

# Labour's Leaked Report: Who Is to Blame for Antisemitism in Britain's Labour Party?

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## Abstract

In April 2020, shortly after Keir Starmer replaced Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the UK Labour Party, an internal party report concerning the workings of Labour's internal disciplinary unit in relation to antisemitism was leaked to the media. This report was over 850 pages long and was intended to be submitted to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which is conducting an inquiry into allegations of antisemitism in the Party. However, Labour's lawyers refused to allow it to be used, almost certainly because the content was so damaging to the Party's own defence. It confirmed many of the claims made by Jewish Party members and community organisations during Corbyn's leadership of the party, namely that the disciplinary system was not fit for purpose and cases of alleged antisemitism were ignored or delayed and punishments were too weak. When it was leaked the report caused a scandal because it claimed that Corbyn's efforts to deal with antisemitism were sabotaged by his own Party staff, who were mostly drawn from factions opposed to his left wing project. Furthermore, the report claimed that this was part of a broader conspiracy against Corbyn that even extended to Labour Party staff trying to prevent a Labour victory in the 2017 General Election. The leaked report is selective and inaccurate in many respects and ignores the role played by Corbyn and his close advisers in denying the problem of antisemitism existed. Nor does it address the reasons why people with antisemitic views were attracted to Labour under his leadership. It is most likely that it was written to allow Corbyn and his supporters to continue to claim that their project did not fail on its own merits, but was betrayed by internal saboteurs.

**Keywords** Labour Party, Antisemitism, Jeremy Corbyn, Left -Wing, UK Politics, EHRC, Keir Starmer, Chakrabarti Report.

One legacy of the Labour Party's troubles with antisemitism that will be welcomed by future researchers of this phenomenon is the sheer number of reports generated, written, published, quashed, and, on this occasion, leaked, by the various different actors in this saga. Each of these reports was conceived for a different purpose and met a different end, and their respective content, and the ways in which they were, or were not, published, all contribute to our understanding of how the Labour Party found itself sucked into the quicksand of antisemitism, and why it will

take Labour's new leadership a considerable time to drag the party back onto solid ground.

In February 2016, the party's official student body, Labour Students, investigated allegations of antisemitism within Oxford University Labour Club. Their report was never published; instead, the Labour peer Baroness Royall was asked by the Party's National Executive Committee (NEC) to investigate, and report on, the same allegations. It is not known why the NEC took the job of investigating antisemitism at a student Labour Club out of the hands

of Labour Students; but Baroness Royall got to work and in May 2016 delivered her fifteen-page report to Labour's NEC—who promptly decided not to publish that either. Instead, they released only the report's Executive Summary and its Recommendations, from which the most eye-catching and, for some, reassuring, conclusions were that “I do not believe that there is institutional antisemitism within OULC” and there had even been “at least one case of serious false allegations of antisemitism” at the Club. It was only when the full report was leaked to the *Jewish Chronicle* newspaper in August of that year that it emerged Baroness Royall had in fact made a significantly different finding in the body of the report, where she wrote that “There appears to be cultural [*sic*] problem in which behaviour and language that would once have been intolerable is now tolerated. Some Jewish members do not feel comfortable attending the meetings, let alone participating.” She added, “It is clear to me from the weight of witnessed allegations received that there have been some incidents of antisemitic behaviour and that it is appropriate for the disciplinary procedures of our Party to be invoked.”<sup>1</sup> Royall was unhappy at the way her report had been selectively published by the party's NEC; but by this stage it had been superseded anyway, as the Party had launched a third inquiry into antisemitism, with a much broader remit and led by the human rights lawyer Shami Chakrabarti—with Baroness Royall as one of her two vice chairs. This inquiry was a reaction to the escalating problem that antisemitism was causing Labour under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. Its terms of reference covered “anti-Semitism and other forms of racism” across the whole of the party; rule changes and improvements to Labour's disciplinary processes; questions of appropriate behaviour between party members; and education and training for officials, candidates and elected MPs.<sup>2</sup> Chakrabarti concluded that the Labour Party is “not overrun by antisemitism, Islamophobia, or other forms of racism,” warned against the use of “racial or religious tropes

and stereotypes about any group of people” and banned the antisemitic insult “Zio.” This inquiry concerned itself mostly with matters of process and party rules, and did not investigate to any depth the political ideas or culture that lay behind the antisemitism that had emerged in the party. It was nominally independent, but the swift ennoblement of Baroness Chakrabarti and her appointment to Corbyn's shadow cabinet soon after she completed her report left many feeling it was nothing of the sort.

At this point, critics of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership got in on the act. A selection of the submissions made to the Chakrabarti Inquiry, but largely ignored in its final report, was compiled and published in book form as part of a project that included a film: both titled *Whitewashed: Anti-Semitism in the Labour Party*.<sup>3</sup> Professor Alan Johnson, editor of the journal *Fathom*, wrote a 129-page report arguing that the Labour Party was institutionally antisemitic.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most consequential report so far the submission by the Jewish Labour Movement to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) asking them to open a statutory inquiry into the Labour Party for breaches of the Equality Act—an invitation the EHRC accepted. The JLM's submission amounted to approximately 2,000 pages of legal argument, witness evidence, whistleblower testimony and media clippings.<sup>5</sup> It was exceeded, in size at least, by a submission from the Labour Against Antisemitism campaign group, who amassed a staggering 10,000 pages (or thereabouts) of screenshots and other evidence, mainly gleaned from social media, of antisemitism amongst Labour members, activists, and supporters. Still to come at the time of writing is the EHRC's own report, which is keenly awaited by those who hope it will be the final word on whether the Labour Party broke the law by discriminating against its Jewish members; and whether it did so in such a way that would justify describing Britain's foremost progressive party as institutionally antisemitic.

Except that even an unequivocal ruling from Britain's official equalities watchdog would not be the final word in this seemingly endless argument, because defenders of Corbyn's leadership are convinced, and are already claiming, that Corbyn was the victim of a plot by his factional opponents within the Labour Party machine. They argue that the conspirators deliberately failed to process complaints of antisemitism or to punish those guilty of it, while misleading Corbyn and his fellow naïfs in Labour's leadership office who had no idea that such sabotage was going on under their noses. This theory is set out in tortuous detail in perhaps the most remarkable report on this subject so far: an 851-page, 250,000-word document, written during the latter days of Corbyn's leadership with the formal purpose of being submitted to the EHRC, withheld on the orders of the Labour Party's lawyers, and then leaked anyway by actors as-yet unnamed. Despite its unglamorous title of *The Work of the Labour Party's Governance and Legal Unit in relation to anti-Semitism, 2014–2019*,<sup>6</sup> it amounts to a long and detailed allegation that a conspiracy of shocking cynicism at the heart of the party not only prevented Labour from ridding itself of antisemitism (until Corbyn's supporters wrested control of the party machine in 2018 and began the arduous work of cleansing the party), but also denied Britain a transformative socialist government. And even this will not be the end of the reporting production line, because the leaking of this report led the Party's NEC to establish yet another inquiry, led by an independent senior lawyer, to investigate the allegations made in the report and the way in which it was commissioned, written and leaked.<sup>7</sup>

The leaked report reveals a great deal about how the outgoing leadership team wants their record on antisemitism to be viewed. It is unambiguous in accepting that antisemitism has been a problem within Labour and rejects the notion "that it is all a 'smear' or a 'witch-hunt'," although it is confused about why this is the case.<sup>8</sup> "In 2016," it claims, "the problem

of antisemitism in the Labour Party could be attributed to a small number of individuals who had long held antisemitic views." Three years later this had become "more widespread" due to the emergence of "a specific discourse" about the issue of antisemitism in Labour, "which in itself has antisemitic undertones and has aggravated the problem."<sup>9</sup> In other words, by 2019 the existence, scale, and form of antisemitism in Labour was specific to the party. However, the report also claims that the party had become "more broadly reflective of the problems and prejudices of British society at large."<sup>10</sup> In other words, this wasn't a problem specific to Labour at all. Whatever the reason, "a small number of members [held] views which were unarguably hostile to Jewish people and in some cases frankly neo-Nazi in their nature"<sup>11</sup>—an arresting admission for a progressive, left-wing party to make. There are enough cases of antisemitism from Labour members quoted throughout this report to leave the reader in no doubt that this claim is no exaggeration, although the report does not address the issue of why such people would want to join Labour in the first place. The extensive citing of antisemitism cases in this report has created another problem for Labour. In the version that was widely leaked in April 2020, the names of all those accused of antisemitism, and of their accusers, were left unredacted. In one stroke those responsible for leaking the document potentially defamed dozens of people, while leaving dozens of others at risk of vengeful harassment or attack. This data breach is believed to be the subject of legal action and an investigation by the Information Commissioner that could cost the Labour Party, by one estimate, over £5 million in legal costs, fines, and compensation payments.<sup>12</sup>

This recognition that antisemitism in the Labour Party was, and is, a real problem, and not a smear invented by Zionists, Tories, or Blairites to undermine Corbyn's leadership, is welcome (if somewhat overdue). The report goes so far as to say that "denying that there is a problem of antisemitism within the Party contributes

to, and is part of, the problem,”<sup>13</sup> and that Labour suffers from “a culture of ‘denialism’”<sup>14</sup> amongst some members regarding antisemitism. It even credits Corbyn with recognizing the dangers of this denialism; but it omits to point out that Corbyn himself was guilty of exactly this when responding to a 2016 article about antisemitism in Labour by *Guardian* columnist Jonathan Freedland, which Corbyn described as “utterly disgusting, subliminal nastiness.”<sup>15</sup> Similar views were expressed on a regular basis by Corbyn’s closest political supporters. Here are four examples. Another *Guardian* columnist, Seumas Milne, wrote in August 2015 of “an attempt to smear [Corbyn] by association with antisemitism”<sup>16</sup> (Corbyn recruited Milne as Labour’s Executive Director of Strategy and Communications four months later). Len McCluskey, General Secretary of the Unite trades union that is Labour’s main financial backer, said the suggestion that Labour has a problem of antisemitism is “mood music that was created by people who were trying to undermine Jeremy Corbyn.”<sup>17</sup> Diane Abbott, speaking as shadow International Development Secretary in 2016, told the BBC: “It’s a smear to say that Labour has a problem with antisemitism. It is something like a smear against ordinary party members.”<sup>18</sup> Veteran left wing filmmaker Ken Loach, one of Corbyn’s best-known celebrity supporters, wrote that “exaggerated or false charges of anti-Semitism have coincided with the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader.”<sup>19</sup> There is a long section in this report on the role of leadership in regard to antisemitism in Labour, which is composed of articles and statements made by Corbyn and others condemning antisemitism and promising to oppose it resolutely: examples of Labour’s previous leader and his closest supporters denying the scale or existence of the problem, or complaining that it was being used to damage their cause, were not included.

This report aims to explain why antisemitism became such a problem in Labour by highlighting what it claims is a combination of poor processes and factional intrigue. The argument

set out in this report is that Labour’s governance suffered from “bureaucratic drift and inertia”;<sup>20</sup> “mistakes, deficiencies, and missed opportunities to reform”;<sup>21</sup> “a lack of staff training and guidance”; and “a lack of rigorous systems and processes.”<sup>22</sup> The Governance and Legal Unit (GLU) that had responsibility for investigating and overseeing antisemitism cases “lacked systems, processes or guidance for managing complaints and disciplinary processes,”<sup>23</sup> and in 2015 and 2016 “had no systems for logging all disciplinary cases and tracking their progress.”<sup>24</sup> This was compounded by “inefficient processes, often poor judgements, and inconsistent decision-making.”<sup>25</sup> Consequently, this report claims, in ten months from April 2017 to February 2018, “there was not a single antisemitism case that went through GLU’s designed processes and received action,”<sup>26</sup> and only a small fraction of antisemitism complaints were acted on outside of that period until Jenny Formby—another Corbyn ally—became Labour’s General Secretary in April 2018. Even worse, the report claimed that the GLU allegedly provided “false and misleading information” to their superiors in Labour HQ and in Corbyn’s office, meaning there was a “hidden backlog of people” reported for antisemitism but never disciplined that the leadership was unaware of when they defended the party’s record in public.<sup>27</sup> The possibility that it was Corbyn and his staff in LOTO [the Leader Of The Opposition’s office] that prevented the GLU from acting on antisemitism cases is dismissed at several points in the report. “LOTO did not have authority over GLU, which routinely acted against LOTO’s interests and desires,”<sup>28</sup> it says; “Claims that the GLU were not able to take action on antisemitism cases because of pressure from LOTO or the NEC are simply not credible, and are directly contradicted and disproved by a vast array of documentary evidence.”<sup>29</sup>

Rather than Corbyn being to blame for these failures, the report proposes a different suspect: we are told that “the major blockage in this period appears to have been one individual, the Head of Disputes Sam Matthews.”<sup>30</sup>

By the time this report was written, Matthews was already a very public critic of the party's handling of antisemitism. He was one of eight former Labour staff members who were interviewed in an episode of the BBC current affairs show *Panorama* in July 2019, titled *Is Labour Anti-Semitic?*, that argued it was senior staff in Corbyn's leadership team that had obstructed the party's efforts to deal with antisemitism.<sup>31</sup> The interviews given by these former staffers turned whistle-blowers formed the heart of a powerful piece of political journalism that has been nominated for a BAFTA award for current affairs (full disclosure: this author was also interviewed on the program). Matthews was the most compelling of the interviewees, who not only described their first-hand experience of how antisemitism allegations were handled by Labour, but also bore witness to a working environment so toxic that it led Matthews to contemplate suicide. It can be assumed that Matthews and his former colleagues have made similar statements to the EHRC: the redacted summary of the JLM's submission to that inquiry repeatedly cites evidence given by party staff acting as whistleblowers. When the *Panorama* episode was broadcast, Labour's official media response was so condemnatory of the whistle-blowers that all but one of them sued the party for libel. In July 2020, the Labour Party withdrew their defamatory accusations, issued an unreserved apology to the whistle-blowers (and to John Ware, the BBC journalist who made the *Panorama* documentary), and paid them damages.<sup>32</sup> Corbyn objected publicly to the decision to settle this legal case and relied on the leaked report to do so. He criticized the decision to settle the libel action as "a political decision, not a legal one," warned that it "risks giving credibility to misleading and inaccurate allegations about action taken to tackle antisemitism in the Labour Party in recent years" and cited "the evidence in the leaked Labour report . . . about the role played by some of those who took part in the programme" as his justification.<sup>33</sup> The decision to settle the case was taken by Corbyn's successor

as leader, Keir Starmer, who has impeccable legal credentials as a QC and a former Director of Public Prosecutions.

All of which suggests that the outgoing party leadership would have an obvious motive to try to discredit Matthews's testimony. The leaked report claimed it was Matthews, as head of the GLU, who "fail[ed] to progress cases,"<sup>34</sup> provided "inaccurate and misleading reports"<sup>35</sup> to his superiors, "may have invented the numbers he reported"<sup>36</sup> and got away with it due to a "failure by his line managers."<sup>37</sup> The report even shares the extraordinary, and highly speculative, theory aired by unnamed "former LOTO staff" that Matthews and his colleagues in the GLU "deliberately failed to act on extreme cases of antisemitism in order to undermine the Labour Party as led by Jeremy Corbyn."<sup>38</sup> In other words, the defense put forward across 850 pages of this report, written with the intention of submitting it to the EHRC inquiry into alleged unlawful discrimination, is that the greatest hope of the left in a generation was the victim of sabotage at the hands of right-wing conspirators inside the Labour machine, who cynically manipulated the very serious and genuine issue of antisemitism in pursuit of their factional goals. Matthews strongly denies all these allegations (although he was not given the opportunity to do so within the leaked report) and his High Court vindication over his *Panorama* interview presumably leaves his remaining detractors in the weakest of positions. He—or rather, his lawyers—have described the report as a "defamatory dossier" that is "full of glaring omissions, factual inaccuracies, and innuendo."<sup>39</sup> Specifically, he says the claim that no antisemitism cases were processed by the GLU from April 2017 to February 2018 is false, and that the other statistics it contains relating to the work of the GLU are inaccurate. Having already won one legal case in relation to his *Panorama* appearance, he is taking further legal action against the Party as a result of this report.

The report does not accuse Matthews or anybody else at Labour HQ of sympathizing

with the antisemites that it claims they failed to discipline. It specifically says there is no evidence of “any antisemitic views on the part of party officials. . . . On the contrary, current and former staff members have expressed their disgust at examples of antisemitic attitudes within the party.”<sup>40</sup> What it does claim is that they were driven by factional motives. It is impossible to understand the behavior of the GLU during this period, the report claims, “without understanding the domineering role of factionalism within the Party.”<sup>41</sup> In an unwittingly comic demonstration of how domineering factionalism really is in Labour, the first 170 pages of this report—ostensibly about the work of the GLU “in relation to antisemitism”—are devoted to the subject of factional politics in the Party. Staff in the GLU, we are told, hated Jeremy Corbyn so much that they supported MPs who tried to unseat him as leader in 2016, wanted Labour to lose the General Election in 2017, and systematically used their powers to expel members who supported Corbyn and protect those who were from their own factions. In the lexicon of Labour factionalism, “trots” is a disparaging term used for people on the left of the party,<sup>42</sup> and the report quotes numerous examples of staff talking about “trot busting,” “bashing trots,” “trot spotting,” “trot hunting,” describing Corbyn himself as “that fucking trot” and one staffer claiming to be “trot smasher in chief.”<sup>43</sup> Nor was this the worst insult directed at Corbyn. “It was deeply inappropriate, offensive and against Labour’s code of conduct,” we are told, “for staff to share materials, using Party resources in office hours, likening the newly elected leader of the Labour Party to Adolf Hitler.”<sup>44</sup> If this sounds like the more puerile end of left wing student politics, the report has an answer for that too: “Many staff at Labour HQ had a background in ‘Labour Students’ . . . an organisation historically, and then, run by people from the ‘right’ of the party . . . [with] an internal culture of calling people to their left ‘Trots’.”<sup>45</sup> Nor was this limited to political insults. The language used in private messages between staff about some colleagues

and Labour MPs was “abusive or inappropriate”<sup>46</sup> and included “sexist and derogatory comments.”<sup>47</sup> This is a party so divided against itself that in one sentence it even speaks about itself in the third person twice over, as if the Labour Party and the Labour Party are two different entities: “The Labour Party believes that this was, unfortunately, indicative of the level of thought being put into Labour’s disciplinary procedures at the time.”<sup>48</sup>

The picture of a disciplinary system that was not fit for purpose will be familiar to members and campaigners who made complaints about antisemitism, only to find that their complaint would not be acknowledged, or would be acknowledged but not investigated, or would be investigated but would take years to resolve. A system designed to weed out the occasional unsuitable candidate for election was suddenly overwhelmed by hundreds of complaints about antisemitism. This was acknowledged by Chakrabarti in her 2016 report, which described “a lack of appropriate expertise, sufficient resources and clarity” and “the lack of any readily available complaints procedure.”<sup>49</sup> One of the recommendations of The Chakrabarti Report was to reduce the use of interim suspensions for members who were under investigation for antisemitism, which she felt were disproportionate. Chakrabarti wrote that “the presumption should be against interim suspension” and “if the principle of proportionality had been properly applied in recent times, I query whether so many people would ever have been suspended at all.”<sup>50</sup> The GLU was subsequently more reserved in its use of interim suspensions, but the leaked report criticizes Matthews for this.<sup>51</sup> Chakrabarti had qualified her remarks by noting that suspensions might still be appropriate, depending on “the gravity of the conduct complained about” and the “risk that the individual or group concerned might do lasting or irreparable damage to the Party even during the period of the investigation.”<sup>52</sup> According to the leaked report, “basic common sense”<sup>53</sup> indicated that antisemitism would be covered by these criteria, and

Matthews should have known this. Yet the terms of reference of the Chakrabarti Report specified that her recommendations regarding “clear and transparent compliance procedures” were “for dealing with allegations of racism and antisemitism”;<sup>54</sup> so it was not unreasonable for Matthews to interpret her recommendation to reduce the use of interim suspensions as applying to antisemitism cases and the report’s criticism of him for doing so seems obviously unfair. And there is yet another twist to this story that has not previously been disclosed. In its official Right Of Reply correspondence with the BBC prior to the July 2019 Panorama, the Labour Party explained Chakrabarti’s recommendations in an entirely different way:

The sheer number of individuals suspended and auto-excluded and the paucity of the justification for many of these decisions, fueled suspicions throughout the Party that the disciplinary process under those officials was being manipulated for political reasons, not least in an attempt improperly to influence the outcome of those elections. *It was this conduct during the 2015 leadership election that led to a number of Shami Chakrabarti’s findings and her recommendations for reform.* [emphasis added]<sup>55</sup>

There was nothing in the terms of reference of the Chakrabarti Inquiry that related to the suspension and exclusion of members during the 2015 leadership election; nor is there any discussion of this issue in her Report. The suggestion that this formed part of Chakrabarti’s motivation in drafting her recommendations makes no sense, unless, for some LOTO staff, her report was used as a Trojan horse to smuggle in measures that would make it harder for Labour HQ to suspend and expel Corbyn’s supporters, many of whom had spent years in small far left political parties and movements to the left of the Labour Party and only joined, or re-joined, when Corbyn stood for leader.

There are other details about some of the better-known episodes in Labour’s antisemitism crisis revealed in this report that are of interest.

It confirms that Corbyn’s office initially did not want to suspend Naz Shah MP for her antisemitic Facebook posts that emerged in April 2016, before reversing their position the following day. When a disciplinary panel failed to expel Ken Livingstone from the party in 2017 for various offensive comments he had made the previous year, including the claim that Hitler had “supported Zionism,”<sup>56</sup> one senior staffer in Corbyn’s office allegedly told Shadow Cabinet members that this outcome was the result of a plot by Labour’s Deputy Leader Tom Watson, working with allies in Labour HQ, who (they claimed) had encouraged Livingstone to make “provocative comments” and then rigged the disciplinary panel to give a weak verdict, “all in order to embarrass JC [Jeremy Corbyn] and create a crisis.”<sup>57</sup> Livingstone eventually resigned from the party the following year under the shadow of a further disciplinary investigation. Even then, we learn, his resignation was apparently arranged by Seumas Milne with the agreement of others in LOTO and in Labour HQ, as they were worried that if he avoided expulsion a second time it would generate “further controversy and media circus”; alternatively if he was expelled he “might take the party to court.”<sup>58</sup> Corbyn’s office put a significant effort into overturning the decisions to expel Moshe Machover and Glyn Secker, two well-known Jewish anti-Zionists on the Labour left. The report quotes internal discussions about the difficulties in handling cases that involve Jewish members allegedly using antisemitic language. We are told, “The Party’s disciplinary process recognises that individuals from protected characteristic groups can also be perpetrators of prejudice against said group, and has therefore suspended and investigated Jewish members for allegations of antisemitism”; but also “the fact that an individual is Jewish is important context in the disciplinary process in considering allegations of antisemitism.”<sup>59</sup> The work of grassroots activists in Labour Against Antisemitism (LAAS), and investigative blogger David Collier’s work exposing antisemitism in the Palestine Live Facebook

group and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, are discussed at length. They generated a lot of casework for the GLU and their efforts were taken seriously, although the report says “LAAS’s claims were wildly inaccurate—the number of Labour members they had reported were about one hundred, rather than the hundreds or thousands they claimed.”<sup>60</sup> But then this report has its own problems with accuracy, as much by what it omits as what it includes. The report admits that “Jeremy Corbyn had technically been a member of the [Palestine Live] Facebook group,”<sup>61</sup> but does not mention that he was an active member who posted in the group and whose office had helped to organize a meeting in Parliament for one of the group’s administrators—who has since been expelled by the Party. It has a long section about Labour’s efforts to write its own antisemitism code rather than adopting the IHRA working definition of antisemitism, concluding with the NEC’s decision to adopt the IHRA definition in September 2018; but doesn’t mention that even at that meeting, Corbyn brought his own qualifying statement that he wanted the NEC to adopt. There is extensive discussion of the recommendations of the Chakrabarti Report, but no mention of the Report’s launch being disrupted by a supporter of Corbyn accusing a Jewish MP, Ruth Smeeth, of “working hand in hand” with a right-wing newspaper journalist against her party leader.<sup>62</sup> There are many more examples.<sup>63</sup> But ultimately, everything in this report points to one simple question: why was it actually written?

We know that the report was intended for the EHRC, as has already been explained. But it cannot have been written as a rebuttal of the formal charge that the party unlawfully discriminated against its Jewish members, nor against the broader allegation of institutional antisemitism, because on both counts this report is damning. Every claim made by campaigners and Jewish community activists over the five years of Corbyn’s leadership, much of which was repeatedly denied at the time, is validated by this report. Antisemitism cases were not investigated, or were

dropped, or people were let off with warnings, or the party claimed that members were not actually members. Antisemitism grew in the party as a result of the failure to tackle it, encouraged by a culture of denial that it was a problem at all. The disciplinary system was not fit for purpose and Jewish members suffered as a result. As the JLM argued in their submission to the EHRC:

The Party has singularly failed to implement appropriate complaints and disciplinary systems to protect Jewish members from antisemitism. Its procedures are characterized by: inadequate definitions of antisemitism; inherently politicised decision-making, lack of training for staff and committees dealing with antisemitism; a lack of transparency; political interference; action only being taken in response to public pressure; excessively lenient sanctions; unreasonable delay; blanket impunity for certain kinds of antisemitism; and the appointment of plainly inappropriate personnel within the system.<sup>64</sup>

It is no surprise that Labour’s lawyers refused permission to submit the leaked report to the EHRC: it confirms everything the party is accused of by the JLM. Instead, it appears that the report’s true purpose may not be to defend the Labour Party under its current leadership, but to absolve the previous leader and his followers from any blame. It provides a legend of hope betrayed by internal sabotage that allows the Corbyn project to retain its self-image of ideological and political purity. In this telling, Labour under Corbyn would have won the 2017 General Election if it were not for right-wing saboteurs at the heart of Labour’s own operation. Rather than Corbyn being the leader of an antisemitic movement, or even an antisemite himself, he is recast in this telling as the innocent victim of opponents who manipulated antisemitism to bring him down. It is a conspiracy theory of a kind with a long tradition on the part of the left represented by Corbyn and his inner circle.<sup>65</sup> There is little space in this version of history, or in this report, for the idea that antisemitism in the Labour Party reflected a certain strand of left

wing politics personified by Corbyn himself;<sup>66</sup> much less any consideration of why people with such antisemitic views were attracted to join Labour under his leadership. Instead, this report provides a 250,000-word alibi for the true believers of Corbynism. And if its legal and financial consequences leave Labour destitute, that will be, for some, an acceptable price to pay.

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- 41 Ibid.
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- 43 *Work of the Labour Party's Governance and Legal Unit*, 70–71.
- 44 Ibid., 51.
- 45 Ibid., 74.
- 46 Ibid., 51.
- 47 Ibid., 54.
- 48 Ibid., 267.
- 49 Chakrabarti, *Report*, 14–15.
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