

BBC Panorama witch-hunts Corbyn and Labour Party on bogus anti-Semitism charges

By Richard Tyler
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Britain's Labour Party, and Jeremy Corbyn in particular, have faced a constant barrage of anti-Semitism allegations ever since he became party leader in September 2015.

These allegations have originated in the Labour Party's Blairite right wing, whose candidates for party leader lost resoundingly to Corbyn both in 2015 and again in 2016, as well as Zionists and supporters of the right-wing Israeli government. The charges have been relentlessly amplified by the media.

The latest attack was mounted by the British Broadcasting Corporation's "Panorama" programme, which broadcast a segment Wednesday evening titled "Is Labour anti-Semitic?" Containing nothing new politically, its significance was its airing by the state-funded broadcaster, which has a nominal responsibility to be politically impartial.

This was, however, political propaganda from start to finish. Moreover, the BBC followed the hour-long programme by devoting the first 20 minutes of its 10 PM news report to comments on its own documentary.

The piece was presided over by political editor Laura Kuenssberg. In January 2017, the BBC's own watchdog found that Kuenssberg had inaccurately reported Corbyn's views in the aftermath of the November 2015 terror attacks in Paris.

"Panorama" provided a platform for politically hostile former Labour Party staff members to air their allegations, as well as several Zionists whose political affiliations were not disclosed, depicting them as "whistle-blowers."

The target of the anti-Semitism smears was not just Corbyn, but all those who have joined the Labour Party following his election as leader, and, by extension, all those on the left. The presenter and journalist behind the programme, John Ware, soberly intoned that "party membership surged, some attracted by his decades of radical left activism."

The next to speak was Mike Creighton, former director of complaints, who said: "There was an increase in membership from a particular perspective. And they brought

with them a particular world view, which unfortunately allowed breathing space for anti-Semitism to arise."

To make sure the message was clear, Sam Mathews, former chief investigator under Creighton, added, "This is about the creation of a culture within the Labour Party that makes anti-Semites feel that it is their political home."

According to the Electronic Intifada website—which has documented the use of fake Twitter profiles posing as Corbyn supporters to post virulent anti-Semitic statements—two of those appearing on the programme, who were not named, are members of the Jewish Labour Movement (JLM), which has close ties to the Israeli government.

One of the "experts" brought on was Alan Johnson, presented as a "life-long Labour Party member and historian," who has "campaigns against anti-Semitism on the left since the 1980s." His contribution consisted of laying down what is an "acceptable" criticism of Israel and what is not. "You can say the occupation is wrong," he declared, "you can say the settlements are wrong, but if you say Israel is an inherently racist endeavour, that should be abolished, that is something different."

The footage then switches to Corbyn addressing a pro-Palestinian rally, and the voice-over speaks of him sharing platforms with Hamas, which "wants Israel to be dismantled."

Johnson stands on the right wing of the Labour Party and was a co-author of the 2006 "Euston Manifesto," which American neo-conservative William Kristol described as an "impressive document." As the WSWS pointed out at the time of its launch, many of those supporting the manifesto "come from a left-Zionist background and are now grouped around *Engage*, which is dedicated to identifying and opposing 'left and liberal anti-Semitism in the labour movement.'"

What "Panorama" conveniently omitted to say was that Johnson, far from being an "independent" academic, has since 2011 been an employee of BICOM, the British Israel Communications and Research Centre, whose *raison d'être*

is to provide favourable news coverage for the Israeli government.

BICOM is largely funded through its chair, Poju Zabłudowicz, a London-based billionaire who has also channelled funds to the Conservative Party and the Conservative Friends of Israel.

The other featured talking head was Dave Rich, director of communications at the Community Security Trust (CST) and author of the 2016 book “*The Left’s Jewish Problem: Jeremy Corbyn, Israel and Anti-Semitism*.” The CST funded the doctoral thesis research that produced the book.

The CST is a registered charity, but it is politically Zionist and has played a key role in the anti-Semitism witch hunt of the left. One director is David Menton, who is also a director of BICOM. Its advisory board includes leading Conservatives such as Michael Gove MP and Colonel Richard Kemp, who said in 2017 that because Corbyn opposed the use of nuclear weapons, “he would have blood on his hands” and “must never be elected to lead this country.”

Labourites on the CST board include arch anti-Corbyn plotters Louise Ellman, Ivan Lewis, Denis MacShane, Jim Murphy, John Mann and Tony Blair’s former Middle East envoy, Lord Levy of Mill Hill.

In a statement published on the Labour Party website following the broadcast, an official spokesperson “completely reject[ed] any claim that Labour is anti-Semitic.” The website branded the programme as “seriously inaccurate” and a “politically one-sided polemic,” whose makers had “breached basic journalistic standards, invented quotes and edited emails to change their meaning.” Those cited as whistle-blowers were “disaffected” and politically hostile. “It was an overtly biased intervention by the BBC in party political controversy,” the statement concluded.

But once again, rather than standing up to the anti-Semitism smears and exposing those behind it and their political motives, the Corbyn leadership issued advice, leaked to the *Huffington Post*, to “socialist media activists.” The advice included (all capitals in original):

“DO NOT ADVANCE ANY GENERAL CRITICISMS of Panorama or the show. They are correct to raise Antisemitism. It’s a very very real & serious problem in Labour that Jeremy & Jennie are tackling.

“DO NOT CRITICISE THE LABOUR RIGHT or [Blairite Deputy Labour Leader Tom] WATSON over this next few days in relation to Antisemitism, as this will play into their hands.

“Try not to commentate on the documentary as it transpires... Try to park your emotions for a few days.”

Watson felt no such compunction to stay silent. He

tweeted immediately after the programme was broadcast: “I am shocked, chilled and appalled by what I’ve just seen on Panorama. Hearing the testimony of party members and former staff was harrowing. They are not ‘disaffected,’ they have been incredibly brave. Very serious questions now have to be answered.”

Like the witch-hunter he is, he called for the automatic exclusion from the party of members accused of anti-Semitism.

It was announced yesterday that more than 30 whistle-blowers—including the eight who resigned and were shown on “Panorama,” but also current members of staff—will submit evidence to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) alleging anti-Semitism in the party.

The EHRC has begun contacting up to 100 party figures it wants to question as part of an investigation to “determine whether the Labour party has unlawfully discriminated against, harassed or victimised people because they are Jewish.”

Those contacted are being warned they may be committing a criminal offence if they withhold information.

What the “Panorama” witch-hunt does show is that Corbyn’s refusal to expel the Blairites is a political crime for which Labour members and the working class are paying the price. He and his leadership clique would rather see the mass expulsion of their own supporters and hand the party over to Watson and his ilk than do anything that could risk a rebellion against the Labour and trade union bureaucracy and ignite a broader movement of the working class.

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