

# Jews and the Pandemic

by Michael Curtis



**There are legitimate differences** of opinion over pivotal issues such as the rules of cricket or whether restaurants should serve “gendered menus,” as a cafe in Greater Manchester is doing. Feminists are not alone in objecting to discrimination in afternoon tea: the options for women are dainty cucumber finger sandwiches, quiche, and a mini prawn cocktail. While men were offered a heavy steak, pork pie, chorizo sandwich, and chips. At least equality partly prevailed, both meals were priced at the same amount, but is it cricket?

Disagreement has also become vocal over increasing woke attitude to sport. The laws of cricket, the socially prominent British game, are determined by the Marylebone Cricket Club in London, the guardian of the laws of the game, custodian and arbiter of rules relating to cricket around the world.

Henceforth, cricketers will be referred to as “batters” instead of “batsmen”, in order to make the player neutral. The man of the match now becomes the hero of the match. The gendered neutral terminology and the woke attitude reflects the considerable growth in women’s cricket but not all lovers of the game agree. Besides, other gendered terms remain, maiden overs and third man.

There is no such disagreement over the increasing evil of worldwide antisemitic phenomena especially now it has been associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. This new wave of antisemitism focuses on the charge that Jews, or Zionists, or the State of Israel are responsible for the pandemic or benefit from it. Jewish world conspiracies to a large extent have been replaced by Zionist conspiracies, but antisemitism

is central to conspiracy theory. Israel is characterized by Islamists as the COVID-1948 virus. The pandemic is linked to the immigration of Jews into the area before the creation of Israel and the war initiated by Arab states in 1948.

Accompanying this charge are fantasies of Jewish conspiracies of evil or for world domination, similar to the medieval blood libels or the Tsarist forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The new conspiracy theories have learned from previous theories in addition to new fantasies such as the equivalence of Zionism and Nazism.

Antisemites in the past have blamed Jews for causing disasters, plagues, economic crises, and now anti-vaccine conspiracy theorists have linked Jews to the pandemic. Just two of them may be mentioned. Best-selling author David Icke, asserts that blood drinking Jewish reptilian humanoids secretly control the world, that Israel is exploiting the pandemic to test its technology, and that "Rothschild Zionists" were leaders of the reptilian conspiracy. Piers Corbyn, brother of the former leader of the Labour Party has distributed literature comparing COVID-19 vaccines to Auschwitz.

In view of the persistence of the COVID-19 virus, a recent British report has ominous overtones. It calls for the Government to tackle urgently a resurgence with the antivaccination movement, it warns that 27 of the leading anti-vaccination networks on Facebook and Twitter hosted antisemitism in 79% of their posts. Exposing the level of antisemitism amongst the anti-vaccine movement is of the utmost importance.

Some of the studies and research on this issue are disturbing, reflecting anxiety and fear as well as hatred of Jews. One study in 2021 at Oxford University of 2,500 adults states that 19% of the British public believes that Jews caused the pandemic for financial gain: 5.3% said they agree a little,

6.8% agreed moderately, 4.6% agreed a lot, and 2.4% agreed completely. A study at the same time by the NGO *Hope not Hate* group, in April 2020 reported that 13% believed Jews have undue control of banks, and 38% could not be sure or did not know, and 17% thought Jews had disproportionate control of powerful institutions. A survey of social media accounts in February 2021 found that 5,000 of the 27,000 Twitter references were antisemitic.

In his article in 1964 in *Harper's Magazine* the historian Richard Hofstadter analyzed the "paranoid style" in American politics with its attribution to more or less normal people of elements of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy. A variety of surveys indicate that these elements are present in manifestations of antisemitism. In an article in 2005, these manifestations have become more virulent because as Bernard Lewis, in an article in 2005, noted, that to religious and racial antisemitism has been added an ideological hatred of the Jewish collective, the "cosmic evil" of Israel.

What is disquieting is that antisemitism is not confined to the rhetoric or the behavior of certifiable lunatics or disturbed individuals like Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, sixth president of Iran who told the world that 2,000 Zionists want to rule the Universe, or extremists like Louis Farrakhan, Nation of Islam leader, or both left and right wing extremists, or biased members of U.S. Congress, but is prominent in mainstream institutions with more or less normal people, even leftists with their professed belief in equality and anti-racism, and opposition to systematic discrimination

This bias in mainstream institutions is presently being illustrated in Britain. On September 27, 2021, the British Labour Party at its annual conference in Brighton passed a motion moved by a group, Young Labour, declaring that Israel was an apartheid state and called for sanctions against it until it ends its apartheid and occupation, and respects the

right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. The motion demanded actions against the building of settlements and annexation, and for ending the occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza.

To their credit some of the leaders of the Party did not support the motion. One of them is Lisa Nandy, the "shadow foreign minister," former chair of Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East. Partly of Indian heritage, Nandy called for the end of anti-Jewish racism in the Party, and for a balanced approach that recognized there can only be peace between the parties through a safe and secure Israel existing alongside a sovereign and viable Palestinian state. The attack on the Jewish collective, Israel, is counterproductive. The diatribe by U.S. Representative Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., Somali born former refugee, and a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, declaring that AIPAC was buying influence of legislators for pro-Israel policies, is unlike to aid the Palestinian cause.

Antisemitic expressions come from all quarters, colors, and personalities. The murderers of 11 congregants at the Tree of Life Synagogue, Pittsburgh in 2018. The gunman, a male 22 year old former nursing student killed one and attempted the murder of 53 others on April 27, 2019, in a synagogue in Powey, near San Diego, California on the last day of Passover. The January 2021 Vogue cover features the plus-sized model, half African-American, Paloma Elsesser who is best known for her views on beauty standards and Victoria Secret. In peculiar language, she called on her Instagram followers not to post about antisemitism because it delegitimizes the Palestinian struggle: "No none is saying you have to be silent on antisemitism, but before you post about antisemitism, ask yourself is it likely this is linked to Palestinian liberation as a whole. Will people use it to delegitimize the Palestinian struggle"? This new expert on Middle East issues immediately follows other successful supermodel experts, Bella

and Gigi Hadid, whose father is Palestinian, and who on their post said that Israel was not a country but rather a land settled by colonists.

A different kind of model, Philadelphia Eagles football wide receiver DeSean Jackson issued a series of antisemitic posts, one of which included a quotation falsely attributed to Adolf Hitler, "Black people are the real children of Israel, and white Americans would be terrified to know they have been mistreating and discriminating and lynching them." Jackson apologized for the posts, saying he did not realize what Hitler was saying, but his offensive and divisive remarks also included his knowledge that there was a Jewish plan to "exhort America and achieve world domination."

Prominent institutions, academic and commercial, are at fault and deserve criticism. A former teacher at Eton College, Will Knowland, who had lost his job over a controversial lecture on gender, was involved in September 2021 in a controversy after he hosted an interview with a writer, E. Michael Jones, who claimed among other things that "The Jews were always behind pornography." Other items of wisdom were that critical race theory is Jewish, Talmudic Jewish scholarship led to the demise of literary criticism, the Jews have taken over Hollywood, and Jews were always behind pornography.

Some of the corporate giants, American Eagle, Target, Facebook, Walmart's CEO Doug McMillon, have taken steps to address hate speech issues directed toward Jews on public platforms, and banned antisemitic stereotypes about the collective power of Jews who run the world. But others, Google and Unilever, have failed to tackle antisemitism. There is a need for all corporations to reject the slander that Jews have an insatiable appetite for control, are insensitive to suffering of non-Jews, and above all to refute the allegation that Jews created COVID-19 for their benefit.