



Briefing: The Jewish Labor Committee and Apartheid Israel

International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network-Labor, and Labor for Palestine (U.S.), April 13, 2010

Israel was left with no choice but to defend itself and dismantle Hamas's ability to launch more missiles. . . . Israel is continuing to supply humanitarian aid of food, water and medicine into Gaza, and to allow relief agencies to supply material to the suffering people of Gaza.

—“Jewish Labor Committee Statement on Gaza,” January 9, 2009¹

The JLC put together a delegation of Irish-American trade union leaders last November (including one of our honorees tonight) to go to Ireland and to stand up for the State of Israel when Irish trade unionists were considering positions with which we disagreed.

—“Stuart Appelbaum’s Remarks at October 2009 JLC Dinner”²

•**Overview.** The Jewish Labor Committee (JLC) presents itself as a model of progressive, socially conscious trade unionism. But as a U.S. mouthpiece for the Histadrut, this false image has been a smokescreen to disguise and promote Apartheid Israel, “AFL-CIA” support war and empire, and racism in the labor movement.

•**1940s: *The Nakba.*** The JLC was founded in 1934 to fight fascism and help Jewish refugees from Europe.³ But in the late-1940s, the JLC joins with Labor Zionist union officials who help persuade both Truman and Stalin to support partition and establishment of the Zionist state.⁴

•**1950s: *McCarthyism.*** Under the banner, “Jewish Labor Fights Communism,”⁵ the JLC supports McCarthyite purges of government and labor,⁶ and undermines the campaign to defend the Rosenbergs from execution.⁷

The JLC also supports overall U.S. Cold War foreign policy,⁸ urges the U.S. to arm Israel against “Communist and Arab designs,”⁹ and declares that conflict in the Middle East, “is not simply between Egypt and Israel, but between democracy and expansionist dictatorship, between the free world and Nasserism backed by Moscow. . . . Events also have demonstrated the basic identity of interest of Israel and the free world.”¹⁰

•**1960: *Trade Union Racism.*** Speaking to a JLC conference, AFL-CIO chief George Meany attacks the NAACP

for exposing racism in U.S. labor bodies. Historian Philip S. Foner observes, “Meany’s choice of the Jewish Labor Committee conference to unleash the official AFL-CIO response to the NAACP report was not accidental. The JLC had been one of the shrillest critics of the report,”¹¹ which—like today’s Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israeli apartheid—it brands as anti-Semitic.¹²

•**1962: *Attack on the Student Movement.*** The JLC joins “an all-out attack on the Port Huron convention” of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) for allowing Communists to participate and opposing U.S. imperialism.¹³

•**1964: *Censorship at the World’s Fair.*** The JLC demands removal of a World’s Fair mural it calls “anti-Semitic” for depicting Palestinian refugees.¹⁴

•**1967: *Witch Hunting the Black Power Movement.*** The JLC accuses the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) of being “an apostle of racism,” for having called Israel racist and imperialist.¹⁵

•**1967-1968: *Vietnam War.*** In 1967—the same year that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. publicly spoke out against the Vietnam War, the JLC hosts a dinner at which President Lyndon Johnson links support of Vietnam and Israel’s 1967 War, claiming that U.S. “commitment to a small and distant country in Southeast Asia is being tested. . . . [and that] [t]he same kind of issues are at stake in the Middle East.”¹⁶ In 1968, the JLC honors Hubert Humphrey, Johnson’s pro-war vice-president and Democratic Party presidential nominee.¹⁷

•**1968: *Community Control of the Schools.*** The JLC joins with the United Federation of Teachers to oppose African American demands for community control of the schools in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville section of Brooklyn.¹⁸

•**1970s: *Racist Hiring Practices.*** The JLC, Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and other Zionist organizations help roll back affirmative action policies designed to boost African American employment.¹⁹

¹ “Jewish Labor Committee Statement on Gaza,” January 9, 2009, http://www.jewishlaborcommittee.org/2009/01/jewish_labor_committee_stateme_1.html.

² http://www.jewishlaborcommittee.org/2005/10/stuart_appelbaums_remarks_at_o.html.

³ “Labor Group Maps Policy on Hitler,” *New York Times*, April 5, 1934.

⁴ Adam Howard, *Sewing the Seeds of Statehood: Garment Unions, American Labor, and the Establishment of the State of Israel* (University of Florida, 2003), <http://www.cofc.edu/~jwst/pages/Howard, Adam - Seeds of Statehood +.pdf>.

⁵ “Guide to the Records of the Jewish Labor Committee (U.S.), Part II, Holocaust Era Files 1948-1956,”

http://dlib.nyu.edu/eadapp/transform?source=tamwag/jlc_h2.xml&style=tamwag/tamwag_xsl&part=body.

⁶ “Tobin Hails Labor For Fight on Reds,” *New York Times*, May 29, 1950.

⁷ Edward S. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry since World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 36-37.

⁸ “Military Economy For America Seen,” *New York Times*, October 2, 1950.

⁹ Irving Spiegel, “Parley Stresses Threat to Israel,” *New York Times*, January 18, 1956.

¹⁰ Irving Spiegel, “Jewish Units Ask U.S. Reappraisal,” *New York Times*, November 1, 1956.

¹¹ Philip S. Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker 1619-1973* (New York: International Publishers, 1974), p. 332.

¹² Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey, *Race Traitor* (Oxford: Routledge, 1996), p. 225.

¹³ Jon Wiener, *Professors, Politics and Pop* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 233.

¹⁴ Emily Alice Katz, “It’s the real world after all: the American-Israel Pavilion-Jordan Pavilion controversy at the New York World’s Fair, 1964-1965,” *American Jewish History*, March 1, 2003.

¹⁵ Kathleen Teltsch, “S.N.C.C. Criticized For Israel Stand,” *New York Times*, August 16, 1967.

¹⁶ “Excerpts From Johnson’s Talk at Jewish Labor Dinner Here,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1967.

¹⁷ “Labor Leaders Hail Humphrey At Dinner Here Honoring Abel,” *New York Times*, December 11, 1968.

¹⁸ Daniel Perlestein, “The dead end of despair: Bayard Rustin, the 1968 New York school crisis, and the struggle for racial justice,” *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, July 1, 2007.

<http://www.thefreeibrary.com/The+dead+end+of+despair:+Bayard+Rustin,+the+1968+New+York+school.+...+a0165359506>.

¹⁹ Murray Ilson, “6 Jewish Groups Charge Colleges With Reverse Bias,” *New York Times*, January 14, 1973; Herbert Hill, “Black-Jewish Conflict in the Labor Context,” in Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey, *Race Traitor*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 230.

•**1973: 1973 War.** During the 1973 Mideast War, the JLC is part of a coalition that spends more than \$1 million to mobilize support for Israel.²⁰

•**1979: Andrew Young and the PLO.** The JLC, Anti-Defamation League and other organizations help oust Andrew Young, chief U.S. delegate to the U.N., for meeting with a PLO representative.²¹

•**1991: Settlements.** The JLC criticizes the Bush Sr. administration for threatening to condition U.S. loan guarantees on ending Israel's aggressive settlement policy.²²

•**1998: War Against Iraq.** JLC Executive Director Avram Lyon criticizes an 1199 SEIU resolution that calls for an end to U.S. sanctions against Iraq.²³

•**2001: Boosting Labor Support for Apartheid Israel.** JLC head Stuart Appelbaum boasts that "[t]he labor movement, and the AFL-CIO in particular, has been among the most stalwart defenders of Israel," and that the JLC itself had blocked "Israel-bashing resolutions at various Democratic Party gatherings" in the 1980s.²⁴

•**2002: Jenin Massacre.** In April, as Israel butchers Palestinian refugees at Jenin in the West Bank, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney—introduced by JLC chief Stuart Appelbaum—is a featured speaker at a belligerent "National Solidarity Rally for Israel."²⁵

•**2003: Palestine Student Solidarity at Rutgers University.** In July, the JLC joins the attack on a student Palestine solidarity conference at Rutgers University.²⁶

•**2004: Somerville BDS Resolution.** On November 8, the JLC opposes a BDS resolution under consideration in Somerville, MA as "one-sided."²⁷

•**2004: Nakba Denial.** On December 5, the JLC cosponsors a conference in Philadelphia organized by AIPAC (the main Zionist lobbying agency in the U.S.) to discredit such "Arab myths" as Israel's responsibility for Mideast wars; "the so-called Palestinian 'right of return'; and facts about Palestinian Arab suicide bombers."²⁸

•**2006: War on Lebanon.** In July, the JLC participates in a Philadelphia rally supporting Israel's war on Lebanon "and its fight against the terrorist organizations Hezbollah and Hamas."²⁹

•**2006: Palestine Solidarity in Los Angeles.** Under pressure from the JLC, the ADL and Simon Wiesenthal Center, the United Teachers of Los Angeles cancel an October 5 forum on Palestine sponsored by the union's own human rights committee.³⁰

²⁰ Julia Goldman, "Remembering Yom Kippur War: U.S. Jews mobilized for Israel with prayers, money and lobbying," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, September 21, 1998.

²¹ "11 Jewish Groups Reject Criticism From Blacks, but Urge Cooperation," *New York Times*, August 24, 1979.

²² Fox Butterfield, "Bush's Dispute With Israel Upsets Many Leading Jews," *New York Times*, September 16, 1991, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CE5D6143EF935A2575AC0A967958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>.

²³ Jeffrey Blankfort, "The Israel Lobby and the Left: Uneasy Questions," *Left Curve*, Issue 27, May 2003, <http://www.leftcurve.org/LC27WebPages/IsraelLobby.html>.

²⁴ Stuart Appelbaum, "Working for Workplace Justice," *Jewish Daily Forward*, August 31, 2001.

²⁵ "National Solidarity Rally with Israel, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C., April 15, 2002," http://www.ujc.org/local_includes/downloads/1163.pdf.

²⁶ Robert Wiener, "Jewish groups plan pro-Israel advocacy response as Rutgers, governor okay pro-Palestinian parley," *Jewish News*, July 24, 2003.

²⁷ Penny Schwartz, "Somerville Jewish residents up in arms; Outcry by hundreds of residents blocks passage of divestment in Israeli Bonds," *Jewish Advocate*, November 12-November 18, 2004.

²⁸ Zara Myers, "The Name of the Game? Advocacy for Israel," *Jewish Exponent*, November 25, 2004.

²⁹ "Supporting Israel's Right to Fight," *Jewish Exponent*, August 3, 2006.

³⁰ D. Wurker, "Labor Solidarity Versus the Occupation," *Live From Palestine*, Vol. 4, No. 2, July 2007, http://www.norcalism.org/newsletters/ISM_July_2007.pdf.

•**2007: Equating Anti-Zionism with Anti-Semitism.** In January, the JLC, AIPAC and other Zionist organizations co-sponsor conference in San Francisco against alleged "anti-Semitism on the left."³¹ The JLC's session is entitled "An Imperfect Union: Keeping Anti-Semitism Out of the Labor Movement."³²

•**2007: Trade Union BDS in the UK.** In June, AFL-CIO and Change to Win leaders sign a JLC statement denouncing British trade union support for BDS. JLC head Stuart Appelbaum later boasts that, "American leadership is fundamental to challenging Israel bashing within the labor movement globally—and there can be no effective campaign to build support for Israel on the left internationally absent labor support."³³

•**2008: Solidarity Conference in Boston.** Under pressure from the JLC and UNITE-HERE leadership, a Boston community center cancels a March 8 conference on "Zionism and the Repression of Anti-Colonial Movements."³⁴

•**2008: Australian Trade Unions.** Also in March, JLC head Stuart Appelbaum accuses two Australian unions of "anti-Semitism cloaked under the veil of anti-Zionism," for having accused Israel of "excessive use of force" against the people of Gaza.³⁵

•**2009: Gaza Massacres.** On January 9, the JLC endorses Israel's brutal war on Gaza, falsely claiming that "Israel was left with no choice but to defend itself and dismantle Hamas's ability to launch more missiles," and that "Israel is continuing to supply humanitarian aid of food, water and medicine into Gaza, and to allow relief agencies to supply material to the suffering people of Gaza."³⁶

•**2009: "TULIP" and Escalating Sabotage of International Trade Union BDS.** In April, the JLC and Eric Lee (Labourstart) are primary cofounders of "Trade Unions Linking Israel and Palestine" (TULIP), the purpose of which is to oppose labor support for the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) campaign against Apartheid Israel.³⁷

International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network-Labor:
www.ijsn.net/C91

Labor for Palestine: www.laborforpalestine.net/wp/

Union labor donated.

³¹ Ben Harris, "Bay Area takes on 'progressive' anti-Semitism," *The Jewish Journal*, January 25, 2007, http://www.jewishjournal.com/world/article/bay_area_takes_on_progressive_antisemitism_20070126/.

³² "Finding Our Voice: The Conference for Progressives Constructively Addressing Anti-Semitism, California," <http://www.engageonline.org.uk/blog/article.php?id=773>.

³³ "Statement of Opposition to Divestment From or Boycotts of Israel," July 18, 2007, <http://www.juf.org/news/local.aspx?id=24484>.

³⁴ "Jewish Labor Committee Attempts to Shut Down Boston Conference on Zionism," New England Committee to Defend Palestine, March 16, 2008, <http://www.uruknet.info/?p=m42087&hd=&size=1&l=e>.

³⁵ Brad Norington, "US Jews attack unions over ad," *The Australian*, March 31, 2008, <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23457342-5013404,00.html>; Brad Norington, "Union chief retreats from Israel advert," *The Australian*, April 7, 2008, <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23495395-2702,00.html>.

³⁶ "Jewish Labor Committee Statement on Gaza," January 9, 2009, http://www.jewishlaborcommittee.org/2009/01/jewish_labor_committee_statement_1.html.

³⁷ "Pro-Israel unionists seek to undermine Palestinian solidarity," May 31, 2009, <http://revitalisinglabour.blogspot.com/2009/05/pro-israel-unionists-seek-to-undermine.html>; Jonny Paul, "Organization sets up Google ad campaign to counter Israel boycott calls," *Jerusalem Post*, July 16, 2009, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1246443833062&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull;Who+are+the+50+most+influential+Jews+of+2009?>

³⁸ "Who are the 50 most influential Jews of 2009?," *Haaretz*, November 14, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1128026.html>.