

Jeremy Corbyn — and the Company He Keeps

Andrew Stuttaford

National Review, The Corner, World, May 10, 2018



British opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn leaves his home in London, April 2, 2018. (*Hannah McKay/Reuters*)

Yesterday, [Jeremy Corbyn](#), the far-left leader of Britain’s Labour party, [tweeted](#) that he had been pleased to meet the co-leader of Germany’s Left party (*Die Linke*), a party based on the ruins of the old East German Communist Party and which has now extended its reach into the former West Germany. It secured 9.2 percent of the vote in the last German general election.

Corbyn:

“We discussed how progressive parties and movements inside and outside the European Union can work together to end austerity and privatisation, and promote international peace.”

Among *Die Linke*’s work to “promote international peace” has been an accommodating (there are other adjectives) attitude to Russian neocolonialism and aggression in Ukraine.

[Open Democracy](#):

Germany’s *Die Linke* party went even further by some of its leaders [delivering “humanitarian aid”](#) to the self-proclaimed “Donetsk People’s Republic”, and [met with its anti-Semitic leader Aleksandr Zakharchenko](#). A *Die Linke* politician recently, the

first among German politicians, [declared that Crimea legally belongs to Russia](#) after his visit on the peninsula.

In another peace effort, the Left Party has called for the replacement of NATO with a new alliance that includes Russia (previously it had called for simple withdrawal from NATO).

Corbyn himself has attacked NATO for years, and, although Labour's 2017 manifesto reiterated a commitment to NATO, if the party were ever to get into power, Britain's participation in the Atlantic Alliance would, I suspect, soon begin to fade.

[This](#) (from the *Belfast Telegraph* in 2017) gives a preview of what to expect:

Jeremy Corbyn has said no more British troops should be sent to the Baltic states as he called for increased dialogue with Russia. The Labour leader also refused to say if he agrees with the Nato principle of collective defence — which means an attack on one member is deemed an attack on all. Instead, Mr Corbyn called for greater efforts to demilitarise the eastern border with Russia.

Meanwhile, there's [this](#) (from *Der Spiegel* in 2011):

For years, the [Left Party](#) — a partial outgrowth of the East German communists — has been criticized for harboring anti-Semitism and being overtly critical of Israel. Just recently, Left Party floor leader Gregor Gysi pushed a resolution through the party's parliamentary faction stating: "In the future, the representatives of the Left Party faction will take action against any form of anti-Semitism in society."

The party, the resolution read, will no longer participate in boycotts of Israeli products, will refrain from demanding a single-state solution to the Middle East conflict and will not take part in this year's Gaza flotilla.

That resolution, however, did not sit well with the party's left wing. The group protested against being "muzzled," complaining that Gysi's declaration was "undemocratic" and "dangerous," as Left Party parliamentarian Annette Groth complained. And Gysi, formerly head of the party, gave in...

...it seems unlikely that the Left Party will be able to quickly silence the debate. On Monday, Dieter Graumann, president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, wrote a guest commentary for the daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in which he accused Left Party members, particularly those from western Germany, of "downright pathological hatred of Israel." He also wrote that the "old anti-Zionist spirit from East Germany still stains the party."

...Several recent incidents bear witness to the problem. In April, the website of the district chapter of the Left Party in the western city of Duisburg featured a swastika entangled with a Star of David. The symbol linked to a pamphlet which called Israel a "rogue nation" and called for a boycott of Israeli products. The Duisburg Left Party

chapter distanced itself from the pamphlet and claimed that the site had been illegally manipulated — but the head of the Duisburg Left Party has long supported a boycott of Israeli products.

Old news? Well, there is always this delightful story ([via the *Jerusalem Post*](#)) from 2017:

The head of the German Left Party in the city of Saarlouis, situated in the state of Saarland, used an antisemitic phrase on his Facebook page to denigrate an MP in his party, according to a Monday report in the regional paper *Saarbrücker Zeitung*. Mekan Kolasinac, the chairman of the Left Party in Saarlouis, called the party's federal head, Bernd Riexinger, a “sneaky Jew.”

Kolasinac told the paper he wrote the anti-Jewish entry but regrets it. He said it was a mistake and he intended to write “Judas” instead of “Jew.” Kolasinac said he apologized on his Facebook page and apologized to “my Jewish friends.”

As it happens, there has been considerable controversy in Britain recently about the strain of [anti-Semitism](#) that undeniably runs through part of the Corbynista wing of the Labour party. Doubtless the fact that Corbyn (who, from time to time, comes out with some fine *words* condemning this phenomenon) is meeting the leader of a party with similar, well, issues is only a coincidence.

[Writing in the *Spectator*](#) meanwhile, Nick Cohen launches into Corbyn's Labour:

The Labour leadership is just as cranky — to use the mildest word I might choose. It, too, regards Venezuela as a beacon, and ignores the poverty and corruption. Jeremy Corbyn and Emily Thornberry are as willing as any hack Russia Today propagandist to fuel fantasies about the poisonings of Russians in Salisbury and Syrians in Douma. They say they are “concerned” about antisemitism but the conspiracy theory of fascism flourishes...everywhere on the Corbyn left.

Cohen concludes that this brand of politics will keep Labour out of power. I doubt it. Labour has been the principal party of opposition to the Conservatives in the U.K. since before the Second World War. It is where most voters who want to vote against the Tories turn — and will continue to turn. The far Left who are taking over the Labour party know that. If they lose an election in the meantime, they are happy to spend their time tightening their control over Labour still further while they wait for the moment that enough anti-Conservatives come their way, as, sooner or later, they will.

That said, the way that the Tory party is [bungling Brexit](#), they may not have to wait very long.