

Conspiracy Theories by Palestinians and Others

The world is full of noises and sounds. Some are sweet airs that give delight and do not hurt. Others are hurtful and pernicious and are deliberate distortions of documented truth, simple but false explanations of existing problems and of those individuals, groups, or nations who are the villains responsible for evil behavior.

High among the distortions of reality are conspiracy theories, supposed diabolical secret plans to carry out some offence for an unlawful or evil purpose. Like magic tricks, they misdirect perception of the true state of things. As a result, close attention is essential to overcome illusory perception. As George Orwell reminded us, the restatement of the obvious truth is the first duty of intelligent people.

The attacks in major cities of the world by individuals belonging to or acting on behalf of ISIS, the terrorist Caliphate, have led to a cottage industry, of conspiracy theories. Those theories have existed since the dawn of history, and have become ever more familiar as expressed in various forms of modern culture, in television series, in James Bond movies, as well as in political discourse. Proponents of these theories use them to lull people about the nature of real problems facing their societies. They blame others, abstract elements such as "Wall Street" or the "Jewish lobby" or "globalization" for the ills of the world. Charismatic leaders formulate them to acquire power by postulating against the existing system, and to keep power by using them to crush dissent.

For whatever reason conspiracy theories reject documented truth or probable explanations, of policies, events or actions. Instead, they offer simple incorrect explanations or

indulge in fantasies. In this explanation, it was the Freemasons and French philosophers and writers who were responsible for the French Revolution of 1789. They would explain that President John Kennedy was not killed on November 22, 1963 by a lone gunman named Lee Harvey Oswald. The true murderers came from by the KGB, or the CIA, or the Mafia, or Fidel Castro, or the Illuminati, or even his wife Jacqueline. The 9/11 attacks on the U.S. were an inside job by the U.S. Government.

Conspiracy theories have usually been evil and mean spirited on behalf of persons or groups. In the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin in January 1953 told the people of a plot, the Doctors' Plot, a vast conspiracy organized by Jews in the U.S. to murder him and destroy the Soviet Union. The result was the arrest of hundreds of Jews and the construction of four large prison camps in different parts of the country. The dictator's intention was to execute the plotters in Red Square but this was prevented by his death in March 1953.

Today, countless conspiracy theories abound. Most are childish nonsense. We learn that UFO flying saucers appeared in Roswell, New Mexico in 1947. We are told that NASA faked the six manned landings on the moon. But others are more serious, and many of the current conspiracy theories have been and are antisemitic in nature.

Throughout history, Jews have been the butt of them. Jews are said to have involved in ritual murder of Christians, to poison wells, to plan to control the world. It is shameful that the Russian forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the fantasy of the Jewish plot to conquer the world, is still a best seller in some countries. Today, some public figures, even U.S. presidential candidates, tell us that Jews control Wall Street, the U.S. Federal Reserve System, the media, and Hollywood, and worse of all that the Holocaust is a hoax, a myth to get international sympathy for Jews.

These fantasies and myths now mainly come from two sources: the political Left in Europe and elsewhere, and from Palestinians and their supporters.

In his play *Look Back in Anger*, John Osborne had the angry young protagonist ask the question, "Are there any good brave causes left?" In recent years, leftist causes involving the death penalty, abortion, and gay rights have been won. Yet, in a world of economic and political crises, increasing inequality, religious wars within the Muslim world, Islamist terrorism, and growing refugee and immigration problems, it is particularly distressing that some advocates of the political Left in Europe and in the U.S. propound mean-spirited anti-Jewish conspiracy theories as their "good brave cause."

A few examples can illustrate the point. One concerns the Oxford University student Labour Club from which the vice-chair, a courageous young man named Alex Chalmers, resigned because of the Club's antisemitic behavior, and implications of a "Zionist" conspiracy. His resignation was followed by that of another member of the Club for the same reason.

British leftist politicians have engaged in similar utterances bordering on conspiracy theories. One Labour Party member, Vivki Kirby, allegedly posted antisemitic comments on Facebook, for which she was suspended in March 2016. She had already been suspended in 2014 for similar remarks on social media. Among those remarks were that Hitler might be the "Zionist god." Hitler, she thought, seems to be the teacher of Israelis.

Another, Labour member, Gerry Downing, a Trotskyist activist, was expelled from the Party for his preposterous remarks. These included praising Hamas terrorism, questioning the Holocaust, and calling a prominent British Jewish historian a "Zionist minder." In 2001 Downing had refused to support the British government plan to list al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization. To do so he thought, would cause a great deal of

disquiet in the Islamic, Turkish, and Tamil communities.

A third Labour member is the former Lord Mayor of Bradford, 2013-2014, and now district councilor, Khadim Hussain, who implied in a comment on social media that Israel had created the "so-called ISIS" and was secretly arming it. He may not be a historian but his analysis of the past is that Hitler killed "six million Zionists."

A fourth Labour member is Bob Campbell, Labour Member of Parliament, who declared one day after the terrorist attack in Brussels on March 2, 2016 that ISIS is run by Israel. Infact he explained, ISIS has not attacked Israel because "the dog does not bite its own tail." He also was said to have posted, though he later denied it, pictures of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu being hung from a tree and of an Israeli flag with the words "The real plague" on it.

The British Labour Party may be losing elections but some of its members are good at antisemitic utterances and propounding conspiracy theories. It goes without saying that Palestinian authorities and spokespeople are adept at both. They know, as we do not, that Israel was behind the attack in Brussels, punishing Europeans for their support of a Palestinian state, and for their boycott of products made in the Israeli settlements.

A member of the Fatah Revolutionary Council, Muwaffaq Matarr, did not want to "throw accusations" but he asked the question about the motives of Israel in helping ISIS. It is not clear whether or not he admired the extraordinary skill of the villains. These villains, "the heads of the Zionist project," used the latest tools of terror ("the terrorist savage" ISIS) to hit three birds with one terrorist bombing, the Palestinians, the Arabs, and Europe.

The fantasies and conspiracy theories formulated by Palestinian leaders may be regarded as harmful black

comedy. But they raise the serious problem, can those leaders ever be interested in a peaceful solution of their differences with Israel?