

## Rassegna del 18/04/2018

### TIMES

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# Tensions in Labour erupt over rising abuse of Jews

● Standing applause as MPs reveal antisemitism ● Deputy leader deserts Corbyn for back benches

Henry Zeffman Political Reporter

Labour's antisemitism row intensified yesterday as three of the party's Jewish MPs received standing ovations in the Commons after attacking its handling of the issue.

Jewish leaders also said they would boycott a meeting next week with Jeremy Corbyn after it emerged that a hard-left group which denies that Labour has a problem with antisemitism had also been invited. In an emotionally charged debate, Labour backbenchers lined up to highlight the growth of antisemitism claims under Mr Corbyn's leadership.

Dame Margaret Hodge, 73, the veteran Labour MP for Barking and the daughter of Jewish refugees, told the Commons that she felt like "an outsider in the party I have been a member of for 50 years". After describing seeing a battered suitcase bearing her uncle's initials during a visit to Auschwitz, she said: "I have never felt as nervous and frightened as I feel today at being a Jew. It feels that my party has given permission for antisemitism to go unchallenged." Dame Margaret finished her speech to a standing ovation.

The same reception greeted Luciana Berger, the Labour member for Liverpool Wavertree, who said that antisemitism had become "more commonplace, is more conspicuous and is more corrosive" in the party. "That's why I have no words for the people who purport to be both members and supporters of our party, who use that hashtag JC4PM [Jeremy Corbyn for prime minister], who attacked me in recent weeks for my comments; they attacked me for speaking at the rally against antisemitism... who say I should be deselected."

Ruth Smeeth, the Labour MP for Stoke-on-Trent North, was also applauded after reading a sample of antisemitic abuse she had received on social media, including "hang yourself you vile treacherous Zionist Tory filth, you're a cancer of humanity" and "first job for Jeremy Corbyn tomorrow, expel the Zionist hag bitch Ruth Smeeth".

In a highly pointed gesture, Tom Watson, Labour's deputy leader, chose to sit on the back benches between Ms

Berger and Ms Smeeth rather than in his usual position on the front bench beside Mr Corbyn. The Labour leader sat through much of the debate, occasionally shaking his head when Conservative MPs criticised his record on antisemitism.

John Mann, the Labour MP for Bassetlaw, said his wife had been "threatened with rape" by a "leftist antisemite" after he attended a demonstration against antisemitism in Labour three weeks ago. She was also "sent by a Labour Marxist antisemite a dead bird through the post," he said. His daughter, he added, had been "rung up in the last few weeks by Special Branch to check out her movements."

Several Conservative MPs made emotional contributions to the debate. Robert Halfon, the Conservative MP for Harlow, who is Jewish, said antisemitism was now "out in its naked viciousness for everyone to see".

Sajid Javid, the communities secretary, said: "While I would much rather that this issue transcended party politics, as other forms of racism have done for a long time, we cannot and we must not ignore the particular concern with elements within the Labour Party." Long-simmering accusations that there was antisemitism in Mr Corbyn's Labour Party moved to the centre of Westminster's agenda late last month when the Jewish community protested about the issue in Parliament Square.

The Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council are due to meet the Labour leader on Tuesday, but they were angered to receive an invitation from the Labour leader's office to a second "round-table" meeting at which the attendees would include groups who have played down claims that Labour has a problem with antisemitism.

A Labour source said the party had invited a wide range of Jewish organisations, community groups, rabbis and synagogue representatives.

Scoppia la tensione tra i Laburisti per l'aumento di insulti contro gli ebrei



# Labour candidate in new antisemitism row

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A Labour council candidate who heads a left-wing Jewish group has said that Jews are "often agents" of exploitation.

Leah Levane is a co-chairwoman of Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL), which has been invited by Jeremy Corbyn to a round-table discussion next week on antisemitism in Labour. Yesterday mainstream Jewish leaders said they would boycott the event.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council will meet Mr Corbyn at a separate event next Tuesday. They organised a protest in Parliament Square last month over Labour's handling of antisemitism. JVL organised a counter-demonstration.

Ms Levane, who is Jewish, is a candidate for Hastings in elections next month. Last year she commented on an article posted on Facebook titled "Austria's neo-Nazis find friends in Israel", saying it was "not surprising". She also wrote online: "Jews are often agents rather than instigators of exploitation."

Euan Philipps, a spokesman for Labour Against Antisemitism, said: "We have serious issues with Leah Levane's track record on apparently promoting antisemitic tropes."

Ms Levane told *The Times*: "We [JVL] are firmly committed to working to rid our society of [antisemitism] and all forms of racism and discrimination." She said she looked forward to the "long overdue implementation of the [Baroness] Chakrabarti recommendations" made in 2016 to tackle anti-Jewish behaviour in Labour. Her co-chairwoman Jenny Manson, who is also Jewish, said: "We haven't attacked anybody. We don't attack the Board of Deputies, but we might question their representation of us ... calling a Jew antisemitic is a very strange concept."

Labour has said that antisemitism has no place in the party.

● A group called Community United Against Labour Party Antisemitism drove three billboards outside Labour HQ in London yesterday.

Candidato laburista coinvolto in una nuova disputa sull'antisemitismo



## New Lows

### Jeremy Corbyn's attempts to address antisemitism in the Labour Party are woeful

When a politician has as little credibility as Jeremy Corbyn has on the issue of antisemitism in his party, every gesture counts. It is deeply regrettable, therefore, that Mr Corbyn has frustrated his own efforts to engage with those in the Jewish community who feel unsafe in his party by asking community leaders to sit down with him and a far-left Jewish group whose members have denied that Labour has an antisemitism problem at all. Mr Corbyn says he is taking antisemitism seriously. In truth, he seems determined to do whatever it takes to make British Jews think the opposite.

The Labour leader has scheduled a meeting for next week with the Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council (JLC), two groups fiercely critical of his handling of Labour's record on antisemitism in recent months. The representatives accepted that meeting on the condition that they can set the terms and the agenda, forcing Mr Corbyn to tackle their concerns head-on. The Labour leader was not content with that arrangement. He also invited them to a separate "round-table", which is to include a group calling itself Jewish Voice for Labour. JVL's views are rather more comfortable for Mr Corbyn. Four weeks ago, when the Board of Deputies and the JLC organised a protest outside parliament against antisemitism in the Labour Party, JVL turned up to counter-demonstrate. They held placards emblazoned with the slogans "Jews for Jez" and "Stop the media witch-hunt".

We also reveal today that Leah Levane, the co-chairwoman of JVL, was a signatory to an open letter that said that "antisemitism does not exist as a political force in the Labour Party. It never has and never will". She has been accused of repeating antisemitism tropes online, writing, for instance, that "Jews are often agents rather than instigators

of exploitation". She has even defended Ken Livingstone against suspension from the party, despite Mr Livingstone's insistence that Hitler was "supporting Zionism before he went mad and ended up killing six million Jews".

Let there be no doubt that Labour has a genuine problem with antisemitism. Mr Corbyn once spoke up for a mural that shows Jewish financiers playing Monopoly on the backs of the poor. During Passover, a holiday in which Jews celebrate freedom from oppression, he attended the feast of "Jewdas", an anti-establishment group that has called Israel "a steaming pile of sewage which needs to be properly disposed of". The party has a backlog of complaints to deal with, and the last time Labour attempted a systematic inquiry into this problem, asking the lawyer Shami Chakrabarti to do an "independent" study, it concluded there was not much of a problem at all. Soon afterwards, Ms Chakrabarti entered the House of Lords and got a shadow cabinet job.

Mr Corbyn believes, wrongly, that saying he opposes antisemitism is the same as opposing it. Opposing antisemitism means breaking ties with antisemites, even when they are his longstanding political allies. It means disowning them, even when they are his most loyal supporters. It means publicly castigating them, by name, even when they are his friends.

Most of all, it means listening, in good faith, to Jews who think there is a problem. It does not mean asking them to sit down at a round-table with the Jews for Jez.

Nuovi picchi negativi

