

# Antisemitic anti-Zionism: the root of Labour's crisis

## A submission to the Labour Party inquiry into antisemitism and other forms of racism

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### Antisemitic anti-Zionism: the root of Labour's crisis

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### Introduction

Everything depends on the Labour Party understanding *what* it is dealing with: almost never old-fashioned Jew hatred, almost always modern antisemitic anti-Zionism – a programme to abolish Israel, a movement to boycott Israel and discourse to demonise Israel. To combat it, the party needs to understand the historical roots, ideological tributaries, contemporary modes and forms of expressions of antisemitic anti-Zionism.

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Antisemitism is the most protean of hatreds and it has shape-shifted again (Gidley 2011). 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 (Wistrich 1984, 1991, 2004, 2009, 2012; Johnson 2015a, 2016). Antisemitic anti-Zionism bends the meaning of Israel and Zionism out of shape until both become receptacles for those tropes, images and ideas.

In short, *that which the demonological Jew once was in older forms of antisemitism, demonological Israel now is in contemporary anti-Semitic anti-Zionism*: uniquely malevolent, full of blood lust, all-controlling, the hidden hand, tricky, always acting in bad faith, the obstacle to a better, purer, more spiritual world, uniquely deserving of punishment, and so on (Johnson 2015b, Hirsh 2007, 2013b).

Antisemitism's core motif is that the Jews, collectively and in their essence, are not just Other but also *malign*. However, the *content* of this perceived malignity changes with the times and with the needs of the anti-Semites. 'God-killers,' 'aliens,' 'cosmopolitans,' 'sub-humans' and now 'Zionists' have all served as code words to mark the Jew for destruction.

Antisemitic anti-Zionism does not 'criticise' Israel—it *demonises* it. It is a form of antisemitism dependent upon demonising constructs of 'Zionism' and 'Israel'. While classic antisemitism wanted to make the world *Judenfrei*, free of Jews, antisemitic anti-Zionism wants to make the world *Judenstaatrein*, free of a Jewish state.

To grasp the relationship between antisemitism and anti-Zionism today, imagine them as two circles. Some party members – very few, if any, true be told – imagine that, viewed from above, one would see only one circle, because the first fits exactly atop the second; to them, anti-Zionism simply *is* antisemitism. Other party members – many, many more, as the suspensions make clear – see two circles that never touch *and never could touch*. For them, anti-Zionism – no matter what claims it makes about Zionism and Israel, in whatever demonising language these claims are expressed, whatever hate-filled and obsessive spirit animates them, however close is the relationship of their 'criticism of Israel' to classic antisemitic tropes, images, and ideas about 'the Jew', and whether or not their 'criticism' also involves full-throated support for violent antisemites such as Hamas and Hezbollah – is *always and only* just that: legitimate 'criticism of Israel'.

**The problem the party faces is that neither way of conceptualising today's relationship between antisemitism and anti-Zionism – absolute identity or total separation – is able to properly grasp the phenomenon which has prompted this enquiry.** 'Moving on' is only possible for the party if it understands that antisemitism has moved on again: in short, *the two circles now overlap in complex ways, creating a new phenomenon: antisemitic anti-Zionism.*

This submission focuses on that phenomenon

and is structured as follows.

**Part 1** of the submission sets out three *ideological tributaries* of contemporary left-wing antisemitic anti-Zionism.

- (a) Communist cold-war antisemitism, presented as 'anti-Zionism'.
- (b) New Left 'anti-imperialist' thinking that depicts Israel as evil and illegitimate, and seeks the end of the Jewish state.
- (c) an antisemitism that has its roots in parts – I stress *parts* – of the Muslim community.

**Part 2** sets out the three *modes* of contemporary antisemitic anti-Zionism found within parts of the party.

**First**, the *programme* to abolish Israel.

**Second**, a *discourse* to demonise Israel.

**Third**, the *movement* to boycott Israel.

These three modes – programme, movement, and discourse – should be considered together, each interacting with and reinforcing the other, creating an environment uniquely conducive to the spread of antisemitic anti-Zionism on the left.

**Part 3** examines some of the recent *expressions* of antisemitic anti-Zionism within the party and claims that, almost without exceptions, they involve modern antisemitic anti-Zionism not old-fashioned Nazi-style Jew hatred. It also suggests that the problem of anti-Semitic anti-Zionism is found among some leaders of the party as well as among parts of the membership.

**Part 4** makes three recommendations to tackle antisemitic anti-Zionism within the party: the adoption of the EUMC Working Definition of antisemitism, a political education programme to educate the party in its spirit, and a new Labour party campaign: 'Pro' – pro-Palestine, pro-Israel, pro-peace.

## **Part 1: Ideological Tributaries**

There is no wave of popular antisemitism in

the UK. Rather, there are three distinct political antisemitisms; on the dwindling far right; in parts - I stress *parts* - of the British Muslim community; and in parts - again, I stress *parts* - of the Left. This submission is concerned almost exclusively with the last.

Left-wing antisemitism has never been the dominant strand of opinion on the Left, and it is not so today; not by a long chalk. But it has always existed, it is growing today, and it is causing a breakdown in the relationship between Jews and the Left (Steve Cohen 1984; Ben Cohen 2004; Wistrich 2012).

### 1.1 Rethinking our values: assimilationism, universalism, the Jews and the Left

The contemporary Left needs to rethink its relationship to a couple of its own values - assimilation and universalism. It needs to understand better how it has *misused* those values in its understanding of Israel and the Jews, allowing them to prevent a serious engagement with the history of the 20th century, and, as a result, those values have badly *misshapen* its relationship to Zionism as a project and Israel as a state.

There has always been a distinct tradition of *left-wing* antisemitism. As a Labour student, the author worked with the Union of Jewish Students in the mid 1980s against the far-left campaign to *ban Jewish Societies* from UK university campuses on the grounds that they were 'Zionist'. Left-wing antisemitism got going during the foundations of the socialist movement in the late 19th century as parts of the left, often as a tactical ploy, identified 'The Jew' with finance capitalism. August Bebel, the German Social Democrat leader, shook his head at all this and called it the 'socialism of fools' (Steve Cohen 1984, Wistrich 2012).

In the late 19th century, most of the Left felt that assimilation was the only acceptable Jewish response to rising antisemitism. For example, Lenin - setting up the 'Good Jew / Bad Jew' dichotomy that has been dear to parts of the Left ever since - wrote that 'the best Jews have never clamoured against assimilation.' Many on the Left 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. Much of the Left hoped to dissolve Jewish peoplehood in the solvent of progressive universalism. The proletariat, understood as the universalist class par excellence, was to make a world revolution, and this would solve 'the Jewish question' once and for all, 'in passing' (Geras 2013; Johnson 2015b).

But this left-wing universalism was always 'spurious' as Norman Geras put it, because it singled out the Jews as 'special amongst other groups' in the sense that it obliged the Jews to 'settle for forms of political freedom in which their identity may not be asserted collectively.' 'Jews,' Geras noted, 'must be satisfied, instead, merely with the rights available to them as individuals' (Geras 2013).

Of course, in the 19th century and the early 20th century, many European Jews were keen supporters of both universalism and assimilation; it was the name of their desire too. But *world history went another way* and Jewish history went with it. This is the way that history went: the degeneration of the Russian Revolution into Stalinism and antisemitism, the failure of the European socialist revolution, the rise of Fascism and Nazism, the unprecedented transformation of the assault upon the Jews in the form of the Shoah, an industrial-scale genocide in the heart of Europe, the expulsion of the Jews from the Arab lands. All this left the appeal to Jews of assimilationism and universalism in tatters (Deutscher 1958).

**In response, Jews insisted on defining their own mode of participation in modernity and in universal emancipation: support for Zionism and a homeland for the Jews; the creation of Israel, a nation-state in a world of nation-states.** Whether they moved to Israel or not, that was the choice of *all but a sliver* - albeit a very vocal sliver, often prominent in western intellectual and academic life - of world Jewry. And that remains the case today.

However, and crucially, parts of the Left - by no means all - *failed to adapt* to this great rupture in world and Jewish history. This failure is all-important, for it utterly transformed *the political*

*meaning* of 'anti-Zionism'. Anti-Zionism meant one thing in the early 20th century: an argument among Jews, mostly, about how best to meet the threat of antisemitism. Anti-Zionism has come to mean something entirely different *after* the Holocaust and *after* the creation of the State of Israel in 1948: it has come to mean a programme of comprehensive hostility to all but a sliver of world Jewry, a programme for the eradication of actually existing Jewish self-determination (Hirsh 2007).

After the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, the 'socialism of fools' did not disappear. Rather, it morphed into the 'anti-imperialism of idiots' in the second half of the 20th century, when vicious, well-funded and long-running anti-Zionist campaigns were conducted by the Stalinist states in alliance with authoritarian Arab states (see 1.2). While the New Left challenged Stalinism about many things, it mostly adopted Soviet 'anti-Zionism' as its own, mostly uncritically, especially in the UK (see 1.3). Thus was the soil prepared for the growth of the antisemitic anti-Zionism the party must now challenge (Wistrich 2012).

## **1.2 Ideological Tributary: Communist 'anti-cosmopolitanism' and anti-Zionism'**

Moshe Postone has pointed out that when 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' in the form of a global 'anti-Zionist' propaganda campaign (2010; see also Fishman 2004; Crooke 2001, Julius 2010).

One statistic from Anthony Julius's book *Trials of the Diaspora* (2010) gives us a sense of the scale of this Stalinist campaign: 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 huge impact on the Left of this decades-long campaign has been underestimated. In the view of Stan Crooke, author of *The Stalinist Roots of 'left' Anti-Zionism* (2001), this flood of Communist propaganda ensured that the following ideas

took root in parts of the global left: Zionism equals racism; Zionism equals imperialism; Zionism equals South African apartheid; Israel is the USA's 'watchdog' in the Middle East; Zionism is complicit with, or even promotes, antisemitism, Zionism is a form of Nazism, Israel is a Nazi-like state. All of these notions are central to antisemitic anti-Zionism today.

Communist-led 'anti-Zionist' campaigns began in earnest in the late 1940s. 'Zionists' i.e. Jewish communists in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Berlin were tried, expelled, and in some cases executed (Herf 2016). These 'anti-Cosmopolitan purges' almost culminated in a crime against humanity in the form of Stalin's 1953 plan to deport the surviving Jews of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, an enormity which was to begin with an antisemitic show-trial of five Jewish doctors on fake charges of poisoning - the so-called 'Doctor's Plot.' Fortunately, Stalin died first and his successors dropped the plan (Fishman 2004, Herf 2016).

The 1967 Six Day War gave the Communist 'anti-Zionist' campaign a huge boost. Crooke (1988) has noted that this campaign 'increased in the 1970s, as Israel inflicted another defeat on Arab states in the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and Jewish organisations internationally stepped up their campaign for Soviet Jewry.' Crooke continues: 'The core of the Stalinist argument was their old technique of "the amalgam". Zionism, so the Stalinists claimed, was tied up with, allied to, linked with, or responsible for, every reactionary force that right-minded people might detest - capitalism, imperialism, even antisemitism and Nazism.'

It would be a mistake to imagine that this is all just old history.

First, the amalgam technique is still operative, albeit dressed up in the new language of 'intersectionality'.

Second, as François Furet has reminded us, while the 'illusion' of Communism may have passed, *'it wasn't that long ago'*. Point: some people formed in that milieu are now very influential in the Labour party and its affiliated trades unions at the very highest levels. Seumas Milne, the current Head of Strategy and Communications of the

Labour Party, does not support Israel's right to exist, claims its founding was 'a crime', supports Hamas as a 'resistance' movement (see Milne 2016). He wrote in 2014 that 'Hamas has shown it can hit back across Israel', adding 'Israel does not have a right to self-defence' against Hamas rockets fired on Israel (Milne, 2014).

Third, parts of the New Left inherited, rather than critiqued, the antisemitic anti-Zionist aspect of the Stalinist inheritance (Julius 2010, Hirsh 2007, Wistrich 2012, Johnson 2015b).

### **1.3. Ideological Tributary: The New Left and 'anti-Zionism'**

Listen to the words of the leading socialist feminist academic Judith Butler: 'Understanding Hamas, Hezbollah as social movements that are progressive, that are on the left, that are part of a global left, is extremely important' (quoted in Johnson 2012) And listen to the words, recorded on You Tube, of the Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn: '[Hezbollah is] an organisation that is bringing about long term peace and social justice and political justice in the whole region' (see Hirsh 2016). What happened to make some parts of the Left - even leading public intellectuals and social democratic party leaders - lose the ability to distinguish the antisemitic and the fascistic from the progressive? What have been the consequences of this for the relationship between the Left and the Jews?

The short answer is that a paradigm shift has taken place on large parts of the left with disastrous consequences for that relationship. David Hirsh (2007) observed that whereas before the late 1960s anti-imperialism was 'one value amongst a whole set - democracy, equality, sexual and gender liberation, anti-totalitarianism' - it was raised to a radically new status after the political rupture that was 'the Sixties': anti-imperialism became 'the central value, prior to and above all others.' Parts of the left abandoned universal progressive values rooted in the Enlightenment and became apologists for authoritarian and reactionary political forces. 'Victory to the Resistance!' meant the Left apologised for, or refused to criticise, any and all 'resistance' to the West.

Israel was thus reframed not as a nation-state among others, to be criticized as others, but as 'a key site of the imperialist system'. In this new world view, the Left's duty was to take sides in a Great Contest, and sign up on the side of the 'Oppressed Countries' against the 'Oppressor Countries', on the side of 'the Resistance' against 'Imperialism', or in today's language of poststructuralism and postmodernism, on the side of 'The Multitude' against 'The Empire'. The Israel-Palestine conflict was no longer a complex unresolved national question to which democrats should respond with support for the peacemakers on both sides and work for 'two states for two peoples'. Instead, parts of the left now supported Israel's enemies - *whatever* these enemies stood for, *however* they behaved - as a left-wing 'anti-imperialist' duty (see Berman 2005).

This shift meant a number of things on parts of the left.

First, the antisemitic anti-Zionism spread by the Stalinist movement was retained and translated into the new 'anti-imperialist' language of the New Left, rather than rejected root and branch.

Second, the very meaning of 'Zionism' began, slowly but surely, to take on the old shapes that had been reserved for 'the Jew' in anti-Semitic discourse.

Third, if you were an enemy of Israel, even an openly and proudly antisemitic one, you were redefined as 'part of a global left' and an agent of 'social justice'. Parts of the Left infantilised the Palestinians as noble savages, denied their agency, put them beyond criticism, and coded revanchist Arab nationalism - and sometimes even antisemitic Islamism - as singularly progressive (Johnson 2012). This political recoding put a plus sign where once there was a negative and so created a bridge between the far-left and the Islamists, across which traffic has latterly been heavy, especially since 9/11 and the subsequent 9/11 wars.

### **1.4: Ideological Tributary: Islam, Islamism and antisemitism**

The third ideological tributary of contemporary antisemitic anti-Zionism - elements of Islamic

and Islamist thought - is not *of* the left but it has come to be influential *on* parts of the Left.

The party must proceed exceptionally carefully here. On the one hand, to treat all Muslims as antisemitic would be ridiculous: wholly wrong, and itself cause for disciplinary action. On the other hand, there is a sense in which the party must start to 'get real' about the problem it faces. It is a fact that, today, *one* major source of antisemitic anti-Zionism - as many of the recent individual 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 in *some* parts of *some* Muslim communities in the UK (see Rich 2015.)

This claim should be uncontentious. According to leading UK Muslim political commentator Mehdi Hasan, a bitter critic of Israel, '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' (2013).

The UK Muslim community consumes media from the wider Muslim world, including the Middle East, and we must be willing to register the utterly *routine* character of antisemitic anti-Zionism on some of those platforms: sermons, websites, official media, social media, and cartoons like those reproduced below. To cite just one example, an ADL 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. the portrayal of Israelis as Nazis (ADL 2010).

A.



Cartoon A. Jordanian newspaper *Ad-Dustur* (October 19, 2003) depicts the railroad to the death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau - but with Israeli flags replacing the Nazi ones.

B.



Cartoon B. *Arab News*, a Saudi-based English language daily (April 10, 2002), shows Ariel Sharon wielding a swastika-shaped axe to chop up Palestinian children.

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 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 itself.

The 'banality of Muslim antisemitism' pointed to by Mehdi Hasan, has its roots in several sources.

**First**, canonical antisemitism found in the Koran and Hadith (Bostom /Johnson 2008).

**Second**, cultural antisemitism brought over with immigration and mostly unchallenged due to failures of integration (Malik 2009).

**Third**, a modern, political, and ideological Islamist antisemitic anti-Zionism, typified perhaps by Islamist Sayyad 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 Berman 2002; Hasan 2013).

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The point in asking the enquiry to consider these lengthy accounts of the three ideological tributaries of antisemitic anti-Zionism is to demonstrate that the party does not face a passing problem caused by an influx of some odd former far-leftists as a result of Jeremy Corbyn's victory. (In fact, as I make clear in part 4, many of the suspended members are councillors, Mayors or former Mayors, and there is even an MP.) The point is: *these rivers run deep*. In other words, antisemitic anti-Zionism is the product of some long standing and important, though not dominant, political movements, ideological traditions and cultural trends on the UK left.

The next section of the submission explores the three modes through which antisemitic anti-Zionism is seeking to reshape the party's culture and policy today.

## Part 2: Modes

Antisemitic anti-Zionism has three interlinked modes: a **programme** to abolish Israel (and only Israel), a **discourse** to demonise Israel (and only Israel) and a **movement** to exclude Israel (and only Israel) from the economic, cultural sporting and educational life of humanity. None is mere 'criticism of Israel'. Each must be decisively rejected by the party.

### 2.1 The Programme to abolish Israel

Antisemitic anti-Zionism has a programme: the destruction of the existing Jewish nation-state in Israel. While classic antisemitism wanted to make the world *Judenfrei*, free of Jews, antisemitic anti-Zionism wants to make the world *Judenstaatrein*, free of a Jewish state.

It tends to view Jewish nationalism, as David Hirsh has pointed out, as 'essentially different from all other nationalisms ... nothing at all but a mode of exclusion ... more like a totalising and

timeless essence of evil than a historical set of changing and variegated beliefs and practices' (2007).

In the imaginary of antisemitic anti-Zionism, Israel's *very existence* is viewed as a crime against humanity: an illegitimate nation inspired by nothing but racism, born in sin through an 'ethnic cleansing'; and now an 'Apartheid state' pursuing 'genocidal' policies. 'The most dangerous country in the world!' says Ilan Pappé - the influential Israeli academic, now teaching in the UK. 'A Lunatic Nation!' that deserves what Germany and Japan got in 1945, says Norman Finkelstein. And so on.

The political programme of the left for every other oppressed people in history - the right to national self-determination - is denied to just one group, the Jews, who are told to embrace post-national universalism; and not in some socialist future, but *now* (Cohen 1984). 'Nationhood is not a right ... self-determination is a myth' argues the anti-Zionist writer Jacqueline Rose (2007). Omar Barghouti, a founder of the BDS movement, rejects *any* expression of Jewish self-determination because 'by definition it infringes the inalienable rights of the indigenous Palestinians to part of their homeland.' (2012) Another leading anti-Zionist and proponent of the abolition of Israel, Ali Abunimeh of *Electronic Intifada*, writes that 'self-determination... cannot apply to Israelis' (2012).

The idea of *conquest* lies just beneath the surface of the antisemitic anti-Zionist programme, especially for the hard-core ideologues. Coercion will be necessary, argues Shenhav, because Israel is a 'pseudo-democracy' in which all critical thought has been 'paralysed.' (2012) Saree Makdisi, an English professor at UCLA, and a BDS leader, is blunter still. 'No privileged group in the history of the world has ever voluntarily renounced its privileges,' he says, so 'the Israelis will never relinquish their privileges until they are *compelled*, preferably by non-violent means... to accept the parameters of a single democratic state' (2012)

That weasel word 'preferably' is a political and moral opiate taken to evade the real-world logic of the programme. The leading anti-Zionist

writer Norman Finkelstein has criticised the BDS movement for exactly this evasion. Talking about the BDS movement's programme, Finkelstein said 'I loathe the disingenuousness – they don't want Israel [to exist].' He went on:

[The BDS movement] can't answer the Israelis when they say BDS seeks to eliminate Israel because it's true! It's not an accident that BDS does not mention Israel. You know that and I know that. I'm sick of it. Are you going to reach the Israeli public with a message of 'they want to destroy us'? No. And you know what? You shouldn't. At least be honest – say 'we want to destroy Israel and this is our strategy for doing it. But this duplicity and this disingenuousness! 'Oh, we are agnostic about Israel' [you say]... you are *not* agnostic! You don't want it! Just say it! You don't because you know that if you do, you don't have a prayer of reaching a broad public (2012).

I turn now to the antisemitic anti-Zionist discourse which, by demonising Israel, justifies the programme of the abolition of Israel.

## 2.2: The discourse to demonise Israel

The abolitionist programme of antisemitic anti-Zionism is justified by a demonising discourse that bends the meaning of 'Israel' and 'Zionism' out of shape until both become receptacles for those tropes, images and ideas of classical antisemitism. In short, *that which the demonological Jew once was, demonological Israel now is*: uniquely malevolent, full of blood lust, all-controlling, the hidden hand, tricky, always acting in bad faith, the obstacle to a better, purer, more spiritual world, uniquely deserving of punishment, and so on (Hirsh 2007, Wistrich 2012, Johnson 2015a, Johnson 2015b).

The following ways of talking about Israel are common on parts of the left today.

- depicting Israel as being **all-powerful** and at the heart of an **all-controlling conspiracy**, as 'the Jew' was in classical antisemitism;
- depicting support for Israel as the site of a dubious **dual loyalty**, a shadow under which 'the Jew' was cast in classical antisemitism;

- as guilty of the wanton and gratuitous shedding of the blood of non-Jewish children, as 'the Jew' was held to do in the classic **blood libel** slander;
- as the **obstacle to a better, purer, peaceful and spiritual world**, as 'the Jew' was in classical antisemitism;
- as **inherently racist, violent and supremacist**, as Judaism was depicted as being in classic antisemitism;
- and as the **equivalent of the Nazi state**.

Also forming an important part of the antisemitic anti-Zionist discourse is **antisemitism denial and victim-reversal**: i.e. the idea that whoever claims to see 'antisemitism', and speaks up about it, is guilty – unless they are talking about a Nazi or neo-Nazi – of (a) deliberately 'playing' a 'card' in bad faith to 'prevent criticism of Israel', or (b) committing an act of 'Islamophobia' if the antisemitic anti-Zionism which is the subject of their criticism also happens to have emanated from a Muslim, such as Yusef Quaradawi or the new NUS President. A short-hand term for this form of denial and victim reversal is 'The Livingstone Formulation' (Hirsh 2016), which Hirsh defines as 'a rhetorical device which enables the user to refuse to engage with the charge made. It is a mirror which bounces back onto an accuser a counter-charge of dishonest Jewish (or 'Zionist') conspiracy.'

Hirsh identifies two defining features of 'The Livingstone Formulation'.

Firstly, the *Livingstone Formulation* conflates anything allegedly antisemitic, in this case repeatedly insulting a Jewish reporter by comparing him to a Nazi, into the category of legitimate criticism of Israel.

Secondly, it goes further than accusing people who raise the issue of antisemitism of being wrong; it accuses them of being *wrong on purpose*, of crying wolf, of playing the antisemitism card. It alleges an intent, often a collective intent and so a conspiracy, to mobilize Jewish victim-power for illegitimate purposes.

Those lucky enough not to have been obliged to study the demonising discourse of antisemitic anti-Zionism often understandably fail to appreciate the sheer extravagance and wanton excess of it. In brief:

**'Zionism'** is reduced by antisemitic anti-Zionism to an ideology and movement of 'racial superiority and supremacy' with a relation of 'inherent contradiction' to democracy and liberalism, and which is, anyway, based on a calculated fabrication of peoplehood (Pappe 2014) This conception of Zionism homogenizes, essentialises and - to invent a word - *monsters* it.

Judith Butler, for example, reduces Zionism to nothing but 'a violent project of settler colonialism,' while Yitzhak Laor attacks the 'fundamentally intolerant nature' of a movement that 'has no source of legitimization except the old colonial discourse' (2009). For Jacqueline Rose, Jewish nationalism is racism, separatism, and exclusivism (2007). The Nobel laureate Jose Saramago tells us that 'the great majority' of Israeli Jews exhibit 'a contempt and an intolerance which, on a practical level, have led to the extreme of *denying any humanity* to the Palestinian people, at times *denying their basic right to existence*' (foreword to Laor 2009). Zionism is understood by Pappe as a genocidal ideology and movement which 'expelled, massacred, destroyed, and raped' in 1948, conducting an 'ethnic cleansing' of the Palestinians. And which could do no other: 'Zionist ideology' is an 'ethnic ideology' that seeks a 'total cleansing' of non-Jews from the land to make possible the complete 'Judaisation of Palestine' (2010). Israel, Pappe claims, is 'preparing an ethnic cleansing in the West Bank and a genocide in Gaza,' only leaving the Strip in 2005 so it could 'bomb freely.' And so on.

Unhinged portrayals of **'Israel'** as a kind of *monster* are common. For example, Yitzhak Laor claims that IDF 'death squads' are guilty of 'indiscriminately killing,' and of acts of 'sadism,' including 'mass starvation.' (2009) Omar Barghouti claims Israel has an 'insatiable appetite' for 'genocide and the intensification of ethnic cleansing.' (2012) (One is reminded here of those inter-war cartoons of gigantic Jews looming over and eating up the gentile world.) According

to Shenhav's *Beyond the Two-State Solution*, Israel is 'an aggressive war machine', pregnant with genocide; Israel's 'violence-generating mechanisms' drive it into killing Arabs regularly,' and Israel is on course to achieve 'the annihilation of the Palestinian people' (Shenhav 2012). The introduction to Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé's 2015 book *On Palestine* - prominently displayed for months in our high street bookstores - claims that in 2014 Israel was engaged not in targeted strikes to restore deterrence against incessant Hamas rocket fire on Israeli civilians, but rather in the 'systematic carpet bombing of an entire population'. And, of course, the Nazi analogy is now used frequently (see below).

**I now examine some prominent tropes of this antisemitic anti-Zionist discourse.** In each case we can see that older antisemitic tropes are being updated, without consciously or not, in the new assault on Zionism and Israel. Later, in part 4 we will see that *almost every suspension from the party is a case of a party member being influenced by these tropes*, not by old-fashioned Nazi antisemitism.

### **Discourse: from the conspiratorial all-controlling Jew to conspiratorial all-controlling Israel**

'Antisemitism,' Steve Cohen observed, 'provides its adherents with a universal and generalised interpretation of the world': the *theory of the Jewish conspiracy*. This theory 'depicts Jews as historically controlling and determining ... human destiny.' Jews are framed as conspiring to run the world, start wars, and exploit the non-Jew to further Jewish tribal interests (1984).

Today's antisemitic anti-Zionism 'works' like this: once, the discourse was once all about the 'devilish Jew' who was, for example, both arch-capitalist and arch-Bolshevik - a Jewish division of labour to trick the gentiles - with the world in its grips. Today, the discourse is all about 'Israel' depicted as doing what the devilish Jew used to do: 'standing in the way of world peace ... responsible for stirring up wars ... uniquely racist or apartheid or dangerous in some other way' (Hirsh 2007).

John Mearsheimer's and Stephen Walt's 2007

book *The Israel Lobby* - whether intentionally or not - gave a stamp of academic legitimacy to this kind of conspiracism (Mead 2007). By alleging that *only* the power of the Israel lobby to shape US foreign policy could explain the US decision to invade Iraq, they gave new life to the old idea that a dangerous but hidden Jewish power pushes states into wars and revolutions. Their thesis has certainly *normalised* conspiracy talk, from Baroness Tonge saying 'The Jewish lobby has got its grips on the Western world, its financial grips' to Ilan Pappé who claims that US Middle East policy in the region is 'confined to the narrow route effectively delineated ... by AIPAC' (Pappé, in Chomsky and Pappé 2010).

Such conspiracy talk is inseparable from the dual loyalty smear. In 2011 Labour MP Paul Flynn alleged that Britain's first Jewish ambassador to Israel had divided loyalties because he had 'proclaimed himself to be a Zionist'. Flynn added that ambassadors to Israel had hitherto not been Jewish precisely 'to avoid the accusation that they have gone native'. Britain needed, he said, 'someone with roots in the UK [who] can't be accused of having Jewish loyalty' (see Bright 2011). He was subsequently made to apologise by Ed Miliband, the then party leader.

The dual loyalty canard is also found in some highly influential academic writing that shapes wider left-wing culture in the UK. 'In the United States today,' Ilan Pappé argued, in a book widely available in high-street book shops in the UK, 'one cannot ignore the level of integration of Jews into the heights of American financial, cultural and academic power' nor their 'exploitation of the fruits of successful integration into American society for the benefit of a foreign country' (Pappé in Chomsky and Pappé 2010). Pappé doesn't quite call American Jews a fifth column, but he is getting there.

### **Discourse: from the blood libel aimed at 'the Jew' to 'criticism' of the Jewish state as blood-thirsty child-killer**

The classic blood libel held that Jews murdered gentile children for pleasure or in their religious rituals - to bake their Matzo bread. Today we have a peer of the realm who demands an

enquiry into the monstrous Big Lie that the rescue mission sent by Israel to Haiti had a secret agenda of *harvesting the organs of the dead* for transportation back to Jews in Israel.

The blood libel / baby killers trope was present at, sometimes central to, the protests during the 2014 Gaza conflict as in this photograph of a protest outside the BBC:



The blood libel is a theme found in much anti-Israeli discourse in the Arab and Muslim world, which, of course, has influence in the UK. For example, in 2007 extremist Islamist Sheik Raed Saleh, an antisemite and a leader of the Northern Islamic Movement, gave a speech in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Wadi Joz that peddled the medieval blood libel, saying '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' (see Johnson 2015c).

And why does Raed Saleh matter to this enquiry? Because the degree to which the party does not currently 'get' antisemitic anti-Zionism was shown by the warm reception given to Salah by Jeremy Corbyn, the party leader. Corbyn organised a press conference to defend Salah's presence in the UK and said of him: 'He is far from a dangerous man. He is a very honoured citizen, he represents his people extremely well, and his is a voice that must be heard.' Corbyn even added this personal message to Salah: 'I look forward to giving you tea on the terrace [of the House of Commons] because you deserve it!'

Saleh - as many pointed out to Jeremy Corbyn at the time - opposed not the occupation but the 'bacteria of all times'. He did not criticise Benjamin Netanyahu, but the demonic 'unique mover' who was behind 9/11. He did not call for the West to apply diplomatic pressure on Israel but attacked the entire West as a 'slave to Global Zionism'. These statements were all one click away on the internet and the leader was pointed to them. He ignored them all and instead issued fulsome praise for Saleh. About Saleh's blood libel speech, the UK Appeal Court [decided](#) that 'We do not find this comment [by Saleh] could be taken to be anything other than a reference to the blood libel against Jews.' It also decided that this would 'offend and distress Israeli Jews and the wider Jewish community' (Johnson 2015).

### **Discourse: The Jew as obstacle to a new and better and more spiritual world**

In classic antisemitism, a peaceful utopia is depicted as being just out of reach, graspable if only 'the Jew' would get out of the way. Now it is Israel which is to get out of the way, or to be pushed.

- Form 1 (Christian): Jews as the betrayers and killers of the universal God.
- Form 2 (Enlightenment): Jews as a particularist anachronism, standing in the way of universalist reason.
- Form 3 (Anti-Enlightenment): Jews as rootless cosmopolitans, the dissolvent of every nation and people.
- Form 4: (Nazi): Jews as untermenschen, the biological pollutant in the otherwise healthy social body of the *volksgemeinschaft*.

Today, the homeland of the Jewish people, Israel itself, has been handed the role of 'Jewish obstacle to utopia'. It is not treated in anti-Semitic anti-Zionist discourse as a nation-state to be criticised like others but as *the very fulcrum of all that is wrong with our world*, to be cleared away as the necessary preliminary to local, regional, indeed world peace. Antisemitic anti-Zionist discourse suggests darkly the need for 'A World Beyond Zionism' or it says that 'Zionism is our misfortune' or that 'The key to world peace is the destruction of Israel' or it argues that the 'Jewish

neocons' (or the 'Jewish lobby') started the Iraq war (or confected a crisis in the UK Labour Party) for Jewish purposes. 'Criticism of Israel' this is not: it is the demonization of the Jewish *State* in terms eerily reminiscent of those once reserved by antisemites for 'the Jew' (Gardner, 2007).

### **Discourse: from 'Judaism is violent and supremacist' to 'Israel is the violent and supremacist expression and embodiment of Judaism'**

In classical antisemitism, Judaism is framed as a violent, supremacist pseudo-religion; a tribal affair masked as something more elevated to fool the gentiles. Today, the discourse depicts a 'racist' 'imperialist' 'genocidal' Israel as the inevitable result of, and the natural expression of a fundamentally malevolent Jewish religion, or, perhaps even worse, the natural expression of a fundamentally malevolent essential 'Jewish being and thinking', of which Judaism itself is only an outcrop.

Today, the old notion of Judaism as violent and supremacist is being given a new lease of life by parts of the Left. Israel Shahak was lauded recently by no less an authority than Perry Anderson in the *New Left Review*, sometimes called 'the flagship journal of the western left' (Anderson 2015). Some of Shahak's words have been quoted approvingly by the influential anti-Zionist writer Jacqueline Rose. These words: 'the real issue [is] the racist character of the Zionist Movement and the State of Israel and the roots of that racism in the Jewish religious law [Halakha]' (quoted in Rose 2007).

Oren Ben-Dor, a university lecturer and the co-organiser of an academic conference about Israel as an illegal state that was to be held at Southampton University in 2016 (and is now scheduled for Cork in 2017), has given this kind of thing a Heideggerian twist, as Sarah Browne has revealed in a critique (2015). Ben-Dor claimed that 'The Zionist victim and supremacist mentality - that living force and unity which is nourished by the desire to be hated, stems, before all else, from sublimated hatred of, and supremacy towards, all "others"'. He goes on to argue that 'the Holocaust occurred because of something that haunts Jewish being and thinking, something

that cannot be tamed' (see Browne 2015).

Ben-Dor is not a one-off in academia. Consider also the leading European philosopher Gianni Vattimo's astonishing editorial introduction to *Deconstructing Zionism*, a collection of essays written, note, by 'some of today's leading philosophers.' He writes: 'When I continue to recite, in the Latin breviary, certain Psalms like the 12th, (*Cum reduceret Dominus captives Sion* ...) I increasingly feel its literal more than its allegorical sense: this is ... a song of jubilation for the military victory of one people over another.'

Vattimo presents the collection of essays as digging up the roots of a violent tribal Jewish essence and he is personally disgusted by what he finds: 'the feeling of a nomadic people with whom I have nothing in common.' He goes on, 'To speak of Israel as an "irredeemable sin" is therefore not so excessive.' And he objects to the Holocaust being used as 'a type of Nuremberg trial before which all thinkers are brought in order to be judged.'

As for those 'Nazi hunters who never seem to get enough of justice-vengeance' - he has had enough of them, too. Vattimo suggests we listen less to 'the Zionists' and more to the former Iranian President Ahmadinejad who has had the courage to 'question the very legitimacy of Israel's existence.' Passing in silence over Ahmadinejad's threats to erase Israel from the page of time and his Holocaust denial, Vattimo praises the former Iranian leader in terms that should give us pause: 'When Ahmadinejad invokes the end of the State of Israel, he merely expresses a demand that should be more explicitly shared by the democratic countries that instead consider him an enemy' (Vattimo 2014).

The point, for this enquiry, is that Vattimo is no fringe figure. *Deconstructing Zionism* is stuffed full of the cream of left-wing intellectual life, from Judith Butler to Slavoj Žižek, and is read in universities. And yet, parts of the book are engaged in not only the intellectual delegitimization of the state of Israel but a kind of incitement against Jews (see Brahm's 2014 critical review).

## Discourse: The Nazi Analogy

An accurate understanding of the Nazi Holocaust is essential to grasp modern Israeli savagery towards the Palestinian people (Mike Napier, Chair of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign, quoted in Gerstenfeld 2009).

This is what I have to live with every time Israel does something bad. Out come the swastikas, out come the pictures of Hitler, and the photos, omg, photos of graphic images of dead Jews set side by side with images of whatever havoc Israel has wreaked this time. It's a deliberate, systematic attempt to make people relive an experience that left millions of Jews dead and a wound on the collective Jewish memory that hasn't even begun to heal. ... Hurting an entire group of people because you're so incandescently angry at a particular set of them is indirect discrimination. In short, comparing Jews, any Jews, to the Nazis is antisemitic and it's wrong. Please stop. (Sarah McCulloch, a British Jew, blogging in anguish on 20 July 2014).

One of the most dangerous developments in antisemitic anti-Zionism in recent times has been the spread of the Nazi Analogy or what is increasingly called 'Holocaust Inversion' (Gerstenfeld 2007; Rich 2009). As this has been present in several of the communications of suspended party members it is treated at some length here.

Holocaust Inversion takes four forms. First, the depiction of Israelis as the new Nazis and the Palestinians as the new Jews; an inversion of reality. Second, Zionism is made to appear as akin to Nazism, or to be considered alongside of, or in comparison to, or even collaborating with Nazism. Third, the Holocaust is turned into a 'moral lesson' for, or a 'moral indictment' of the Jews - an inversion of morality. Fourth, Holocaust memory appears only as a politicised and manipulated thing, a 'card' that is 'played', a club that is wielded instrumentally, with malice aforethought, by bullying Jews, for Jewish ends (Klaff 2013, 2014).

The depiction of Zionism as a kind-of-Nazism was 'the major trope in the 1960s and 1970s Soviet antisemitism', according to Anthony Julius (2010). By the 1980s, wrote the late scholar of antisemitism Robert Wistrich, 'the Soviet Union ... stood in the forefront of the global campaign to equate Zionism with Nazism' (1984). Wistrich also demonstrated in some detail how the 'willingness of supposedly anti-Soviet radical leftists to swallow these made-in-Russia fabrications' ensured that a demonising anti-Zionism became 'an integral part of the cultural code of many Leftist and some liberal circles' in the West (1984; see also Cohen 1984).

This trend was 'most striking in Great Britain', Wistrich believed, the far-left leading the way in 'reflecting motifs long familiar from Soviet propaganda' (Wistrich 1984) and in taking those motifs into UK civil society in the most determined and organised fashion. The Inversion has now been in use for over three decades in far-left circles in the UK, as demonstrated by these cartoons depicting Israeli Prime Minister Begin as a Nazi, published in 1982 in the hard-left *Labour Herald* newspaper, co-edited at the time by Ken Livingstone, and in the Socialist Workers Party's monthly magazine *The Socialist Review* (see Cohen 1984; Wistrich 2012; Cohen 2004; Gerstenfeld 2007a and 2007b).

C.



Image C. *Labour Herald*, June 25 (1982) According to his biographer Andy Hosken, Ken Livingstone, who had a leading role at *Labour Herald*, insisted that the paper publish this cartoon.

D.

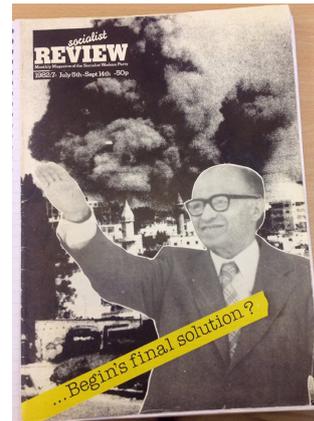


Image D. *Socialist Review*, 7, 5 July-14 September (1982).

Today, it is no longer unusual to find, in the European public square, especially if that square has been occupied by the Left, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu portrayed as a modern-day Hitler, or the Israeli Defence Forces as the modern-day SS, especially at times of conflict in Israel-Palestine. One routinely hears Israel's anti-terror operation in Jenin in 2002 - in which 52 Palestinians were killed, around half being combatants, as well as 23 Israeli soldiers - described as being 'just like the Warsaw Ghetto' (in which approximately 300,000 Jews were murdered during the Holocaust).

The use of Inversion discourse is no longer a fringe activity in Europe. In 2009, the European Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism noted the 'growing normalisation' in the UK of 'the use of Nazi or related terms or symbols (Nazism, Hitler, Swastikas, etc.) in reference to Jews, Israel, Zionism' (Iganski and Sweiry 2009). Writing in 2010, Anthony Julius claimed, in his history of antisemitism in England, that the Inversion had become 'a reflex' among certain groups in the UK (2010).

The Community Security Trust (CST), the UK Jewish community's monitoring organisation, recorded that around one-third of the antisemitic incidents in July and August 2014 involved Holocaust-related language or imagery. Indeed, 239 of the 1,168 antisemitic incidents reported to CST across 2014 'employed discourse based on the Nazi period, including swastikas and references to the Holocaust' (2015a). 'Reference to Hitler or

the Holocaust' noted the CST, was used to taunt or offend Jews, often in relation to events in Israel and Gaza' (cited in Gidley 2015). Offenders will select from a range of Jewish related subjects,' say CST, '*particularly insults related to the Holocaust or Israel*, for language or imagery with which to abuse, insult or threaten their Jewish victims' (CST 2015a, emphasis added).

The academic Ben Gidley analysed the mass demonstrations organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) in London during Operation Protective Edge and concluded that while antisemitism was not a 'predominant presence' at these events - indeed, 'the overwhelming majority of messages [...] were not antisemitic' - antisemitism was 'nonetheless a feature' of street protests, where 'a continuum of expressions emphasising the Holocaust' was found (2015).

Holocaust Inversion placards were untypical and always homemade in the summer of 2014, Examples read: 'Rabid evil mass murderers Hitlers clone', 'Stop the Palestinian Holocaust now - Fascist Israel will not escape justice'. One large banner read 'Genocide Apartheid Holocaust 2014' and 'Baby Killers' alongside a Star of David. There was at least one home-printed Holocaust Inversion placard: 'Bush and Blair are our Adolf Hitler's and Gaza is our Auschwitz'. The All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry found that 'banners and placards equating Israel with Nazi Germany ... were said to have been paraded without police interruption' (2015:60).

Social media was 'a platform for antisemitic rhetoric' during the conflict, according to the Association of Chief Police Officers (APPG 2015:40). Paul Iganski and Abe Sweiry, two academics from Lancaster University's Corpus Approach to Social Sciences Unit, conducted an analysis of antisemitic discourse on Twitter for the APPG Inquiry. Working with 22 million Tweets from July and August 2014, they analysed a sub-sample of 38,460 Tweets containing the words 'Israel' or 'Gaza', along with the words 'Jew', 'Jews' or 'Jewish'. Their findings suggest that Holocaust Inversion discourse may be moving closer to the centre of contemporary antisemitic discourse:

A keyword analysis - one of the core

methods of corpus linguistics - showed that in the sub-sample analysed, the spectre of Nazism, with words such as "Hitler", "Holocaust", "Nazi" and "Nazis", was present in the top 35 keywords for the downloaded sample. "Hitler" was mentioned 1117 times; "Holocaust" was mentioned in 505 tweets, and "Nazi" or "Nazis" were mentioned in 851 tweets.'

The Nazi theme was also evident in hashtags analysed for the sub-sample, with the high frequency of the hashtags #hitler, #hitlerwasright, and #genocide.' (Iganski et al 2015).

Iganski and his colleagues found that 0.9 per cent of tweets in the corpus that mentioned Israel or Gaza in July 2014 also invoked Hitler, Nazis or the Holocaust - some 99, 832 out of 11,008,511 (2015b). Using the linguistic technique of collocation analysis, they then examined a sub-sample of the twitter data set for the presence of *invective* and provisionally concluded that 'The largest category in relation to invective, again, was Nazi references' (APPG Report 2015:52).

### **Discourse: antisemitism denial and victim reversal**

Antisemitic anti-Zionism tends to see Holocaust memory *only* as a politicised and manipulated thing, a club wielded instrumentally, with malice aforethought, by bullying Jews, for Jewish ends. The words 'Zionism', Holocaust', 'Israel', 'Nazi', 'Jenin', 'Gaza', 'IDF', 'SS', 'Ghetto', 'Concentration Camp' - are now routinely rearticulated until their meaning is established not by its original material referent but by its new place in the structure of antisemitic anti-Zionist discourse.

For example, 'The Holocaust' is transformed so that it no longer really comes into focus as a descriptor of the Nazi murder of the six million. Instead, it is reconstituted as a moment within the new discourse; as a 'lesson, unheeded, for the Jews'; as 'what the Zionists are doing now to the Palestinians'; as 'a card played by Zionists to prevent their incremental genocide of the Palestinians being criticised'. Israel's operations to stop rockets from Gaza have been described as a 'vernichtungskrieg' (war of extermination)

and Israel itself as a 'Taetervolk' (a nation of criminals). Tariq Ali can say that Israelis treat Palestinians as 'untermenschen' while Noam Chomsky can write about the 'jackboots' of the IDF.

### **Annexe: OK, this discourse is offensive, but is it really antisemitic?**

The *meaning* of this kind of discourse - in particular whether it should be considered antisemitic or merely *offensive* - is disputed by anti-racists.

One recent locus of that dispute was the contrasting submissions of two anti-racist academics, David Feldman and Ben Gidley, to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Antisemitism enquiry into antisemitism in the UK during the Gaza conflict in the summer of 2014 (Feldman 2015; Gidley 2015). The final report of the Inquiry, published in 2015, noted that 'there was some debate between those from whom we took expert testimony regarding the nuances of the definition of antisemitism when it comes to Nazi comparison' (APPG 2015). In short, Ben Gidley defined examples of Holocaust Inversion as antisemitic discourse but David Feldman did not, arguing that 'the fact that they are wrong and hurtful does not render them antisemitic' (2015).

David Feldman advanced two reasons to deny Holocaust Inversion the status of antisemitic discourse. First, that the Inversion is *banal* (my word not his). i.e. he argued that invoking the Holocaust in argument is a 'much used rhetorical device', a *common* argumentative move used about many subjects, often light-mindedly, therefore lacking any *specifically antisemitic* content. In support of this claim, Feldman cited attacks on the UK Independence Party (UKIP) as 'Nazis' as an example of the banality of playing the Nazi card, also citing those occasions when Israel's own leaders call their enemies 'Nazis' (2015:7-8).

Second, Feldman argued that the Inversion is not motivated by an *anti-Jewish subjectivity*, so cannot be antisemitic as such; the target of the Inversion during OPE was Israel, not Jews,

so lacked antisemitic motivation or intent, he believed; only when Holocaust discourse 'endorse[s] Nazi persecution of Jews and the Holocaust' (e.g. when it involves brandishing a 'Hitler Was Right!' placard) can it be considered antisemitic (2015).

I find both of these arguments - from (the presence of) banality and from (the absence of) individual subjectivity - unconvincing. More: they risk putting beyond understanding much that is *constitutive* of *contemporary* antisemitism, as opposed to earlier forms. I make that case now.

### **Why Holocaust Inversion is antisemitic**

The argument from banality - i.e. everyone plays the Nazi card about everything, so it's not antisemitic when used about Israel - is an *innocent* reading. It misses the three shaping contexts which ensure that Inversion discourse 'works' in antisemitic ways and has real-world antisemitic consequences: the Jewish context, the political context, and the discursive context. We need to bring each back in if we are to tackle the crisis in the party.

#### **The Jewish context**

First, the language Feldman uses to describe the act of treating Israeli Jews as Nazis ('grossly misleading', 'hurtful') radically mischaracterises its object. The Inversion 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 on the grounds that it is as a unique evil in the world, on a par with the Nazi state that perpetrated the Shoah. The discourse is, as Israeli Elhanan Yakira puts it, implicitly 'annihilationist'. Ben Gidley, in a more English understated style, claims that '[t]o single out Hitler and the Holocaust as the frame for understanding the actions of the Jewish state is not neutral.' (2015). Iganski, McGlashan and Sweiry, after studying antisemitism on Twitter during the conflict, pointed out that 'deep wounds are scratched when the Nazi-card is played in this way in discourse against Jews ... [it] is not simply abusive [but] ... invokes painful

collective memories for Jews and for many others. By using those memories against Jews it inflicts profound hurts' and can incite violence against Jews (Igansky et al 2015).

In similar vein, Dave Rich of the Community Security Trust has argued that Holocaust Inversion in the UK in 2014 deliberately played on Jewish sensibilities 'in order to provoke a reaction' adding that 'another word for that is Jew-baiting' (in Gidley 2015). The CST record incidents equating Israel with Nazi Germany as antisemitic because the Inversion has a 'visceral capacity to offend Jews on the basis of their Jewishness' and so 'carries a particular meaning for Jews because of the Holocaust' (2015a).

Elhanan Yakira rejects the argument from banality for another reason: the 'more immoral, more significant ... more effective ... more widespread' character of the Inversion 'when applied to Jews and the Jewish state'. More: the Inversion seeks to 'suppress memory, which in this instance can only mean eliminating identity' (2010).

Robert Wistrich believed that the Inversion was actually becoming more central to contemporary antisemitism; indeed was 'in practice ... the most potent form of contemporary antisemitism' (2004). Invertors, he pointed out, 'exploit the reality that Nazism in the post-war world has become the defining metaphor of absolute evil' and by associating Zionism with Nazism and Israel with the Third Reich, seek to place upon all people nothing less than 'a moral obligation to wage war against Israel' as a uniquely malign force (2004).

### The political context

The second context missed in the depiction of the Nazi analogy as banal is the political context. In short, the Inversion is an essential part of the political practice of a global social movement that seeks the destruction of only one state in the world, the Jewish one. To equate this knowing, relentless, state-sponsored, well-funded and global political project, that has stretched over several decades and across several continents, and has often merged with murderous antisemitism, with the semi-serious, rhetorical

use of the 'Nazi' charge in other contexts, such as the criticism of UKIP, is to miss the political point quite spectacularly. It is to bracket the fact that the Inversion is embedded within 'a worldwide anti-Israel campaign'. As Yakira observes, beyond the subjectivity of this or that individual user of the Inversion is an entire 'eco-system'; an 'international community' with a shared code, language, jargon, credo and sensibility (2010).

### The discursive context

Feldman's approach also misses the discursive context, i.e. how the Inversion *works* within an entire 'discursive field' or set of communications, to *renew* the core motif of antisemitism which is that that the Jews, conceived collectively, and essentialised, are cast not just as the Other but as malevolent (Gerstenfeld 2007:c).

This perception of absolute malevolence - the 'metaphysical dimension' of antisemitism, to use Gerstenfeld's helpful term - is present in much antisemitic discourse, but the precise content of that malevolence changes with the times and - as David Nirenberg has shown in exhaustive detail in his seminal book *Anti-Judaism: The History of a Way of Thinking* - also with the needs of the anti-Semites: the Jew as God-killer, the Jew' as Rootless Cosmopolitan dissolving the integrity of every Nation, the Jew as the world-controlling Capitalist-Bolshevik conspirator subverting the Gentile world for Jewish purposes, the Jew as Untermenschen, the Biological Pollutant of the Master-Race. Holocaust Inversion, far from being banal, *functions* today - whatever the subjective intentions of the speaker - as a discursive updating for our times of both the core antisemitic motif of malignity and the metaphysical dimension of antisemitism, by depicting the Jewish State as a Nazi state, and its supporters as Zio-Nazis.

It is impossible to adequately grasp any of this if we insist upon the presence of individual subjectivity, personal motivation and conscious intention. Instead, we should understand the significance of any single piece of discourse as dependent upon (a) its place in the entire discursive structure in which it is embedded and upon (b) the social and political conjuncture in which it is employed, which also shapes its

meaning, emotional colouring and 'affective dimension' and (c) its real-world consequences (Gidley 2011, Hirsh 2007).



The 2006 All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism had it exactly right: 'discourse has developed that is in effect antisemitic because it views Zionism itself as a global force of unlimited power and malevolence throughout history ... having redefined Zionism in this way, traditional antisemitic notions ... are transferred from Jews ... on to Zionism...' (APPG 2006:17).

This photograph of a blood-sucking vampiric Netanyahu, the puppeteer of the world powers, taken on an anti-Israel demonstration in central London on 26 July 2014 illustrates the point.

When the far-left writer Tariq Ali says that Israelis treat Palestinians as 'Untermenschen' (cited in Julius 2010) he is constructing what Elhanan Yakira has helpfully labelled a 'transhipment mechanism', that is, a 'vehicle for transferring blame and negation', i.e. for transferring the 'absolute evil, limitless guilt, and suffering' from the Holocaust to Israel and Zionism.

To minimise all of this as merely 'offensive' and 'hurtful' is to fail to grasp the *evolution* of antisemitism in the era of Israel, and to fail to delineate one of its *contemporary* forms.

### 2.3 The movement to exclude Israelis

Ideologies are powerless until their notions are effectively *projected socially*, i.e. taken out into the world by a social movement. The discourse of antisemitic anti-Zionism has been projected

socially for several decades now, by experienced political activists embedded within civil society organisations - including the Churches, universities, the trades unions, and the Labour Party - through the global BDS movement and its many associated forms and practices and platforms.

**These activists seek to make Israel a pariah state and to exclude Israeli Jews and their supporters from the economic, cultural, educational and sporting life of humanity.**

The movement has been boosted in the UK as parts of the far left and parts of the Islamist movement in the UK came together in the context of the failure of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the Second Intifada, the Durban conference, the 9/11 attacks, and widespread and fierce public protests against the '9/11 Wars' in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The traditions coalesced within the Stop the War movement (in which the Socialist Workers Party, Counterfire and the Communist Party provided the core leadership), George Galloway's Respect coalition (an alliance between the Muslim Brotherhood-linked Muslim Association of Britain and the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party), and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, with its deep roots in UK trade unions (themselves more influenced by the anti-Zionist far-left that at any time in their history), churches and NGOs.

## Part 3: Expressions of antisemitic anti-Zionism in the Labour Party

### 3.1 Antisemitic anti-Zionism and the membership

The recent crop of suspensions from the Labour Party, almost without exception, have not been the result of old fashioned Jew hatred of a neo-Nazi type amongst the membership. Rather, almost every suspension has involved party members who have fallen under the influence of the discourse and movement of modern antisemitic anti-Zionism, as this selection illustrates.

- **Beinazir Lasharie:** Labour councillor in Kensington and Chelsea suspended for

sharing a video on Facebook claiming that ISIS is run by the Israeli secret service, and in another post said that she had heard 'compelling evidence' that Israel is behind ISIS. 'I've nothing against Jews ... just sharing it!' she wrote.

- **Naz Shah:** Bradford West MP 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 'problem solved' comment.
- **Ken Livingstone:** former Mayor of London suspended for bringing the party into disrepute by claiming Adolf Hitler was a Zionist before he 'went mad and ended up killing six million Jews'. Livingstone made the comments while defending Shah's comments.
- **Vicki Kirby:** former Labour parliamentary candidate originally suspended from the Labour party in September 2014. Suspended for a second time in March following an outcry that she was allowed to return after previously posting a series of tweets, including one calling Hitler a 'Zionist god' and another about Jews having 'big noses'.
- **Illyas Aziz:** Labour councillor for Nottingham was the first of three party members suspended over antisemitic social media posts on the same day. Aziz was found to have written a Facebook post in 2014 suggesting 'perhaps it would have been wiser to create Israel in America...they could even relocate now'. 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?'
- **Salim Mulla:** former mayor of Blackburn was suspended hours later after sharing the same Facebook post regarding relocating Israel that got Shah suspended, as well as sharing another post suggesting it is 'bloody obvious' Israel was behind some Islamic State (Isis) attacks.
- **Shah Hussain:** a councillor from Burnley was suspended the same day 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 to [sic] race in ww2.'
- **Aysegul Gurbuz:** Labour councillor for Luton

suspended over allegations that she posted a series of antisemitic tweets, including one describing Adolf Hitler as 'the greatest man in history' and if it was not for him 'these Jews would've wiped Palestine years ago'. (This was one of the few cases of plain old antisemitism of the 'Hitler was right' kind, though even here we find a co-mingling with antisemitic anti-Zionism of the 'Israelis are Nazis' kind.)

- **Khadim Hussain:** former Lord Mayor of Bradford and Labour councillor suspended by the party 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.
- **Miqdad Al-Nuaimi:** Newport councillor suspended for sending a series of tweets comparing Israel to the Nazi party and suggesting there is an 'Israeli connection' to Islamic State. It was also reported that tweets suggested he thought Jews have the 'same arrogant mentality as the Nazis'.
- **Terry Kelly:** Renfrewshire councillor suspended after it emerged he wrote a blog post in 2014 about the 'Jewish lobby' influencing the US politics and the Oscars, no less.
- **Tony Greenstein:** suspended in light of various comments. Refers to his critics as 'Zio idiots' and 'Zionist scum'. Argues that Zionism collaborated with the Nazis.
- **Gerry Downing:** expelled, re-admitted to, and now 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.'
- **Bob Campbell:** Momentum activist and party member in Middlesbrough, suspended after he told his followers on Facebook that 'ISIS is run by Israel', adding that IS has not attacked Israel 'because the dog doesn't bite its own tail'.

In short, Labour faces a problem of antisemitic anti-Zionism and not – or only very rarely – old-fashioned Jew hatred.

### 3.2 Antisemitic anti-Zionism and the leadership

However, it is unclear if the leader of the party – always so clear about opposing old-fashioned Jew hatred of the kind fought at Cable Street in the 1930s – has even an inkling of the existence and the danger of antisemitic anti-Zionism in 2016. As the CST have pointed out ‘The problem is not that Corbyn is an antisemite or a Holocaust denier – he is neither. The problem is that he seems to gravitate towards people who are, if they come with an anti-Israel sticker on them.’ The concern about the party leader felt by many party members, and not just Jewish members, is that he has a record of *indulging the antisemitism of others* when it comes wearing an ‘Israel’ badge, which these days, it so often does.

This is not only a matter of one word (‘friends’ – to describe his relationship to Hamas and Hezbollah). Nor is it only a matter of failing to mention another word (‘Israel’ – when he addressed the 2015 Labour Friends of Israel reception). It is not only that he has failed to pay Isaac Herzog – the leader of the Israeli Labour Party and a fellow member of the Socialist International – the basic courtesy of replying to his letter expressing concern about antisemitism in the UK party and inviting him to Israel – months after it was sent. It is also that, at times, the leader has been an enabler or even a purveyor of antisemitic anti-Zionism and he seems to have no self-awareness of that fact.

For example, the leader’s support for the antisemitic organisation Hezbollah flies in the face of Labour’s best traditions. He has defended Hezbollah as ‘an organisation that is bringing about long term peace and social justice and political justice in the whole region’ – a truly appalling statement. Hezbollah are an antisemitic Islamist goose-stepping ‘Party of God’ who persecute (and assassinate) liberals and democrats in Lebanon. The Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah has said, ‘If Jews all gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide.’ (NY Times, May 23, 2004, p. 15, section 2, column 1.) Hezbollah were enthusiastically [slaughtering](#) Syrian civilians on behalf of the Assad regime long [before](#) ISIS or Jabhat Al-Nusra joined the fray, and more recently they have been starving Syrians to death

on behalf of Assad.

The Leader’s full-throated defence of the vicious antisemitic Islamist Raed Salah, discussed earlier in the submission, is also profoundly concerning.

The party leader, and other leadership figures, must understand that antisemitism is not reducible to *one* of the historical forms it has taken: Nazi/fascist and neo-fascist antisemitism. He needs, to be blunt, to stop being so intellectually lazy and come to terms with the evolution of antisemitism.

More: the repeated smear by some senior party figures that the crisis that prompted this enquiry was concocted by ‘Zionists’ to ward off legitimate criticism of Israel, *is itself* part of the discourse of antisemitic anti-Zionism, being a form of antisemitism denialism and victim-reversal. We have heard Len McCluskey (‘Labour’s Antisemitism Row “Cynical Attempt” To Challenge Jeremy Corbyn’s Leadership, Len McCluskey Warns’), Ken Livingstone (‘Ken Livingstone blames “embittered Blairite MPs” for antisemitism row’) and the party leader (‘Jeremy Corbyn insists “Labour has no antisemitism problem” and suggests critics “nervous” of his power as party suspends Ken Livingstone’) engage in antisemitism denialism and victim-reversal.

### Part 4: Recommendations

We need to walk the walk not simply talk the talk. There should be no hierarchy when it comes to racism. Racism is racism. And if it means members of my party – senior members including members of the NEC – being trained on what antisemitism is then so be it. [Sadiq Khan](#), Labour Mayor of London, 2016.

The party needs to urgently construct an intellectual and cultural firewall to separate criticism of Israeli policy – which is legitimate, and which, even when unfair, remains non-lethal – from the demonization of Israel which is not legitimate and which, given what we know about how discourse can precede violence, may well be lethal.

*No one* is suggesting the party take an ‘Israel

right or wrong' approach. *No one* is saying Israel is beyond criticism. Legitimate criticism, even when unfair, includes opposition to the occupation and the settlement project, opposition to Israel's periodic restoration deterrence against Hamas rockets by the use of 'disproportionate' force, and opposition to inequalitarian, illiberal and racist forces within Israel.

*No one* is suggesting the party give up on our duty as democrats to support a Palestinian state, achieved through negotiations, as an expression of the right to national self-determination of the Palestinian people. The author of this submission is the editor of *Fathom: for a deeper understanding of Israel and the region*, a journal in which critical perspectives on Israeli society and politics are a constant presence, as they should be, showcasing the critical voices of Palestinian politicians and activists, Israel's Arab citizens, Israeli feminists, reform Jews, and left-wing Israelis.

**This submission ends with two recommendations that could help the party deal with its antisemitic anti-Zionism problem over the long-term: the adoption of a version of the 'EUMC Working Definition' of antisemitism, and, taking up Sadiq Khan's suggestion, a national programme to educate the membership in its spirit.**

#### 4.1 Adopt the EUMC Working Definition

The party should adopt a version of The EUMC Working Definition (European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, now the Agency For Fundamental Rights, FRA). It is used around the world, from the [European Parliament](#), to the [UK College of Policing](#), to the [US Department of State](#) and the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance](#) (See Hirsh 2013 on the history of the EUMC Working Definition).

The Definition is so important for the party because it states that particular kinds of hostility to Israel 'could, taking into account the overall context' - that qualifier providing the flexibility needed to take context into account - be a manifestation of antisemitism. The kinds of hostility the Definition has in mind are highlighted in bold below, as part of a longer list of examples of antisemitism included within the EUMC Working Definition:

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanising, demonising, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective - such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.

**Examples of the ways in which antisemitism manifests itself with regard to the State of Israel taking into account the overall context could include:**

- **Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination (e.g. by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour).**
- **Applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.**
- **Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g. claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterise Israel or Israelis.**
- **Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.**
- **Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.**

The EUMC Definition also makes it clear that, on the other hand, 'criticism of Israel similar to that

levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.'

### **Some people oppose the EUMC Definition for one of two reasons:**

(a) they falsely believe, or claim to believe, that the Definition defines *all* criticism of Israel as antisemitic. In fact, the Definition is *explicit* in rejecting that very notion.

(b) they refuse to accept that *any* criticism of Israel can be antisemitic. For them, *any way* of talking about Israel, even the Nazi analogy, *any* policy towards Israel, from boycott to abolition, is never antisemitic. For these dogmatists, the two circles just never meet.

If the party adopts either of these positions it will be a disaster, and its crisis will likely become chronic. Antisemitic anti-Zionism will flourish, the fundamental perception of the party among the electorate will be that Labour is 'extremist', there may well be an exodus of long-standing members and donors; and the climate for Jews in this country will become less welcoming and more dangerous.

### **4.2: Develop a political education programme**

While suspensions are necessary to establish red lines, the radical answer to the crisis in the party is a long-term, well-resourced political education programme.

The party can recover from this crisis. Labour still officially supports a policy of mutual recognition, engagement, negotiation and compromise to secure two states for two peoples: a viable Palestine and a secure Israel. It has long-standing links to both the Histadrut and the Palestinian General Federation of Trades Unions (PGFTU); it can talk to the Israeli Labour Party and to Fatah; it has an active Friends of Israel group and an active Friends of Palestine group. Now it needs to educate its new membership in the democratic spirit of those policies and links, and in the spirit of the EUMC Working Definition.

The party leadership must educate itself and the membership about what is wrong with refusing

the right to national self-determination of just one people, the Jewish people; about the active promotion of the destruction of just one state in the world, the little Jewish one; and about proposals to boycott just one state in the world, Israel.

The possibility of asking the highly respected Community Security Trust to advise about this education programme should be explored. They are the experts who deal with antisemitism everyday and who produce a detailed report each year into antisemitic discourse as well as antisemitic incidents. The Jewish Labour Movement, a party affiliate, should also be consulted.

### **4.3 Create a new party campaign: 'Pro': pro-Palestine, pro-Israel, pro-peace**

Labour must offer members a better, more democratic alternative: campaigning in solidarity with all who support the two states for two peoples solution: pro-Palestine, pro-Israel, pro-peace. The creation of a new campaign and a new or 'third narrative' could help provide party members with a progressive campaigning alternative.

### **4.4 A final word**

Whatever the subjective motivations of the individuals who indulge it, antisemitic anti-Zionism - as a programme to abolish Israel, a movement to boycott Israel and discourse to demonise Israel - is proving to be, in its real-world effects, an incitement to discrimination and even physical violence against Jews. It begins by refusing to accept that 'history has forged a Hebrew speaking Jewish nation on the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean' (Hirsh 2007). It carries on by adopting the reactionary programme of ending the very existence of Israel. It goes on, over the years, justifying this programme by a means of a rigid dogma, a code that reduces an entire people to 'Zios' and equates Israel with the Nazis. And it ends in the grotesque chaos of the party having to suspend its own members, its own councillors, its own Mayors and MPs and to launch an enquiry into antisemitism in its ranks. Enough is enough.

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