti-Zionism’.

I make no apology for making available to the reader a large number of examples of each type of antisemitism within this typology. As there is so much denialism in the Labour Party, at the top as much as the base, I had no choice.¹⁴ Also, those of us who run training sessions on antisemitism know that one real-life example can be worth any amount of history or theory in helping people

to understand antisemitism.

Part Three says that Labour has failed to develop processes to tackle antisemitism that are effective, command trust, and are seen as having integrity. The failure to provide what Macpherson called an ‘appropriate and professional service’ is plain. The Labour Party has struggled to identify antisemitism, safeguard members against antisemitism, educate members about contemporary antisemitism, tackle the culture of denial about the issue, or routinely take speedy and effective action against it.

These multiple failures define the Labour Party, for now, as institutionally antisemitic. Concern about the evidence of these failures is surely what led the EHRC to launch a probe in March 2019.

Part Four says the Labour Party has failed to tackle its culture of antisemitism denial and victim-blaming. I argue this sub-culture has *completely undermined* those in the party who are making a genuine effort to end antisemitism. Jeremy Corbyn’s repeated pro forma statements over almost four years that condemn ‘antisemitism and all other racisms’ are no longer taken seriously because for four years they have co-existed with this culture of denial. Rooting it out will be tough. Without a profound self-criticism by Corbyn himself, I suggest, it will be impossible.

Though I have ideas about the kind of measures the Labour Party should take to turn things around, the purpose of this report is more limited: to establish that the party is institutionally antisemitic and is in denial about this plain fact. I do so in the belief that only clarity about how low the party has sunk can be the basis for a climb back towards the light.

Part 1. Labour has failed to understand Contemporary Antisemitism

Antisemitism involves a core demonology about Jews: they are powerful, malign, and conspiratorial. But the forms supposedly taken by this supposed Jewish malignity have changed radically throughout history.

1.1 What is antisemitism?

The Community Security Trust (CST) defines antisemitism as ‘hatred, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination against Jews.’ It noted that ‘the word “antisemitism” came into use in the late nineteenth century to describe pseudo-scientific racial discrimination against Jews. Now, it generally describes all forms of discrimination, prejudice or hostility towards Jews throughout history’.

The CST note that ‘There are several definitions of antisemitism which have been created by international bodies to formally recognise antisemitism as a form of racism’. In 2016, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopted a working definition of antisemitism, which has also been formally adopted by the UK Government. ‘This Working Definition’ says the CST, ‘should be regarded as a helpful set of guidelines to help identify different examples of possible antisemitism, rather than a strict legal definition.’

Antisemitism is the longest hatred. It has been around for millennia in one form or another, and has been central to the world-view and the self-understanding of Christian-Medieval, Secular-Modern, Islamic and modern totalitarian societies, ideologies and political movements. It has the following characteristics: (i) it has a core demonology; (ii) there is a tendency for it to shape-shift through history; (iii) it offers an explanation of the world to the antisemite, i.e. it is an ‘ideology’ or world-view; (iv) it is delusional; and (v) consequential, potentially moving from antisemitic discourse to anti-Jewish violence. I now explore each of these characteristics.

1.1.1 Antisemitism has a core demonology

The ‘core demonology’ of antisemitism casts ‘the Jew’, stereotypically understood, as being *essentially different* from non-Jews, and as well *powerful* and *malign and up to something*. To deploy an analogy, the core demonology is the *piano*, and each historic form of antisemitism is the specific *tune* played on

that piano. There have been many ‘pianists’ – i.e. many ideologies, religions, movements and leaders – that have *adapted* the core demonology about the Jews to suit their own world views and their own political agendas.

The core antisemitic demonology depicts ‘the Jew’ as ‘historically controlling and determining nature and human destiny’, according to the socialist Steve Cohen. Jews are seen as conspiring to start wars and to exploit the non-Jew in order to control the world and to further Jewish interests. This ‘devilish Jew’ can be an arch-capitalist and arch-Communist at the same time – indeed that division of labour was seen as a diabolically clever Jewish plot to get Jewish grips into the Gentiles and into the world, to exploit the one and despoil the other.

The image of ‘the Jew’ established by the Christian Bible and by Church teaching over many centuries – the Jew as God-killer, no less – meant that variations of the following ideas about the Jews became a kind of popular common sense at many times and in many civilisations, not only Christian ones. The Jew has been viewed as:

- malevolent (deliberately harmful; devilish, evil) and clannish (loyal to themselves only, anti-universalist, a tribal fifth-column wherever they are, not to be trusted);
- all-powerful (they shape events, are in control of societies, wars, history etc);
- conspirators (exercising an immense but hidden, power by string-pulling and conspiracy, always ‘up to something’);
- liars (about both their hidden power and about antisemitism as a concept, always ‘crying wolf’ about antisemitism to close down criticism of their hidden power);
- base (an arch-exploiter, a super-materialist, an arch-capitalist, an anti-spiritual, humourless, calculating money-grubber);
- an obstacle to Utopia (the Jew is *in the way*, stopping oneness with God or world peace or Eine Volk or World Communism or Universalism);
- a dangerous free-thinker (respecting no traditions, holding nothing sacred, a dissolvent eating away at every organic or volkish nation: a ‘rootless cosmopolitan’);
- uniquely violent, vengeful and bloodthirsty.

It’s quite a rumour, this rumour about the Jews.¹⁵

1.1.2 Antisemitism shape-shifts through history: new times, new forms

Antisemitism has taken on radically different forms and supposed ‘rationales’ in different cultures at different times.

Medieval priests made one claim about ‘the Jews’, Enlightenment philosophers made another. The Nazi SS officer had his claim, as did the Stalinist Central Committee Member.

Each told a *different story* about the alien, powerful, malevolent and tricky Jew. Each story has served to justify a murderous attack upon the Jews who have been indicted as:

- the betrayer and killer of the universal God, drainer of gentile blood, poisoner of the wells, etc (Christian antisemitism);
- the tribal anachronism, the enemy of the Age of Reason (Enlightenment antisemitism);
- the rootless cosmopolitan, everywhere the enemy of and fifth column within organic nations (Counter-Enlightenment antisemitism);
- the biologically programmed threat to all races, to be eliminated to the last child (Nazi antisemitism);
- the sons of apes and pigs who will be killed on a Day of Judgment (some forms of Islam and modern Islamic antisemitism);
- the arch-capitalist exploiter – to be hung from the lampposts as German Communist Ruth Fischer put it (Left antisemitism);

Today, in addition to all of the above (each of which is still with us), there is a new form of antisemitism which has been the consequence of the development of a Jewish State – Israel – and the demonisation of it. ‘Zionism’, properly understood as a movement of national liberation for the Jewish people, is demonised through the antisemitic ideas of the ‘The Zios’, ‘The Zionists’, ‘Global Zionism’ and ‘the all-powerful Jewish Lobby’. In tandem with earlier forms of antisemitism, these conceptions of Zionism see the Zionists as still malign, still controlling the world for Jewish purposes, and still string-pulling. The ‘Zionists’ power is still virtually unlimited, still exercised through their hidden control of global media, political parties and governments, and global finance. They are still uniquely evil, the modern-day Nazis. Not a lot has changed, except in post-Holocaust times, the antisemite tries to remember to

say 'Zionist' not 'Jew'. This is antisemitism 'dressed up' as anti-Zionism.

The Labour Party does not understand that the creation for the first time in two thousand years of a Jewish State has transformed the language and style of antisemitism. As historian David Nirenberg, author of the seminal work *Anti-Judaism: The History of a Way of Thinking*, puts it, 'We live in an age in which millions of people are exposed daily to some variant of the argument that the challenges of the world they live in are best explained in terms of 'Israel'.¹⁶

1.1.3 Antisemitism 'explains' the world to the antisemite: i.e. explains who has power, who wins, and why (and who loses and why). It is in that sense, 'intellectual'.

Antisemitism isn't just a *prejudice* against Jews. It is also a *fear* of their supposedly tremendous (but always hidden) power to shape the world. In *that* sense, antisemitism sometimes *functions* in some different ways to other prejudices, other racisms. (Which is not to say it is any 'worse' than any other prejudice. There is no league table. All racisms are unique and all are to be fought.)

The leading US democratic socialist Michael Walzer argues antisemitism has been 'a tool in many different intellectual efforts, religious and secular, to understand the world and to denounce opposing understandings' of the world'. Similarly, Steve Cohen, in his pioneering study of left antisemitism *That's Funny You Don't Look Antisemitic*, pointed out that antisemitism, 'provides its adherents with a universal and generalised interpretation of the world'.¹⁷

1.1.4 Antisemitism is delusional.

Antisemitism is an irrational fantasy, often linked to wild conspiracies and apocalyptic visions of the world.

For the antisemite, the powers of the Jew are unlimited: indeed they verge on the supernatural or devilish. The Jews (but today, often, 'the Zionists') are seen to control *everything*: they run global media, finance and politics, they start wars, run the slave trade, do 9/11 (while warning all the Jews about it the night before), cause financial systems to crash, and organise fake antisemitism crises – such as the present one in the Labour Party, which has supposedly been contrived by Jews to bring down Jeremy Corbyn.

Antisemitism does not *need* real-life Jews doing any of this, because antisemitism is not *about* real-life Jews. It is about the *idea* of ‘the Jew’. For example, both the military regime and the Islamist opposition in Egypt accuse the other of being ‘Jewish’ and ‘run by Jews’. It is irrelevant that there are barely a handful of Jews left in Egypt. ‘The Jew’ functions for each side as the ultimate symbol of malevolent power, and so as the ultimate delegitimising insult. ‘The Jew’ / ‘The Zionist’ is a screen onto which the antisemite projects his or her fantasies, fears and needs.

1.1.5 Antisemitism is consequential: from discourse to violence

Unchallenged, antisemitic discourse can lead to anti-Jewish violence, especially at times of social and political crisis and cultural upheaval, when there is a particular danger that political ‘entrepreneurs’ can whip up trouble against an old, convenient scapegoat.

1.2 What is ‘Contemporary Antisemitism’?

‘What do you mean by *contemporary* antisemitism? Antisemitism is antisemitism. I don’t understand what you mean by a contemporary form of it.’ Chris Williamson MP, now suspended from the Labour Party for saying Labour was ‘too apologetic’ about antisemitism.¹⁸

Dave Rich, author of *The Left’s Jewish Problem: Jeremy Corbyn, Israel and Antisemitism*, explains contemporary antisemitism in the clearest terms: ‘Nowadays antisemitism often appears in discourse relating to Israel, either by targeting Israel itself as a proxy for Jews or by repeating old antisemitic slanders with “Israel” or “Zionist” swapped in for the word “Jew”.’ He goes on: ‘Antisemitism in today’s Labour Party ... usually involves language that draws on old racist lies about Jews, but reframes the bigotry in a modern, “anti-Zionist” setting that has nothing to do with what Zionism is, or with how Israel actually behaves.’¹⁹

Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm issued a warning in 1980 that a new form of antisemitism was emerging. Across huge tracts of the world, he noted, *antisemitism had never gone away*, surviving in two major regions in the post-war years – ‘under Islam and, unfortunately, in some countries committed to

an ideology which rejected racism, notably the Soviet Union.’ Today, almost all the cases of antisemitism are Islamist or Stalinist in inspiration, whether the perpetrator knows it or not.

Though he was a lifelong member of the Communist Party, Hobsbawm pointed out that in Stalinist Eastern Europe, ‘antisemitism ... was ... tolerated and sometimes encouraged’ after the Holocaust, ‘*albeit now dressed up as anti-Zionism*’ in the era of the Jewish state.²⁰ Hobsbawm predicted that this ‘new’ form of antisemitism – antisemitism ‘dressed up’ as anti-Zionism as a camouflage in a post-Holocaust world – would grow in influence.²¹

The party needs to grasp the character of ‘new antisemitism’ because it needs to grasp the difference between:

- **Legitimate criticism** of Israeli policy, which, as I made clear above, would include criticism of the occupation of the territories, the settlement project, aspects of the treatment of minorities in Israel, and the degree of force Israel uses to restore deterrence against Hamas; and
- **Illegitimate discourse**, which uses demonising, dehumanising and conspiracist language to bend the meaning of ‘Israel’ and ‘Zionism’ and ‘Zionists’ so far out of shape that each term becomes a fit receptacle for the tropes, images and ideas of classical antisemitism.

Antisemitism ‘dressed up’ as anti-Zionism has three components: (i) a political programme to abolish the Jewish homeland (and no other homeland); (ii) a discourse to demonise it as evil and ‘Nazi’ (and only it); and (iii) a movement to make it a global pariah state so it can be ‘smashed’ (an anathema applied to no other state in the world).

The old antisemitism – which has not gone away, but is co-mingled with the new form – believed ‘the Jew is our Misfortune’. The new antisemitism proclaims ‘the Zionist is our misfortune’.

The old antisemitism wanted to make the world ‘Judenrein’ – free of Jews. The new antisemitism wants to make the world ‘Judenstaatrein’ – free of the Jewish State, which all but a tiny sliver of world Jewry either lives in, has family members living in, or treats as a vitally important part of their identity.

Some people, such as Chris Williamson MP, quoted above, are disbelieving of the development of a new form of antisemitism. But as the scholar of racism Ben Gidley has noted, we have no right to be. History tells us that antisemitism changes over time, ever-changing euphemisms marking the Jew for

destruction.²² Today, the euphemism is, very often, ‘Zionist’ or ‘Zio’ or ‘Global Zionism’. The new antisemites write, talk and tweet as if what the demonised ‘Jew’ *once was* in the old antisemitism, demonised Israel or ‘Zionism’ *now is*. The new antisemite does not depict a nation-state as guilty (or not, as the specific case may be) of particular human rights abuses. Instead, ‘Israel’ and ‘Zionism’ or ‘Global Zionism’ is depicted by the new antisemite in eerily similar ways to how ‘the Jew’ was anathematised by the old antisemites:

- as a malignity to be eradicated, routinely compared to the ultimate evil, the Nazis;
- as a cosmically powerful force, able to bend global politics, media and finance to its will;
- as an essentially violent force, a blood-lust state, a ‘baby killer’ state, seeking to start wars and send Gentile boys off to fight them;
- as a conspiracy against the gentile or ‘the people’, its power hidden, operating in the shadows and by pulling strings.

All supporters of the *existence* of this state, Israel (many of whom are critical of specific Israeli policies), are lumped together and monstered as ‘the Zionists’ to be attacked, banned, driven out of the movement and denied access to the public square (or even to a campus Jewish Society).

When a person says ‘the Zionists’ control the media, or control America, or did 9/11, or created ISIS, or stole Asghar Bukhari’s shoe in the dead of night²³; when they use the term ‘Zio’, or ‘Zio-Nazis, or they say Israel is the new Third Reich and so should be ‘smashed’; when they demand all UK Jews take responsibility for Israeli policy in the West Bank (or else), this is not ‘criticism of Israel’: It is the new antisemitism.²⁴

Antisemitic forms of ‘anti-Zionism’ include the demand that *alone* among the nation-states of the entire world, one must be smashed, the little Jewish one. Contemporary antisemitism does not propose to establish Palestine *alongside* Israel (the progressive ‘two states for two peoples’ solution) but Palestine *instead of* Israel. It wants Palestine ‘from the River to the Sea’. It says ‘Destroy Israel for World Peace’.

The Nazi analogy: an antisemitic form of anti-Zionism

Such acts as calling Israel ‘the new Third Reich’, calling Israelis ‘the new Nazis’,

and so on, typify a form of antisemitism dressed up as anti-Zionism that is often called ‘the Nazi Analogy’ or ‘Holocaust Inversion’.²⁵ The *person* using the Nazi Analogy may not subjectively hate all Jews as Jews. They probably do not. We can even imagine that, as the saying goes, some of their best friends are Jews. Nonetheless, the *use* by that person of the Nazi Analogy is antisemitic. This is because the use of the discourse has antisemitic impacts given three contexts in which the analogy is used: the Jewish context, the political context, and the discursive context.

The Jewish context of the Nazi analogy

Whatever the subjective intentions of the person using the analogy, treating Israelis or Jews or Zionists as ‘Nazis’ is obscene; it verges on the demonic in its cruelty as it implicitly demands, as a matter of ethical obligation no less – and this *after* the rupture in world history that was the Shoah – the destruction of the Jewish homeland as a unique evil in the world, no better than the Third Reich, the perpetrators of the Shoah.

The academics Iganski, McGlashan, and Sweiry have pointed out that ‘deep wounds are scratched when the Nazi-card is played . . . in discourse against Jews.’ The inversion is ‘not simply abusive,’ they add, but ‘invokes painful collective memories for Jews and for many others’, such that ‘by using those memories against Jews it inflicts profound hurts’ and can lead to violence.²⁶

In a similar vein, Dave Rich of the CST has argued that Holocaust inversion plays on Jewish sensibilities ‘in order to provoke a reaction,’ adding, ‘another word for that is Jew-baiting.’²⁷

For the CST, ‘incidents equating Israel to Nazi Germany would normally be recorded as antisemitic,’ because the inversion has a ‘visceral capacity to offend Jews on the basis of their Jewishness’ and ‘carries a particular meaning for Jews because of the Holocaust.’²⁸

The political context of the Nazi analogy

The Nazi Analogy is used in a definite political context: there is a global social movement dedicated to the destruction of only one state in the world – the Jewish one. This movement is state-sponsored, well-funded, and has grown up over several decades and across several continents. It includes in its ranks

eliminationist antisemitic forces. And central to this global movement is the deliberate use of the Holocaust Analogy to bait Jews and delegitimise Israel's very *existence* (not its policies, but *its existence*).

This worldwide campaign to 'Smash Israel' matters more than the subjectivity of any individual user of its discourse, images, and tropes. As the Israeli academic Elhanan Yakira has observed, when it comes to the Nazi Analogy there now exists an 'entire eco-system,' a veritable 'international community', that has a shared code, language, jargon, credo and sensibility.²⁹ This is surely why the late scholar of antisemitism Robert Wistrich came to believe that 'Holocaust inversion' was 'in practice . . . the most potent form of contemporary antisemitism.'³⁰

In that context, to deny the Nazi Analogy the status of antisemitism unless the user of the analogy can be proved to have a personal subjective hatred of Jews as Jews (and how on earth would that be done?) is to fail to understand how contemporary antisemitism *works*. Antisemitism need not involve strong personal feelings of hatred for Jews. It very often does, of course, but though hatred is probably a sufficient condition it is not a necessary one: discriminatory treatment of the kind described above, and of other kinds too, will suffice.

The discursive context of the Nazi analogy

'Discourse' just means 'ways of speaking, writing and representing': i.e. our writing, talk, speeches, tweets, graffiti, cartoons, videos, internet memes, as well as the words and signs we use on our placards, and so on. The discourse of the Nazi Analogy constructs the contemporary Jew as a Zio-Nazi.³¹ As a 2006 inquiry by the United Kingdom's All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) against Antisemitism put it, 'a discourse has developed that is in effect antisemitic because it views Zionism itself as a global force of unlimited power and malevolence throughout history.' When Zionism is redefined in this way, 'traditional antisemitic notions . . . are transferred from Jews (a racial and religious group) on to Zionism (a political movement).'³²

Whether or not the user of the discourse subjectively hates Jews is an important question, no doubt, but the transference identified by the APPG Report *happens anyway*, and so does the impact on Jews.

When Israel's operations to stop rockets from Gaza are described as a *vernichtungskrieg* (war of extermination) and Israel is described as a *Taetervolk*

(a nation of criminals), or when Tariq Ali says Israelis treat Palestinians as *Untermenschen*, or when Noam Chomsky writes about the ‘jack-boots’ of the IDF, we have what Elhanan Yakira has called a ‘transshipment mechanism’ – a helpful, if awkward term, that means a ‘vehicle for transferring blame and negation . . . absolute evil, limitless guilt, and suffering’ from the Holocaust to Israel and Zionism.³³

It has to stop.

Placards were held aloft outside a Labour Party NEC meeting in September 2018. They read ‘Anti-Zionism is not Antisemitism’. The party has to put itself to school so that it can say ‘sorry, while sharp criticism of Israeli policy is legitimate, we know that these days, *sometimes*, antisemitism *does* come “dressed up” as anti-Zionism.’ Until it can say that, and hold its ground when the ‘anti-Zionists’ argue back, the crisis will go on and on.

1.3 The ‘two-camp’ world view: A ‘philosophy’ of antisemitic anti-Zionism

Antisemitic forms of anti-Zionism have a guiding philosophy, of sorts: the crude idea that the world is divided into two and only two camps: the good-oppressed vs. the bad-oppressors.

This ‘two-camp’ world-view acts as a distorting lens on the world’s conflicts for its supporters. It serves to erode their progressive left-wing values, replacing them with that old amoral myth, ‘my enemy’s enemy is my friend’. As David Hirsh has observed, whereas anti-imperialism used to be ‘one value amongst a whole set’ including ‘democracy, equality, sexual and gender liberation, [and] anti-totalitarianism’, it was raised to a radically new status in the 1960’s by the far left in the West.

At that point, everything became *relative*.

Tyrants, fascists, religious fundamentalists, and misogynists may look bad, but they can be re-designated by the ‘two camps’ philosophy as *objectively progressive* because they are shooting at the West, which is simplistically constructed as the Oppressor. Democrats, workers, women and gays, meanwhile, can be abandoned if they get on the wrong side of the ‘anti-imperialist’ Mullahs, the Islamist Hate-Preachers, and the Dictators. The ‘two camps’ world view defines theirs as a legitimate struggle against the evil West (even though it is usually just the age-old war on uppity women, the wrong kind of Muslims, and

anyone seeking democracy, freedom and joy).

Momentum made a video in which the speaker says ‘Palestinians need to have the right to define their oppression in whatever terms they see fit.’ Really? What if those terms are, to quote Jeremy Corbyn’s friend Raed Saleh, that the Jews are ‘the bacteria of all times’? What if Jews are ‘apes and pigs’, to be slaughtered by divine edict as Hamas believes? Can we find no voice to object to such sentiments? Are such people really our ‘friends’ and ‘brothers’ – as Jeremy Corbyn has called them? Are they really ‘a force for peace and social justice’ as he said?

The two-camp philosophy has meant in practice that Iranian democrats and progressives who oppose the theocratic fascists in Tehran are shut out of Stop the War Coalition events, while representatives of the tyrannical Iranian regime are welcomed.

The two-camp philosophy meant that when Hadi Saleh, an Iraqi socialist and trade unionist tortured under Saddam, returned from exile in 2002 to build a free trade union movement, and was then tortured and murdered by Saddam’s fascistic thugs, he got no sympathy from those on the Left who are in thrall to the ‘two-camps’ world view.³⁴ Indeed the Stop the War movement, when Jeremy Corbyn was its patron, thought Hadi Saleh was – objectively speaking, comrade – in the *wrong* camp. Stop the War told its members, to the disgust of many trade unionists, that ‘the resistance’ had the right to use ‘whatever means necessary’. The two-camp philosophy means a murdered free trade unionist can be scorned as a ‘collaborator’ with imperialism, while his fascist killers can be hailed as the objectively progressive ‘resistance’.³⁵ The Left’s moral compass is thus turned upside down.

The two-camp philosophy, I believe, led Jeremy Corbyn to defend an antisemitic Islamist preacher-politician called Raed Saleh.

It led Ken Livingstone to embrace the antisemitic Islamist and misogynist preacher Qaradawi, and then to attack the human rights activist Peter Tatchell when he protested about this.

The crude two-camp world view can even persuade leftists that the fascistic is the new progressive and that they should carry placards through the streets of London proclaiming ‘We are all Hezbollah Now!’

The consequences of the two camps dogma have at times beggared belief. For example, in 1976 two German far-leftists Wilfried Böse and Brigitte Kuhlmann hijacked Air France Flight 139 along with their comrades Fayeze

Abdul-Rahim Jaber and Jayel Naji al-Arjam, and demanded the release of Palestinian and Baader-Meinhof terrorists. They flew the plane to Entebbe in Uganda, separated the Jews from the non-Jews, and prepared to execute them. To fully understand how Böse – an idealistic anti-Nazi, a member of the far-left Revolutionary Cells (RZ) – ended his days selecting Jews for death, it is necessary to grasp the nature of modern left-wing ‘anti-Zionism.’ Crucially, ‘anti-imperialist struggle’ displaced ‘class struggle’ as the organising category of thought and the basis of political identity resulting in a hybrid political phenomenon that the Germans call linksfaschismus, or left-fascism. When a Jewish passenger showed him his Auschwitz tattoo, Böse shouted back, ‘I’m no Nazi! ... I am an idealist.’ He had absorbed the far left-wing ‘common sense’ that to support Israel’s enemies—whatever these enemies actually stood for, however they actually behaved—was an ‘anti-imperialist’ duty: in other words, antisemitism had gone ‘progressive.’³⁶

This kind of thing has been eating away at the left like a cancer since the 1960s. Most people educated on the left today come to know nothing else; they think it *is* leftism. By reducing the complexity of the post-cold-war world to a single Great Contest – ‘Imperialism’ against ‘the resistance’, or ‘Empire’ against ‘the multitude’ – this ‘reactionary anti-imperialism’ constructs a left that is gripped by the same Manichean world-view and habits of mind that dominated a previous ‘left’ in the Stalinist period; from apologia to denial, from cynicism to grossly simplifying tendencies of thought, from the belief that ‘my enemy’s enemy is my friend’ to the abandonment of all who get on the wrong side of the ‘anti-imperialists’.

Perhaps the nadir of this kind of idiocy was when Judith Butler, the American academic, told an audience that ‘Understanding Hamas, Hezbollah as social movements that are progressive, that are on the left, that are part of a global left, is extremely important.’³⁷

The Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has been formed by this kind of politics, as we discuss in detail in Part Four. That is why he said of the fascistic and antisemitic Hamas and Hezbollah, ‘it will be my pleasure and my honour to host an event in Parliament where our friends from Hezbollah will be speaking. I’ve also invited friends from Hamas to come and speak as well... an organisation that is dedicated towards the good of the Palestinian people, and bringing about long-term peace and social justice and political justice in the whole region.’ What Corbyn said was untrue. Dangerous nonsense, in fact. But it

makes sense to the person in thrall to the two-camp philosophy.

Applied to the Israel-Palestine conflict, the two-camps idea reduces what is a hugely complex conflict to a cartoon. A tragic clash between two peoples who are both the victims of a tragic history is reduced to just one more example of Good Camp vs. Bad Camp. Rather than support deep mutual recognition, negotiations, sharing the land, and peacebuilding, Israel is to be 'smashed'. Israel's enemies – whatever they stand for, however they behave, whomever they kill – are to be cheered on as the 'anti-imperialist resistance'. Even antisemitic Islamism is excused, or even worse, is recoded as objectively progressive and offered tea on the terrace of the House of Commons.

Without grasping the influence of the two-camp dogma it is difficult to explain the sheer number of cases of antisemitism 'dressed up' as anti-Zionism that have plagued the Labour Party for these last four years.

It is to the antisemitism in the Labour Party that the report now turns.

Part 2: Labour has failed to tackle three types of antisemitism in the Party

Three types of antisemitism are present in today's Labour Party: 'the socialism of fools', 'classic racial antisemitism' and 'antisemitism dressed up as anti-Zionism'. This section of the report presents a large number of illustrative examples of each. In this section I make no apology for focusing on Labour members, rather than those outside the party who might share similar sentiments. Only by confronting people with miserable example after miserable example can we challenge the myth that Labour faces a 'smear' rather than a genuine crisis.

2.1 Antisemitism in the Party (Type 1): 'The Socialism of Fools'

The core antisemitic demonology was given a *leftist* twist from the late 19th century, when parts of the emerging European socialist movement – sometimes as a tactical ploy, sometimes because they had simply absorbed the common sense of their time – identified 'The Jew' with finance capitalism and began to attack Jews as the *arch*-exploiters, *uniquely* reactionary obstacles to socialism and world peace.

August Bebel, the German Social Democrat leader, taking his lead from Marx's intellectual partner Frederick Engels, shook his head at all this dangerous nonsense and called it the 'socialism of fools'.³⁸

There was much of this kind of foolishness coming from British socialists at this time. 'Wherever there is trouble in Europe, wherever rumours of war circulate and men's minds are distraught with fear of change and calamity,' warned the Independent Labour Party in 1891, 'you may be sure that a hooked-nosed Rothschild is at his games somewhere near the region of the disturbances.' In the same year, *Justice*, the paper of the Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF), claimed that 'Jew moneylenders now control every Foreign Office in Europe.'

A plethora of examples were also apparent in continental Europe. For example, Ruth Fischer, a leading figure in the German Communist Party in the early 1920s, told crowds that 'Whoever fights against Jewish capital ... is already a class-fighter, even if he does not know it ... Strike down the Jewish capitalists, hang them from the lamp posts!' (For a *mass* of similar quotes covering the entire history of the Left and each of its strands, socialist,

communist and anarchist, download Steve Cohen's *That's Funny, You Don't Look Antisemitic* from the Engage website.)³⁹

In explaining this antisemitism, it isn't enough to talk only of the prevailing climate of ideas in the age of imperialism. Also implicated are two ideas that were very popular on the left, assimilationism and universalism, both admirable in many ways, but which took on a darker meaning when it came to the Jews.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, most of the European Left felt that only *assimilation* by Jews into gentile society was an acceptable Jewish response to rising antisemitism. Many left-wingers, Jews included, disapproved of the survival of *Jewishness* – of the Jews as a people with the right to national self-determination, as opposed to individuals with civil rights in nation-states which already existed. The Left hoped to dissolve Jewish peoplehood in the solvent of progressive universalism. In the Marxist version of this hope, the proletariat, understood as the universalist class par excellence, was to enact the world revolution, solving 'the Jewish question' once and for all.⁴⁰

In truth, this left-wing universalism was always spurious, i.e. false. As the Marxist theorist Norman Geras wrote, it singled out the Jews as obliged to 'settle for forms of political freedom in which their identity may not be asserted collectively.' *Only the Jews*, Geras noted, were to be satisfied 'merely with the rights available to them as individuals.'⁴¹

In any event, history went another way and Jewish history went with it. Rather than the Left's dream of universal harmony under socialism, history became what the German socialist Walter Benjamin called *a train wreck*: the degeneration of the Russian Revolution into Stalinism and antisemitism, the failure of the European socialist revolution and the rise of Fascism and Nazism, which led to that unprecedented radicalisation of the persecution of the Jews culminating in the Shoah, the industrial-scale genocide in the heart of Europe and the subsequent mass expulsion of the Jews from the Arab lands following the creation of Israel in 1948.

It was *this catastrophe*, not the dastardly machinations of 'the Zionists', which left the appeal to Jews of assimilationism and universalism in tatters and secured support from almost all Jews for Zionism, i.e. for the idea of establishing a Jewish State, a refuge state, with soldiers standing on its ramparts, as the answer to antisemitism.⁴²

And so, whether they moved to Israel or not, it was Zionism (i.e. the creation of Israel, a nation-state in a world of nation-states) that became the choice of

all but a sliver of Jews – albeit a very vocal sliver, who are often prominent in western intellectual and academic life. And that remains the case today.

However, significant parts of the Left – though by no means all – completely failed to adapt to *this great rupture in world and Jewish history*. To this day they fail to notice that the political meaning of their ‘anti-Zionism’ had been completely transformed – indeed *inverted*. ‘Anti-Zionism’ meant one thing in the early 20th century (an argument among Jews, mostly, about how best to meet the threat of antisemitism). However, *after* the Holocaust and *after* the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, ‘anti-Zionism’ came to mean something *entirely different*, something much darker. After 1948, ‘anti-Zionism’ could only be a reactionary proposal to rewind history and eradicate Israel. But how on earth was that to be carried out, short of violence on a huge scale, conquest, in short? Accompanying this reactionary programme came a comprehensive and venomous hostility on the Left to the vast majority of world Jewry, now blacked-balled from decent society as ‘Zionists’. And all this in the name of... socialism!⁴³

From the socialism of fools to the anti-imperialism of idiots

And then things got a lot worse. In the second half of the 20th century, the old ‘socialism of fools’ morphed into a new ‘anti-imperialism of idiots’, as from the late 1940s to the 1980s the Stalinist states (often in alliance with authoritarian Arab states and far left groups in Europe) ran well-funded, state-sponsored antisemitic campaigns – vile Judeophobic propaganda ‘dressed up’, as Eric Hobsbawm put it, as ‘anti-Zionism’.

These Communist-led, ostensibly ‘anti-Zionist’ campaigns began in earnest in the late 1940s. ‘Zionists’ and ‘Cosmopolitans’ – i.e. Jews in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Berlin – were tried, expelled, and in some cases executed. Stalin murdered 15 Jewish poets and writers in the cells of the Lubyanka in August 1952. The 1952 Slansky show trial, when most of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party were shot, was typical. Moshe Postone notes that ‘All of the charges against them were classically antisemitic charges: they were rootless, they were cosmopolitan, and they were part of a general global conspiracy. Because the Soviet Union could not officially use the language of antisemitism, they began to use the word ‘Zionist’ to mean exactly what antisemites mean when they speak of Jews.’⁴⁴

A series of ‘anti-Cosmopolitan purges’ were planned by Stalin, which were to culminate in a crime against humanity, in the form of his 1953 plan to deport the surviving Jews of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. An antisemitic show-trial of five Jewish doctors on fake charges of poisoning – the so called ‘Doctor’s Plot’ – was to be the catalyst for this enormity. Fortunately, Stalin died first, and his successors dropped the plan.⁴⁵ But the use of anti-Zionism as cover for antisemitism carried on. For example, in 1968 the Polish communists ran an antisemitic pogrom in the name of ‘anti-Zionism’.⁴⁶ In 1981 the Polish Communist Party attacked the free trade union centre Komitet Obrony Robotników (KOR), the forerunner of Solidarnosc, in barely camouflaged antisemitic terms: ‘K.O.R. openly confesses to having sympathies for freemasonry and for the cosmopolitan fatherland-negating concepts promoted in the West by Zionist and free-thinking circles.’⁴⁷

The socialist theorist Moshe Postone pointed out that these Stalinist campaigns were a *catastrophe for the global Left*, turning it inside out and upside down. As Stalinism spread over large parts of the globe after World War Two ‘another strand of left anti-Zionism – this time deeply antisemitic – was introduced by the Soviet Union into the international Left in the form of a global “anti-Zionist” propaganda campaign’.⁴⁸

One statistic captures the scale of this campaign. Anthony Julius, in his book *Trials of the Diaspora*, tells us that 230 books were published in the USSR alone from 1969-1985 about a supposed Zionist-Masonic conspiracy against Russia, with a combined print run of 9.4 million.

The impact on the global Left of this 40 year-long Stalinist antisemitic propaganda effort has been grossly underestimated. From it came the ‘absolute anti-Zionist’ ideas dragging the party down today: Zionism equals racism; Zionism equals imperialism; Zionism promotes antisemitism, Zionism ‘collaborated’ with the Nazis, Zionism is a form of Nazism itself, Israel is a Nazi-like state, and so on.

2.1.1 Illustrative cases of the ‘socialism of fools’ form of antisemitism in the Labour Party

Example 1: Labour Party member and Momentum supporter **Ian Love** wrote on Facebook that former Prime Minister Tony Blair is ‘Jewish to the core’ and claimed he is still under the ‘protection’ of the Rothschild banking

family, who 'control all the money in the world'.⁴⁹

Example 2: Labour Party member **Gerry Downing** (admitted, expelled, re-admitted, re-expelled) tweeted an article that argued 'Since the dawning of the period of neo-liberal capitalism in the 1970s, elements of the Jewish-Zionist bourgeoisie, from Milton Friedman to Henry Kissinger to the pro-Israel ideologues of the War on Terror, have played a vanguard role for the capitalist offensive against the workers.'⁵⁰

Example 3: **Leah Levane**, a Labour council candidate, who is co-chairwoman of Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL), said Jews are 'often agents' of exploitation'.⁵¹

Example 4: Labour Party member **Jackie Walker** has been under investigation, without conclusion, for almost *three years*. In February 2016, Ms. Walker posted on Facebook that Jews were 'the chief financiers of the sugar and slave trade.' Walker's comments came to light in May 2016. She was suspended from the Labour Party on 5 May 2016, only to be readmitted a few weeks later, when she received a warm public welcome from Jeremy Corbyn. In September 2016, Walker said that Holocaust Memorial Day should be 'open to all peoples who've experienced Holocaust' and questioned the need for the Jewish community to have extra security for its buildings. She also said that antisemitism was being 'exaggerated' to 'undermine Jeremy [Corbyn]'.

Following her September 2016 comments, Ms Walker was again suspended. She was also removed from her position as national vice-chair of Momentum. In March 2017, Ms Walker's case was referred to Labour's National Constitutional Committee (NCC). In April 2018 in response to the Board of Deputies demonstration against Labour antisemitism at Parliament Square, Walker said that the people attending were 'absolute enemies of Muslims, enemies of people of colour' and that there was a 'hierarchy of race in the UK'.⁵²

During the Labour Party's *three years* of dithering, Jackie Walker has written and toured a play comparing her treatment to a lynching. The play's strapline is: 'To oppose Israel is not to be antisemitic', even though *none* of the comments for which she was twice suspended mentioned Israel *at all*.

On 22 February 2019 Walker wrote on social media that by 'foul means, the JLM have been v busy undermining the Party since Corbyn became leader'.⁵³

Example 5: **Barnet Momentum** members defended a local activist who had written about the 'over-representation of Jews in the capitalist ruling class'

and plotted how to block efforts, led by a Jewish councillor, to have that activist's application for Labour membership rejected.⁵⁴

Example 6: Pam Bromley, a Labour Councillor in Lancashire, posted links to an antisemitic article entitled 'World War 3: Trump Begins Paying His Homage to Rothschilds,' commenting 'we must remember that Rothschilds are a powerful financial family (like the Medicis) and represent capitalism and big business.'⁵⁵

Example 7: Terence Flanagan, a member of Hampstead and Kilburn Constituency Labour Party (CLP), compared a Jewish Councillor to the Nazi Josef Goebbels. He also called for the expulsion of former Labour donor Michael Foster, referring to him allegedly as 'the Jewish millionaire'. Flanagan was suspended, but then readmitted to the party after a formal written warning.⁵⁶

Example 8: Piers Corbyn, Jeremy Corbyn's brother, is a tweeter of posts attacking 'Rothschild' capitalism. For example, he retweeted a post by a white supremacist called 'White Knight' that pictured Lord Jacob Rothschild against a Nazi Swastika with the comment 'Obama is my puppet'. Although Jeremy Corbyn has never endorsed these kind of tweets from his brother I have been unable to locate any criticism of them either. In 2016 the *Jewish Chronicle* (JC) reported that Jeremy Corbyn 'defended his brother for tweeting that it was "absurd" for a Jewish MP to call on the Labour leader to do more to tackle antisemitism. Mr. Corbyn said his sibling, Piers, was "not wrong" to claim that it was preposterous to question his efforts. He added "we actually fundamentally agree – we are a family that has been fighting racism from the day we were born."⁵⁷ (Piers Corbyn's bid to rejoin the Labour Party was rejected.)

Example 9: The Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council (JLC) staged an unprecedented demonstration in Parliament Square in March 2018. The immediate cause of the demo was **Jeremy Corbyn's** public support for a classic example of the 'socialism of fools'; a wall mural in London which depicted huge, looming, hook-nosed Jewish financiers exploiting bent-backed black helots upon whom they had placed a kind of Monopoly board. When anti-racists complained about this mural in 2012, Corbyn defended it on social media, opposed its removal, and compared it, preposterously, to the removal of a left-wing Diego Riviera mural from the Rockefeller Center in America in 1934.

When the story broke in 2018, Jeremy Corbyn apologised, saying he was

‘sorry for not having studied the content of the mural more closely before wrongly questioning its removal in 2012.’⁵⁸

Example 10: John Clarke, a former Labour Prospective Parliamentary Candidate (PPC) in Witham, shared a Neo-Nazi meme saying the Rothschild family has used money lending and Israel to ‘take over the world’. He said the meme ‘contained a great deal of truth’. He was later suspended.⁵⁹

Example 11: Maureen Madden, a Labour Councillor in North Tyneside, shared an image of banker Jacob Rothschild – which had a caption stating among other things ‘these people ... invisibly control the world.’ She is still a Councillor and was re-elected in 2018.⁶⁰

Example 12: Alex Scott-Samuel is the Chair of Liverpool Wavertree CLP. He tabled a motion of no-confidence against Luciana Berger, the Jewish (and then) Labour MP, only weeks before she was due to give birth. According to the *JC* he has been ‘a regular guest on the [antisemitic conspiracist] Richie Allen Show on David Icke.com since 2015. Mr Allen – who has continued to invite Dr Scott-Samuel on his show since splitting from Mr Icke to air his shows on his own website – hosted notorious antisemite Gilad Atzmon last July, former KKK Grand Master David Duke in 2016 and self-described ‘Holocaust revisionist’ Alison Chabloz in 2018.’⁶¹

According to *The Spectator*, ‘On the show, Labour Wavertree’s chairman told the audience that “The Rothschild family are behind a lot of the neo-liberal influence in the UK and the US. You only have to Google them to look at this.”’ According to *The Spectator*, a Scott-Samuel tweet in 2013 about a person named Rothschild included the phrase ‘Rothschild’s doing usury’.⁶² According to the *JC*, Scott-Samuel also posted asking if Jewish Labour MP Ruth Smeeth was ‘the enemy within?’ He also argued that ‘Isis, Boko Haram and Zionism are genocidal terrorists’.⁶³

He remains Chair of Liverpool Wavertree CLP.

2.2 Antisemitism in the Labour Party (Type 2): ‘classic’ or racial antisemitism

The second type of antisemitism in the Labour Party is ‘racial’ antisemitism or what we might think of as bigotry directed at Jews, who are depicted in

derogatory and stereotypical ways as clannish, lying, money-grubbing, all-powerful, conspiratorial, evil, and so on. Nazi-style antisemitism is included in this type.

2.2.1 Illustrative cases of the ‘classic’ or racial form of antisemitism in the Labour Party

Example 13: Aysegul Gurbuz, a Labour Councillor from Luton, was suspended over allegations that she posted a series of antisemitic tweets, including one describing Adolf Hitler as ‘the greatest man in history’ and saying if it was not for Hitler ‘these Jews would’ve wiped Palestine years ago’. She resigned from the party.⁶⁴

Example 14: George McManus, a member of Labour’s National Policy Forum (NPF) and a former Labour PPC, was suspended in August 2018 after he posted comments on Facebook about Deputy Leader Tom Watson’s relationship to ‘Jewish donors’. McManus, who stood for election to *lead* the NPF in 2018, wrote: ‘Apparently Watson received £50,000+ from Jewish donors. At least Judas only got 30 pieces of silver.’ Luciana Berger MP made a formal complaint. McManus apologised and his suspension was lifted by the party.⁶⁵

Example 15: Nasreen Khan, a Labour council candidate (subsequently barred from standing), asked: ‘What have the Jews done good in this world?’ She said schools were ‘brainwashing us and our children into thinking the bad guy was Hitler’ and said ‘Jews have reaped the rewards of playing victims’.⁶⁶

Example 16: Andrew Slack, a Labour Councillor in Chesterfield, was suspended after sharing an antisemitic meme of a blood-smeared, hook-nosed Israeli soldier. The meme said ‘Israel was created by the Rothschilds’. Mr Slack was quietly reinstated by the party. He remains a Councillor.⁶⁷

Example 17: Former chair of Spitalfields and Banglatown CLP, Musabbir Ali, tweeted a far-right ‘timeline of the Jewish Genocide of the British People’ that claimed ‘Jews control Britain and are committing genocide on us.’ He was suspended after a complaint from the JLM. The *JC* reported that Ali also claimed on Twitter that Israel was behind the Islamic State-claimed bombings in Ankara – a classic example of antisemitic anti-Zionism.⁶⁸

Example 18: Two Jewish Labour Councillors in Haringey resigned, saying it had become impossible to do their jobs due to overwhelming antisemitic abuse. **Joe Goldberg** and **Natan Doron** reported that ‘many members have repeated to me assertions about Jews having big noses, controlling the media and being wealthy’, and that a fellow councillor accused Goldberg of ‘bagel-barrel politics’. On his resignation, a **Haringey Momentum** activist tweeted to Goldberg: ‘At least [you] will have more time to count your money.’ Mr. Goldberg said complaints he made to Labour Party officials were dismissed.⁶⁹

Example 19: Damien Enticott, a Labour parish councillor from Bognor Regis, was suspended from the Labour Party after apparently posting on his Facebook page a call for the execution of ‘Talmud Jews’, repeating the blood libel, and calling Jews ‘parasites’.⁷⁰ According to one website, Enticott’s social media posts claimed Jewish people ‘drink blood and suck baby’s dick’, that Jewish people are ‘murdering bastards’ who ‘should be gassed’, and that ‘Hitler would have a solution to the Israel problem’. The website noted ‘Enticott’s defence is that he was hacked. Repeatedly. Over the course of several years. And he didn’t notice until now. Enticott’s Facebook profile is littered with revolting posts. None of the Labour colleagues he was friends with spoke out.’ According to the *JC*, ‘Cllr Enticott later admitted he was responsible for the posts.’⁷¹

Example 20: In February 2019 *The Daily Mirror* reported that Labour’s Deputy Leader, Tom Watson, had been handed a file of more than 50 cases of antisemitism that MPs had raised over the preceding months, and which had not been dealt with. The cases included several that appear to be of the classic ‘racial’ type of antisemitism, including:

- A person accused of claiming Jews engaged in ‘double dealing, back stabbing, cheating’.
- A person accused of claiming that Jews ‘pervert democracy in the UK’ and calling for the Board of Deputies to be a proscribed terror group.
- A person accused of describing Hitler as an ‘illegitimate Rothschild’ and saying of the Holocaust, ‘the figures don’t add up.’
- A person accused of claiming ‘Jews murder people and children.’
- A person accused of saying of Jewish MPs Ruth Smeeth and Louise Ellman ‘don’t know what runs through their veins, not human blood.’⁷²

Example 21: Paul Ashworth stated on Twitter (3 July 2018) that he is a Labour Party member in Tameside. He tweeted the following examples of antisemitism to his 30,000+ followers between 2014 and 2018.⁷³

- ‘most of top movers at BBC are Jewish. Their head of news is married to a Jew from well-known banking dynasty.’
- ‘Jews also class us as inferior to them, and class themselves as God’s chosen people.’
- ‘if the Ashkenazi Jews all returned back to Turkey where they came from, Hamas would not need tunnels.’
- ‘Jesus, the **#Jews** turned against you. We beg of you to help the people of **#Palestine**.’
- ‘Jews do NOT belong on the land of **#Palestine**.’

Example 22: On 22 February 2019, shortly after the resignation of seven Labour MPs, in part over antisemitism, **Jackie Walker**, former National Vice Chair of Momentum, shared an arguably antisemitic image of a man with an especially huge hooked nose standing atop a pile of wealth, associated with the political right. In many other scenarios in this crisis Jews, Zionists and pro-Israelis have been routinely lumped together in this way (e.g. Trump fanatic rabbis, ‘30 pieces of silver’, ‘the Rothschilds’, and many other examples.) Whether the image is intended as an antisemitic image or not, it clearly carries the risk of being perceived as such.⁷⁴

2.3 Antisemitism in the Labour Party (Type 3): antisemitic forms of anti-Zionism

We discussed antisemitic forms of anti-Zionism, i.e. what Eric Hobsbawm called antisemitism ‘dressed up’ as anti-Zionism, at length in Part One.

2.3.1 Illustrative cases of antisemitic forms of anti-Zionism in the Labour Party

Example 23: Beinazir Lasharie, a Labour Councillor in Kensington and Chelsea, was suspended for sharing a video on Facebook claiming that ISIS is run by the Israeli secret service Mossad. Lasharie had posted a video on Facebook titled ‘ISIS: Israeli Secret Intelligence Service’, and commented,

'Many people know about who was behind 9/11 and also who is behind ISIS. I've nothing against Jews... just sharing it!' She also wrote: 'I've heard some compelling evidence about ISIS being originated [sic] from Zionists!' (The self-image of many people engaging in antisemitic forms of anti-Zionism is that they personally have 'nothing against Jews'. On this 'no intent' self-defence, see section 4.4.) Lasharie was reinstated by the party after two months.⁷⁵

Example 24: Irfan Mohammed is a Labour Councillor in Lambeth and a member of Labour's Equality Impact Assessment Panel. In December 2015 he shared a post that said: 'Jews working in the World Trade Centre received a text message before the incident: 'Do not come to work in September 11.' I class this kind of claim as a case of antisemitic anti-Zionism rather than classic 'racial' antisemitism because these days it is Mossad, not the Elders of Zion, who are held responsible for tipping the wink to their fellow Jews.'⁷⁶

Example 25: In December 2018 the Labour Party suspended its first staff member, **Mohammed Yasin**, a Regional Organiser in the West Midlands (he is not to be confused with the Labour MP for Bedford who has a similar name). The *JC* reported that his Twitter feed contained a series of antisemitic posts and conspiracy theories about the 9/11 attacks; contained material that blamed Jews for 'all the wars in the world'; shared a meme that showed an image of two people laughing hysterically under the headline 'when someone tells me it's not the Jews'; as well as a video describing the Rothschilds as the world's 'most wicked and wealthiest family', and so on.⁷⁷

Example 26: Some students who were members of the **Oxford University Labour Club** mocked the Jewish victims of the Paris kosher supermarket attack, called Auschwitz a 'cash cow', and used the slur 'Zio', according to extensive testimony from Jewish students provided to the party. After months of delay and obfuscation, the Labour Party NEC decided not to publish the report it had commissioned, even though it concluded there had been incidents of antisemitic behaviour. The NEC decided not to discipline the key perpetrators either.⁷⁸

Example 27: Bob Campbell, a Momentum activist and Labour Party member in Middlesbrough, was suspended after he told his followers on Facebook that 'ISIS is run by Israel', adding that they had not attacked Israel 'because the dog doesn't bite its own tail'.⁷⁹

Example 28: Dorian Bartley, an officer within Lambeth CLP (Gipsy Hill Branch) in south London posted images comparing Israel to the Nazis. He also shared a post defending the mural which sparked Jewish community protests against Jeremy Corbyn – contradicting the Labour leader who had eventually admitted it was antisemitic. *Mail Online* reported that ‘In one Facebook message Mr Bartley shared an image of Adolf Hitler doing the Nazi salute with the words ‘we are the master race’ alongside an image of Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu.’⁸⁰

Example 29: Labour Councillor and former Labour Mayor of Blackburn, **Salim Mulla**, called Zionist Jews a ‘disgrace to humanity’, endorsed a video that blamed Israel for school shootings in the USA, and said ‘Zionism’ was orchestrating ISIS. After an initial suspension he was quietly reinstated and is now again a Labour Party member.⁸¹

Example 30: Naz Shah, the Labour MP for Bradford West, was suspended after it emerged she had shared a Facebook post in 2014 suggesting Israeli Jews should be transported to the US as a ‘solution’ to the Israel/Palestine conflict, along with a comment: ‘problem solved’. Shah has since held meetings with the JLM, and talked about why she now believes what she did was wrong. She still objects to many aspects of Israeli policy and practice (as do members of the JLM of course).⁸²

Example 31: Ken Livingstone, the former Mayor of London, was suspended from the Labour Party for bringing the party into disrepute after claiming close links between Nazis and the Zionist movement before Hitler ‘went mad and ended up killing six million Jews’. Livingstone made his comments while defending Naz Shah’s Facebook post and comment, and this became the focus of the party inquiry. Suspended, his case dragged on without resolution for two years before he eventually decided to leave the party in 2018.⁸³

Example 32: A Labour Councillor in Birmingham, **Zafar Iqbal**, shared a video on Facebook by former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke. The video was entitled ‘CNN Goldman Sachs and the Zio Matrix’. The Labour Party accepted Mr Iqbal’s apology and his claim that he had no recollection of sharing the video. No disciplinary proceedings were taken.⁸⁴

Example 33: Vicki Kirby, a former Labour PPC, was originally suspended from the Labour Party in September 2014 after previously posting a series of tweets,

including one calling Hitler a 'Zionist god' and another about Jews having 'big noses'.⁸⁵ She was suspended for a second time in March 2016 following an outcry that she was allowed to return.

Example 34: Labour Party member **Billy J. Wells** said 'It's the super rich families of the Zionist lobby that control the world. Our world leaders sell their souls for greed to do the bidding of Israel'. (According to one political website, Wells's Twitter page suggests he has been reinstated and is now standing as a Labour Councillor.)⁸⁶

Example 35: Miqdad Al-Nuaimi, a Labour Councillor in Newport, was suspended after tweeting that '#Israel regime and army are increasingly assuming the arrogance and genocidal character of the #Nazis' and that 'ISIS leader Al-Baghdadi dies in Israeli hospital ... if confirmed, the #Israeli connection is very interesting'. He was initially suspended, but then quietly reinstated.⁸⁷

Example 36: Afzal Khan, then a Labour MEP and now the MP for Manchester Gorton, compared Israel to the Nazis. No disciplinary action was taken.⁸⁸

Example 37: Terry Couchman, a Labour town council candidate in Wiltshire, used social media to attack 'ZioNazi stormtroopers of IsraHell' and 'fake Jews of IsraHell and the USA'. He was suspended and later expelled from the Labour Party.⁸⁹

Example 38: Luke Cresswell, a Labour Councillor in Suffolk, tweeted an image of a blood-soaked Israeli flag, accused Israel of genocide and captioned the image 'Moses must be proud of you'. Though initially suspended, he was then re-admitted, and subsequently elected as a Councillor.⁹⁰

Example 39: Max Tasker, a Labour town councillor in North Wales, posted YouTube videos to his Facebook page entitled: 'Is ISIS good for the Jews?', 'The whole story of Zionist conspiracy: the filthy history of paedophilia, murder and bigotry', 'Not for the immature! Zionist Antichrist will rule the [New World Order]', 'Ukraine's anti-Russian stance is a Zionist masterplan' and 'Zionist AntiChrist will rule the NOW [New World Order]'. According to 'Jewish Voice for Labour Watch', Mr Tasker is a member of JVL but is not actually Jewish. He retweets antisemites such as Gilad Atzmon and Holocaust Denier Sarah

Wilkinson. According to Hope Not Hate, he is a former member of the English Defence League (EDL) who has ‘reinvented himself a Red Labour Corbynista.’⁹¹

Example 40: Ilyas Aziz, a Labour Councillor in Nottingham, was suspended over antisemitic social media posts in 2014 suggesting ‘perhaps it would have been wiser to create Israel in America...they could even relocate now’. Aziz shared posts from the antisemitic conspiracist David Icke, as well as sharing a page called ‘Israel – Rothschilds’ Frankenstein Monster’. He also posted an article about Nazi Germany, with a message: ‘A reminder of the treatment and suffering of Jews in Nazi Germany. Are there any similarities to how Israel is treating Palestinians?’ He was quietly reinstated by the party.⁹²

Example 41: Rebecca Massey, a Labour Party member in Hove, tweeted that ‘Israel has Tory and Labour parties under control’, and believes Labour’s antisemitism crisis is ‘manufactured’. No action was taken and Ms Massey went on to be appointed Treasurer of Hove and Portslade CLP.⁹³

Example 42: Terry Kelly, a Renfrewshire Labour Councillor, was suspended after it emerged he wrote in a blog post in 2014 that the ‘American Jewish lobby is extremely powerful and it has its boot on Obama’s neck’. He also worried that ‘The King’s Speech’ might not win an Oscar because ‘there is a powerful Jewish lobby campaigning against [it]’. Mr Kelly was temporarily suspended in May 2016 before being reinstated a month later.⁹⁴

Example 43: Mohammed Shabbir, a Labour Councillor in Bradford, tweeted the conspiracy theory that Israel was behind ISIS, accused Jews of ‘playing the Holocaust card’, and said the BBC was run by a ‘hasbara media cartel’. He was suspended and then reinstated by the party.⁹⁵

Example 44: Long-time anti-Israel activist **Tony Greenstein** was suspended from the Labour Party in light of various comments he made, including some about ‘Zio idiots’ and ‘Zionist scum’.⁹⁶ According to the Labour blog Red Roar, among his other comments the following stand out: that Jewish MP Louise Ellman ‘supported Israeli child abuse’ and that ‘gay Zionists make me want to puke.’⁹⁷

Example 45: The Chair of Manchester Labour Students, **Tayyib Nawaz**, resigned after tweets surfaced in which he had claimed ‘Hitler was Jewish’ and

Israel was comparable to ISIS.⁹⁸

Example 46: Labour Party member **John McAuliffe** was suspended for claiming on Facebook that the Holocaust was a ‘useful political tool’ of Israel ‘to establish a financial racket’.⁹⁹

Example 47: **Khadim Hussain**, the former Lord Mayor of Bradford and a Labour Councillor, was suspended for sharing a Facebook post complaining schools only teach children ‘about Anne Frank and the six million Zionists that were killed by Hitler’ instead of killings in Africa.¹⁰⁰

Example 48: Former Labour PPC **Michelle Harris** allegedly shared a Facebook post from antisemitic conspiracy theorist David Icke about ‘Rothschild Zionist Israel an International Pariah’ as well as posts using the Nazi analogy. On 25 July 2018 she posted on Facebook that ‘The Labour Party has decided that there is no case to answer regarding the fabricated allegations made about me and lifted my suspension’.¹⁰¹

Example 49: **John Clarke**, a former Labour PPC and former Labour Councillor in Essex, endorsed a post online that said, ‘The Rothschild Family’ has used money lending and Israel to ‘take over the world.’ The post he promoted was headlined ‘Israel owns the senate, Congress and the Executive’ of America ... but who owns Israel?’ He later posted, in a classic example of antisemitism denial and victim-blaming, that nothing he had posted was antisemitic: ‘Antisemite smear in constant overuse as those who use it expand their power base’ and he threatened to block all who ‘accuse me of Antisemitism merely to close down legitimate criticism of Israel &/or Rothschild family. End of.’¹⁰²

Example 50: A member of **Liverpool Sefton CLP**, speaking at a Momentum rally, received a standing ovation after asking the meeting ‘What could be a greater threat to our democracy than a foreign government who is trying to veto the person we want for Prime Minister?’ He added: ‘Of course, I’m talking about the Israelis with their foot soldiers in Labour – the LFI, the JLM. They are trying to take our democracy away from us.’ According to the JC journalist present at the event, those Labour MPs present, including Corbyn allies Chris Williamson MP and Dan Carden MP, did not challenge these comments.¹⁰³

Example 51: Fife Labour Councillor **Mary Lockhart** suggested on Facebook

that there may be a ‘Mossad assisted campaign to prevent the election of a Labour Government.’¹⁰⁴ Initially suspended, Lockhart was quietly reinstated. The JC reported that ex-Labour MP Thomas Docherty, who complained about the post to the party, said the decision was evidence that Labour was “not a safe space for Jewish people ... the party is clearly institutionally racist and does not take antisemitism seriously.”¹⁰⁵

Example 52: David Watson – Fundraising Officer in MP Stella Creasy’s Walthamstow CLP – was suspended after sharing Facebook articles comparing Israel with the Nazis.¹⁰⁶

Example 53: Sameh Habeeb, a Labour candidate in local council elections and the former founder and editor of the antisemitic website ‘Palestine Telegraph’, praised the antisemite Gilad Atzmon, promoted an antisemitic tirade by KKK leader David Duke, and so on. Dave Rich of the CST has written of Habeeb’s Palestine Telegraph website, ‘I can’t think of a single UK far right website that was as brazenly antisemitic as Palestine Telegraph at that time.’ When Habeeb emerged as a Labour council candidate one political blog concluded Labour had reached a new nadir.¹⁰⁷

Example 54: The Facebook group ‘**Palestine Live**’ was the subject of an extensive report by researcher David Collier. The report showed it to contain posts supporting Holocaust denial, 9/11 conspiracy theories and antisemitic slurs. Jeremy Corbyn, a member of the group, said he did not see the offensive posts and had left in 2015. Investigations were reportedly begun into the Labour Party members who had posted antisemitic material on the page.¹⁰⁸

Example 55: Dipu Ahad, a Labour Councillor for over a decade on Newcastle City Council, posted that as a councillor he ‘DIDN’T vote for the new mega Marks & Spencer store in Gosforth as a matter of principal [sic]... Marks and Spencer are directly killing innocent Palestinian people by directly funding the Zionist regime.’ Cllr Ahad also liked a post in 2015 which promoted the antisemitic conspiracy theory that Western countries went to war in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya in an attempt to ‘achieve the Zionist [goal]... to have each country in the debt of the Rothschilds... there were six countries that didn’t have Rothschild and three were Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan.’¹⁰⁹ A Labour North spokesperson told the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* ‘Dipu Ahad has apologised for offence

caused by his Facebook comments made in 2013 which he deleted at the time, and remains a Labour candidate in the local elections.¹¹⁰

Example 56: In January 2019 **Lewisham Deptford Constituency CLP** passed a resolution opposing the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Definition of Antisemitism. The resolution declared the CLP was ‘aware that the Israeli government resources an international campaign to conflate criticism of itself with antisemitism’.¹¹¹

Example 57: Liam Moore was selected as a Labour council candidate for the Norris Green ward in Liverpool – close to Luciana Berger’s constituency. In 2014 he tweeted that ‘Rothschilds Zionist run Israel and world governments’ and in 2018 compared Zionists – or simply those worried about antisemitism – to Judas: ‘We are seeing a very English right-wing Zionist coup mate and sadly the Labour Party is infiltrated by sellouts who would sacrifice a Labour government for their 30 pieces of silver.’¹¹²

Example 58: In November 2018 the **Norton West branch of Stockton CLP** rejected a motion condemning the Pittsburgh Synagogue Massacre. The proposer was branch Secretary Steve Cooke. It is worth quoting Cooke’s account of the meeting at length as it paints a picture of antisemitism denial at the local level, arguably as big a problem as the multiple failures of the Labour Party machine that are discussed later in this report.

‘Arguments made against the motion included that it should say we were against all racism not just antisemitism. I pointed out that the motion clearly expressed concern about “racist hate crime more generally”, criticised governments and opportunist politicians for the “scapegoating of minorities”, cited Tell Mama UK, the Islamophobia monitoring organisation, and it affirmed our commitment to “fighting racism in all its forms”.’

‘It was said that all the focus was on “antisemitism this, antisemitism that”, while other types of racism never even got a mention. I pointed out that I had presented a motion about Islamophobia and anti-migrant racism to the CLP in July and then our women’s officer Barbara Campbell and myself had organised a counterprotest against a far-right group that marched in Stockton town centre later that month.’

‘They wanted references to antisemitism removed from the Pittsburgh motion, but no demands had been made to make the aforementioned

Islamophobia and anti-migrant racism motion more generic or to erase all mention of those specific types of racism when it was debated and then unanimously supported at July's CLP meeting.'

'[One] comrade accused me of trying to bring the party into disrepute by associating us with antisemitism. It felt dreadful to be accused of this simply for proposing a motion that, in fact, would have strongly disassociated us from any form of hatred towards Jewish people and which would have shown how clear we were about confronting the evil of antisemitism.'

'Steve Nelson [Cabinet Member for Community Safety], said that the whole Labour antisemitism issue was "just a game being played" and that my motion and call for political education on the topic was part of that. "Who's playing the game then?", comrade Campbell and I asked, "Tell us." But he wouldn't say.'

'Councillor Robert Cook, the Leader of the Council, said nothing to support us or protect me from personal attacks. (In the end he too voted against the motion.)'¹¹³

Example 59: According to the Jewish News, **Elleanne Green**, a member of Cities of London and Westminster CLP and Convenor of the Palestine Live Facebook Group (which contained multiple antisemitic comments) is 'being investigated for comments in a Facebook group, revealed in research by pro-Israel blogger David Collier. Collier claimed that Green shared articles including one suggesting Israeli intelligence service Mossad was behind the Paris terrorist attacks, another suggesting that Mossad was behind 9/11 and others suggesting the Rothschild family controlled bank bosses.' Green describes herself as a personal friend of Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell and the Labour Party's 'independent counsel' on antisemitism, Gordon Nardell QC.¹¹⁴

Example 60: According to *Mail Online*, 'Dame Margaret Hodge hit out at Labour last night for ignoring a dossier of violent antisemitic abuse directed against her – including a call for Hezbollah to murder her. The Labour MP, who is Jewish, revealed that she contacted the police after she was accused of being a 'NazIsrael apologist' and a 'pro-Zionist Trojan horse' by supporters of Jeremy Corbyn. The catalogue of abuse was also sent to Labour, but while the police responded by charging one of the perpetrators, Labour has not contacted the MP at all.'

The report continued: 'Another called Jewish MPs Ruth Smeeth, Luciana

Berger and Dame Margaret “dim-witted Zionist sluts”, while a third referred to Israel’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, calling Dame Margaret a “stupid Netanyahu loving ****”. The MP was also told she should “pack her bags and f*** off out of the Labour Party”, while she was also called a “foul-mouthed gobs***”.’

Dame Margaret said: ‘The police are taking action. The only reaction I’ve had from the Party is from the person who wrote one of the emails I submitted, who contacted me to say how dare I complain.’ Hodge also said, ‘There’s always been underlying antisemitism on the hard Left – but it has never before been allowed to exist unchallenged.’¹¹⁵

Example 61: *The Times* reported that **Ewa Jasiewicz** was invited by Momentum to address the fringe at Labour Party conference. Jasiewicz had previously daubed ‘Free Gaza and Palestine’ on the Warsaw Ghetto Wall in 2010. She had also called for Palestinian ‘activists’ to ‘do’ the Israeli parliament or ‘a sophisticated politician bump-off’ rather than targeting Israeli civilians.¹¹⁶ When this emerged in the UK press, she withdrew from attendance.¹¹⁷

Example 62: **Ali Milani** is a Labour Party member, selected as the Labour candidate in Boris Johnson’s Uxbridge and South Ruislip constituency, and was a vice-president of the National Union of Students. He allegedly said ‘Israel has no right to exist’ and allegedly suggested Jewish people are mean, with a tweeted reply in 2012 that read: ‘Nah, you won’t mate. It’ll cost u a pound. #jew.’ In 2013, Miliani said: ‘I want to be the President of Israel. They have a self-destruct button, right?’ The Labour Party decided not to intervene, stressing that Mr Milani had previously apologised for his comments.¹¹⁸

Example 63: The *JC* reported that ‘Young Labour’s Chair Miriam Mirwitch has said many Jews within the party are now “scared” to speak out about antisemitism, making it harder than ever to be a Jewish member of the Labour Party.’ The *JC* added, ‘The **Young Labour** account later retweeted a post by Asa Winstanley, the Electronic Intifada writer, who has accused Ms Mirwitch of belonging to a front group for the Israeli Embassy.’¹¹⁹

Example 64: **Margaret Tyson**, a senior member of Liverpool Wavertree CLP and an elected representative on the Liverpool Labour Local Campaign Forum – the body that helps select and vet candidates to stand for the party in local elections – launched an attack on local Jewish MP Luciana Berger (before Berger left), accusing her of supporting the ‘Zionist Israeli government’ whose

‘Nazi masters taught them well’. In another post Ms Tyson wrote ‘Is it any wonder the Zionest (sic) are hated and despised (sic) throughout the world.’¹²⁰ I am not aware of any action taken.

Example 65: Kenneth Campbell, a Liverpool Wavertree CLP member, proposed a no-confidence vote in Luciana Berger, called the MP a ‘disruptive Zionist’ and spread conspiracy theories online, including 9/11 conspiracy theories and the claim that Israel covertly supports ISIS.¹²¹ I am not aware of any action taken.

Example 66: The *JC* reported in 2019 that ‘an explosive, unpublished report by senior party staff into the Liverpool Riverside CLP has found that Dame Louise Ellman MP, 73, was physically threatened by one member’ and ‘there have been CLP meetings during which antisemitic incidents are alleged to have taken place.’ One member was ‘explicitly suggesting Israeli responsibility for Isis, Hamas and Al Qaeda.’ Another called the MP a ‘JLM bitch’.

The report concluded: ‘incidents of antisemitism seem to have occurred with troubling regularity’ and that members ‘feared for their own or others’ physical safety’. According to the *JC*, which has made the unpublished report available on its website, ‘The report details further witness statements from members which told of meetings and online discussions in which it was claimed: ‘Every Jew is a “Zio-fascist” if they support Israel’s existence.’ Another member said Israel was ‘responsible for the global rise in antisemitism’ while another said ‘Jews bear an individual and collective responsibility for the actions of the Israeli government.’¹²²

From discourse to violence?

Some examples of antisemitic discourse can be seen as moving from demonisation and bullying towards the implicit threat of violence.

Example 67: The influential Corbynista blog **Skwawkbox** shared a blog post attacking ‘The Jewish establishment’s war against Corbyn.’ It claimed that complaints about antisemitism ‘risks turning fake antisemitism into real antisemitism.’ Skwawkbox thought this warning was ‘pertinent and frightening’. (The post was later deleted, but no apology was issued.)¹²³

Example 68: Skwawkbox also retweeted a call for the BBC to be shut down

for broadcasting an interview with a British Jewish family whose members claimed they were afraid for their future because of Jeremy Corbyn.¹²⁴

Example 69: The Jewish Chronicle reported that ‘a rank and file Corbyn supporter ... on Twitter as @nipperbaker ... [who] describes themselves as a “senior charge nurse in A&E” ... tweeted the following to a Jewish twitter user: ‘Before I block you I will say that if Jews like yourself get Jeremy unseated, with Jeremy so popular and you get us subjected to more Tory rule, the so-called antisemitism you think you see now will be nothing to what you will see.’¹²⁵

Example 70: The *JC* reported that “The far-left Corbynite blog called **VoxPoliticalOnline** ... published a falsehood-riddled piece titled “Jewish MPs who whipped up fake ‘antisemitism’ claims against Labour want bodyguards for party conference”. The site published a picture of Luciana Berger, the Jewish Labour MP ... captioned as follows: “Luciana Berger: Is the reason she needs a bodyguard the fact that she lied about her leader?” The writer added below in bold type: “You reap what you sow, I suppose.”¹²⁶

The CST’s annual report into antisemitic incidents in the UK found a record high of 1,652 incidents in 2018, an increase of 16 per cent on the previous year. The monitoring group found that around one in 10 incidents were ‘examples of, or related to arguments over, alleged antisemitism in the Labour Party’, and that reports of antisemitism surged in the two periods of controversy within the party.¹²⁷ The CST noted ‘the months with the highest totals appear to correlate to periods when political and media debate over allegations of antisemitism in Labour were at their most intense.’¹²⁸

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Looking over these cases, it is no wonder the Stretford and Urmston Labour MP Kate Green told a packed PLP meeting that she ‘can’t look [her] Jewish relatives in the eye.’¹²⁹

In Parts One and Two of this report we have established that the Labour Party does not properly understand contemporary antisemitism and has become host to three types of antisemitism, the ‘socialism of fools’, racial antisemitism, and antisemitic forms of anti-Zionism. Part Three looks at why Labour’s structures and processes to tackle antisemitism have failed, i.e. do not command trust, lack integrity, are viewed as politically compromised, and have been ineffective in tackling antisemitism. Part Four then deals with the party’s

culture of antisemitism denial and victim-blaming, which in many ways makes those multiple failures inevitable.

Part 3: The Labour Party has failed to create structures and processes to deal with complaints of antisemitism that command trust, have integrity, are free from political interference, and are effective

3.1 What does ‘institutionally antisemitic’ mean?

This is the definition of institutional racism which was first used in the Macpherson Report and which subsequently became the go-to definition for both scholars of racism and creators of public policy (the bold highlighting is my own emphasis):

‘The concept of institutional racism, which we apply, consists of: The collective failure of an organisation to provide **an appropriate and professional service** to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or **detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour** which amount to discrimination through **unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping** which disadvantage minority ethnic people. It persists because of the **failure of the organisation openly and adequately to recognise and address its existence and causes by policy, example and leadership**. Without recognition and action to eliminate such racism it can prevail as part of the ethos or culture of the organisation. It is a corrosive disease.’ – The Macpherson Report, 1999.¹³⁰

As antisemitism is a form of racism (albeit not only that), we can agree that institutional antisemitism constitutes a form of institutional racism, and thus by using the definition we can assess whether a given organisation is institutionally antisemitic. Close examination of the Labour Party’s ‘structures, processes, attitudes and behaviours’, its failures of ‘leadership’ and its ‘culture’ of antisemitism denial and victim-blaming, suggests that ‘institutionally antisemitic’ can serve as a reasonable short-hand description of the party today, as it ‘disadvantages’ Jews in the organisation.

Things are bad enough that, having looked at a mass of evidence provided by both the Jewish Labour Movement (JLM) and the Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA), the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) announced in March 2019 that it had asked Labour for a response to their

complaints, before deciding whether to launch a formal inquiry.

Defining the Labour Party as ‘institutionally antisemitic’ today is not to say it will *always* be so, or that today, every member, or even a large percentage of members, act or speak in antisemitic ways. There are, of course, countless Labour people at every level of the party speaking up against antisemitism every day, and their actions may yet serve to turn the party around.

To define the Labour Party as institutionally antisemitic is to say that it is not *currently* offering ‘an appropriate and professional service’ to a particular group, Jews; that this failure can be detected in the ‘processes’, ‘attitudes’ and ‘behaviours’ found in the party; that the party has not ‘openly and adequately addressed’ antisemitism in the party; and that these multiple failures are common enough to adversely impact the experience of Jews, so that they are in various ways disadvantaged (as those Jews currently leaving the party keep making clear to the leader in their eloquent resignation letters).

In short, the Labour Party has been failing to do the following in an ‘appropriate or professional’ way:

- Failing to fulfill its basic **safeguarding** responsibilities with regard to Jewish members;
- Failing to **deal effectively with complaints** of antisemitism brought to its attention, or **educate** the party members about antisemitism;
- Failing to consistently follow *in practice* the **IHRA Definition of Antisemitism** it finally adopted in theory in 2018;
- Failing to tackle the **culture of denial and victim blaming** which means that victims all too often feel that they are being ignored, or even targeted as ‘smearers’ (see Part Four of this report).

3.2. The Labour Party is failing in its basic responsibility to safeguard its Jewish members

In September 2018, Theo Usherwood of LBC Radio received a leaked 89-page internal Labour Party dossier detailing over 20 incidents, some of which could be defined as race hate crimes, many of an antisemitic nature. Usherwood revealed that the party had failed to report these crimes or incidents to either their targets (in some cases Jewish Labour women MPs) or to the police.

The BBC reported: ‘When LBC showed the material to former Met Police officer Mark Chishty, [his] view was that 17 instances should have been

reported to the police for investigation, and another four were potential race hate crimes.¹³¹

The Jewish News reported that ‘According to Mr Usherwood, the four cases included an activist who attacked a Jewish Labour MP as a “Zionist extremist” who “hates civilised people” and was “about to get a good kicking” for spreading “Zionist propaganda”, an activist who posted an article containing Holocaust denial and antisemitic cartoons of Jews from a blog claiming to provide “intelligent antisemitism for the thinking gentile”, a party member posting that “we shall rid the Jews who are a cancer on us all” and another party member accused of physically and verbally abusing a seven-year-old boy using racist remarks including “Paki” and “Jew-boy”.’¹³²

Labour MP Dame Margaret Hodge was one of the MPs who was targeted in cases described by this dossier, but was not informed about this by Labour Head Office. She said: ‘They’re not informing MPs and I think in their failure to do so, they are not really fulfilling their duties of care to their members.’

The file showed that Luciana Berger was threatened with ‘a good kicking’ by one Labour Party member on Facebook. This was not reported to her or the police. Interviewed by the *Jewish Chronicle* (JC), Berger strongly criticised the decision made under the auspices of General Secretary Jennie Formby not to make her aware of specific threats against her – which are now the subject of a police investigation. Berger said, ‘This was a party that was made aware of a physical threat against me and didn’t tell me about it – and didn’t tell the police about it.’¹³³

The Labour Party’s response was to point out that ‘Where someone feels they have been a victim of crime, they should report it to the police in the usual way.’ But as LBC’s Theo Usherwood pointed out, ‘[The Labour Party] assumes MPs are aware of the abuse and threats in the first place. But most are not – the complaints having been made by a third party and MPs are not being told so they can report to the police. That – and of course the fact Labour itself is not referring the cases – means that the police are never given the chance to investigate.’

The campaigning group Labour Against Antisemitism (LAAS) argued the dossier and the Labour Party’s handling of it ‘raises serious questions about the fundamental ability of the party to function effectively as an organisation.’

The BBC reported that by 2 November 2018 the Met Police had themselves reviewed the file and decided to launch a criminal inquiry into allegations of

antisemitic hate crimes within the Labour Party. Met Police chief Cressida Dick told the BBC her officers were assessing online material because ‘there may have been a crime committed.’¹³⁴

3.3. The Labour Party has failed to deal appropriately and professionally with complaints of antisemitism, or to adequately educate its members about contemporary antisemitism

Over the last four years every aspect of the Labour Party’s processes for handling complaints of antisemitism has come under sustained questioning. The party has failed to develop administrative processes that are trusted to understand, identify, and investigate antisemitism, free of political interference, and capable of taking prompt and effective action.

Although some changes were introduced in 2018, and extra staff recruited, Deputy Leader Tom Watson surely spoke for the vast majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) when he said in February 2019, ‘very patently, the Jennie Formby reforms have not been adequate, they have not succeeded’.

3.3.1 The poor administration of cases

Even sympathetic observers have concluded that part of the problem from the beginning has been plain ‘administrative incompetence’ such that ‘the party has never appeared fully in control even of many of the most serious cases it has had to deal with.’¹³⁵

A 2016 report by the Home Affairs Select Committee into antisemitism in the UK concluded that the Labour Party was ‘demonstrably incompetent’ in dealing with incidents of anti-Jewish abuse, and that the 2016 Chakrabarti-Feldman report into antisemitism had been ‘ultimately compromised.’¹³⁶ *The Guardian* reported that ‘the [Select] Committee noted Chakrabarti’s failure to respond to requests for a timeline proving that there was no connection between her elevation to the Lords and her inquiry.’ The report concluded ‘Ms Chakrabarti has not been sufficiently open with the Committee about when she was offered her peerage, despite several attempts to clarify this issue with her.’

In April 2018, Jeremy Corbyn ‘apologised for failing to get a grip on

antisemitism in the Labour Party, and admitted Labour had ‘not done enough’ to tackle the problem and that Labour’s processes for dealing with anti-Jewish abuse were ‘not fully fit for purpose’.

In August 2018 (three years after he became leader, two years since the Chakrabarti-Feldman Report) Jeremy Corbyn again apologised for hurt caused to Jewish people by antisemitism in his party, admitting ‘we have been too slow in processing disciplinary cases of, mostly, online antisemitic abuse by party members. We are acting to speed this process up.’

In March 2019, writing to the JLM almost four years after he took charge of the party, Corbyn said once again that the party had ‘certainly moved too slowly’. Apology has followed apology for close to four years, but nothing ever seems to improve.¹³⁷

In March 2019 the leader of the Scottish Labour Party admitted the party had been unable to cope with the flood of antisemitism complaints, saying there was a ‘bit of a resource issue’.¹³⁸

In early 2018, the JLM said it was deeply worried about ‘a vast backlog of cases involving alleged antisemitism that appear to be stuck in the system, in some cases for over a year.’¹³⁹ Some cases have trundled on for *years* without resolution. For example, the NEC and Jeremy Corbyn promised an investigation into allegations of antisemitism against the former London Mayor Ken Livingstone in April 2017. No investigation had begun by the following February. Livingstone eventually resigned in May 2018, without his case ever being adjudicated. Jackie Walker’s case, originally opened in 2016, has still not been resolved as I write in March 2019.

Too often, chaos reigns. One day the Deputy Leader calls for all cases to be copied to him so he can monitor progress, as his trust in the official process has collapsed. The next day the General Secretary angrily sends an email to all MPs telling the Deputy Leader to back off as Lord Falconer, former Labour Secretary of State for Justice, is now on the case. The day after, Lord Falconer says this is not true – he has reached no agreement with the Labour Party to take on an advisory role, and tells the party not to brief otherwise. The general secretary says that GDPR rules on data sharing mean that Watson cannot see details of cases, but it almost immediately emerges that details of cases have been copied to and commented on by staff in the Leader’s office.

In February 2019 Deputy Leader Tom Watson received 50 complaints about antisemitism from colleagues and demanded Jeremy Corbyn personally

take the lead in getting a grip on the crisis. The complaints included Labour members sending tweets linking Hitler and the Rothschilds, accusing Jews of murdering children and questioning whether Jewish MPs and Councillors had ‘human blood’.

Watson said each of these cases had been raised by Labour MPs over a period of several months, but that no action had been reported back to those who had raised the complaints. This prompted his despairing comment that the administrative reforms of 2018 ‘have not been adequate. They have not succeeded.’¹⁴⁰

The Guardian reported that an MP emerged from an angry PLP meeting of 4th March 2019 and said there was now a ‘complete breakdown in trust’ between the PLP and the Labour Party’s most senior official, General Secretary Jennie Formby.¹⁴¹

Earlier, on 4 February 2019 the PLP unanimously passed an ‘Action on Antisemitism’ motion at its weekly meeting. It was ‘dismayed that there remains such a backlog of antisemitism cases’ and ‘very concerned by recent reports that a number of cases of alleged antisemitic activity from high-profile members have been dropped’. The PLP called on the party leadership to ‘adequately tackle cases of antisemitism, as a failure to do so seriously risks antisemitism in the party appearing normalised and the party seeming to be institutionally antisemitic.’

Labour MP Catherine McKinnell said, ‘The rhetoric of zero tolerance to antisemitism doesn’t appear to match up to reality,’ and added ‘If we continue to fail to understand and act on the concerns of the Jewish community... we risk this sorry and destructive state of affairs gradually becoming normalised, potentially slipping into the situation where antisemitism becomes an institutionalised problem.’¹⁴²

Peter Mason, National Secretary of the JLM, concurs. ‘It’s been three years of the Labour party failing to tackle antisemitism, three years of there being thousands of cases of antisemitism being processed by the party, and three years in which there have been very few expulsions for antisemitism.’ He went on:

‘What does the Labour Party expect its Jewish members to do when faced with a barrage of antisemitism, both from individual members within constituency Labour Parties and on social media? Are we expected to take it? The party’s abject failure to tackle antisemitism has

put a question mark over the JLM's affiliation to the party after 99 years. If 99 years isn't enough for the party to stand with us in our hour of need then, quite frankly, I'm not sure what's left.'

Labour Party internal processes, Mason went on to say 'are operating within a culture of anti-Jewish racism, of denial and obfuscation such that instead of the honest and right thing [happening] i.e. ensuring that antisemites are excoriated from the party', Labour had 'spent the last year covering up the extent to which their inaction has failed to do so'.

In some despair, Mason said 'It's been a year since the Jewish community stood outside Parliament and protested [Labour] antisemitism. The community set six tests. The JLM set 19 tests to judge the party's actions in tackling antisemitism. *None have been met.* Instead we have experienced a summer of hell in which the Labour Party took it upon itself to redefine antisemitism, in which it has failed to bring forward disciplinary cases'.

Mason claimed that the party's inaction stemmed from 'a culture of antisemitism in which the Labour Party create the space that is filled by conspiracy theory.'¹⁴³

Party-collated statistics about antisemitism cases have been questioned

In February 2019, after a lot of pressure from an angry PLP, General Secretary Jennie Formby finally released some data to Labour MPs about one 10-month period, from April 2018 to January 2019. In those months, she reported, the party received 673 accusations of antisemitism by Labour Party members.

Of those who were party members:

- 96 members were immediately suspended.
- 146 received a reminder of conduct.
- 220 cases did not have sufficient evidence of a breach of party rules to proceed with an investigation.
- 211 were issued with a Notice of Investigation.

Of the cases where those involved were issued with a Notice of Investigation or suspension, there have been 96 NEC antisemitism disputes panel decisions:

- 42 members were referred to the National Constitutional Committee

(NCC).

- 16 members were issued with a formal National Executive Committee (NEC) warning.
- 6 members' cases were referred for further investigation.
- 25 members were issued with 'reminder of conduct' notices.
- 7 members' cases were closed.

The following 18 NCC decisions have been made:

- 12 members were expelled.
- 6 members received sanctions of some kind.

24 cases currently with the NCC, Labour's top disciplinary body, are outstanding.

The figures have been met with scepticism in the PLP and beyond. They only covered the preceding 10 months, although the alarm bells had already been ringing for the preceding three and a half years. Formby's claim that earlier figures were not available was angrily disputed by the previous General Secretary.

Jewish MPs Ruth Smeeth and Dame Margaret Hodge suggested 'thousands' of allegations of Jew-hate had been omitted from the figures. Ruth Smeeth MP said 'we know of thousands of cases that have been submitted where nothing seems to have been done.' In a reference to her colleague Luciana Berger MP, Ms Smeeth added: 'One of my friends who is heavily pregnant is having to go through this day in day out and it's simply not good enough.' Ms Berger herself read out vile antisemitic messages and images she had been sent by a Labour member, *who had still not been expelled*.¹⁴⁴

Jon Lansman of Momentum told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme that there are now a 'much larger number of people with hardcore antisemitic opinion' in the Labour Party than he previously thought, and they are 'polluting the atmosphere' in some local meetings and particularly online.

Euan Philipps, spokesperson for LAAS, questioned the claim that many complaints did not concern Labour Party members. 'In August 2018 we contributed to an article in the *Sunday Times* ('Labour finds a way to let off "antisemite" Corbyn allies', 5 August 2018) in which it was revealed how Labour mis-identified party members (such as Brent Central CLP Secretary and former employee of John McDonnell, Michael Calderbank) in an apparent effort to help them evade disciplinary action. In another example we were informed that

sitting Labour councillor Pam Bromley was also not a Labour Party member, and she was only later suspended following media investigation.’ Philipps also asked ‘what has happened to the 1,200 cases we have reported since 2016, many of which are not accounted for here?’

LAAS also claimed to have forwarded to the party 4,000 screenshots of antisemitic comments and images culled from Labour-supporting Facebook groups and Twitter accounts, relating to around 1000 party members, including a member of Momentum’s Steering Committee, who had shared a message accusing Saudi Arabia of being in thrall to ‘Zionist masters’. According to LAAS, one Labour Party member claimed the UK is ‘enslaved to the Rothschilds and the Zionist World Bank’. Another retweeted a picture of [the paedophile] Jimmy Savile alongside an article saying satanic abuse of children was rife, adding: ‘All part of the Satanic structure behind the Zionist-inspired new world order and one world government.’¹⁴⁵

3.3.2 Political interference in cases

In addition to a loss of faith in the *efficacy* of Labour Party processes, in the early months of 2019 a series of leaked emails left in doubt the *integrity* of the process, and its *freedom from political interference* from the Leader’s Office.

There is a concern that the formal structures and processes established to deal with antisemitism had been (a) *colonised* by factional allies of the leader, some of whom sit in the key structures – Disputes Panel, the NCC, the NEC, the regional structures – despite being on record as expressing their extreme scepticism about antisemitism complaints, even dismissing them as contrived to designed to ‘get’ the leader, and (b) *compromised* by interference from the Leader’s Office, including by key Corbyn staff some of whom have openly called the complaints a smear – such as senior staffer Andrew Murray, who told a rally that ‘people on the right-wing of the Labour Party are simply using this issue as the latest stick to beat Jeremy Corbyn with ... [it is a] disgraceful smear campaign’. In short, to invoke the terms of the Macpherson Report, the process for dealing with antisemitism appears ‘inappropriate and unprofessional.’

The Disputes Panel

There are doubts about: the degree to which some key personnel of the Disputes Panel understand contemporary antisemitism; the degree to which

they are willing to follow the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Definition of Antisemitism, which has been formally adopted by the Labour Party, when deciding on cases; whether they operate free from political interference from the Leader's Office; and whether there is a structural problem with a party body investigating the party on this issue.

In 2017 the Labour Party was made aware that a member, Alan Bull, had shared an article on Facebook, without comment, which claimed the Holocaust was a hoax. Astonishingly, the party only got round to suspending the council candidate when contacted by the *Jewish Chronicle* in March 2018.

And then things got even worse. The head of the Labour Party's Disputes Panel, Christine Shawcroft, opposed Bull's suspension and sent out an email calling for his reinstatement (which would have enabled Bull to stand in local elections in Peterborough). When her email was leaked and a public storm broke, Shawcroft resigned. She then wrote on Facebook 'this whole row is being stirred up to attack Jeremy, as we all know'.

This seems to me to be an example of institutionalised antisemitism. The head of a Labour Party body (a 'structure') charged with judging antisemitism fails to do so in an 'appropriate and professional' manner (a 'behaviour'), and when challenged, uses an antisemitic trope (an 'attitude') on her way out the door.

After Shawcroft resigned, Claudia Webbe, a friend of Jeremy Corbyn, became the new head of the Disputes Panel. Webbe has previously defended Ken Livingstone in the Guardian after he had likened a Jewish reporter to a concentration camp guard, and she twice worked as an advisor to Livingstone. She chaired a meeting in 2014 in at which Jeremy Corbyn spoke alongside Stop the War, Friends of Al-Aqsa, and others. The video of the meeting suggests neither she nor Jeremy Corbyn objected to any of the following interventions made at the meeting: a call to prosecute British Israelis who are fighting in the IDF, denunciations of Israeli 'genocide', calls for a total boycott of Israel, claims that Israel was 'ethnically cleansing the Gazans into Sinai' and that 'Israel is fundamentally racist in everything it does'.¹⁴⁶

There is also, arguably, a structural problem with the Disputes Panel that the party needs to face. It is both a quasi-judicial body and a political body, its members elected on a factional slate, its job being to protect the interests of the party. While this does not present a problem for either cases of gross misconduct or the inevitable local personal fall-outs and bureaucratic tangles

that happen in the party, as in any organisation, it is not clear that the panel is fit for purpose for what is an entirely exceptional challenge: large numbers of members engaged in antisemitism, the rigorous exposure and punishment of which may be seen as having a price for the party in terms of adverse media coverage and damage to electoral prospects.

Tough questions for Labour's high command

The Guardian received leaked internal emails from the period March to May 2018, and reported that they showed how 'Labour's high command opposed recommendations to suspend several party activists accused of antisemitism.' This leak shocked the Deputy Leader Tom Watson, who asked if there had been 'unacceptable political interference in dealing with antisemitism cases.'¹⁴⁷

According to *The Guardian* the leaked internal documents showed that:

- 'an official acting on behalf of General Secretary Jennie Formby opposed recommendations from the party's investigations team to suspend several members accused of antisemitic behaviour.'
- 'Andrew Murray, a key Corbyn adviser, argued for more lenient action to be taken against a member accused of defending an antisemitic mural.' This is the same Andrew Murray who told a rally in 2016, 'Let's be clear, some people on the right-wing of the Labour Party are simply using this issue as the latest stick to beat Jeremy Corbyn with ... [it is a] disgraceful smear campaign.' (That Murray was handed bunches of complaints and asked to say whether they were antisemitic or not, given his previous public statements about 'a disgraceful smear campaign', *beggars belief*. This fact, *alone*, would cast serious doubt over the party's claim to be offering 'an appropriate and professional service'.)
- 'Staff recommended the suspension of Kayla Bibby, a member accused of posting a picture of an alien with the Star of David printed on it, covering the face of the Statue of Liberty. Formby's official instead suggested that she be given a "reminder of conduct" only, because the context of her other posts suggested she was "anti-Israel, not anti-Jewish".'
- 'In April, Formby's official opposed a recommendation to suspend a member who claimed that a Labour Jewish group had links to the Freemasons, instead backing an investigation with no suspension

- That same month the official disagreed with a recommended suspension of a member who had used the term “zio”.¹⁴⁸

Louise Ellman MP has suggested that ‘the problems with the party’s failure to deal with antisemitism are *political*.’ She said some senior Labour Party figures would ‘find every reason possible not to discipline someone who is from their group.’¹⁴⁹

In March 2019 it was revealed by the *Observer* and *The Times* that staff working in Jeremy Corbyn’s office had been giving guidance on individual antisemitism investigations. This contradicted assurances given by Corbyn to Labour MPs and the Jewish community that there was no political interference in the process. Margaret Hodge MP wrote to Corbyn asking why he had ‘made it clear in our discussion that your office plays no part in the complaints process? I was given categorical assurances that this does not happen and has never happened, however, it is clear ... that your staff did intervene and have had a direct role in complaints.’¹⁵⁰

Trust in the integrity of the Disputes Panel then plunged further when it became known that Laura Murray had been seconded to Labour’s Complaints Unit as its Acting Head. Laura Murray had no obvious experience to fit her to lead a team in judging antisemitism cases, but she is Jeremy Corbyn’s stakeholder manager and the daughter of his key advisor Andrew Murray, who, as mentioned above, has attacked a ‘disgraceful smear campaign’.

Ruth Smeeth MP called the appointment of Laura Murray ‘extraordinary’. Louise Ellman MP asked incredulously, ‘what are her credentials?’

It then emerged that on her second day in post, Laura Murray had intervened to try and reverse the decision of the head of the Disputes Panel to suspend a member who had defended an antisemitic mural. *The Guardian* reported that ‘Crucially, Murray repeatedly used the phrase “we”, an apparent reference to the Leader’s Office, in her contact with the party’s Head of Disputes.’ Laura Murray cc’d into the email she sent to the disputes panel objecting to the suspension the following Corbyn staffers: Seumas Milne, Corbyn’s Head of Communications (and former hardliner from the Straight Left faction of the Communist Party); her father Andrew Murray, Corbyn’s advisor (and another hardline communist from Straight Left); and Karie Murphy, Corbyn’s Chief of Staff.

Jeremy Corbyn’s claim that his office did not intervene in cases of antisemitism was in tatters.¹⁵¹

Jewish Labour MP Ruth Smeeth MP said: ‘This completely undermines any residual faith we can have in the complaints process. This clearly isn’t independent by any definition as professionals in Labour HQ are asking for political permission and signoff for how to handle antisemitism cases.’

Labour MP Wes Streeting said: ‘It is now crystal clear that members of staff in Jeremy Corbyn’s office were directing Labour Party staff on how to handle antisemitism cases in writing, copying in virtually every senior member of staff in Jeremy Corbyn’s office. This directly contradicts what we were told and what Jewish community leaders were told by the Leader of the Labour Party. Either he lied to us, or he didn’t know and his staff sat silently around him and allowed him to mislead us. Either way, it stinks.’¹⁵²

The Jewish communal organisation, the Board of Deputies, the JLC and the CST were incredulous at the leaks: ‘We asked for his personal leadership on antisemitism and were explicitly told that he does not intervene in individual cases because it is all handled by the NEC’, the three organisations wrote. ‘This latest revelation shows that cases were routinely referred to his office for their advice and direction ... the Labour leadership cannot be trusted on this issue and vindicates our request for a genuinely independent, mutually agreed ombudsman to oversee Labour’s handling of antisemitism disciplinary cases.’¹⁵³

Further emails leaked to *The Guardian* appeared to show that key members of Corbyn’s staff had asked to be copied in on antisemitism complaints *so they could exercise oversight*. *The Guardian* reported: ‘In a message sent on 8 April, Corbyn’s Chief of Staff, Karie Murphy, asks for his political secretary to continue to be given an “overview”. Murphy thanks staff at Labour HQ for keeping her “in the loop on all these complaints”, during what she calls a “difficult period”. But it becomes clear in the course of the email exchange that key figures in Corbyn’s office would continue to be kept informed. “It’s important for Amy Jackson to have an overview of all complaints that involve elected politicians or candidates,” Murphy says. Jackson is Corbyn’s political secretary, liaising with MPs.’

The Guardian noted that ‘The senior Labour compliance official’s email calls for “cases to be flagged where they involve any particularly politically sensitive matters, ensuring attention of Seumas [Milne, Corbyn’s head of strategy and communications] /Amy [Jackson] /any others as appropriate”.’

Corbyn staffer Laura Murray, seconded to be the Acting Head of Complaints,

asks in the leaked emails for a wide group to be copied in on antisemitism cases on an ongoing basis, saying: 'I really feel safer with more people in the loop, than less people, considering how easy it is for things to slip through the net/cases to get traction in the media etc.'¹⁵⁴

The Times reported in March 2019 on a specific case. "Two of Jeremy Corbyn's closest aides directly intervened to lift the suspension of an activist accused of antisemitism, according to leaked emails. Seumas Milne, the Labour Leader's Director of Strategy and Communications, told party officials to reinstate Glyn Secker after two of them had ruled that he be kicked out'.

Milne's intervention followed an email from Andrew Murray, Corbyn's aide, who called for the suspension to be lifted, noting 'J[eremy]C[orbyn] interested in this one.' The Times also reported that Murray 'denounced campaigners who had exposed hatred of Jews in the party: "I don't know if this came from 'Labour Against Anti-Semitism' but they are well dodgy.'"

After reviewing Secker's case the staffer had written, 'We would normally suspend with this.' But Milne subsequently intervened saying 'None of the posts can be identified as anti-semitic'.¹⁵⁵

The National Constitutional Committee

In November 2018, as part of a Corbyn-supporting Momentum slate which took every position available to ordinary members, Stephen Marks was elected to the Labour Party's top disciplinary body, the National Constitutional Committee (NCC).¹⁵⁶ This body sits in judgement of the most serious allegations of antisemitism within the party.

Marks was one of a group who had written to *The Guardian* in 2016 to complain that 'we believe these accusations are part of a wider campaign against the Labour leadership, and they have been timed particularly to do damage to the Labour Party and its prospects in elections in the coming week.'¹⁵⁷ He once accused the Board of Deputies of being behind 'imagined' claims of antisemitism in Labour.¹⁵⁸

Is it 'appropriate and professional' for a person who thinks allegations of antisemitism are a right-wing or Zionist plot to undermine Jeremy Corbyn to sit on Labour's top body judging complaints of antisemitism? To ask the question is to answer it. Another question arises: do the other Momentum-supporting members elected to the NCC agree with Mr Marks that antisemitism claims are

part of a ‘campaign to damage the Labour party’?

3.3.3. *An overly tolerant handling of cases*

Despite Jeremy Corbyn’s promises that Labour was taking a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to antisemitism in the party, there have been long-standing and serious concerns from the beginning of the crisis that egregious examples of antisemitism were resulting in only warnings, short suspensions followed by quiet reinstatements, or in no action being taken at all. (A number of such cases have been noted in this report: see case numbers 7, 14, 16, 23, 26, 26, 29, 32, 34, 35, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 53, 55, 62, 64, 65, and 66.)

The Guardian reported in January 2018 that ‘in some cases where complaints had been found to have had substance, the party had recommended surprisingly lenient punishment.’ Confidential documents leaked to the *Observer*, led one Labour MP to say ‘the party is showing tolerance, not zero tolerance towards antisemitism, even in cases where it has found complaints that have substance’.¹⁵⁹

In March 2019 ‘an ally of Mr Corbyn’ rejected a suggestion by Labour Party staff to suspend Kayla Bibby, who had posted an antisemitic image of an alien with the Star of David on its back grasping the Statue of Liberty by the face, suggesting control over the US.’ The ‘ally’ was revealed to be Thomas Gardiner. He had decided, in another example of a staffer not understanding contemporary antisemitism, that the image was ‘anti-Israel, not anti-Jewish’. Mr Gardiner was appointed head of Labour’s Governance and Legal Unit. Alarming, according to the *JC*, Mr Gardiner is ‘believed to have overseen numerous other complaints about alleged antisemitism over the past year.’ Have Mr Gardiner’s actions and handling of electronic data been examined, and have those staff who worked for him or interacted with him been interviewed?¹⁶⁰

3.3.3.1 *Additional illustrative examples of overly tolerant treatment of antisemitism cases in the Labour Party*

In addition to the cases cited in Part Two, the following serve as more evidence indicating an overly tolerant approach.

Example 71: Shah Hussain is a Labour Councillor from Burnley. He was suspended from the party for allegedly tweeting at Israeli footballer Yossi

Benayoun: ‘You are an [sic] complete and utter plonker, you and your country doing the same thing that Hitler did tour [sic] race in ww2.’

Dave Rich of the CST has provided an update on this case. ‘Hussain insisted there was nothing wrong with comparing Israel to Nazi Germany and claimed he was the victim of a “witch hunt”. His suspension was quietly dropped and he was allowed to carry on serving as a Labour Councillor.’ In June 2018, now reinstated, Hussain shared a post that claimed ‘Israel has a powerful stranglehold on the American government... They control much of the media, they control much of the commerce of the country, and they control powerfully both bodies of the Congress. They own the Congress.’

Rich explains that ‘this is typical of how antisemitism operates in today’s Labour Party. It usually involves language that draws on old racist lies about Jews, but reframes the bigotry in a modern, “anti-Zionist” setting that has nothing to do with what Zionism is, or with how Israel actually behaves.’¹⁶¹ Typical perhaps, but seemingly not even recognised *as* antisemitism by the party.

Example 72: A Labour Party member told a meeting of Wimbledon CLP in August 2018 that ‘the Jewish community plans to attack our party’. He said the controversy over antisemitism had been contrived, that it was a ‘storm that started straight after we elected Jeremy’ and was being ‘directed at him’ by a ‘very undemocratic elite from within our party.’ In October 2018, Labour’s London regional office *took no action* and dismissed the case.¹⁶²

Mike Katz, vice chair of the JLM, complained that the Labour Party response was unacceptable. ‘Talking about an “undemocratic elite”, talking about the Jews acting as a whole community to attack the Labour Party, that really plays into some of the oldest antisemitic tropes – about Jews being conspiratorial, about acting in secrecy as some sort of cult to try and influence politics.’ Katz went on: ‘It’s really worrying that people in the Labour Party compliance, when they see these remarks which people at the meeting itself very clearly understood to be antisemitic, don’t say that these are antisemitic – they don’t uphold the complaints.’

Example 73: On 10 February 2019, Labour Party General Secretary **Jennie Formby** wrote to the Chair of Liverpool Wavertree CLP, Alex Scott-Samuel. The context of her email was a call by Deputy Leader Tom Watson to suspend the CLP on the basis that it had tabled a controversial no-confidence motion

in the local Jewish MP, Luciana Berger, and for various other instances of unacceptable treatment of Berger (including the fact Berger was due to give birth shortly after the motion was set to be put to a vote). Formby refused Watson's call. Although she welcomed the withdrawal of the no-confidence motion in the heavily pregnant MP (a motion she characterised rather generously as 'ill-judged') the CLP was otherwise given a clean bill of health. Formby wrote (emphasis is mine):

'I have seen the wording of the motions in question, neither of which make any mention of antisemitism but which instead refer to Luciana's lack of support for the Leader of the Opposition. I have also seen the statement from the Executive of the CLP which states: 'we as an Executive have always and continue now to express total solidarity with Luciana as a victim of misogyny and of antisemitism – coming mostly from the far right. Our Chair [Alex Scott-Samuel] himself is Jewish'. I also spoke with the Regional Director on Friday who confirmed that the motions were in order and had been submitted in accordance with rule.

CLPs are at liberty to discuss motions of no confidence in their elected representatives, including MPs, and in the case of Wavertree, to date I **have seen no evidence of any behaviours that constitute potential bullying or antisemitism** other than the complaints about one individual which are being investigated.'

But had the party really *looked*? Had the Labour Party taken seriously the following cases, either before or after Formby's letter was sent on 9 February?

- **Alex Scott-Samuel**, the recipient of Formby's letter and the chair of the CLP had himself, according to the *JC*, 'been a regular guest on the Richie Allen on David Icke.com show since 2015. Mr Allen – who has continued to invite Dr Scott-Samuel on his show since splitting from Mr Icke to air his shows on his own website – hosted notorious antisemite Gilad Atzmon last July, former KKK Grand Master David Duke in 2016 and self-described 'Holocaust revisionist' Alison Chabloz in 2018. According to *The Spectator*, 'On the show, Labour Wavertree's Chairman told the audience that "The Rothschild family are behind a lot of the neo-liberal influence in the UK and the US. You only have to Google them to look at this."' JVL Watch

posted a screen-grab of a Scott-Samuel tweet from 24 July 2013 which said ‘Rothschilds doing usury’.¹⁶³

Alex Sobel, the Jewish Labour MP for Leeds North West, tweeted that Mr Icke and Mr Allen were ‘fermentors of antisemitic thought and draw people into a series of conspiracy theories’ and said ‘Sharing a platform with these men is incompatible with Labour membership.’

The *JC* reported that Scott-Samuel also posted a claim that Jewish MP Ruth Smeeth was ‘the enemy within?’ and had said ‘Isis, Boko Haram and Zionism are genocidal terrorists.’¹⁶⁴

- The Jewish News reported that **Kenneth Campbell**, a Liverpool Wavertree CLP member who proposed a no-confidence vote in Luciana Berger and trolled her online, had called the MP a ‘disruptive Zionist’ who should be deselected, and spread conspiracy theories online, including 9/11 conspiracy theories and the claim that Israel covertly supports ISIS.¹⁶⁵
- **Margaret Tyson**, a senior member of Liverpool Wavertree CLP and an elected representative on the Liverpool Labour Local Campaign Forum – the body that helps select and vet candidates to stand for the party in local elections – launched an attack on Berger (before she resigned), accusing her of supporting the ‘Zionist Israeli government’ whose ‘Nazi masters taught them well’. In another post Ms Tyson wrote ‘Is it any wonder the Zionest (sic) are hated and despised (sic) throughout the world.’¹⁶⁶
- **Helen Dickson**, Equalities Officer of Liverpool Wavertree CLP, signed a letter complaining that ‘The current bogus “anti-Semitism” attack by the Israel Lobby ... will negate our human rights.’¹⁶⁷

Example 74: Welsh Jewish community leaders expressed dismay when Welsh Assembly Member (AM) **Jenny Rathbone** was readmitted to the party without serious punishment despite the *JC* revealing she had claimed that Jews’ security fears were ‘in their own heads’, that the actions of the Israeli government were to blame for rising antisemitism in the UK, and that British Jews had a ‘responsibility’ to promote peace in the Middle East. Communal leaders said the case had been handled without ‘consideration’ for the Jewish community. Ms Rathbone is a long-time supporter and associate of Jeremy Corbyn.¹⁶⁸

Example 75: Labour Party member **Marlene Ellis** was suspended in 2016 after she defended Ken Livingstone’s comments on Hitler and Zionism, referred to

'Zionist criminals', said Labour had been pressured by 'the pro-Zionist lobby in and beyond the media', and said of another Labour MP's comment that Israel should be transported to America that it was 'not so outrageous within the historical context and involvement of Zionists with Nazis'. She was readmitted to the party in March 2019 without explanation by Labour Party Head Office.¹⁶⁹

Ignoring the IHRA?

After a long-running and bitter internal row, the party finally adopted the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism in September 2018. But some are doubtful the Definition is being used in practice.

Example 76: Mark Serwotka is a Labour Party member, President of the TUC, and General Secretary of the PCS trade union. He told a fringe event at the TUC 2018 conference that Israel could have 'created a story that does not exist' in order to distract attention from the 'atrocities' he said it had committed. He also claimed there was 'something sinister going on.' He elaborated: 'I'm not a conspiracy theorist, but I'll tell you what – one of the best forms of trying to hide from the atrocities that you are committing is to go on the offensive and actually create a story that does not exist.'

Matt Zarb-Cousin, Jeremy Corbyn's former spokesman, said the comments were wrong and 'very unhelpful.'¹⁷⁰

The IHRA definition, includes as an examples of potential antisemitism 'making... stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective' and 'accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel.'

The Labour Party dismissed the case because 'this does not amount to a breach of Party rules' and said they would there 'not be taking any further action.'

Euan Philipps, spokesperson for LAAS, which made the formal complaint about Serwotka's comments, said: 'Once again, we see the Labour Party fail to adhere to its own disciplinary processes on antisemitism. After a summer spent resisting the adoption of the IHRA definition it appears the party leadership is simply refusing to implement it. As a consequence, party members promoting antisemitic views are walking away without so much as a warning.'

Example 77: Professor David Miller, a Labour Party member, gave a talk in late 2018, *after* the party had adopted the IHRA Definition, which defines as

possibly antisemitic calling Israel a 'racist endeavour', and he described Israel as exactly that, 'a racist endeavour.' And he did so knowingly: 'I say that in cognizance that [what] I've just said is regarded by lots of people as being antisemitic.' Miller also said 'most of the allegations of antisemitism in the Labour Party have been false' and he defended Ken Livingstone's comments about Hitler and Zionism.¹⁷¹

The complaint against Prof. Miller was dismissed by Labour in the identical bureaucratic words used in the Serwotka case: 'this does not amount to a breach of Party rules' and so they would 'not be taking any further action.'

David Toube of the Quilliam Foundation said Labour's rejection of the complaint against Prof. Miller made it now apparent that 'Labour's claim to abide by the IHRA Definition is a barefaced lie'.¹⁷²

3.3.4 A failure to understand and empathise with the Jewish experience

It is emotional empathy as much as intellectual understanding and administrative efficiency that many have found lacking in the Labour Party.

The widely respected anti-racist NGO Hope Not Hate produced a report in 2019 that concluded Labour was *still* not doing enough to tackle antisemitism and one reason was a failure to understand and acknowledge the Jewish experience. The report pointed out that, 'The family history of so many members of the British Jewish community includes first-hand experience of persecution. Many people in the Jewish community therefore identify with a sense of the precariousness of their safety, where material security and educational attainment are not seen as guarantors of security and safety'. Hope Not Hate concluded: 'The inability of the Labour Party leadership to understand and acknowledge this experience is particularly chilling when the Labour Party and the Left in general hold values of equality and antiracism as core to their identity'.¹⁷³

In September 2018 – two years after the Chakrabarti Report and over three since Jeremy Corbyn became leader – Labour frontbencher Barry Gardiner admitted that Labour still needed to 'get a real understanding' of the antisemitism crisis.¹⁷⁴

One reason the Labour Party does not understand what it is dealing with is that not once has it sought the advice of those Jewish (and non-Jewish) party members who have spent their political lives fighting *leftwing* antisemitism and

their professional lives studying it and writing many books, essays and reports about the phenomenon.

One such member, Dr. David Hirsh, left the Labour Party in February 2019 saying he would no longer put up with being treated like the agent of a foreign power rather than the long-time socialist, anti-racist and internationally-recognised expert on Left anti-Semitism that he is. 'I have had enough of being humiliated by antisemitism in the Labour movement. I have fought it for years, in the student movement, in the academic unions and in the Labour Party. I won't subject myself to it any longer ... I'm done. And I think most other Jews are done too' he wrote in a resignation statement.¹⁷⁵

Shortly before she left the Labour Party, Luciana Berger MP pointed out that if the mounting pile of antisemitism complaints 'concerned incidents of racism against black or Asian members, or verbal abuse towards members of the LGBTQ community, or members with disabilities, there would rightly be a huge scandal and calls for heads to roll.'¹⁷⁶

3.3.5 A failure to educate members about contemporary antisemitism

As the crisis is now in its fourth year, the absence of a well-resourced national programme of political education about contemporary antisemitism is astonishing.

Initially, some progress was made. Training sessions were run for members by the JLM. One section of the training used actual antisemitic messages posted online (anonymised), to educate about contemporary antisemitism. John Cryer, chairman of the PLP, said the examples of antisemitism used in the training material were 'stomach-churning' and 'awful'. He said: 'I have no idea why people who hold these views would want to be a member of the Labour Party ... what I know is these people are quickly suspended and expelled.'

Unfortunately that was not true with at least one case study used in the JLM training. Councillor Andy Slack was reinstated to the party despite, according to the *JC*, sharing a Facebook post 'referring to the "Rothschilds" and showing an antisemitic caricature of a hook-nosed figure.... [The post] said: "The modern state of Israel was created by the Rothschilds, not God, and what they are doing to the Palestinian people now is EXACTLY what they intend for the whole world". The post also included a photo, supposedly of a Palestinian father weeping over his dead infant, with the words "Today it's

a Palestinian child, soon it will be your child.” It also showed a depiction of a bearded, hooked-nose figure dressed in an army uniform, in front of a flag bearing a Magen David and the United Nations symbol positioned in the cross-hairs of a gun-sight. The figure’s hands are covered in blood.’

The JLM training used this as an example of contemporary antisemitism. Initially, the party said only that ‘Councillor Slack has apologised and he has been reminded of his responsibilities’. After an outcry he was suspended for a short period, but was soon reinstated. He remains a Labour Councillor.¹⁷⁷

JLM offered their training to the NEC, but the offer was not taken up.

Worse was to follow. In August 2018, *The Jewish News* reported that ‘The JLM has pulled out of an antisemitism training session planned for the national conference next month, accusing the party of trying to “censor” material. The group criticised left-wing factions of Labour, who had allegedly tried to alter the contents of a training session. Party officials were accused of acting “in a manner to deliberately undermine” the efforts of JLM.’ The report stated that ‘the JLM had planned to discuss ways in which party members had crossed the line between anti-Israel rhetoric and antisemitism.’¹⁷⁸

And in March 2019, the nadir. The JC reported that ‘Labour has committed to a university course on antisemitism, ending a three-year association with the Jewish Labour Movement for giving training on antisemitism to branches across the country.’

John McDonnell had admitted that there was a need to ‘ensure that everybody now is educated around the issues of antisemitism in a way maybe we haven’t been good enough in the past.’

The JC talked to a JLM source who said ‘For the Labour Party to institute training without the consultation of their Jewish affiliate at this point is an astonishing level of arrogance.’ The new course has been developed with Professor David Feldman, Director of the Pears Institute for the study of Antisemitism. The JC noted that ‘Professor Feldman was vice-chairman on Baroness Chakrabarti’s report into Labour antisemitism, which was widely criticised as a “whitewash”, with critics saying it failed to define contemporary antisemitism or give any indication of how to spot it.’¹⁷⁹

*

We have seen that the Labour Party’s ability to fulfil its safeguarding responsibilities has been questioned; that its processes for dealing with cases

of antisemitism have been questioned; that the efficiency and integrity of these processes are suspect, and their freedom from interference from the Leader's Office in doubt. Its educational programmes, as far as they exist, have run into controversy again, and it is unclear if, after having finally adopted the IHRA Definition of antisemitism, the party actually uses it in practice. Underlying all these failures – making them not just possible but inevitable – is the failure discussed in Part Four, the failure to tackle a culture of antisemitism denial and victim-blaming that can be found among many party members, from the top to the bottom of the party.

Part 4. Labour has failed to tackle the culture of antisemitism denial and victim-blaming

‘In March 2018, a YouGov poll showed 77 per cent of Labour members believed the charges of antisemitism to be deliberately exaggerated to undermine the leader or stop criticism of Israel and 19 per cent said it was a serious issue.’ – ITV News, 31 March 2018.¹⁸⁰

‘It is the same old story, heard at Labour’s NEC just as it is found in Labour-supporting Facebook groups every day: talk of antisemitism is a smear, people on the Left cannot be antisemitic, and when Jews complain about Labour antisemitism it just proves they are Tories, Zionists or Trump supporters. Throughout all of this, while Jewish members of the NEC reacted with anger and distress, Jeremy Corbyn sat silent and passive.’ – Dave Rich, Community Security Trust, 18 July, 2018.¹⁸¹

‘What has happened is that there has been a major campaign of misusing antisemitism ... These allegations have been made up in order to discredit the leadership.’ – Glyn Secker, secretary of pro-Corbyn group ‘Jewish Voice For Labour’ speaking at Dulwich and West Norwood Labour branch on 28 February 2019, opposing a motion that acknowledged Luciana Berger resigned from the Labour Party, in part, because of antisemitism she had received as a Jewish MP.¹⁸²

‘I had a conversation last week with a Jewish woman from a family of Holocaust survivors, and people murdered by the Nazis. She has been a Labour party member for nearly 40 years. “It feels like being in an abusive relationship,” she said. A year ago she made an official complaint to the party about what she has experienced, but aside from an acknowledgment, she has heard nothing. During debates in her constituency general committee about issues of antisemitism, she has been jeered – by as many as 30 people – for trying to point out the gravity of the issue. At one party event about hate speech, she was prevented from speaking. Some of her supposed comrades have said that claims of antisemitism have been invented to undermine Jeremy Corbyn; she knows of at least one suggestion that such accusations are the work of

Israel.’ – John Harris, writing in *The Guardian*, 4 March 2019.¹⁸³

‘Due process? It’s what I call a Jew process.’ (Laughs, applause) – Jo Bird, a Wirral Labour Councillor, and a member of ‘Jewish Voice for Labour’, speaking at a meeting alongside Chris Williamson MP, March 2019.¹⁸⁴

Far too many Labour Party members assert *without any evidence whatsoever* that claims of antisemitism are a ‘plot’, a ‘coup’, a ‘smear’, a Zionist fabrication, a ‘contrived’ i.e. politicised and manipulated thing, a club wielded instrumentally, with malice aforethought, by bullying Jews / Zionists / ‘Blairites’ for Jewish / Zionist / ‘Blairite’ ends. These members are in denial.

In Part Four of this report I will examine this culture of antisemitism denial and victim-blaming which I believe *underpins all the other failures of the Labour Party*. I suggest the denial takes five forms:

- ‘it’s all a smear’
- ‘whataboutery’
- ‘a few bad apples’
- ‘No intent’, i.e. an insistence on the obvious presence of a personal subjective anti-Jewish intent before a statement or action qualifies as antisemitism
- The problem with Jeremy Corbyn

As before, I have deliberately chosen to cite a large number of examples of antisemitism denial and victim-blaming from the very top of the party to the base, to show how ingrained the culture is.

4.1 Antisemitism denial (Type 1): ‘It’s all a smear!’

The crudest form of antisemitism denial dismisses the antisemitism crisis as a smear concocted by ‘Zionists’ or ‘the Right’ to ward off legitimate criticism of Israel or to ‘get Jeremy’. As such, *it is itself* a component of antisemitic anti-Zionism. This form of antisemitism denial can be heard throughout the party.

4.1.1 Illustrative cases of antisemitism denial (Type 1) in the Labour Party

Example 78: Unite trade union General Secretary, **Len McCluskey**, who is one of the two or three most powerful voices in the Labour Party, told the BBC in

2016, “This is nothing more than a cynical attempt to manipulate antisemitism for political aims because this is all about constantly challenging Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership. The idea that there is an antisemitic crisis within the Labour Party is absolutely offensive but it is being used in order to challenge Jeremy Corbyn. Once the mood music of antisemitism dies down, then next week and the week after there will be another subject.”¹⁸⁵

Three years later, in February 2019, McCluskey was asked by the BBC to respond to a group of Labour MPs leaving the party, including Jewish MPs, each citing the party’s failure to tackle antisemitism as one of the reasons they were resigning. Seeming to smirk, he said, ‘I think the whole thing is contrived.’¹⁸⁶

Example 79: Labour Party filmmaker and leading Corbyn supporter **Ken Loach** said ‘It’s funny these stories suddenly appeared when Jeremy Corbyn became leader, isn’t it? ... the aim is to destabilise Jeremy’s leadership, this is what it is about.’ Asked to condemn those who questioned whether or not the Holocaust happened, Loach would not, saying only ‘all of history is there for us to discuss.’¹⁸⁷

Example 80: Andrew Murray, a senior advisor to both party leader Jeremy Corbyn and Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey, told a rally in 2016, ‘Let’s be clear, some people on the right-wing of the Labour Party are simply using this issue as the latest stick to beat Jeremy Corbyn with ... [it is a] disgraceful smear campaign.’¹⁸⁸ Murray joined the Labour Party towards the end of 2016, after 40 years in the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), specifically its hardline or ‘tankie’ wing, and then the Communist Party of Britain. In 1999 Murray praised Stalin for creating ‘a socialist system embracing a third of the world’.¹⁸⁹

Example 81: The pro-Corbyn Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL) chair, **Jenny Manson**, said in December 2017 ‘it has been the JLM and its supporters allied with Progress [a pressure group in the party] who have alienated numbers of former Labour voters by stirring up an unfounded panic about the party having “a problem with Jews.”’ Speaking to BBC Newsnight in March 2019 she said that the claim of antisemitism was being used to mount ‘a coup’ against Jeremy Corbyn. She contrasted the ‘real antisemitism’ JVL members knew all about to the ‘misuse of antisemitism’ by those mounting the ‘coup’.¹⁹⁰

This report is pockmarked with examples of members of the ‘Jewish Voice

for Labour’ group, formed in 2016 to support Jeremy Corbyn, minimising antisemitism, engaging in antisemitism denial and victim-blaming and even spreading antisemitic discourse about the Labour Party practicing ‘Jew process’ not due process.¹⁹¹

Example 82: Former Mayor of London **Ken Livingstone** blamed ‘embittered Blairite MPs’ for the antisemitism row.¹⁹²

Example 83: **Diane Abbot**, Shadow Cabinet Member and leading Corbyn ally, told the BBC on 1st May 2016 that ‘It’s a smear to say that Labour has a problem with antisemitism.’¹⁹³

Example 84: **Tony Greenstein**, now expelled from the Labour Party, said ‘The false antisemitism narrative is the ONLY weapon the Zionists have ... like a multi headed hydra – however many heads of the snake you cut off they keep on growing back.’ (The image of the Jews as a multi-headed hydra has historically been classically antisemitic. It is found today in antisemitism that comes dressed up as anti-Zionism, for example in the cartoons of Latuff.)¹⁹⁴

Example 85: A **Momentum activist** alleged that ‘People are leaving Israel in large numbers. Antisemitism is necessary, either real or manufactured, in order to persuade Jews they are safer in Israel and so to move there.’¹⁹⁵

Example 86: A **Momentum activist** claimed there were people in the Labour Party ‘whose allegiances lie with a foreign government’.¹⁹⁶

Example 87: A **Momentum activist** said Labour should not go in for the ‘appeasement’ of the Jewish community.¹⁹⁷

Example 88: A **Momentum activist** asked the rhetorical question ‘is it really antisemitic to suggest... there is a conspiracy involving JLM [Jewish Labour Movement], CAA [the Campaign Against Antisemitism] and some [pro-Israel] *hasbara* agencies to discredit Corbyn and the left?’ (Barry Rawlings, the leader of Barnet Labour Group, responded that this was ‘antisemitic ranting’, adding ‘I’ve heard a lot of good words but I’ve not seen much action from the party leadership. It’s a shame that Jeremy seems to have this blind spot over antisemitism.’¹⁹⁸

Example 89: Labour Councillor **Mike Pevitt** wrote ‘Labour get lead in polls

and Tories instruct their Jewish members to write in.^{'199} He was responding to 68 Rabbis writing an open letter to Jeremy Corbyn about his failure to tackle antisemitism in Labour.²⁰⁰

Example 90: JVL membership secretary **Mike Cushman** suggested that Labour had become 'a pawn of Zionist organizations that place loyalty to Israel's interests above advancing the Labour Party'.²⁰¹

Example 91: Labour Councillor **Dave Oldfield** from North Lincolnshire tweeted that the Labour antisemitism scandal 'must be a MI5 Tory government plot to cause havoc in our party' because he has 'never come across it anywhere'. He then shares a post saying he will no longer be reading anything about antisemitism because it is a 'politically motivated attack by the political establishment'.²⁰²

Example 92: Labour Party member, JVL member and blogger **Jay Blackwood** dismissed 'the Big Lie', 'the never-ending mummings play called "Labour Party antisemitism"' as 'a farce' run by 'an Israel lobby'. He called instead for a UK foreign policy that isn't 'in hock to the US and its regional proxy – the settler-colonialist, *racist* Israeli state'.²⁰³

Example 93: **Barnet Momentum activists** claimed security outside synagogues and other Jewish buildings was unnecessary and a tactic to 'generate an atmosphere of insecurity' because 'Zionists' want to 'exploit and generate the fear of antisemitism'.^{'204}

Example 94: **Jonathan Rosenhead** of JVL implied the Israel secret service, Mossad, could be orchestrating the antisemitic social media posts that had been attributed to supporters of Jeremy Corbyn. 'We don't know if they are members of the Labour Party. We don't even know if they are supporters of Jeremy Corbyn. If I was the Israeli government, I would be running all sorts of false flag operations getting people to post – and they have hordes of them in Israel doing this sort of stuff on the internet – saying things which would then discredit Jeremy Corbyn'.²⁰⁵

Example 95: **Richard House**, a pro-Corbyn activist, in a letter to *The Guardian* argued that, 'This orchestrated assault on Corbyn has everything to do with destroying him; and they've chosen their *cause celebre* very carefully – which they'll stoke and keep running until (they calculate) Jeremy eventually falls on his sword, exhausted'.²⁰⁶

Example 96: Pete Willsman, the long-standing Secretary of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) and a member of Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC), was recorded at an NEC meeting saying that accusations of antisemitism in Labour came from Jewish 'Trump fanatics making up duff information'. He then attacked the 68 Rabbis who had written to the party in protest at Labour antisemitism, saying 'We should ask these ... rabbis: where is your evidence?' Later in the recording, Willsman asked members of the NEC to raise their hands if they had witnessed antisemitism in the party. When some raised their hands, he replied: 'I'm amazed. I've certainly never seen any.' Only when the audio recording of his remarks was widely shared and a media storm broke did the party act. Willsman apologised and was told to attend training (it is unclear if he ever did so).²⁰⁷

Leading Corbyn supporters then defended Williamson's comments. For example:

Example 97: Fire Brigades Union leader Matt Wrack said Pete Willsman had nothing to apologise for. He disparaged Willsman's critics: 'It is as if they have never gone to a political meeting before and heard someone rant about a subject'.²⁰⁸

Example 98: Christine Shawcroft wrote in defence of Willsman on her Facebook page asking all Labour Party members to re-elect him to the NEC. Shawcroft had resigned a few months earlier as head of Labour's disputes panel and from the NEC over her mishandling of the case of a party member, Alan Bull, who had posted an article on Facebook claiming the Holocaust was a hoax.²⁰⁹

Example 99: In February 2019, a film emerged of Labour MP and vocal Corbyn supporter Chris Williamson addressing a Momentum meeting in Sheffield about antisemitism. He told the audience (to loud applause) 'We've given too much ground. We've been too apologetic.'

Initially, the Labour Party did not suspend Williamson.²¹⁰ Indeed, after the story broke, the journalist Michael Crick claimed on Twitter to have witnessed Williamson, on his way to the Leader's Office, 'bumped into the Labour Party Chairman Ian Lavery in Portcullis House, and Lavery gave Williamson a big hug.'²¹¹ Louise Ellman MP described Labour's initial decision to issue Williamson with only a notice of investigation as 'meaningless' and a 'failure of

leadership yet again.²¹² But in a new and positive development, after pressure from senior Labour MPs including Deputy Leader Tom Watson, Williamson was suspended later that day.

Parts of the Corbyn base in the Labour Party reacted furiously, launching a 'Stand With Chris' campaign and passing resolutions calling for his immediate reinstatement.²¹³ *The Jewish Chronicle (JC)* reported that Darren Williams, a member of Labour's ruling body, the NEC, 'sent a message to thousands of members of the pro-Corbyn Momentum group attacking the party's decision.'

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Williamson has a history of making similar or worse statements.

- Williamson has said that claims Labour had a problem with anti-Jewish racism within its ranks were a 'dirty lowdown trick' and were being used for 'political ends.' He dismissed the claims of antisemitism in Labour as 'proxy wars and bullshit, smears and lies and dirty tricks.'²¹⁵
- Williamson, a leading Corbyn supporter in Parliament, received loud applause when he defended Willsman at a packed Momentum meeting in Liverpool, telling told his audience to be 'brave' in the face of 'sinister' action taken against 'activists in the Labour Party.' In response to those comments, JLM Chair Ivor Caplin, a former Labour Minister at the Ministry of Defence, wrote to Labour Chief Whip Nick Brown to complain: 'It is clear that Mr Williamson believes ... that there is no antisemitism in our party, and that it's all a smear, which in itself draws upon antisemitic tropes.' JLM received no reply and no action was taken.²¹⁶
- Williamson was recorded at a meeting saying 'certain dark forces' are using their 'power' and 'contacts in the media' to undermine Jeremy Corbyn. Dave Rich of the CST called this 'dog-whistle conspiracy talk.' An audio of the meeting also revealed that Jo Bird, a Labour Councillor in Wirral and member of Jewish Voice for Labour, drew laughs and applause when she said of the Labour Party's due process, 'It's what I call Jew process.'²¹⁷
- Williamson had to apologise after giving his support to the musician Gilad Atzmon, who is well-known as an antisemite.²¹⁸
- Williamson told Sky's Kate McCann in February 2019 that viewers should consult the articles of Asa Winstanley of the website 'Electronic Intifada' which, he suggested, showed that supposed cases of Labour Party online antisemitism may have been created by right-wingers pretending to be

party members. Winstanley has himself now been suspended from the Labour Party.²¹⁹

- Williamson was formally warned for booking a room in Parliament to show a film, ‘Witchhunt’ defending Jackie Walker, who had been suspended from the Labour Party.²²⁰
- Williamson agreed to speak at a meeting of the group Labour Against the Witch Hunt alongside its leader Tony Greenstein. Greenstein has been expelled from the Labour Party for antisemitism.²²¹

Some Labour Party members have long suspected that Williamson is a licensed outrider for the Leader’s Office. Perhaps because Jeremy Corbyn has defended Williamson in the past against accusations of antisemitism, saying ‘Chris Williamson is a very good, very effective Labour MP. He’s a very strong anti-racist campaigner. He is not antisemitic in any way.’²²²

By contrast, the Board of Deputies of British Jews has asked in anger, ‘How much longer will Williamson get away with trolling the Jewish community?’²²³ Labour MP Lilian Greenwood has said Williamson’s behaviour ‘disgusts me and brings shame’ on the party.²²⁴ The JLM has repeatedly demanded Williamson be suspended by Labour, but revealed it has ‘yet to receive a reply from the Opposition Chief Whip [Nick Brown] from when we wrote to him in August [2018] about Chris Williamson and his Jew baiting.’²²⁵ The JLM has complained ‘Chris Williamson has been baiting Jews in the party for too long unchecked.’²²⁶ The anti-racism charity Hope Not Hate has pleaded with the Labour Party to expel Williamson.²²⁷

Example 100: In 2019, after subsequently being *re-elected* as a member of the NEC, Pete Willsman doubled down on his denialism, asking his ‘empty-headed critics’ to provide evidence of claimed antisemitism in the party.²²⁸ The Labour Party took no action.

Later in 2019, according to leaked emails received by the JC, Willsman threatened to ‘do in’ Momentum leader Jon Lansman. Leaked emails revealed that, according to Lansman, Willsman ‘waited two hours outside a room in which I was engaging in a telephone conference to threaten me when I emerged, “I am going to do you in”’. Lansman says these were Mr Willsman’s ‘precise words’.²²⁹ It should be pointed out that the NEC on which both Mr Willsman and Mr Lansman sit is the Labour Party’s sovereign decision-making body.

Example 101: Former Labour MP **Jim Sheridan** was suspended for a post saying he'd lost 'respect and empathy for the Jewish community' due to 'what they and their Blairite plotters are doing to my party'.²³⁰ He was reinstated by the Labour Party. He promptly attacked his accusers as 'misguided'.²³¹

Example 102: In January 2019 the **Lewisham Deptford CLP** passed a resolution alleging 'the Israeli Government resources an international campaign to conflate criticism of itself with antisemitism'.²³²

Example 103: **Jonathan Rosenhead** of Jewish Voice for Labour appeared on Press TV (alongside Stephen Sizer, an Anglican vicar ordered off social media by the Church after he posted an article on Facebook claiming 'Jews and international Zionists' were behind the 9/11 attacks) to blame Jewish institutions for whipping up fears about antisemitism: 'Many Jews are fearful and feel that the Labour Party is infected with antisemitism. That's the result of the campaign by the Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council.' He also claimed that 'Prevent is supposed to be about terrorism but it's actually focussed on Palestine'.²³³

Example 104: Professor **David Miller**, a Labour Party member and an academic at Bristol University, has argued 'what we've seen in this country in the last two years which is the attack in particular on the Corbyn leadership of the Labour Party, and the weapon of choice has been antisemitism...it's also meant that Israel's attempts to drive a wedge into the Corbyn movement have been partially successful.' He also claimed that 'It's not Jewish students who feel unsafe [on campus], it's specific Jewish students who are part of a particular political tendency who are saying that they feel unsafe'.²³⁴

Example 105: In March 2019 **Steve Lapsley**, a member of the Labour Party and its 'soft-left' ginger group Open Labour, posted on Facebook about his experience at a branch meeting in Nottingham. 'A member began a long, rambling speech by stating that allegations of antisemitism were a huge smear and that she "refused to accept any more". She went on to defend clear incidents of antisemitism, and said the party needs to stand up to "these people". I thank [Name provided in original post] for his reasoned attempt at intervention, but in the end I took the decision to leave the room. I am not obliged to sit and listen to my own and many other friends experiences being dismissed in such a terrible fashion'.²³⁵

Denial on the non-Labour Left

Why do goings-on in the wider non-Labour left matter for the Labour Party? Because since the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader, the Labour Party has been transformed: it now has a much more left-wing set of economic policies – welcomed by many, including the author – and a new, mass and left-wing membership, including the author who rejoined after the Blair years. Many new members have had formative experiences in the far-Left or in social movements led politically by the far-Left or non-Labour Left, including Stop the War and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Some of Jeremy Corbyn’s most influential advisors have spent their political lives in the hard-line factions of the Communist Party and its successors.

In consequence, the border between the Left outside and the Left inside the Labour Party has become porous: *people and ideas flow relatively freely*. The influence of the internet and social media has also broken down the dividing lines.

It is now more accurate to speak of the existence of a large radical left-wing *network* in Britain, with some hubs inside and some hubs outside the Labour Party. For these reasons, the *near-universal* antisemitism denial and victim blaming found *outside* the party, on the far left, is increasingly influential on the party itself.

It is for those reason that I have decided to include some illustrative examples of denialism and victim blaming on the non-Labour Left *which it is reasonable to think have influenced Labour Party members*.

Example 106: The Morning Star. The communist *Morning Star* daily newspaper is connected to the core leadership team around Jeremy Corbyn and the major trade unions that back him. Indeed, Corbyn was himself a regular *Morning Star* columnist before becoming Labour Leader. A *Morning Star* editorial of 27 March 2018 attacked the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the JLC for being ‘more concerned about a loss of political support for the Israeli government than they are about racism’. The newspaper demanded, ‘The Left must unite against cynical smears aimed at undermining Labour’ and it attacked ‘the self-proclaimed “leaders of British Jewry” attempting to disinter bogus accusations that Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn is somehow soft on antisemitism.’²³⁶

Jeremy Corbyn, despite his previous close relationship to the *Morning Star* has, as far as I have been able to tell, never once publicly criticised the paper for

its constant drum-beat of antisemitism denial and victim-reversal.

Example 107: Open Democracy is a well-resourced political website widely read on the Labour and non-Labour left. In August 2018 its analyst Paul Rogers wrote ‘The [Israeli] strategic-affairs ministry is likely to be fulfilling its duty to the state by helping any opposition to Corbyn. It may be many months or even years before the extent of such help becomes clear.’²³⁷ In addition, Jamie Stern-Weiner wrote an astonishing article at Open Democracy titled ‘Jeremy Corbyn hasn’t got an “antisemitism problem”. His opponents do’, in which claims of antisemitism were dismissed as ‘baseless’. He argued that ‘manufactured hysteria is being instrumentalised to discredit and undermine movements for justice in the UK and abroad’.²³⁸

Example 108: The Scottish Left Review wrote that: ‘What we are witnessing is a classic smear campaign’... false accusations of antisemitism are being used to attack the left’ asserted the journal. It went on: ‘Zionism seeks legitimacy by branding its political opponents as antisemitic, and accusations of antisemitism have become the weapon of choice for those looking to wound the Labour leadership ... the Blairites have developed a new McCarthyism with which to purge socialists from their party ... if they have criticised Israel.’²³⁹

Example 109: Radical website **Counterfire** attacked ‘the antisemitism smear campaign waged ... by the right-wing of the PLP, the Tories, and the mainstream media.’ The organisation is a split from the SWP and is led by Lindsey German, John Rees and Chris Nineham, all close associates of Jeremy Corbyn at Stop the War. Nineham has suggested that ‘This is a defining moment for the Corbyn project. Attacks over antisemitism and Palestine must be firmly opposed or they will escalate to chilling effect.’²⁴⁰

Example 110: The long-running journal **New Left Review** posted Alan Badiou’s opinion that ‘there could be no such thing as a far-Left antisemitism – an absurd oxymoron.’ Badiou, a former Maoist and a supporter of the Chinese ‘Cultural Revolution’ and Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge, is one of the most influential left-wing philosophers alive today. He went on to threaten the person who made the charge of left antisemitism with violence: ‘I’ll simply give Professor Bensussan a smack in the face if I ever come across him.’²⁴¹

Example 111: On the **Electronic Intifada** website, Asa Winstanley wrote in

2017 that ‘the smear tactic is the go-to response of Israel and its lobby’.²⁴² Corbyn ally Chris Williamson MP has recommended Winstanley’s articles.²⁴³

Example 112: The Evolve Politics website wrote in 2018: ‘The Jewish Voice Twitter Account is absolutely DESTROYING the media’s latest Corbyn antisemitism smear.’²⁴⁴ Helen Lewis, a journalist and commentator at the left-wing political magazine *New Statesman* has written about the role played by pro-Corbyn websites such as **The Canary, Skwawkbox and Evolve Politics**.

‘It is necessary to understand this ecosystem to understand why Labour’s antisemitism row is so prolonged, so toxic and so intractable. Put simply, for sites such as these, the default assumption is that criticism of Corbyn is motivated by a “centrist” or “Blairite” agenda – or perhaps even by *actual* right-wingers. In another case, which I tweeted about, *The Canary* claimed that “36 international Jewish groups” had backed Corbyn over the IHRA definition of antisemitism. A closer look at the groups revealed them to be tiny, overlapping fringe organisations, often containing the same left-wing activists whose comments were under investigation.’²⁴⁵

Example 113: The Socialist Party. Peter Taafe, General Secretary of The Socialist Party (formerly The Militant Tendency), wrote: ‘This is all part of a calculated attempt to conflate opposition to the policies of the Israeli government and the right-wing reactionary Benjamin Netanyahu with antisemitism.’²⁴⁶ Since Corbyn’s election as Labour Party Leader, many former Militant and Socialist Party members have rejoined the Labour Party, not least in Liverpool. Former deputy council leader and Militant member Derek Hatton was welcomed back into the party in 2019, only to be suspended two days later when he was discovered to have tweeted ‘Jewish people with any sense of humanity need to start speaking out publicly against the ruthless murdering being carried out by Israel!’ This could be deemed antisemitic under the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism adopted in 2018, though *not* because of what it says about Israel, but rather because, depending on context, the IHRA Definition says ‘holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel’ can be antisemitic.

Example 114: Michael Kalmanovitz, an activist with the **International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network** (IJAZN) told a fringe meeting at the Labour Party conference 2017, ‘The accusations of antisemitism have been made to

undermine the Palestinian movement and to kick Jeremy and the Left. It is a right-wing accusation ... What is the [JLM] and Labour Friends of Israel doing in our party? It is time we campaigned to kick them out!’²⁴⁷

The Guardian reported that the Labour Party Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell MP had backed a Commons motion welcoming the creation of the IJAZN in 2008. The *Guardian* report continued: ‘The IJAZN’s charter suggested the Holocaust was being used by Israel to give it licence to “perpetrate other atrocities” against the Palestinians and claimed there was a history of Zionist collusion with “repressive and violent” regimes including Nazi Germany. *The wording of McDonnell’s motion specifically welcomed the charter, which critics said breached the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism twice, while also suggesting the Nazi holocaust was unexceptional.*’²⁴⁸

Example 115: Left activist and Stop the War stalwart **Yvonne Ridley** wrote in Middle East Monitor (MEMO): ‘Those who back the Zionist State of Israel usually have very deep pockets to finance and fuel campaigns to ensure that any discussions or debates about Palestine are not only closed down but those behind them are also silenced and punished.’²⁴⁹ MEMO is cited in many online threads involving Labour party members.

Example 116: **Piers Corbyn** responded to the complaint of Louise Ellman MP that the Labour Party was making only slow progress on dealing with antisemitism by tweeting ‘ABSURD! JC+ All #Corbyns are committed #AntiNazi. #Zionists cant cope with anyone supporting rights for #Palestine’. The tweet carried the implication that a Jewish MP was only pretending to be concerned about antisemitism but was really a stooge for Israel. When asked for a response, Jeremy Corbyn told the Sun Newspaper, ‘No my brother isn’t wrong. My brother has his point of view, I have mine. We actually fundamentally agree.’²⁵⁰ One survey concluded that ‘Piers Corbyn uses social media to spread conspiracy theories that contain antisemitic themes, tropes and rhetoric.’²⁵¹ According to the Sunday Times, Piers Corbyn’s attempt to rejoin Labour in January 2017 was blocked.

Example 117: **George Galloway**, the former Respect MP (who had earlier been expelled from being a Labour MP for calling for the deaths of British troops in Iraq), visited the Liverpool Wavertree Constituency days after Jewish MP

Luciana Berger resigned. He said 'It's really a black op that's going on here... it's pure Goebellian propaganda ... I don't believe she's leaving because of antisemitism.' Indefatigable, Galloway is now seeking to be readmitted to the Labour Party.²⁵² Andrew Murray, Corbyn's close advisor, called for Galloway to be readmitted to the party in December 2017.²⁵³

From denial to blaming the victim

Those who say 'it's all a smear' implicitly identify a smearer: the person making the charge, who is said to be 'crying wolf'. Denial is a psychological defence mechanism we employ to protect our ego when it is threatened. When friends tell us we are at fault, we often seek to protect ourselves, not only by denying the fault but also by going on the attack, making up a story that *shifts the blame* onto someone or something else. The victim-blaming story heard most often in the Labour Party is '*they*' are making it all up to stop criticism of Israel. This story makes the accusation of antisemitism much easier to dismiss. It also carries a message to the world: hey, blame *them* not *me*.

The academic David Hirsh has coined the term 'the Livingstone Formulation' to sum up this attitude, after the former Mayor of London Ken Livingstone who said 'The accusation of antisemitism has been used against *anyone* who is critical of the policies of the Israeli government.'²⁵⁴ (*Any person, any criticism, note.*)

Hirsh says the Livingstone Formulation is first of all, flatly untrue. He has pointed out that people like himself, myself, and countless others who are complaining about antisemitism today have a record stretching back decades of public criticism of many aspects of Israeli policy, as well as standing for the two state solution. The Livingstone Formulation involves 'refusing to engage with an accusation of antisemitism', instead making 'an indignant counter-accusation, that the accuser is taking part in a conspiracy to silence political speech.' The Livingstone Formulation also functions, he argues, 'to de-legitimise scholarly or political analysis of antisemitism by treating analysis of antisemitism as an indicator of anti-progressive discourse.'

Hirsh lists some of the key 'moves' often taken by those who use the Livingstone Formulation:

- 'refuse to discuss the *content* of the accusation by shifting focus instead onto the hidden *motive* for the allegation';

- ‘make a counter-accusation that the accuser is not mistaken, has not made an error of judgment, but is getting it wrong on purpose’; ‘collapse everything, some of which may be demonisation of Israel or antisemitism, into a legitimate category like “criticism”’;
- ‘allege that those who raise the issue of antisemitism are doing so as part of a common secret plan to silence such “criticism”’.²⁵⁵

‘The Livingstone Formulation’ has survived the removal of the man himself from the Labour Party’s ranks. For example:

Example 118: Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL) vice-chair **Leah Levane** criticised those who ‘make that accusation [of antisemitism] every time you criticise the despicable behavior of the state of Israel toward the Palestinian people.’ *Every time, note.*²⁵⁶

Example 119: **Jeremy Corbyn** wrote a letter to the Church of England in support of Rev. Stephen Sizer who had been accused of antisemitism. Corbyn wrote that Sizer was ‘under attack by a pro-Israeli smear campaign.’²⁵⁷ (Sizer was banned by the Church of England from social media for a period after he promoted an antisemitic article on his Facebook feed entitled: ‘9/11: Israel did it’) ²⁵⁸

Example 120: **Naomi Wimbourne-Idrissi**, the co-founder of pro-Corbyn group Jewish Voice For Labour, speaking on LBC radio, attacked Luciana Berger, claiming the Jewish MP had raised antisemitism ‘at the apposite moment to suit her anti-Corbyn agenda’. She also said ‘All these things, every single one of these allegations, I can pick apart.’²⁵⁹

Example 121: **Helen Dickson**, the Equalities Officer of Liverpool Wavertree CLP, signed a letter dismissing ‘The current bogus “antisemitism” attack by the Israel Lobby.’²⁶⁰

Example 122: On 1 March 2019 **Hackney North Constituency Labour Party** passed a motion calling on the NEC to ‘firmly reject’ that Labour is ‘in any way’ institutionally antisemitic. The motion attacked the claim as a ‘slander’ made by ‘the media and the right-wing of the PLP’. The local MP Diane Abbot reportedly did not intervene in the debate. A Labour Party member tweeted that ‘Jewish members bravely spoke up and their lived experience was ignored

and denied. I feel ashamed and bereft that my political home of over a decade has sunk so low.’ The *JC* reported ‘Rabbi Avrohom Pinter, a local Charedi school headmaster and longtime Labour member, said he was “shocked” by Ms Abbott’s failure to intervene, adding that he “no longer feels welcome” at CLP meetings. He added: “The atmosphere is absolutely toxic these days.”’²⁶¹

Example 123: On 1 March **Sheffield Hallam CLP** passed a motion denouncing the ‘political campaign to weaponise antisemitism’ against the leader by the media and the PLP; it also expressed unqualified solidarity with suspended MP Chris Williamson, who the CLP claimed had been targeted because he had ‘stood up to the witch hunt’, demanding his immediate reinstatement.²⁶²

Victim-blaming on the non-Labour Party Left

Victim-blaming is found throughout the non-Labour Party left. For all the reasons I gave above, this is relevant to what happens in today’s Labour party. Especially since 2015, the influence of the non-Labour Left on the party – via the new mass membership, social media and the internet (and because of the hollowing out of the intellectual life of the party in the later Blair-Brown years) – is much more significant.

Example 124: Peter Taffe, General Secretary of The Socialist Party (formerly Militant) has blamed the crisis on ‘An incessant chorus involving the capitalist press, the Tories and their allies, together with the back-stabbing tendency within the predominantly right-wing Parliamentary Labour Party’ who have ‘led a scurrilous no-holds-barred campaign alleging widespread antisemitism in Labour’.²⁶³

Example 125: Richard Seymour, blogger and author of *Corbyn: The Strange Rebirth of Radical Politics*, dismissed the ‘insidious attack from the Right organised by the *Jewish Chronicle*, edited since 2008 by the Tony-Blair worshipping neoconservative Stephen Pollard.’

Seymour wrote on Facebook in 2015: ‘Jewish journalist reporting on Israel-Palestine, ‘F*ck him, they should cut his throat’. Kate Green MP pointed out to the Labour Party that “These kind of violent and deeply offensive remarks make a mockery of Jeremy’s “kinder, gentler politics.” Jeremy should be condemning his comments.’ As far as I know, Green was ignored. Certainly, in 2018, as in

previous years, Richard Seymour was invited by the organisers to address the Momentum festival, *A World Transformed*, at the Labour Party Conference.²⁶⁴

Example 126: Norman Finkelstein is an influential author who draws large audiences on UK campuses, and is influential with many Labour Party members. In 2015 he said ‘It’s long past time that these antisemitism mongers crawled back into their sewer.’ He has admitted in interview that he deliberately uses the Nazi analogy to bait and wound. In his books *Beyond Chutzpah: On the Misuse of Antisemitism and the Abuse of History*, and his controversial best-seller *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, Finkelstein argues there is a ‘Holocaust Industry’ which he characterises as a deliberate effort by Zionists and their allies to create an ‘ideological weapon to delegitimise criticism of Israel’ and to get money.²⁶⁵ For Finkelstein, the claim that there is now a ‘new antisemitism’ or an ‘antisemitic anti-Zionism’, is only ‘a variant of this Holocaust card.’²⁶⁶ Zionists, he claims, ‘cry wolf’ in order to shut critics up.²⁶⁷

Example 127: Tariq Ali, an influential intellectual and Corbyn supporter but not a Labour Party member, has argued that ‘The campaign against the supposed new “antisemitism” in Europe today is basically a cynical ploy on the part of the Israeli Government to seal off the Zionist state from any criticism of its regular and consistent brutality against the Palestinians.’²⁶⁸

Example 128: Bruce Kent, a former Catholic priest and leader of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), employed the *Livingstone Formulation* in a particularly crude form: ‘Anyone who speaks against Zionist policies is labelled antisemitic’. *Anyone*, note.²⁶⁹

Example 129: Tina McKay, Labour’s PPC for Colchester, apologised after suggesting claims of antisemitism in the Labour Party are part of a ‘plot’ against Jeremy Corbyn. She wrote ‘There have been individuals who have said that it has been used as a plot, there is evidence of what they said being true.’²⁷⁰

4.2 Antisemitism denial (Type 2): ‘Whataboutery’

The second form of antisemitism denial found in the Labour Party can be called ‘whataboutery’. ‘Whataboutery’ happens when someone responds to a claim of antisemitism in the party by saying ‘but what about anti-Muslim bigotry?’

(as opposed to saying, as they should, ‘antisemitism is terrible and so is anti-Muslim bigotry, let’s talk about both’) or ‘what about the Tories?’ or ‘what about the crisis in social care?’ Whataboutery works by *changing the subject*. For example:

4.2.1 Illustrative cases

Example 13: Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL): ‘there is massively more antisemitism on the right of politics than on the left.’²⁷¹

Example 131: Labour Party member, JVL member and blogger Jay Blackwood wrote ‘whatever the current fears within the Jewish community, the simple fact is that most Black and Ethnic Minority groups face far more onerous structural and day-to-day discrimination than we do.’²⁷²

Example 132: Diane Abbott has said ‘the idea that there is much more antisemitism in the Labour Party and none in any other party – that can’t be right.’ (No one said there was *none* in other parties, of course).²⁷³

Example 133: A group of Corbyn-supporting British Jews – including Stephen Marks, who currently sits in the NCC judging antisemitism complaints – wrote to the Guardian in April 2016 to say ‘As Jews, we are appalled that a serious issue is being used in this cynical and manipulative way, diverting attention from much more widespread examples of Islamophobia and xenophobia in the Conservative and other parties.’²⁷⁴

Example 134: In September 2018, @LabourBAME tweeted in response to the claim that the Labour Party was now institutionally antisemitic. ‘BAME Labour condemns the assertion that Labour is institutionally racist. Our party has a proud history fighting racism that continues today under @JeremyCorbyn and these remarks undermine our task of challenging the *real* rise in racism today.’²⁷⁵

4.3 Antisemitism denial (Type 3): ‘A few bad apples’

Denial can also take the form of *minimising the scale* of the problem by presenting it as only ‘a few bad apples’. Momentum Chair Jon Lansman said (albeit very late in the day, in February 2019) ‘I do think we do have a major problem and ... *we underestimate the scale of it*. I think it is a widespread problem. We have

a much larger number of people with hardcore antisemitic opinions.²⁷⁶

Underestimating the scale of the problem has hampered Labour's response ever since the prevalence of Labour Party antisemitism was erroneously described as some 'unhappy incidents' by Shami Chakrabarti and David Feldman in their 2016 report. Chakrabarti was awarded a peerage by Jeremy Corbyn very soon after the report was published. A Home Affairs Select Committee enquiry into antisemitism in the UK described the report as 'ultimately compromised'.²⁷⁷

There were only a few 'pockets' of antisemitism in the party, said Jeremy Corbyn in March 2018.²⁷⁸

Owen Jones, an opponent of left antisemitism, who has been attacked for his stance, nonetheless routinely underestimates the problem, describing it as a 'fringe' or 'small fringe', while also using the language of 'smear'.²⁷⁹

Labour's Shadow Trade Secretary Barry Gardiner asked in February 2019 'Is there a problem? Yes there is. How large is that problem in terms of numbers? It's tiny.'²⁸⁰

A Jewish Voice for Labour letter to *The Guardian* claimed antisemitism on the Left is 'relatively rare'.²⁸¹

4.4 Antisemitism denial (Type 4): 'No intent'

When the Labour Party was busy developing its own homemade definition of antisemitism in 2018 (before finally adopting the internationally recognised IHRA Definition) it wanted to include this clause: 'hostility to Israel could only be antisemitic if motivated by antisemitic intent.' The party wanted to see clear evidence of personal subjective antisemitic intent before accepting any discourse as antisemitic.

The anti-racist academic and campaigner David Hirsh, author of *Contemporary Left Antisemitism*, pointed out that this insertion of intent as a necessary condition for an action or discourse to qualify as antisemitism was 'a radical break from everything which is accepted in the scholarly study of racism and in antiracist practice'.²⁸²

Experts, Hirsh pointed out, do not think antisemitism (or any other form of racism for that matter) is reducible to an individual's thoughts, i.e. to their subjective beliefs and attitudes (about which knowledge is always uncertain at best). Rather, experts see racism 'working' by the way in which the structures,

processes, discourses (i.e. ways of talking and representing), practices, policies and cultures of an organisation *function* to ensure *outcomes* that leave a particular minority unequally treated, lacking an appropriate and professional service, discriminated against, worse off, victimised, threatened.

In other words, if someone says Israel or ‘the Zionists’ are controlling world media, finance and politics then, even though he or she does not personally, subjectively, hate all Jews *as Jews*, their *statement* is still antisemitic. They may have simply absorbed an idea or a way of talking unthinkingly from the left-wing networks and websites they move in. As the saying goes, some of their best friends may be Jews. Hell, *they might even be Jews themselves*.

But if they spread the discourse of ‘Israel controls ISIS’, or ‘Israel did 9/11’, or ‘Zionists run global finance’ or ‘Israelis are Nazis’, or say the Labour Party practices ‘Jew process’ not due process, as *a Jewish Voice for Labour member* did recently, then they are sharing and spreading an *antisemitic discourse* and that discourse will have antisemitic impacts regardless of what they *intended*. Discourse is the first step on a continuum to *anti-Jewish violence*.

That is why it was right for the Labour Party to accept the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Definition in full, with all its accompanying examples. That Definition tells us that particular examples of discourse may, *depending on context* (a clause not always noticed) be antisemitic, may work in antisemitic ways, and have antisemitic consequences, even though *the person* (about whom the IHRA Definition is not particularly interested) using that discourse may or may not have a subjective hatred of Jews *as Jews*. The intentions of persons and the consequences of their actions, the IHRA Definition helps us understand, are two quite different things.

4.5 Antisemitism denial (Type 5): The problem of Jeremy Corbyn, ‘the unluckiest anti-racist in history’

Finally, we need to talk about Jeremy Corbyn.

The left-leaning *Observer* newspaper expressed what is now a widespread suspicion, that ‘Labour’s leader does not understand the boundary between legitimate criticism of Israel and its supporters and antisemitism.’²⁸³

Jeremy Corbyn has a long track record of indulging or openly supporting those who practice antisemitic forms of anti-Zionism.

Corbyn’s defence for his record is that ‘In the past, in pursuit of justice for the

Palestinian people and peace in Israel/Palestine, I have on occasion appeared on platforms with people whose views I completely reject.’

This defence was *never credible*.

It is *impossible* to reconcile with Corbyn’s previous record. It is believed today by very few people outside his core support base, and in any case is itself a form of antisemitism denial because it tells us to think, for example, of an antisemitic hate-preacher as a praise-worthy leader. It is a major obstacle to the Labour Party tackling its culture of antisemitism denial and victim blaming.

An emerging consensus about Jeremy Corbyn was expressed with quite remarkable power and eloquence by Richard Horton when he resigned from the Labour party in March 2019. His ‘Dear Jeremy’ letter should be read in full, for it is a cry from a social democratic and Jewish heart. The letter begins and ends with these words:

‘As we have known each other for over a decade and as I have knocked on thousands of residents’ doors for you and with you in the various roles I had in Islington North CLP I thought I should write to you directly ... Antisemitism has been normalised in Labour and in my opinion your behaviour over a number of years has legitimised it ... my daughter asks me, “was Anne Frank brave?” And I always tell her that yes she was brave. I cannot ... teach my daughter about what Anne Frank endured, her bravery and her legacy if I remain a member of an institutionally antisemitic political party. I would be a hypocrite if I did.’²⁸⁴

As long as the Labour Party Leader does not offer the party and public a thorough-going *self-criticism*, as long as he instead claims that his past actions and statements are defensible, indeed the best kind of actions one can take, the best kind of statements one can make ‘for peace’, the party as a whole will be unable to meet the challenge and make the change when it comes to contemporary antisemitism that comes ‘dressed up’ as anti-Zionism.

Stephane Savery, a Labour council candidate and JLM member, has put it bluntly, but accurately: ‘*He is the issue, no question about it.*’²⁸⁵

For example, it is simply not credible for the Labour Party leader to argue that when he called Hezbollah and Hamas organisations ‘bringing about long term peace and social justice and political justice in the whole region’ he was making a contribution to peace.

Labour Party members, activists and politicians have pussyfooted around

this – myself included – for too long, hoping that mild criticism will better leave a space open for the leader to develop an auto-critique. There has been no such critique. In fact, what he said was profoundly worrying. Hezbollah is an aggressive Shia Islamist force which carries out terrorist attacks globally on Jews and whose leader has said if all the Jews would gather in one place it would be easier to kill them all. It is a fascistic goose-stepping ‘Party of God’, a proxy force for the Iranian regime, and was only very recently responsible for starving Syrians to death in besieged cities at the behest of the Mullahs of Iran. Hamas is an antisemitic terrorist group that responded to the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians with suicide bombing to destroy it, because it seeks not peace but the ending of Israel in the name of Islam, and wrote that goal into its founding Charter.

When Labour members watch their leader speak in this way, they can think, ‘well, anything goes’.²⁸⁶

When Jeremy Corbyn said that his brother Piers Corbyn was ‘not wrong’ after he attacked a Jewish MP as ‘absurd’ for criticising the party’s slow response to antisemitism, or for implying her criticism was only made because she was a ‘Zionist’ then, whatever he intends, he is licensing behaviour that should be unacceptable in the party. He said, when asked if his brother had been wrong to post the tweet, said “No my brother isn’t wrong. My brother has his point of view, I have mine. We actually fundamentally agree – we are a family that has been fighting racism from the day we were born.’ It is doubtful if the person who said that can also be the person to lead the charge against contemporary antisemitism in the party.²⁸⁷

Nor was it credible for the Labour Party Leader to say that when he cited, as an example of BBC ‘bias’, the BBC’s support for the principle that Israel has ‘a right to exist’ he was only promoting peace.²⁸⁸ The Labour Party defended Corbyn’s statement, saying ‘The Israeli government is well known to run an effective and highly professional media operation’. This press statement was astonishing. It was an example of Labour, whatever its intentions, normalising and mainstreaming antisemitic anti-Zionism in the UK. A more spectacular example of the party missing the point, and so confirming the existence of the blindspot, would be hard to make up. As a spokesperson for Labour Against Antisemitism said: ‘Questioning Israel’s right to exist, as Corbyn appears to do, could be defined as antisemitic under the IHRA definition, and many Jews would find such comments highly offensive. His comments also suggest he

believes that there is some kind of pro-Israeli agenda at the heart of the BBC – a bizarre suggestion that echoes historical and racially motivated fears of Jewish conspiracy.’

Nor is it credible to suggest that to promote peace it is necessary to call Hamas terrorists ‘the brothers’ and ‘friends’. And nor is it clear why, if Jeremy Corbyn really does ‘completely reject’ their views, he feels the need to call them ‘the brothers’ and ‘friends’ in the first place, or say it is his ‘honour and pleasure’ to host them, or praise them as a force for ‘peace and social justice in the region’.²⁸⁹

It is to stretch credulity beyond breaking point to claim that his friendly and solidaristic associations with Abou Jahjah, or Hatem Bazian, or Press TV, or the Just World Trust, or Paul Eisen, or Raed Salah (see below), or Stephen Sizer advanced peace or social justice.²⁹⁰

How can the Labour Party really tackle the new antisemitism – the kind that comes ‘dressed up’ as anti-Zionism, as the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm put it – when the party knows that in 2010, on *Holocaust Memorial Day*, Jeremy Corbyn organised a meeting in Parliament on the topic ‘The Misuse of the Holocaust for Political Purposes’ at which one speaker said ‘The world was absolutely wrong to think that Nazism was defeated in 1945. Nazism has won because it has finally managed to Nazify the consciousness of its own victims.’²⁹¹

When this event came to light in 2018, Olivia Marks-Woldman, Chief Executive of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust said, ‘This event was an appalling misuse of the Holocaust. It trivialised the suffering of millions of Jews by making inappropriate and offensive comparisons ... This event should never have taken place. Having chaired it, it is now incumbent on the Leader of the Opposition to recognise that it sought to misuse the Holocaust. He should make it clear, without delay, that he regrets chairing this appalling event.’²⁹²

For almost four years now, Labour Party members have been pulled in the direction of *justifying* Jeremy Corbyn’s record in order to defend their leader. But as they do so, the party slides into a space where contemporary antisemitism can be neither recognised nor tackled. Instead, as Horton’s resignation letter says, it is being *normalised* inside Labour.

For example, are Labour Party members to approve or disapprove when they hear of Jeremy Corbyn’s decision, on 27 January 2011, *UK Holocaust Memorial Day yet again*, to support a Parliamentary motion to rename the day Genocide

Memorial Day as ‘all lives have value’. What are they to make of the fact that Corbyn ignored the fact that the UK Holocaust Memorial Day *already* officially includes a commitment to remember *all* the victims of Nazi persecution as well as later genocides — in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur? How are they to respond to Karen Pollock, Chief Executive of the UK’s Holocaust Educational Trust, when she accuses Corbyn of ‘denial and distortion’? Or when she says ‘The Holocaust was a specific crime, with antisemitism at its core. Any attempt to remove that specificity is a form of denial and distortion.’ Are they to think Pollock right when she says ‘this Parliamentary motion and the campaign it supported appear to be politically motivated and attempts to undermine a national day of remembrance that involves communities and educators of all backgrounds.’?²⁹³ Or in the absence of a proper self-accounting by their leader, are they not more likely to react defensively and conclude that this Pollock must be some kind of Zionist, biased, hostile to Jeremy, to be pilloried?

The Labour Party merely issued an anodyne statement saying it was not currently party policy to change the name of Holocaust Memorial Day. But that was useless. It was an abdication of the party’s responsibility to educate the membership about contemporary antisemitism and create a climate in which Jews can feel welcome.

Straining to avoid embarrassing the party leader is one way the normalisation of the antisemitism that comes dressed up as anti-Zionism is happening inside Labour.

The problem is summed up by the case of Jeremy Corbyn and Raed Salah, an extremist, Islamist, and antisemitic hate preacher from Israel’s Arab minority. He gave a speech in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Wadi Joz in 2007 that peddled the medieval blood libel. Salah said, ‘We have never allowed ourselves to knead [the dough for] the bread that breaks the fast in the holy month of Ramadan with children’s blood. Whoever wants a more thorough explanation, let him ask what used to happen to some children in Europe, whose blood was mixed in with the dough of the holy bread’

The degree to which the Labour Party Leader does not currently ‘get’ antisemitic anti-Zionism was shown by Corbyn’s active promotion of Salah.

After Salah had been arrested, Jeremy Corbyn organised a press conference not just to defend his presence in the UK but *to praise him*: ‘He is far from a dangerous man’ said Corbyn. ‘He is a very honoured citizen, he represents his people extremely well, and his is a voice that must be heard.’ Corbyn even

added 'I look forward to giving you tea on the terrace [of the House of Commons] because you deserve it!'

Salah – as many pointed out to Jeremy Corbyn at the time – opposed not just the occupation of the West Bank but what he called the 'bacteria of all times' (the reader can have one guess who he meant). Salah did not criticise Benjamin Netanyahu, the right-wing Israeli Prime Minister. He attacked the demonic 'unique mover' who was behind 9/11 (again, one guess...). He did not call for the West to apply diplomatic pressure on Israel but rather attacked the entire West as a 'slave to Global Zionism' (which, by the way, is a chemically pure example of antisemitic anti-Zionism, the old Jewish conspiracy being barely covered by Salah's anti-Zionist fig leaf).²⁹⁴

Salah's statements were all one click away on the internet and Jeremy Corbyn was pointed to them. His defence now is that 'at no stage did he utter any antisemitic remarks to me.'²⁹⁵

That was a shameful obfuscation to justify his fulsome support for an openly antisemite hate-preacher. Try to imagine an anti-black racist being invited to have tea on the Commons Terrace with the leader of the Labour Party and then, when people object, pointing the leader to his recorded and publicly available racist statements, he responds 'well, he didn't say anything racist *to me*'.²⁹⁶ It is, literally, unimaginable.

Writing in 2015 for *OpenDemocracy*, the *Guardian* columnist Keith Kahn Harris asked why Corbyn was 'pally with tyrants'. He made the point that 'Although [Corbyn] has defended his contacts with Islamists, and others as a contribution to peace-making, he 'does not have the deep relationships across the spectrum [or] the even-handedness that this would entail.'

What struck Kahn-Harris most about Corbyn's record – and here we can recall our earlier discussion of the crude two-camp philosophy in which the leader was formed – was that Corbyn 'is constantly predisposed to be at least convivial towards a broad swathe of those who see themselves as opposed to "the west".' He went on: 'Much of what appears to be [Corbyn's] openness does indeed reflect engrained political pathologies.'²⁹⁷

Three years later, Helen Lewis, Deputy Editor of the left-wing *New Statesman*, made a similar observation. 'Early in Jeremy Corbyn's term as Labour leader, I remember watching clips of a phone-in he hosted for Press TV, Iran's official television channel. (These have now been deleted from YouTube.) In one, he listened politely as a caller described Israel as a 'disease' – not agreeing, but

not disagreeing either – and replied: ‘OK, thank you for your call’. Another caller described the BBC as ‘Zionist liars’, to equally little reaction.’

Lewis has argued that Jeremy Corbyn has ‘a lack of understanding about how prejudice and discrimination work’ when it comes to contemporary antisemitism. He is an anti-racist, she concluded, who ‘seems unable to recognise that he might have a blind spot, even when hundreds of members of a community try to tell him so.’²⁹⁸ Dave Rich of the CST has explained why the Jewish community is not convinced of the good faith of Jeremy Corbyn.

‘Corbyn wrote that: “In the 1970s some on the left mistakenly argued that “Zionism is racism”, but – in an almost Trump-esque whitewash – failed to acknowledge that he spent years campaigning for just that position. One group he sponsored and actively promoted in the 1980s, the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine, believed Zionism was “inherently racist” and pledged to eradicate it from the Labour party. He said people who spread “conspiracy theories blaming 9/11 on Israel ... have no place in the Labour party”, but ignored the fact that he has peddled similar conspiracy theories about “the hand of Israel” being behind jihadist terrorism in Egypt. He condemned those who indulge in Holocaust denial and “crude stereotypes about Jewish bankers”, but made no mention of his involvement with a group that supported French Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy in the 1990s, or his support for an antisemitic mural of – you guessed it – Jewish bankers, which he subsequently claimed not to have properly looked at.’²⁹⁹

Jeremy Corbyn’s continued deflection of one case after another by the defence of ‘I didn’t realise’ or ‘I didn’t look carefully’ or ‘I didn’t know’ or that ‘I was present but not involved’ has been called out by Dave Rich:

‘Jeremy Corbyn must be the unluckiest anti-racist in history. He repeatedly manages to get involved with organisations and people that promote antisemitism and Holocaust denial, apparently without ever noticing anything is amiss. It’s the same old excuse and it wore thin long ago.’³⁰⁰

Professor John Strawson on Jeremy Corbyn and Hamas: 'not a search for peace but a solidarity mission'

The British academic John Strawson is honorary Professor of Law at the University of East London, the author of *Partitioning Palestine: Legal Fundamentalism in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, and for many years he taught in Bir Zeit university on the West Bank. Until recently he was a Labour Party member but he resigned in disgust over the issue of unchecked antisemitism in the party. He has argued that Jeremy Corbyn's record does not amount to working for peace and why we all just have to *stop pretending* that it does. His words are full quoting at length because of his long record of criticism of Israel, his long support for Palestinian statehood and his contribution to Palestinian civil society over many years.

'Jeremy Corbyn's press office keeps telling us that he meets leading figures from Hamas because of his 'principled solidarity with the Palestinian people and engaging with actors to support peace and justice in the Middle East.'

We now know that he met Hamas officials in Israel and Palestine in 2010, chaired a panel at an event in Qatar with the head of Hamas, Khaled Mashaal in April 2012 and then invited leading Hamas activists and supporters to a meeting in the House of Commons in March 2015.

In between he had time to visit Tunisia for the wreath-laying ceremony, for amongst others, Black September terrorists who planned the 1972 Munich massacre of Israeli athletes and, of course, welcomed Islamist and hate-speech specialist Raed Salah to Parliament as an 'honoured citizen.'

Corbyn wrote about these events in his Morning Star column and often talked about them to the Iranian, Press TV. During his November 2010 visit to Israel and Palestine he made no attempt to meet any Israeli Jews. Nor did he contact any of the NGO's who work tirelessly for peace and reconciliation such as One Voice or the Parents Circle Family Forum.

Corbyn was accompanied by Seumas Milne (now a top aide) who a year before had declared that 'Hamas is not broken and will not be broken.' This trip doesn't look like a 'search for peace' but rather as a

solidarity mission with Hamas.

In Doha, Corbyn, attended an ostensibly academic event co-organised by the Al Jazeera Centre for Studies and the London-based Palestine Return Centre (PRC). It was styled 'Seminar on Palestinian Refugees in the Arab World.' Corbyn chaired a panel, whose 'scholars' included Hamas chief Khaled Mashaal, Husam Badran, responsible for the deaths of over 50 Israelis in the Dolphinarium discotheque and Park Hotel attacks in 2001 and 2002 and Abdul Aziz Umar, the planner of the 2003 Café Hillel bombing in Jerusalem that killed 7 people. Months after the conference Corbyn described the participants as 'brothers' on Press TV.

Although Corbyn now regrets calling Hamas 'friends' it is evident that his brotherly relations with them run deep.

Yet Hamas is a nasty antisemitic authoritarian organization. It styles itself as a 'resistance' movement, yet it should not be forgotten Hamas carried out a murderous campaign against the Oslo peace agreements between 1994-5 killing over 120 Israeli civilians and maiming many more. It rejects substantive negotiations with Israel. ... Hamas has set out to destroy any semblance of democracy or the rule of law and has condemned the population [of Gaza] to atrocious conditions. The idea that Hamas is a liberation movement is grotesque. Yet Corbyn has spent years trying to normalise Hamas and to convince a generation of activists that solidarity with the Palestinians means solidarity with Hamas.

Instead of supporting those forces in Palestinian and Israeli society that promote peace and reconciliation Corbyn has helped legitimise a violent, racist and terrorist organisation which has divided and weakened the Palestinians. Corbyn's protestations that he is a peace-maker are fake. He has studiously avoided working with the many brave Israelis and Palestinians who have put their reputations – and often their lives – on the line to foster cooperation and peace between both peoples. Corbyn has chosen another path; to side with his 'brothers' who are committed to violence and terrorism.³⁰¹

Strong words. But it is not enough for Jeremy Corbyn to brush off the case John Strawson makes here by simply repeating his mantra 'it's all been for peace'. Given his record, that brush off has now become one expression of the party's culture of denial, and perhaps the one that, above all others, has made all efforts to date to tackle that culture fail.

Conclusion: Towards a Left that Learns

‘Me’ or ‘Him’ –

Thus begins the war. But it

Ends with an awkward encounter:

‘Me and him.’

– Mahmoud Darwish, the late Palestinian poet.

‘Who are the good guys? That’s what every well-meaning European, left-wing European, intellectual European, liberal European always wants to know, first and foremost. Who are the good guys in the film and who are the bad guys? In this respect Vietnam was easy: The Vietnamese people were the victims, and the Americans were the bad guys...

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a Wild West movie. It is not a struggle between good and evil, rather it is a tragedy in the ancient and most precise sense of the word: a clash between right and right, a clash between one very powerful, deep, and convincing claim, and another very different but no less convincing, no less powerful, no less humane claim.’

– Amos Oz, the late Israeli novelist and a founder of Peace Now.

Four components of the crisis

This report has argued that the Labour Party has failed to understand contemporary antisemitism, failed to prevent the party becoming host to three kinds of antisemitism, failed to develop structures and processes to effectively tackle antisemitism, free from political interference, and failed to root out a culture of antisemitism denial and victim-blaming. These multiple failures, for now, means the party can reasonably be described as institutionally anti-Semitic.

Four contexts of the crisis

The report has placed the antisemitism crisis in four larger contexts that help to explain it.

First, the historical context of a long and ever-developing tradition of left

antisemitism, which these days often comes ‘dressed up as anti-Zionism’, as Eric Hobsbawm once wrote.

Second, the intellectual context of a left in thrall to a terrible idea, the simplistic ‘two-camps’ world view that renders the complex, tragic and as yet unresolved national question between Israelis and Palestinians, both of whom deserve a rich spot under the sun, into a morality play peopled by only good and evil, to be romanticised and demonized, the hard politics of mutual recognition pushed aside by uncritical celebrations of ‘the brothers’ and mindless anathemas of ‘the Zionists’.

Third, the unprecedented influence of the far-left on the party today, the Corbyn surge having produced not only a mass membership but an experienced cadre that is either now inside the party or hanging around party members online, boosting the dead-end two camps world view and spreading a trolling and bullying culture. It is simply a shaming fact that for some Jews who resigned recently, the Corbyn surge plainly felt like an antisemitic purge.

Fourth, the elephant in the room, the record of the leader and some of his closest aides in support for or practice of antisemitic forms of ‘anti-Zionism’. In the absence of a fundamental self-criticism of that record by Jeremy Corbyn, the defence of it by party members will go on, and so will the normalization of antisemitism in the party. And tomorrow, in government, also in the country?

The four components of the crisis establish an agenda for radical reform in the party. The four larger contexts tell us what an almighty reform fight that will be, and that the reformers may fail, resulting in a major split.

Others far better qualified than myself, including the Jewish Labour Movement, have proposed a raft of needed reforms. Hopefully this report will be a goad to the party leadership to advance those conversations.

Hearts and minds

However, as important as changes to administrative structures, investigatory and disciplinary processes, and educational programmes are, perhaps what the party needs more than anything is a new sensibility and mind-set, based on a new kind of activism: not the simplistic, dead-end, polarising ‘two-camps’ activism, but pro-Palestinian, pro-Israeli, pro-peace.

Labour could decide to support all those in Israel and Palestine who promote mutual recognition and peace. Many organisations do just that, including the

Alliance for Middle East Peace, Darkenu, Zimam Palestine, Taghyeer Movement, Roots / Shorashim, the Blue-White Future Group, Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF), MEET, The Peres Centre for Peace, the Abraham Fund, the Geneva Initiative and many others.

Labour could educate its members that it is these constructive ‘pro-Israeli, pro-Palestinian, pro-Peace’ organisations, not Hamas or Hezbollah, that are our true friends, our brothers and sisters, who share our Labour values. That shift of hearts and minds within the party would be the real alternative to the dead-end and destructive politics of antisemitic anti-Zionism.

Local Labour parties could invite these pro-peace groups to speak and engage with them; support them by giving them a platform and by raising money for them.

This alternative style of activism would have plenty room for criticism of Israeli governments. It would challenge all the obstacles to peace. But it would not infantilise or romanticise the Palestinians. It would be willing to also challenge those parts of the Palestinian national movement that are guilty, as they sometimes are, of rejectionism, terrorism, authoritarianism, corruption, and the promotion of a culture of incitement, demonisation and antisemitism. For those things are also obstacles to mutual recognition and the two-states for two peoples solution. And as the demonstrations by Gazans against Hamas rule in Spring 2019 proclaim on their banners, they are obstacles to life too.

The constructive pro-Israeli, pro-Palestinian, pro-peace approach will not shy away from complexity, seeking to acknowledge both genuine Israeli security fears and need for recognition and genuine Palestinian demands for an acknowledgment of their trauma, their need for recognition and dignity as well as statehood: two viable states, two secure and recognised peoples.

Nelson Mandela set out the balanced approach that democrats and internationalists should take towards the conflict. ‘As a movement we recognise the legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism just as we recognise the legitimacy of Zionism as a Jewish nationalism. We insist on the right of the State of Israel to exist within secure borders, but with equal vigour support the Palestinian right to national self-determination.’

If Labour took that approach, and built campaigns in its spirit, recognising the legitimacy of both sides and supporting the democrats and peacemakers of both sides, it would be doing more to give effect to its own conference policy – two states for two peoples by negotiation supported by the international

community – than any amount of flag-waving can achieve.

Labour can ‘encourage and assist’, as Mandela put it, to make its contribution to resolving this tragic conflict of right and right. Labour can decide, like the late Amos Oz, that it will stop treating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a Wild West movie and see it instead as ‘a tragedy in the ancient and most precise sense of the word: a clash between right and right’. Labour can decide to encourage and facilitate what Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian poet called the ‘awkward encounter’ that marks the beginning of the end of every human conflict.

But before a Labour Party can make that shift it has to break decisively with the Left that Does Not Learn. This phrase was coined by my friend Mitchell Cohen, the long-time co-editor of the US democratic socialist magazine *Dissent*, when he issued a call to arms to the democratic left in his brilliant 2007 essay ‘Anti-Semitism and the Left that Doesn’t Learn’.

Aghast at the rise on the left of antisemitic forms of ‘anti-Zionism’, Cohen warned that the ‘political attitudes and arguments that recall the worst of the twentieth-century left’ were making a comeback. And what, he asked today’s democratic left, are you going to do about that? Cohen had in his sights exactly the attitudes and arguments we have been wading through in this report. He saw that by reducing the complexity of the post-cold-war world to a single Great Contest – ‘Imperialism’ against ‘the resistance’, or ‘Empire’ against ‘the multitude’ – parts of today’s left are once again gripped by the same Manichean world-view and habits of mind that dominated a previous ‘left’ in the Stalinist period; from apologia to denial, from cynicism to grossly simplifying tendencies of thought, from the belief that ‘my enemy’s enemy is my friend’ to the abandonment of all who get on the wrong side of the supposedly ‘progressive camp’.

Today’s left is not doomed to repeat the crimes, disgrace, and ultimately the self-immolation of the twentieth century left. Instead it can learn from that experience. But today’s democratic left will need a bit of Cohen’s fighting spirit though, and be willing to say with him ‘It is time for the left that learns, that grows, that reflects, that has historical not rhetorical perspective, and that wants a future based on its own best values to say loudly to the left that never learns: You hijacked “left” in the last century, but you won’t get away with it again whatever guise you don.’³⁰²

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- 12 Many people claim that it is 'not possible to criticise Israel without being called antisemitic.' This is simply untrue. I am the editor of *Fathom*, a journal which for almost seven years has published Israeli and Palestinian voices from across the political spectrum, including highly critical voices from left-wing and radical Israeli NGOs including B'Tselem, Peace Now, and Settlement Watch; from peace-building and coexistence NGOs including Mahapach Taghir, Sukkuy, Parents Circle-Families Forum, and the Alliance for Middle East Peace; as well as the opinions, sharply critical, indeed condemnatory, of Palestinian activists, ex-PA ministers and cultural figures. As far as I am aware not a single Jewish person in the UK has ever called me antisemitic. Not one.
- 13 Some of the examples of antisemitism cited in this report involve British Muslims. To treat all Muslims as antisemitic would be wholly wrong, and itself cause for disciplinary action. On the other hand, it is a fact that, today, one source of antisemitic anti-Zionism – as many of the recent individual Labour Party suspensions should have made clear – is an antisemitic discourse that circulates in parts of the Muslim world, has been brought to the UK along with post-war immigration and is influential today in some parts of some Muslim communities in the UK.

This claim should be uncontentious, a matter of facing up to facts and developing party education programmes and empowering deliverers. According to leading UK Muslim political commentator Mehdi Hasan, a bitter critic of Israel writing in the left-wing *New Statesman*, ‘antisemitism isn’t just tolerated in some sections of the British Muslim community; it’s routine and commonplace.’ Hasan went on: ‘It’s our dirty little secret. You could call it the banality of Muslim antisemitism’ (Mehdi Hasan, ‘The sorry truth is that the virus of antisemitism has infected the British Muslim community’, *New Statesman*, 25 March 2013).

The UK Muslim community consumes media from the wider Muslim world, including the Middle East, and we must be willing to register that antisemitic forms of anti-Zionism are commonplace on some of those platforms: sermons, websites, official media, social media, and cartoons. To cite just one example, a study of the depiction in cartoons published in the Arab and Muslim world of the last four Israeli prime ministers – Ehud Barak, Ariel Sharon, Ehud Olmert and Benjamin Netanyahu – showed the *systematic* use of Holocaust Inversion there, i.e. their portrayal as Nazis (Anti-Defamation League, Personalising the Conflict: A Decade of an Assault on Israel’s Premiers in the Arab Media, 2010).

Anthony Julius has examined the ‘distinctively English versions of contemporary European Muslim anti-Zionism’ in his seminal study of English antisemitism *Trials of the Diaspora* (2010). He catalogued the conspiracy theories about the Jewish control of the media and the theme of a ‘Jewish/Israel lobby’ controlling politics in nefarious ways. Antisemitic material circulates in some Mosques and Islamic bookshops, while Holocaust denial, or hostility to Holocaust Memorial Day as a ploy to defend Israel, is also present in parts of the UK Muslim community, propagated by some Islamist groups and at one time by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) itself.

The ‘banality of Muslim antisemitism’, as pointed out by Mehdi Hasan, has deep roots in several sources. First, there are elements of canonical antisemitism found in the Koran and Hadith, no less disturbing because all Holy Texts have their anathemas. Second, cultural antisemitism was brought over with immigration and often went unchallenged due to failures of integration (See Kenan Malik, *From Fatwa to Jihad. The Rushdie Affair And Its Legacy*, Atlantic Books, 2009). Third, there is a modern, political, and ideological Islamist antisemitic anti-Zionism, typified perhaps by Islamist Sayyid Qutb’s 1950 book *Our Struggle against the Jews* which blames Jews for almost everything from ‘atheistic materialism’ to ‘animalistic sexuality’, from ‘the destruction of the family’ to an incessant war against Islam itself (see Paul Berman *Terror and Liberalism*, 2002; Mehdi Hasan, 2013). While it must be sensitively discussed, and anti-Muslim bigotry given no quarter, silence on all this is no longer an option for the party. It is too late in the day for that.

14 This paper draws in places on some of my earlier writings on antisemitism, anti-Zionism and the Left: Alan Johnson, ‘More Palestinian than the Palestinians’, *World Affairs*, 16 October 2012; Alan Johnson, ‘An Open Letter to Jeremy Corbyn’, *Left Foot Forward*, 16 June 2015; Alan Johnson, ‘Book Review: Judith Butler’s Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism’, *Fathom*, No 3. Spring 2013; Alan Johnson, ‘The Left and the Jews: Time for a Rethink’, *Fathom*, Autumn 2015; Alan Johnson, ‘Intellectual Incitement: The Anti-Zionist Ideology and the Anti-Zionist Subject,’ in *The Case against Academic Boycotts of Israel*, ed. Cary Nelson and Gabriel Noah Brahm (New York: MLA Members for Scholars’ Rights, 2015, 259-281); Alan Johnson, ‘Antisemitic anti-Zionism: the root of Labour’s crisis. A submission to the Labour Party inquiry into antisemitism and other forms of racism’, 2016; Alan Johnson, ‘Labour Party’s antisemitism inquiry findings show Labour has failed to learn’, *Haaretz*, 1 July 2016; Alan Johnson, ‘Antisemitism in the Guise of Anti-Nazism: Holocaust Inversion in the United Kingdom during Operation Protective Edge’, in *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: The Dynamics of Delegitimization*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Indiana University Press, 2019); Alan Johnson, ‘Denial: Norman Finkelstein and the New Antisemitism’, in *Unity and Disunity in Contemporary Antisemitism*, eds. Jonathan Campbell and Lesley Klaff (Academic Studies Press, Boston, 2019); Alan Johnson, ‘Leon Trotsky’s Long War Against Antisemitism’, *Fathom*, Spring 2019.

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– Hussein Agha has been involved in Palestinian politics for almost half a century. He was an Academic Visitor at St. Antony’s College, Oxford and is co-author of A Framework for a Palestinian National Security Doctrine.

‘The importance of the Israel/Palestine conflict for world peace is sometimes exaggerated, but for those of us focused on the conflict, for those of us who hope for peace here, even amidst the surrounding chaos, ‘two states for two peoples’ remains the necessary guiding idea. Fathom magazine is one of the key places where that idea is explained and defended; it deserves our strongest support.’

– Michael Walzer, Professor Emeritus at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey.

‘Indispensable reading for anyone who wishes to understand Middle Eastern politics; well researched, balanced, deeply committed to Israel but equally reading to ask tough questions about its policies; a unique combination of values and realpolitik.’

– Shlomo Avineri, Professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

‘BICOM and Fathom facilitate meetings between the two sides, scrutinise what went right and what went wrong in the process of negotiations over the past two decades. Only by understanding the other and accepting the others existence can the Arab-Israeli conflict be solved. BICOM and Fathom are leading both of us closer along that route. BICOM and Fathom have leverage that many lack and serve as one of the major catalysts that can remove obstacles on the road to peace.’

– Elias Zananiri is Vice-Chairman of the PLO Committee for Interaction with the Israeli Society. He is a former journalist and spokesperson for the PA’s Ministry of Interior and Internal Security

This *Fathom* report finds the Labour Party is now ‘institutionally antisemitic’ as the term is defined in the Macpherson Report: ‘the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin.’

Citing over 130 examples of antisemitism or antisemitism denial in the party, the report shows how Labour has failed to:

- Understand contemporary antisemitism.
- Prevent the party becoming host to three different forms of antisemitism.
- Develop ‘appropriate and professional’ processes to deal with antisemitism and safeguard members.
- Eradicate the party’s culture of antisemitism denial and victim-blaming.

The report also places the party’s crisis in four larger contexts, which make the crisis much harder to resolve than has been assumed.

- the history of left antisemitism and the current fashion for dressing up that antisemitism as ‘anti-Zionism’;
- the increasing sway of a crude ‘two camps’ world-view;
- the sharp increase in far-Left influence over the party;
- the political record of indulging antisemitic forms of anti-Zionism on the part of the leader, Jeremy Corbyn and some of his key advisors and supporters.