

Keir Starmer “Washing the Stain of Antisemitism” From the Labour Party

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Keir Starmer, who replaced the odious Jeremy Corbyn as the head of the Labour Party, is determined to “wash the stain of antisemitism” from the Party. His latest act, firing the Labour Party’s shadow education secretary, shows he means it.

The story is [here](#).

The UK Labour party’s shadow education secretary was fired on Thursday after she tweeted and praised an interview with a British actress who asserted that Israel was responsible for police brutality against minorities in the US.

A spokesperson for Labour leader Keir Starmer announced the axing of Rebecca Long-Bailey with statement saying, “The article Rebecca shared earlier today contained an antisemitic

conspiracy theory.”

“As leader of the Labour party, Keir has been clear that restoring trust with the Jewish community is a number one priority,” the statement added. “Antisemitism takes many different forms and it is important that we all are vigilant against it.”

Long-Bailey tweeted an interview in The Independent with far-left British TV star Maxine Peake, a former communist, who said, “Systemic racism is a global issue. The tactics used by the police in America, kneeling on George Floyd’s neck, that was learnt from seminars with Israeli secret services.”

This is flatly false. Israeli police – not “secret services” – have taught seminars to American police officers. But nothing was taught about “choke-holds” or “knee-on-neck” tactics. It would have been easy for Long-Bailey to have discovered this; no more than 30 seconds of checking online would have enlightened her. But her mind was made up.

The article also noted that Peake was “supposed to be in Palestine still, liaising with young activists.”

American police were not taught about choke-holds while in Israel. But one wonders if, while “liaising with young activists” in “Palestine,” Maxine Peake learned to make and throw a Molotov cocktail, or ways to assemble an incendiary kite, or how to construct a bomb that could be set off in a pizza parlor, a Passover ceremony, a school classroom.

The Independent itself repudiated Peake’s accusation, writing in a correction, “While it is true that US law enforcement officials have travelled to Israel for training, there has been no suggestion that this training involved the tactics referred to in the article.”

Referring to the interview, Long-Bailey tweeted, “Maxine

Peake is an absolute diamond."

An "absolute diamond"? Not even close. At best, this Palestinian groupie is merely a rhinestone in the rough.

Following criticism, Long-Bailey explained, "I retweeted Maxine Peake's article because of her significant achievements and because the thrust of her argument is to stay in the Labour party. It wasn't intended to be an endorsement of all aspects of the article."

No, of course not. But which parts was she not endorsing? Why doesn't she tell us straight out? Long-Bailey retweets enthusiastically a comment by former Communist agitator and actress Maxine Peake, that makes various points – such as, *don't quit, but stay and fight, you Corbynistas, within the Labour Party* – and one of those points is Peake's claim that American police have learned about choke-holds, and knee-on-neck tactics, from Israelis. That charge is completely false; the Israelis have never taught the American police, nor any other police force, to use such methods. Long-Bailey said her retweeting was not meant to "be an endorsement of all aspects of the article." Why not, then, leave out those aspects which she claims not to be endorsing, lest the recipients of her retweet get the wrong idea? She still does not say that Peake's claim about Israelis teaching American police about choke-holds is false; nor does she even say that "I did not mean to endorse what Peake said about Israeli police." She only says that her retweeting was not "an endorsement of all aspects of the article." We still don't know which "aspects" she is not endorsing, and sensible people will see right through this indefensible defense and sly sleight-of-word she provides. Nothing would have been easier than for her to tweet "while I do not agree with Peake's baseless charge about Israeli police teachings, I nonetheless wanted to share another part of her tweet today...." How difficult would that

have been?

After her firing was announced, Long-Bailey tweeted that Starmer's office had approved the initial "clarification of my retweet," but she was later told to take it down

"I could not do this in good conscience without the issuing of a press statement of clarification," she noted. "I had asked to discuss these matters with Keir before agreeing what further action to take, but sadly he had already made his decision.

Keir Starmer made his decision to fire her as the shadow secretary of education because it was clear her "clarification" was completely insufficient. It did not address the only thing that she had been asked to address: does she, or does she not, support Peake's preposterous conspiracy theory, blaming Israeli police instructors for George Floyd's death?

"I wished to acknowledge these concerns and duly issued a clarification of my retweet, with the wording agreed in advance by the Labour Party Leader's Office, but after posting I was subsequently instructed to take both this agreed clarification and my original retweet down.

Keir Starmer had given her a chance to clarify appropriately. She failed to do so. End of story. Starmer has now made clear he is not going to tolerate any longer those who tweet, or in this case retweet, with admiration – "Peake is an absolute diamond!" – an antisemitic charge that manages to blame Israelis for Derek Chauvin's knee-on-neck in Minneapolis.

Board of Deputies of British Jews President Marie van der Zyl thanked Starmer for "backing his words with actions on antisemitism."

"After Rebecca Long-Bailey shared a conspiracy theory, we and

others gave her the opportunity to retract and apologize," she said. "To our surprise and dismay, her response was pathetic. Her position as shadow education secretary was therefore untenable."...

The Muslim Public Affairs Committee, on the other hand, accused Labour of having "prostrated themselves to the Zionist lobby."

Apparently, the refusal to countenance a remark that blames Jews (Israelis) for the death of George Floyd amounts to "prostrating oneself to the Zionist lobby."

"Criticism of Israel and its murderous policies are not antisemitic," it claimed.

Conspiracy theories that blame the Jews for something – when they were in no way involved in the matter – is classic antisemitism.

Under Starmer's predecessor, Jeremy Corbyn, Labour was plagued by antisemitism scandals, some involving Corbyn himself.

Starmer replaced Corbyn in April, in the aftermath of Labour's resounding electoral defeat last December.

Just last week, Starmer told representatives of the UK Jewish community, "We are beginning to wash clean the stain of antisemitism from our party."

Off to a shaky start as Labour leader – he did, after all, appoint Long-Bailey to her position as shadow education secretary, even though her downplaying of antisemitism in the party was an open secret – Keir Starmer has convincingly shown himself to be the anti-Corbyn for whom many in the Labour Party have been waiting. Let's hope he continues to "wash the

stain of antisemitism" from the Labour Party that had been left by Corbyn and his unsavory coterie.

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