

## The Great Pretenders: the Rebranding of Antisemitism

Essays 2018-2020

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Rhetoric about the 1 per cent and economic inequality has the same underlying theme — a small group of very rich people who cleverly manipulate others to defend their interests. So anti-capitalism masks and normalises anti-Semitism.

John McTernan, March 2019

Make no mistake, branding socialism a 'new' form of antisemitism reveals more than a lack of empathy with the oppressed; it revives the 'old' antisemitism, shielding power by portraying it as 'Jewish'.

In September 2017 Amnesty International published a survey of abusive tweets sent to female MPs during the course of the 2017 General Election. Of the more than 28,000 tweets found, nearly half, ten times more than any other Member, were sent to just one MP, Labour's Diane Abbott.

Many messages sent to Abbott featured the casual use of words and slurs about her race, gender or appearance. In Abbott's case, mostly they were devoid of any political content. Even with Abbott removed from the reckoning, the study found that the remaining Black and Asian women received 35% more abusive tweets than their White counterparts and almost half the angry tweets were sent to women MPs from the SNP. In contrast to the impression given by media, the study suggested online abuse of high profile women is directed disproportionately at those who are non white or politically left leaning.

If you are looking for outrage about any of this, examples of Abbott's 'bullied' fellow MPs from the right of the party speaking out in her support or headline calls in the press for 'action' you will be disappointed. Far from feeling obliged to 'support' her, mostly the press joined in the abuse while Abbott's political enemies criticised her decision to withdraw from the campaign for 'health' reasons. While, in April 2018, Luciana Berger, speaking

in Parliament of the 'poisonous' antisemitism directed at her, was hailed for her 'courage', Abbott came under attack for her failure to 'do more' about the racism directed at others.

No matter how the abuse aimed at Abbott is being 'perceived' it is certainly more conservatively than antisemitism where the sentiments of left wingers angry about Palestine or foreign wars are achieving a far higher profile than the entrenched racism and antisemitism of the nationalist right.

While most of the abuse directed at Luciana Berger was traced to right wingers, she, and her allies, directed their attack at the left, a pattern followed in the cases of Louise Ellman and Margaret Hodge. Whatever prompted Berger's admission to the status of victim, rather than Abbott, it was not a dispassionate assessment of their experiences.

Beginning always with deference to the instincts of 'exceptional' people, in practice those tuned ideologically to the 'ideals' of the corporate-military complex, it is the norm for right wing media to associate support for the powerless with hatred of the powerful and to express it in terms contrived to appeal to ordinary people; 'hatred' of democracy, of the USA, of white people, of freedom, of 'our' way of life; and naturally, in the standards applied by anti capitalists to Israel, 'hatred of Jews'.

Yet, politicians of the mainstream, outraged by this 'hatred' have trotted into the lobbies multiple times to vote for the mass killing of Arabs and Africans for which 'standards' they do not expect to be called to account. When in public they defend the 'right' of western nations to carry out assassinations, poison populations with chemical weapons, destroy economies, overthrow governments or fund insurrections, they are heard with respect; never, in the 'debate' on antisemitism, are the 'associations' of these pro war politicians mentioned, let alone condemned.

Claims that 'the left' is racist towards 'people like us', common in right wing media, reflect an anger, driven by feelings of entitlement, which has proved, historically, to be far more dangerous than the real thing. In its focus on the 'perceptions' of the 'threatened', the 'reporting' duplicates the tendentious formula of what sociologists call the 'moral panic'; the 'problem' defined by

politically connected people, is 'adopted', insulated from examination by the power of 'consensus' and expanded, progressively, in both scope and degree until dissent becomes 'heresy'.

In addition to the tracing surveys, the only substantive studies, 'You Gov' 2015-2017, the 'Institute of Jewish Policy Review' September 2017 and 'The Economist' October 2018 found antisemitic attitudes disproportionately on the political right, the latter suggesting those least likely to target Jews were on the anti Zionist 'far left'. None made any impact on the media narrative which continues to report the problem of antisemitism from the point of view of the right.

If we accept, unthinkingly, the right of 'exceptional' (ie advantaged) people to define 'truth', we become prisoners of the monumental system of deception with which they rule over our lives. We should not be deceived into thinking that this time something different, something honest, is going on. Make no mistake, branding socialism a 'new' form of antisemitism reveals more than a lack of empathy with the oppressed; it revives the 'old' antisemitism, shielding power by portraying it as 'Jewish'.

*"I'm not saying money or power is Jewish but I know it's what they mean".* By this inversion ... portraying threats to wealth or privilege as antisemitism ... the same end is reached; through an invented association with Jews, the crimes of great power are protected from being understood or exposed. In September 2019 the European Parliament passed a resolution equating Nazism with 'Stalinism', another defining moment in the history of post war revisionism. In the hands of our modern day 'appeasers', keen to obliterate the overwhelming role of socialists in the anti-fascist struggle, another antisemitic trope is being slowly but shamelessly resurrected ... blaming the war on 'Communism'.

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It is important to understand the defining character of 'journalism' in the West, where the price of a job is not seeing what everyone else knows. Here,

instead of evidence, 'truth' is mediated through the perceptual world of the great and powerful, viewed by the BBC as 'expertise' and followed invariably by an open ended demand that 'something must be done'.

In relation to claims about a dangerous 'new' antisemitism, the evidence, from You Gov, the IJPR and the Economist says antisemitism is less common than other forms of prejudice and found disproportionately on the right. The claims of institutional antisemitism on the left rely substantially on the 'testimony' of right wing 'victims' but this too conflicts with the AI and other searches of social media messages which find abuse targeted disproportionately at non whites and those on the left.

Truth as it is 'identified' by mainstream media is the reality 'perceived' by pro establishment politicians and commentators; in this case the alternative truth that a dangerous new antisemitism is spreading across society and it is the peculiar territory of people on the 'left' who talk in 'code' about 'the powerful'.

The pro war lobby, for that is who they are, wants the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism adopted in its entirety without amendment for two reasons only; in contentious 'examples' of possible antisemitism, added by the IHRA, is found its political narrative; more importantly, it creates an alternative 'understanding' whereby 'evidence' can be evaluated and measured differently.

In the subtext of the IHRA definition, the hierarchical 'order' that governs the political structure of international affairs becomes the 'standard' by which we 'interpret' a form of racism! In defiance of the equality upon which, theoretically, human rights law is based, the IHRA has determined that, as a 'democratic' (ie western) nation, Israel is entitled to the benefits of the superior status conferred on its allies; in other words immunity from the judgements meted out routinely to 'non democratic' (ie non western) nations. Equally, an attitude regarded as racism in everyone else, the equating of Israel with 'Jews', is accepted by the IHRA as legitimate for its supporters. In treating Israel as 'representative' of an identity, people or

religion, it escapes the accountability to international law applied, at least nominally, to other sovereign states.

Under the terms of the IHRA 'examples', alone among nations, Israel cannot be called racist or compared to Nazi Germany, epithets aimed routinely at its neighbours and at Palestine campaigners. The incorporation of Zionist belief systems treating Israel as 'Jews' and the denial of the right to question the exclusivity or misuse of the Holocaust, contrives limitless opportunities for supporters of western supremacy to 'define' any challenge to elite power or exposure of its crimes as 'hatred'. In failing to acknowledge the political case against Zionism, the IHRA has made the essence of anti Zionism, the belief that Israel is a colonial settler state established and maintained by force, unsayable.

It isn't by their race, gender or religion that we can identify the aims of the revisionists. They differ from their critics in their core political doctrine, an idea embroiled historically in racist thinking, the 'leadership' role of western states. Scan the voting records on 'they work for you' and public advocates of the idea of 'left antisemitism' will occupy the same space where the elementary principles of equality as they are understood by everyone else are startlingly absent: Berger, Eagle, Ellman, Hodge, Mann, Smeeth, Umunna, Woodcock; 'generally voted for the use of UK military forces in combat operations overseas', 'voted for the Iraq war' or 'voted against investigations into the Iraq war' and 'voted in favour of replacing trident with a new nuclear weapons system'. Given the 'standards' applied here by these MPs to other nations, the branding of grassroots activists as 'racist' for advocating bans or boycotts is beyond parody.

As happens in all moral panics, there were signs very early that the public perception of what is 'proven' will be 'reconstructed' by favoured ideologues using new 'methodologies'. In a recently published survey of social media, the 'Community Security Trust' found 15,000 antisemitic tweets from all sources over a twelve month period. As Jonathan Cook observed, this included the month of June 2016 during which Labour MP Ruth Smeeth claimed she received 25,000 such messages. As she did when she accused a Labour activist who questioned her 'flirtations' with the Tory press, Smeeth

‘applied’ a definition of antisemitism radically different from that understood by the trust. The failure of liberal media to subject Smeeth’s claims to critical examination illustrates the character of their classless ‘anti racism’; they prefer ‘listening’, which, in practice, means listening to the ‘special pleading’ of ‘exceptional’ people.

In March 2013 an employment tribunal criticized a pro Israel academic who, based on its members passing pro Palestine resolutions, claimed his union, UCU, was ‘institutionally antisemitic’. In spite of testimony from Howard Jacobson, David Hirst and John Mann, prominent advocates of the ‘perception’ model, the tribunal dismissed the case which it called ‘an impermissible attempt to achieve a political end by litigious means’. A few short years later, feeling ‘harassed’ or ‘disturbed’ by the pro Palestine views of others is likely to prove more than enough to result in a finding of ‘institutional antisemitism’.

It is in the controversial parts of the IHRA definition, not in the attitude of her critics, that an ‘exceptional’ or double standard is being created for Israel. On the basis of a reactionary concept of ‘hatred’ rooted in the defence of privilege there is no question ‘antisemitism’ will ‘rise’ and be ‘found’ disproportionately on the left.

Orchestrated by people who are absorbed completely in the narrative world of the powerful, this panic does more than merely buy our agreement to bad policy. What is being slowly but systematically ‘removed’ here is the perception of most people outside the ruling elites, that the Palestinians are oppressed by Israel.

It began with ‘modest’ allegations of ‘infiltration’ of Labour by an ‘extremist’ fringe. It moved on to Corbyn and his ‘tolerance’ of ‘antisemites’. Currently, it is straying towards the classification of anti zionism as ‘antisemitism’. Ultimately, the outrage will move beyond Israel until the end game is reached; once we find ourselves thinking of socialism as the ‘true face of fascism’, capitalism’s traditional allies on the far right are rehabilitated.

Of all the retreats by the Corbyn left, trying it seems to assuage the almost never ending fury of the ruling class, the impulse to placate the 'left antisemitism' narrative, with its focus on opponents of western wars, is by far the most seriously misguided.

It is true that high status people have little need to 'understand' the nature of their privilege and its distorting impact on how they view the world. Where opportunity to influence the 'consensus' is unmediated, there is little to deter politicians and journalists from descending to outlandish deceits in support of favoured positions. When evidence suggests an idea is false, in this case the idea that antisemitism is 'now' an ideology of the left, they will call out the 'denial' as 'proof' of the disease. Equally, the antisemitic 'trope' by which anti Zionists are assumed to mean something different to what they say is predicated on the precise opposite of the standard reserved by the accusers for themselves; invariably, those who hide dark intent behind tropes of light insist on their right to be 'believed'.

Contrary to what the 'populist' press often says about the poor or minorities, research suggests marginal people are inclined to hide experiences of harassment or discrimination rather than invent or embellish. In the outlandishly exaggerated, dramatised, misrepresented, overplayed or fabricated nature of many of the public allegations of bullying or antisemitism aimed by the right at the left mostly we are not hearing the voices of excluded or misunderstood people nor any reasoned assessment of their concerns. What we are hearing is described quite accurately by songwriter Leon Rosselson as the 'special pleading' of people who have no idea what it is like not being heard.

Almost universally, those promoting the 'left antisemitism' panic are supremacists, believers in the right of western nations to subordinate others, a concept uncontroversial here but outlawed under the UN Charter. It leads directly to what we are seeing now, the perspectives of Palestinians living in ghettos and refugee camps disappearing under the weight of outrage at the 'racism' of their cause.

Given that many people here, for whatever reasons, remain complicit in the expansionist 'ideals' of western 'foreign policy', the acquiescence of 'mainstream' Jewish organisations in Israel's colonisation of Palestine is to be expected. The virtue of being 'supported' does not make Zionism the 'voice' of a community 'speaking out' about racism. As their lives are governed by Israel, a majority opinion on Zionism may well prevail among Palestinians; since they are never asked, we can safely assume it is not a viewpoint we are expected to 'believe'.

Having witnessed the systematic 'othering' of Middle Eastern and African nations including Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Iran and Syria, and the decades of torture inflicted upon their societies, the Labour left has surely grasped the painful truth that no concession to the war party, driven as it is by unlimited aims, can ever contain its sense of entitlement.

Apart from being grossly misjudged, the surrenders of the Corbyn faction to the faux angst of political conjurers mired in crimes against humanity is a major kick in the teeth for everyone campaigning at the grassroots for a more equitable world. By adopting in full a definition of antisemitism (IHRA) rejected by just about every country on the planet outside the Western 'sphere of influence', Labour's supposedly left leaning NEC has accepted the subordination of non Jews living in Israel and Palestine.

Under the IHRA 'examples' pro war politicians living here may compare their experiences to pogroms, purges and even the Holocaust while for those living under occupation to say the same about their oppressors is 'racism'. Having forced the removal of the 1975 UN General Assembly resolution which condemned Zionism as a form of racism, every capitulation to the IHRA 'small print' is for the exceptionalists another mark in the continual remoulding of history and 'opinion' to reflect their minority interest; in this case establishing the 'role' of Palestinians as people who 'deny' the rights of those who 'settled' their land.

Parts of these essays were published during 2018 on the website of the Socialist Labour Party (UK)

<https://nationalbolshevism.com/resources/>

