Four years of Labour antisemitism under Corbyn

September 26, 2019

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The Jerusalem Post

<https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Four-years-of-Labour-antisemitism-under-Corbyn-603069>

September 2015 was a disastrous month for Jews in two major European countries. Two highly negative events occurred. First, German Chancellor Angela Merkel decided on a massive welcome policy for asylum-seekers. Germany has since let in more than a million people without selection. Many of them are Muslims who came from countries where antisemitism is among the worst in the world. Studies show that antisemitism among these immigrants is far more widespread than among the indigenous population.

The second very negative event was the election of the extreme leftist Jeremy Corbyn as chairman of the UK Labour Party. This has had a multitude of major consequences. They go far beyond the huge increase of the widespread antisemitic hate mongering in Labour for the last four years.

Due to Brexit uncertainty, Great Britain is in great confusion. The possibility that Corbyn will become the next British prime minister cannot be ruled out. That would be a first for post-war Western Europe: a democratically elected leader of a major country who has called representatives of the genocidal terrorist movements Hezbollah and Hamas his “brothers” and “friends.” Corbyn has also made donations to a Holocaust denier and welcomed another. He is a long-term anti-Israel inciter and a part-time classic antisemite.

Labour accepted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism in September 2018. Corbyn’s hate-mongering reactions against Israel are thus often antisemitic acts according to the party’s own definition of it. Recently, it has also become known that Corbyn signed the 2002 Cairo Declaration, which stated that Israel robbed the Palestinians of their land and accused the US of providing “unlimited support to the Zionist perpetrators of genocidal crimes against the Palestinian people.” Yet polls show that while approval of Conservative leader Boris Johnson are higher in almost all sections of British society, Corbyn is seen as more favorable among the country’s 18-24 age group.

Labour is currently under investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). Only once before has a party been investigated by this commission, the small extreme right-wing British National party.

A detailed document by Labour member and scholar Alan Johnson shows why Labour currently is an institutionally antisemitic party. A recent poll found that most members of the party are in denial about its antisemitism. Only 23% of those surveyed agreed that the party has a “serious” antisemitism problem. Thirty-seven percent blamed the antisemitism on accusations from “political opponents who want to undermine Jeremy Corbyn.” Another 17% blamed “the mainstream media.”

FORMER LABOUR staff members who appeared in the BBC Panorama documentary Is Labour Antisemitic? have stated that before Corbyn’s chairmanship there were few complaints about antisemitism in the party. Yet after Corbyn’s arrival a number of antisemitic expressions from elected Labour representatives under his predecessor Ed Miliband became public. Muslims had a disproportionately large share among these perpetrators. Currently this no longer seems the case. Antisemitic expressions seem to occur regularly among the party’s elected representatives.

A number of other issues related to the Labour antisemitism are only partly understood. It is clear that the percentage of Jewish Labour voters has greatly declined. A major uncertainty, however, concerns the state of mind of British Jewry. The social environment for British Jewry has changed. Antisemitism strongly brought into the British public domain by Labour is there to stay. Israel as a possible place for emigration – if Corbyn wins the next election – has become a significant topic of discussion in British Jewry.

Some Jews have rather suddenly become vocal about their Judaism, which they hardly mentioned before. Examples include the Labour MP Dame Margaret Hodge and TV personality Rachel Riley. The Jewish Labour Movement continues to fight against the antisemitism from within the party. It is also helped by a number of Jewish and non-Jewish MPs. On the other side there is a small group, Jewish Voice for Labour, which minimizes the antisemitism.

The mass of data of the last four years about Labour antisemitism can serve as a methodological basis for studying techniques of denying, minimizing and whitewashing antisemitism anywhere in the world. Smoke-screening about the fight against antisemitism – claiming that one fights against the hatred while doing so – has hardly, if ever, been a subject for analysis. Corbyn himself is a super smoke-screener, an antisemite who calls antisemitism vile.

A new expression has emerged by the white-washers: “Antisemitism is weaponized against Labour.” Yet the facts mentioned about antisemitism in Labour are usually true. The weaponizing claims may however serve elsewhere: for a detailed analysis of weaponizing Islamophobia by Muslims and politically correct politicians. The accusation of Islamophobia is often falsely used against those who expose major crimes in parts of Muslim societies.

The outcome of the EHRC study may also serve as a tool to judge the commission’s effectiveness. This is in view of the massive information accumulated about antisemitism in Labour.

In addition, the many findings about antisemitism in Labour can also serve for the analysis of anti-Israelism among leaders of various European Labour and Socialist parties, for instance, in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Germany.

Finally, Labour has written a contemporary chapter in the long history of perverse progressives, whose beginnings can be traced back to Erasmus of Rotterdam. He lived at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century. Erasmus was called the “Prince of the Humanists,” and was an extreme antisemite even for his time.