Unfair Attack on UK’s Labour Party

The British Labour Party is under attack for “anti-Semitism” because a few of its members have made remarks critical of Israel and Zionism, but this assault is an abuse of a very serious accusation, says Lawrence Davidson.

By Lawrence Davidson

How do you misuse a racial prejudice? At first glance this ought to appear to be an absurd question. Racial prejudices already constitute the distortion of perception and emotion. Nevertheless, when a particular prejudice has a distinct pedigree and an age-old definition, and then is purposely exploited (particularly by those purporting to represent its victims) solely for political gain, the issue of misuse becomes anything but absurd.

The racial prejudice in question is anti-Semitism, one of the most devastating of bigotries and responsible for untold misery. It has always been defined as hatred of Jews as Jews. This hatred is underpinned by a vast number of historical myths and fantastic conspiracy theories, but at its core, what we have here is close to pure racism – a Jew is bad not because of what he or she has done, but because of some racial taint.

Now here is the complicated part. This age-old definition has been reformulated by an ideologically driven sub-set of Jewry – Zionists – for political purposes. The Zionists have declared that there is no difference between the State of Israel and the worldwide community of Jews and therefore, if you are opposed to Israel you are anti-Semitic.

This identification of Israel and the Jews en masse is historically, demographically and certainly religiously false. But no matter, the Zionists shout this redefinition loudly and endlessly. And, by backing their claim with political pressure and a lot of money, they have managed to get it accepted in some Western political circles. This, then, is what constitutes the misuse for political purposes of a dangerous racial prejudice.

Having laid this foundation, the Zionists are now using this bastardized concept of anti-Semitism as a weapon against those critical of not the Jews as a group, but the political state of Israel, its policies and behaviors, which are, themselves, racist and barbaric. Indeed, it is Israeli behavior, specifically toward the Palestinians, that has encouraged a revival of anti-Semitism after
more than a half a century of quiescence – thus the very striking irony of the Zionist insistence that opposition to Israeli racist policies is itself a racial prejudice.

**Attack on the British Labour Party**

There are many examples of this Zionist perversion, but the latest one is a full-blown attack on those members of the British Labour Party who are critical of Israel yet not of Jews as such. Charley Allan, a columnist for the British paper *Morning Star*, has described the resulting atmosphere as a “witch hunt.” Below are two examples of isolated statements made by Labour Party members which have caused a purposefully exaggerated brouhaha over the issue of anti-Semitism.

In late April, it was revealed that Naseem Shah, the Labour MP for Bradford West, had posted on her Facebook account a map that showed Israel transferred to within the borders of the U.S. She labeled it as “a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” Shah’s posting, which she sourced from the website of the Jewish-American scholar Norman Finkelstein, was made at the height of Israel’s 2014 invasion of Gaza and pre-dated her election to Parliament.

While the suggestion of the wholesale transference of Israel to the U.S. is but a fantasy, associating the U.S. and Israel certainly has an underlying logic. The United States is Israel’s major protector and financier. The U.S. Congress treats Israel as a privileged 51st state. And, most of those who emigrate from Israel go to the U.S.

Accusations that Shah’s post was an anti-Semitic attack on Jewry were belatedly raised, leading to her suspension from the Labour Party pending an investigation. She subsequently, and rather abjectly, apologized.

Nonetheless, the fact is that Ms. Shah’s display of the map was not anti-Semitic at all. It was not an attack on Jews as such, and there is no evidence that it was motivated by a hatred of Jews. What is really objectionable is the Zionist effort to perversely manipulate the post as if it really was anti-Semitism, in order to attack those opposed to their own racist political ideology.

The second example concerns the veteran Labour Party leader Ken Livingstone, who is also a former mayor of London. In late April, Livingstone stated on a British radio program that “Hitler was a Zionist” whose policy was that “the Jews should be moved to Israel.” Now this is certainly not a true statement.

What is true is that Hitler wanted the Jews out of Germany. Up until 1938 they could leave that country (albeit without any possessions) if they could find another country that would let them in (which wasn’t easy). During this time Hitler did not particularly care where the German Jews went, and most who did
have the foresight to leave did not go to Palestine.

Though historically inaccurate, Livingstone’s statement was not anti-Semitic. Its principal subject was Hitler and the Zionist movement, and, again, there is no evidence that it was motivated by hatred of Jews. Nonetheless, for making his statement Livingstone has been accused of being anti-Semitic, and he too has been suspended from the Labour Party pending an investigation.

It would seem that the present Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, is running scared, tossing out members like Shah and Livingstone, rather than counterattacking against Zionist offensive with the truth – that the charge of anti-Semitism is being improperly exploited for political purposes.

Corbyn himself, who is of the left wing of the party, and has repeatedly expressed sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians, is probably among the real targets of this campaign of intimidation. It seems that the right wing of the party has joined up with the British Zionists to run Corbyn out of office using, or rather misusing, the charge of anti-Semitism.

Despite what amounts to ever-present paranoia in some circles, there are no signs of a future Holocaust in the making. That does not mean that history holds no important lessons for the Jews. It certainly does.

The primary lesson is that the Jews, like other minority groups, need to protect their collective interests by maintaining strong support for universal civil and human rights, as well as the rule of law both domestically and internationally. However, there is another lesson the past, and specifically the Holocaust, ought to have taught us: that it is dangerously counterproductive to engage in a defense of group interests that involves the persecution of others.

To the extent that they have followed this path, the Zionists have failed to learn from history.

Therefore, it is not the Jews as a people who are remiss. It is only those who have abandoned the protections of civil and human rights and now flout international law in favor of a cruel nationalist policy. The Zionist claim that they have pursue this path to protect the Jewish people is highly suspect for, since its founding, Israel has always been the most dangerous place a Jew can reside.

We are led to the conclusion expressed by Professor Stephen Bronner in a deeply insightful work entitled The Bigot. “Disentangling genuine prejudice from a legitimate critique of Israeli territorial ambitions should be the aim of all progressive inquiry into the problem of anti-Jewish bigotry.”
That critique of Israel’s behavior is not only legitimate, but central to future peace in the Middle East.

Zionism is an ideology gone seriously astray. And the use of the charge of anti-Semitism as a weapon against its critics is a dangerous exploitation of that age-old bigotry as well as a betrayal of the lessons of history.

Lawrence Davidson is a history professor at West Chester University in Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Foreign Policy Inc.: Privatizing America’s National Interest*, *America’s Palestine: Popular and Official Perceptions from Balfour to Israeli Statehood*; and *Islamic Fundamentalism*. 