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Antisemites will destroy Labour, senior MPs warn

● Party veterans condemn Corbyn's failure to act ● Jewish community protests in Westminster

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Labour's existence is under threat from antisemitism within its ranks, Jeremy Corbyn has been told by one of his MPs amid mounting pressure for action.

John Mann, the Labour MP for Bas-setlaw since 2001 and chairman of the all-party parliamentary group against antisemitism, said that behaviour in some quarters of the party was making it "rotten to the core" and warned that Mr Corbyn would rue the day if he failed to tackle the issue. Dame Margaret Hodge, a former minister and another veteran of the party, said that her leader had "allowed himself to become the posterboy of antisemites everywhere", while Louise Ellman, an MP and former chairwoman of the Jewish Labour Movement, accused Mr Corbyn of failing to take effective action. The Jewish community was "in absolute fury and great distress" and the party was in crisis, she told ITV.

The intervention from grandees came after Jewish leaders accused Mr Corbyn of holding a conspiratorial worldview about their community and siding with antisemites "again and again". The Jewish Leadership Council and Board of Deputies of British Jews hit out in an open letter on Sunday and last night held a protest in Parliament Square, with hundreds gathering to declare "enough is enough".

Last week Mr Corbyn was revealed to have questioned the removal of a mural in London that showed Jewish bankers playing Monopoly on the backs of the poor. Yesterday it emerged that he and

other Labour MPs were members of a Facebook group where antisemitic conspiracy theories were posted. Mr Corbyn was a member for seven years.

Dame Margaret, 73, called on her party to consider a new inquiry into antisemitism. Critics have long held that the 2016 investigation undertaken by Shami Chakrabarti, former head of the charity Liberty, was undermined by the leadership's decision to award her a political peerage weeks after it ended.

Yesterday Mr Corbyn responded to the Jewish leaders' letter by insisting that he was a "militant opponent" of antisemitism. He apologised for the "hurt and pain" caused by anti-Jewish incidents and conceded that antisemitism in Labour had "too often been dismissed as simply a matter of a few bad apples". The party had been slow to act in the past and he apologised for questioning the removal of the mural, claiming that he did not study its contents before commenting on Facebook.

Jewish leaders reacted cautiously. Mike Katz, vice-chairman of the Jewish Labour Movement, said: "We've heard the words, now they need to be backed up by actions." Stephen Pollard, editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, said: "The words are fine, although belied by his entire political career. Actions now..." Tony Blair said that the problem had gone beyond the stage where words would solve it. "He's going to have to show that he really understands the issue, that the people round him really understand it," the former prime minister told *Newsnight*.

Critics complained that Mr Corbyn

did not come out and join the Jewish community convening outside the Commons. Hundreds of demonstrators assembled, with placards that read "Dayenu", meaning "enough" in Hebrew, and "For the many, not the Jew". A counterprotest by Jewish pro-Corbyn activists also gathered. Among the group was Tony Greenstein, an activist expelled from Labour last month over alleged antisemitism.

At a meeting of the parliamentary Labour Party last night there was a standing ovation for Luciana Berger, the MP who highlighted concerns over Mr Corbyn's response to the mural. Mr Corbyn was not present at the meeting, at which a series of MPs demanded action against antisemitism.

David Miliband, the former cabinet minister, said on social media last night: "It's terrible that the leadership has brought our party into such gross disrepute. At least now the veil of unctuous denials, whitewash reports, diversionary attacks, has been breached. Now we need actions to haul ourselves out of the depths."

A spokesman for Mr Corbyn said of the public Facebook group: "Jeremy has never posted in the group, did not follow its content and was not an active participant." Mr Corbyn left the group following the revelation about the antisemitic remarks made in it.

Gli antisemiti distruggeranno il Partito
Laborista, avvertono alcuni parlamentari decani



No more talk, Jewish leaders warn Corbyn

Patrick Maguire, Lucy Fisher

Jeremy Corbyn was told by Britain's Jewish community that "the time for talking is over" after he said he was sorry for antisemitism among his left-wing supporters.

The Labour leader apologised for the "hurt and pain" caused by anti-Jewish sentiment in the party's ranks when he wrote to Jonathan Goldstein, chairman of the Jewish Leadership Council, and Jonathan Arkush, president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

They had accused him of failing "again and again" to take their side. In response, Mr Corbyn apologised and pledged to redouble his efforts to "bring this anxiety to an end".

His condemnation of antisemitism specifically was a change to his usual response to reports of antisemitism in Labour, which has been to reject it along with "all forms of racism".

Mr Corbyn has struggled to contain the fallout from revelations last Friday that he had apparently defended a mural depicting Jewish bankers playing Monopoly on the backs of the poor.

The pressure increased on him yesterday, when he was revealed to have spent seven years as a member of a public Facebook group on which antisemitic conspiracy theories were posted. It is the third time in recent weeks that he has been found to have been a member of an online group that features antisemitic content.

The latest group, The Labour Party Supporter, has more than 16,000 members, which at the time that the Guido Fawkes website first reported Mr Corbyn's membership also included Tom Watson, Labour's deputy leader, four other members of the shadow cabinet, and John Mann, a vocal critic of antisemitism within Labour.

There is no suggestion that any of the MPs were aware of the antisemitic content and none is an active user of the group.

The majority of its posts have been

statements praising Labour and attacking the Conservative Party. Some posts were openly antisemitic but appeared to be largely ignored by the group. One, posted in September 2016, depicted the Rothschild banking family as a pig and suggested it was "the control behind those 172 [Labour] MPs" who expressed no confidence in Mr Corbyn's leadership after the Brexit referendum.

Other users posted links to a list of banks "owned or controlled" by the Rothschilds, suggested the Salisbury poisonings had been orchestrated by Israel, and said that Israel was "harvesting Palestinian martyrs' organs". Few of the posts were challenged by other users and most appeared to have been ignored by the group's administrators. A glut of posts yesterday attacked critics of antisemitism in Labour and branded the protesters at a demonstration in Parliament Square last night "racist Zionists".

Mr Goldstein told the rally: "Antisemitism has no place whatsoever in a mainstream political party... So we are here to say to Jeremy Corbyn, 'Enough is enough. The time for talking is over, the time for words is over, and the time for action has begun. Enough is Enough'."

Luciana Berger, a Labour MP who is Jewish, was on the podium with other leading backbenchers. She urged Mr Corbyn to "disassociate himself from people who are carrying banners saying this is all some kind of smear".

Many other protesters waved placards declaring "Dayenu", which means "Enough" in Hebrew, and "No to Holocaust denial". Beverly Mason, 55, an artist, said: "There's been too much appeasement of Jeremy Corbyn. Nobody wants to say anything."

A smaller counterprotest convened by Jewish Voice for Labour, an anti-Israel group of Jewish activists who back Mr Corbyn, also met in the square. They had a banner that read "Labour against the witch-hunt", as well as placards that read "Jews for Jez".

Basta dialogo, i leader ebrei avvertono Corbyn



Corbyn and Antisemitism

Labour has deep historical links with British Jewry. That tradition is traduced by a leader with a history of dubious alliances and inflammatory remarks

Labour was, by a long way, the last of the three main parties to have a Jewish leader but no one could ever have credibly associated it with antisemitism. Not, at least, until 2015, when Jeremy Corbyn became leader. Mr Corbyn brought with him a history of alliances with extremists and of remarks showing frivolous disregard for the concerns of Jews in Britain.

It was a matter of time before the issue erupted again. On Sunday the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council issued an open letter accusing Mr Corbyn of siding with antisemites and declaring that "enough is enough". That is an incendiary charge; sadly, it is entirely consistent with the evidence. Labour parliamentarians cannot honourably give their leader the benefit of the doubt any longer. For their own self-respect, they must denounce Mr Corbyn for trucking with intolerance. The reputation and even, according to the Labour MP John Mann, the very existence of the party is at stake.

In the past few days Mr Corbyn has been exposed as having belonged to three Facebook groups in which antisemitic conspiracy theories, including Holocaust denial, are commonplace. The groups display posts attributing nefarious global influence to the Rothschild banking dynasty and claiming that Israeli military forces harvest the organs of dead Palestinians.

These are virulent tropes of antisemitic discourse. The notion that a Jewish banking cartel operates a global conspiracy is a conceit from the infamous tract *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. Though *The Times* exposed this document as a forgery in 1921, it became a constant theme of the propaganda of Nazi Germany. The organ-harvesting calumny is a direct descendant of the medieval "blood libel" claiming that Jews murder Christian children and use their blood as an ingredient in baking unleavened bread for Passover.

It is almost beyond belief that the leader of the opposition in the 21st century should have belonged to online groups pushing such ancient and evil canards. Nor is this a mere idiosyncrasy. It

emerged at the weekend that Mr Corbyn objected in 2012 when a local authority in east London removed a street mural with an unambiguously antisemitic message. The mural depicted Jewish financiers playing a board game on the backs of crushed and emaciated figures. All Mr Corbyn could find to say, when challenged on this last week by the Labour MP Luciana Berger, was: "I sincerely regret that I did not look more closely at the image I was commenting on." This is feeble. Whether by accident or design, Mr Corbyn's leadership has given heart to a malign political subculture that imagines world events are manipulated by a Jewish conspiracy. His protests that he is personally opposed to antisemitism are increasingly querulous and beside the point. Mr Corbyn evinces little grasp that anti-Jewish bigotry is far more widespread among his supporters than it is in British society more generally.

The Labour Party has deep historical connections with British Jewry and its sister party in Israel. Leaders including Hugh Gaitskell, Harold Wilson, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were attuned to the concerns of the Jewish community. While supporting a wider Middle East peace settlement, they understood the necessity and nobility of Jewish nationhood after the Holocaust.

Mr Corbyn, by contrast, has allied with extremists. He has defended such preposterous figures as Stephen Sizer, an Anglican vicar who spread an antisemitic conspiracy theory that Israel was responsible for the 9/11 terror attacks. Antisemitism is an issue beyond party and ideology. Standing against it is perhaps the most basic test of political integrity. Labour is led by a man who fails that test. Its many decent parliamentarians and supporters should abandon him to merited disrepute.

Corbyn e l'antisemitismo

