



Thoughtcrime: Exposing the New 'Anti-Semitism'

'An expert' wrote Noam Chomsky, 'is someone who articulates the consensus of people with power'.

Patriarchy, racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism are orthodoxies promoted by clever people throughout history to whitewash the guilt of powerful elites. Far from being challenged, as we are lead to believe, mostly they are shifted in new directions at different targets.

On the political right the 'old' anti-Semitism is giving way to a calculating sympathy for Zionism. The historical hatred of Jews has not subsided. It is simply that a new target has been found. Islam is the alien culture and Muslims preferred as the fifth column.

Given Israel's alliance with the West, it is no surprise that the campaign by some of its more militant supporters to re write the meaning of anti-Semitism in accordance with the new 'realpolitik' is meeting a compliant press.

The core objective of those advocating the idea of 'left anti-Semitism' is the legitimisation of Israel. Not in the sense of national sovereignty: rarely do they equate its Arab neighbours with Israel. The acceptance they seek and the standard they use is Israel's right to equal esteem and entitlement with its allies in the 'democratic' West.

Ideologically this conflicts with radical left doctrines viewing Israel not as a haven or homeland but as a European colony established by force, supported ideologically by western exceptionalism.

Differing from arguments about racism historically, the new anti-Semitism draws on the political allegiances of individuals, represented in this case as 'racial'. Opposition to Israel looks like a sinister 'double standard' only if you view Israel as it is viewed by the 'new' Zionists, without the perception of displacement and occupation.

Viewing anti Zionism as racially motivated would be a huge victory for a world view extreme even by the outlandish double standards of western 'foreign policy'; we can

criticise Israel for its mistakes, as we might the UK, since this confers on it the legitimacy sought. Anti Zionism however - viewing Israel as an occupying power - is placed beyond the pale of argument, portrayed shamelessly through the prism of old anti-Semitism.

The word Zionist becomes anti-Semitic code for 'Jew'. Referring to Zionism as powerful or unaccountable becomes a covert endorsement of 'anti-Semitic conspiracies'; questioning its exclusivity becomes a revival of traditional slurs against 'wealthy' or 'influential' Jews; boycott or divestment campaigns become analogous to the burning of synagogues or the attacks on Jewish businesses or shops in 1930s Germany.

Accepting a definition of anti-Semitism written by Zionists denies the Palestinian experience, turning the case for Palestine into thoughtcrime. Without the Palestinians, the 'repudiation of Israel's right to exist' (Howard Jacobson) becomes a denial of Jewish identity, intrinsically anti-Semitic. Anti Zionism is 'associated' with the genocidal instincts of Nazism.

Comparing nations targeted for 'regime change' to fascism or their leaders to Hitler is endemic in our culture, no matter what the experiences of their people historically. Slandering the left with the evil of historical anti-Semitism fits the prevailing political narrative well, built as it is on a common aim; avoid addressing the supremacist nature of western foreign policy by denying the oppressed and portraying opposition as 'hatred'.

What will be achieved if we accept the idea that anti-Semitism has 'changed' in the manner stated is no different to what has been achieved throughout history by all ideas constructed to favour the powerful: the real issues of political justice which lie at the core of the conflict in Palestine and many conflicts around the world are avoided.

Kim Bryan, 24th October 2016