



The Logic of the West's New Anti-Semitism Crisis

by Alex Joffe

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The anti-Semitism crises exploding in the British Labour Party and threatening to erupt in the US Democratic Party have complex sources in both the elites and the middle class. These include the logic of socialism, which opposes Jewish difference; rejection of the nation-state, which Jews still embrace; and conventional nineteenth-century beliefs in Jewish greed and conspiracies. Post-colonial guilt has also led to multiculturalism and societal self-mortification through Muslim mass immigration, which has enormously exacerbated anti-Semitism and terrorism. The trends in Europe and Britain portend negative changes in the US for Jews and Israel.

Western political parties are undergoing astonishing anti-Semitism crises. The British Labour Party and its leader Jeremy Corbyn have been exposed as deeply and irrevocably anti-Semitic. The US Democratic Party has now nominated nearly a half dozen candidates for Congress who are implacably opposed to Israel and stands on the verge of a millennial-driven transformation into Labour. Accusations of Jewish disloyalty and Israeli conspiracies are common, as are threats to banish Israel from the community of nations.

The question is why, and why now? Why have not only the Labour and Democratic Parties but universities, and, increasingly, the interlocked media and entertainment complexes, turned against Jews?

There are old and new explanations.

The first is the logic of socialism, where putative universalism and anti-elitism turn against their traditional nemesis, the Jews, despite outsized Jewish participation in these movements. Jewish difference is the enemy, and as affluent Westerners suddenly rediscover socialism in order to quell ennui and inner resentment against their bourgeois selves, traditional enemies have been rediscovered as well.

Since general approval of Israel is widespread, at least in the US, anti-Zionism is achingly transgressive, only a few steps beyond complaining about the cultural appropriation inherent in wearing a kimono or making tea. And for young Jews anxious to fit into the rapidly shifting cultural norms of the left, in universities and urban society, Israel support is an obvious target. The reluctance of Jews to conform on Israel then yields quickly to outright anti-Semitism.

Coupled with the burgeoning of racialized identity politics and 'intersectionality' – localized versions of Third Worldism and the 'red-green alliance' with Islamists – traditional anti-Semitism has been updated. Jews are suddenly called upon to play their traditional role – reject their identity and join the vanguard or become an enemy of the people. This is familiar from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Another explanation for the current explosion of deep-seated anti-Semitism is at once more historically cyclical and *au courant*. Jews are simultaneously the most assimilated Western minority and the one that remains demonstrably – even uniquely – grateful to host nations, and to the idea of the nation-state and its opportunities. This is intolerable to left-wing positions that reject the nation-state, national identity, and national pride. Jewish attachment to Israel compounds the transgression against post-nationalism, and this connection to a unique and cosmic evil positions the attitude firmly as old-new anti-Semitism.

Jews have traditionally celebrated institutions of national cohesion including higher education, political parties, and, during wartime, military service. But despite close Jewish adherence to the evolving liberal consensus, including internationalism, they can never be critical enough of the state and its institutions for the left wing. Now even national cohesion is anathema; hence the sudden passion for a borderless world and mass migration.

That Palestinians adhere to an even smaller and more parochial nationalism is no issue since victimhood is a paramount virtue for the left. But Jewish 'whiteness' and Israel's 'power' have both erased Jewish victimhood and acted as *de facto* signs of evil. Anointing Palestinians as the 'new Jews' also resolves a theological problem for Protestant denominations and links handily to traditional Christian supersessionism and anti-Semitism.

Conspiracism regarding Jews is thriving in Britain and growing in the US, with accusations of dual loyalties and blood libels. Accusations that Israel is a 'Nazi state' that 'created ISIS' conveniently joins the 20th century's most unequivocal villain with that of the 21st century, both utterly anathematized. The other great villain is the US, the traditional Great Satan to the British Left (with Israel as the Little Satan). In this manner past and present enemies are unified, with limitless power as the sources of evil, demanding cosmic justice.

These are mostly elite formulae but they have given license to popular outbreaks of what might be called middle class anti-Semitism, expressed most vividly by hundreds if not thousands of Labour Party members. A sudden eruption of mostly traditional anti-Semitism from the public was waiting for its moment, with oddly familiar rhetoric: Jews as disloyal, greedy, alien, clannish, manipulative, and conspiratorial. This is merely nineteenth century anti-Semitism updated, no longer theological but not yet racial.

But anti-Semitic attitudes also refract another phenomenon: the unrootedness of a broad swath of the British populace from Britishness. Few nations have repudiated their histories with the speed and anger of Britain, and post-imperial and post-colonial Britain possesses a deep self-loathing of its history and culture. Few cultures are so explicit about guilt and repudiation, although this is matched by the American far left, which sees the country's founding as Original Sin. These are elite formulae that have been disseminated to the middle class through the educational system and media.

Self-hatred (indistinguishable from overweening expressions of self-righteousness and self-love) also partially explains British and European attitudes towards Islam. Official multiculturalism of the 1980s and later was designed precisely to weaken the position of 'white' Europeans in their own countries, both demographically and culturally, and was cast in the guise of progressive enrichment and post-colonial restitution.

In accepting millions of Muslims, especially from the most backward and unassimilated areas of Pakistan and Africa, the instrument of national self-mortification was chosen. Social dissolution in the form of ethnic partitioning, no-go zones, rape gangs, terrorism, and violence followed, along with separatist political parties. Was this an unintended consequence on the part of European elites accustomed to Olympian decision-making; a deliberate conspiracy, as the 'Eurabia' thesis suggests; or an unconscious choice to self-destruct? Perhaps it was all three.

The results for Europe's Jews have been calamitous but entirely foreseeable. Anti-Semitism has risen sharply along with anti-Semitic violence, attributable almost entirely to Islamists. And speaking honestly about the causes, even to describe individual cases where the murderers of Jews have cried "allahu akbar," is to invite condemnations for 'Islamophobia.' A closed mental ecosystem has thus been created which will, by default if not design, expunge Europe's Jews. Political parties, often the bulwark against discrimination, are now leading the way; Muslim and Green parties are frank in their hatred of Israel and Jews, left-wing parties like Labour have now followed.

But in the process, relentless Muslim violence against European society as a whole must be explained and excused. Muslims in Europe are increasingly the antithesis of its Jews: culturally demanding, politically active, and prone to public displays of dominance,

such as taking over entire streets for prayers, and to private acts of violence. Governmental responses to these have been remarkably uniform. Both politicians and public safety officials decry a 'misunderstanding' of Islam that results in organized violence and routinely ascribe individual violence to 'mental illness.' In Scandinavia in particular they absolve behavior by alleging cultural misunderstanding, as if rape and murder are somehow contingent concepts. Muslim anti-Semitism, however, is uniformly covered up, particularly when it is the motive for murder.

Perhaps these are unconscious efforts to domesticate European Islam by exculpation and by gently defining conceptual boundaries and behavioral patterns – but they barely mask a terrifying fear of what politicians have wrought. Ironically, the larger effort seeks to shape European Muslims into something that already exists: European Jews, who are loyal, passive, and compliant.

The actual trend is the reverse. European Muslims, suffused with theological anti-Semitism and conspiracism, influence majority cultures and give still further license to unlock anti-Semitic tendencies. Growing Muslim minorities also make it politically expedient for parties such as Labour to abandon the Jews.

The complex dynamics described here are also occurring in the US, a society long exempt from European- (and Middle Eastern)-style anti-Semitism and violence. That will now change. Whether American political and cultural traditions of self-correction will temper this remains to be seen. Socialism and self-loathing are alien to most non-elite Americans, and local sources of anti-Semitism are not nearly as deep as they are in Europe. But American Jews should prepare for changes unlike anything seen in the five centuries since their arrival on that continent. Israel should prepare as well.

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