

Ha'aretz joins witch-hunt against UK Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn

By Jean Shaoul
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Ever since Jeremy Corbyn's election as Labour Party leader in 2015, the British public has been bombarded with a torrent of lies declaring that he is an anti-Semite.

The right-wing slander campaign has been concocted and promoted internationally by an alliance of Labour's Blairite right-wing, Zionist groups linked directly to the State of Israel and the Conservative Party. Their aim is to silence and criminalise any signs of growing left-wing sentiment expressed in the support for Corbyn's minimalist reforms.

The Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* has now joined this despicable witch-hunt. As Israel's leading liberal daily, it has an influence out of proportion to its four percent Hebrew readership, thanks to an online English edition aimed at the Jewish Diaspora.

Two articles give the flavour of *Ha'aretz* coverage.

Last month, UK-based freelance journalist Rosie Whitehouse wrote an article headlined, "The Last anti-Jewish Pogrom in Britain Occurred Under a Labour Government."

Hers is a scurrilous rewriting of history tarring the 1945 Labour government with anti-Semitism so as to assert a continuity with Corbyn's tepid brand of Fabianism.

Her focus is on the "Sergeants Affair"—the murder of two British army sergeants by Zionist Irgun paramilitaries in Palestine in 1947, then ruled by Britain. Drawing attention to the anti-Jewish riots that broke out in the UK as a result and labelling them Britain's "forgotten pogrom," she attributes political responsibility to the Labour government because it "let down and failed to protect the Jewish community."

This can happen again, Whitehouse insinuates, if Corbyn is not stopped from becoming prime minister. Of the backlash against Jews in Britain, she declares, "The unnerving lesson here is that Labour policy created a toxic atmosphere in which the riots erupted spontaneously" and concludes, "In Britain today there is a similarly toxic atmosphere."

Whitehouse insists that the Labour Party "is bound to set its house in order before its leader's hostile milieu lights a touch paper for something worse."

She claims the root cause of the 1947 riots lay in Labour reneging on its election promise to lift restrictions imposed in 1939 on Jewish immigration to Palestine in order to "appease the Arabs who opposed thousands of Jewish refugees from the

Holocaust finding a home in Palestine."

"A Jewish insurgency against the British [in Palestine] was growing, as was violence between the Jewish and Arab communities. The Labour government chose to play one off against the other in a dangerous gamble," she continued.

This is history according to the most right-wing Zionist pedigree. Contrary to her claims, the history of the Labour Party has in general been one of support for the Zionist project.

In 1917, the Liberal-led war coalition that included the Labour Party, issued the infamous Balfour Declaration in which Britain sought to wrap its predatory aims in the Middle East in pledges of both a homeland for the Jews under its "protection" and independence for the Arabs (set out in the 1915 McMahon-Hussein correspondence), in return for support against the Ottoman Empire, Germany's ally in the war.

Britain believed that the establishment of a strategic client regime in Palestine would help consolidate its empire and safeguard the Suez Canal route to India.

However, opposition came from both the Arab regimes in the oil-rich Middle East and the Palestinians in the face of Jewish immigration into the country and anti-Arab terrorist atrocities—carried out by the likes of Vladimir Jabotinsky's fascist-influenced Revisionist party and the terrorist gangs it spawned.

As Palestine became increasingly ungovernable, Britain repeatedly shifted its policies, supporting at one time the Jews, immigration into Palestine and Jewish nationalism and at another the Arabs and Arab nationalism.

In 1930, Ernest Bevin, the Transport and General Workers Union leader, who would become Foreign Secretary in the post-war Labour government, helped overturn the attempts by Labour Colonial Secretary Lord Passfield (Sidney Webb) to restrict Jewish immigration and land acquisition and to establish a legislative council in Palestine that would inevitably have an Arab majority.

In late 1935, the Labour Party opposed renewed plans for a Palestinian legislative council. Its defeat led to the 1936 Arab Revolt that was suppressed with utmost brutality by the British military, fully supported by the Labour Party, and accompanied by an intensified anti-Arab terrorist campaign.

In 1939, as war with Germany approached, the Labour Party

opposed the Chamberlain Conservative government's White Paper restricting Jewish immigration and proposing a bi-national state in Palestine.

When Labour came to power in 1945, the status of Britain in world affairs had diminished. It was beset by colonial demands for independence and was unable to resolve the Palestine conflict on its own terms. In 1947, the United Nations rejected its proposals for a bi-national state, proposing instead the partition of Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state, which the US and the Soviet Union supported as a way of blocking Britain's position in the Middle East and furthering their own strategic interests.

The Irgun killing of the two British soldiers alluded to by Whitehouse took place during these tumultuous events. The paramilitary organisation, led by Menachem Begin who became prime minister of Israel in 1977, and is the political ancestor of the current Likud-led coalition of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was violently opposed to a bi-national state.

In pursuit of an exclusivist Jewish state, Irgun waged a terrorist campaign against the Arabs—the real pogrom of the period—aimed at their expulsion from Palestine. One of its most notorious actions was the April 1948 Deir Yassin massacre where 250 men, women and children were murdered in cold blood. It was one of the most significant factors in precipitating the exodus of some 750,000 Arabs from Palestine, who along with their descendants remain permanent refugees (See here and here.)

In 1947, the Irgun kidnapped and hung the two sergeants in retaliation for death sentences passed on three of its own fighters. The British tabloid press seized on the killings. The right-wing *Daily Express*—now aligned with the right-wing UK Independence Party and one of the leaders of the Corbyn witch-hunt—whipped up a furore, set against the background of austerity Britain where there was widespread poverty and hunger, questioning the loyalty of British Jews.

Former members of Oswald Mosley's pre-war British Union of Fascists—relaunched as the Union Movement in 1948—also exploited the incident.

Therefore, far from being “spontaneous” as Whitehouse claims, it was the gutter press helped by the fascists who fomented the ensuing anti-Jewish riots. And although they were the largest ever seen on the streets of Britain, with no broader popular support, they rapidly fizzled out.

The anti-Jewish riots were certainly serious, but there was no anti-Jewish “pogrom” in Britain in 1947. Indeed, there have been no pogroms at any time in modern British history. Moreover, Whitehouse presents no evidence that the Labour government played any role in the disturbances, or that it failed to protect the Jews, because she cannot. As foreign secretary, Bevin was accused of anti-Semitism by the Zionists for backtracking on Labour's commitment to Jewish immigration and statehood.

Whitehouse's attack on Corbyn was followed up with another piece by *Ha'aretz* journalist Anshel Pfeffer, who holds dual British/Israeli citizenship, in an opinion piece, “Why Corbynism Is a Threat to Jews throughout the Western World.”

His slanderous article has the merit of making crystal clear that the aim of the manufactured outrage over Corbyn's supposed anti-Semitism has nothing to do with defending Jews. It is aimed at silencing all criticism of Israel's murderous policy towards the Palestinians in the occupied territories and its recent apartheid-style Nation-State law, which enshrines Jewish supremacy as the legal foundation of Israel.

But that is not all. Pfeffer and Corbyn's opponents are opposed to Corbyn's domestic agenda and broader foreign policy. They are determined to prevent the emergence of any socially egalitarian policies, much less socialism, as a political perspective.

Pfeffer speaks for those in ruling circles who fear that Corbyn will be unable to contain the aspirations of the tens of thousands of predominantly young members that joined the party and voted Corbyn into the leadership in 2015, in the belief that he would oppose austerity and war. They will tolerate no restraints on the divine right of the corporate and financial sectors to exploit the working class. He warns, “Jeremy Corbyn is the only radical left-wing and truly socialist leader on the cusp of power in the West. If Labour under his leadership does win the next general election, his ideology will become hugely influential, across Europe and in America as well.”

Prefacing his remarks on Corbyn's foreign policy, Pfeffer makes the politically revealing suggestion, “Put Israel and the Jews aside for a moment. Look at the rest of his ‘foreign policy’ issues.”

He then regurgitates all the other “crimes” that have been ascribed to Corbyn over the last period—his opposition to the US-UK bid to topple the Assad regime in Syria and his reluctance to sign up to the anti-Russia propaganda campaign.

The broader political goal of the Corbyn witch-hunt is now out in the open: it is the silencing of all opposition to the British ruling elite's agenda of social reaction at home and stepped-up militarism and war abroad, in which Israel plays a vital role in the Middle East. This is the campaign that the supposedly liberal *Ha'aretz* now spearheads.

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