

Owen Jones, *This Land: The Story of a Movement*
 Allen Lane: London 2020, £20, hardback
 352 pp, 978 0 241 47094 7

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VICIOUS, HORRIBLE PEOPLE

A range of coroners' reports followed the expiry of Corbynism. In early 2020 Jeremy Gilbert published his five-part analysis of the election defeat on openDemocracy, pinpointing various factors—a conflict-averse leader, a misplaced emphasis on austerity, an insufficient focus on democratic reform—that guaranteed Labour's impotence before a bullish Johnsonian nationalism. Former shadow cabinet members Ian Lavery and Jon Trickett, by contrast, identified Brexit as a prime mover in the catastrophe. Joe Guinan wrote for *Red Pepper* on the failure to build a radical constituency through community organizing and political education, while Owen Hatherley pondered the difficulty of pitching redistributive policies to embittered homeowners in deindustrialized regions. Yet the first extended treatments of this topic, which reconstruct Corbynism's collapse through the testimonies of aides and shadow ministers, arrived almost simultaneously last September: *Left Out*, the standard journalistic account by *Times* reporters Gabriel Pogrund and Patrick Maguire, and *This Land* by Owen Jones, which appeared three weeks later.

Jones, Britain's best-known left-wing commentator, was born in Sheffield in 1984. His parents, both members of the Militant Tendency, met while canvassing for Labour in the late sixties; his father was a trade-union shop steward, his mother a prominent computer-science academic. Other relatives were Labour councillors and radical preachers; Jones attended miners' rallies as an infant and marched against the poll tax as a toddler. After reading history at Oxford and a stint as a trade-union lobbyist he worked for two British left grandees: archiving the papers of Eric Hobsbawm, and serving as a parliamentary researcher to John McDonnell. His breakthrough

came with the release of *Chavs* in 2011: a bestselling account of the class hatred cultivated by Thatcher and augmented by New Labour, skewering the stereotypes of proletarian delinquency that dominate TV shows and tabloids. Fêted by reviewers, Jones's debut elevated him from Labour functionary to salaried columnist: initially at the *Independent*, and then at the *Guardian*, where he continues to write weekly entries. From this perch he attacked the coalition austerity programme, produced several searing indictments of the Metropolitan Police, and published *The Establishment* (2014), which tracks the movement of Hayekian outriders from obscure free-market think-tanks to the centre of the UK's ruling bloc. More ambitious than *Chavs*, if less timely and original, the book increased Jones's standing as a socialist mascot in the world of liberal broadsheets, with a sharper class sensibility than most writers who emerged from the 2011 student protests.

While Poggrund and Maguire tell the 'inside story of Labour under Corbyn', Jones's survey of the last half-decade has a broader aim: to portray the hopes aroused by the reconstituted Labour Party, and to show how these were deflated by missteps at the top. Jones, a self-described 'participant-observer' in the Corbyn experiment, describes the Labour left as the only plausible vehicle for achieving social transformation in the UK. He is determined to find out what went wrong over the past five years so that the necessary lessons can be learned, and socialists can refine their approach to future struggles. This involves correcting two 'standard narratives' of Corbynism: one, that it was doomed from the outset—a utopian delusion sustained by a millennial personality cult; and two, that it was wrecked by a deliberate sabotage operation from internal party enemies and the media. Jones does not deny the ferocity of the anti-Corbyn onslaught—'a character-assassination campaign unprecedented in British political history'—but he insists that the leadership 'also shot itself repeatedly in the foot. It's important to make this point—and I will, throughout this book—because not to do so would lead to a fatalistic conclusion that any radical political project will inevitably be destroyed by entrenched establishment opposition.' While *Left Out* tells a linear story that starts two years into Corbyn's tenure and ends with the ascent of Keir Starmer, *This Land's* chronology is looser, organized thematically around the Brexit debacle, the war with the PLP, the antisemitism controversy and the most recent general elections. Its unifying thread is the 'disastrous failure in strategy' that allegedly prevented Corbyn from surmounting such hurdles: the incapacity to pitch a 'coherent, long-term' vision against this omnidirectional assault.

The book opens with a genealogy of Corbynism, tracing its origins back to Bevan in the 50s and Benn in the 80s. The radical tradition they upheld was mostly extinguished after serial defeats initiated by Callaghan's cuts and compounded by industrial decline. Corbyn and McDonnell were its relics.

But as the privations of the Third Way spawned new ‘cycles of resistance’—alter-globo and environmentalist protests at the turn of the millennium, anti-austerity and tax-justice campaigns throughout the 2010s—the Labour left began to renew its relevance. ‘A mass political constituency was starting to form, below the radar, one which understood that the various discrete injustices against which they had campaigned were all in fact linked’. Corbyn promised to translate these disparate forces into a national project by capturing the Labour Party, hitherto reviled by most of his supporters. This powerful base enabled him to weather the attacks that immediately followed the 2015 leadership election. While staff at Labour HQ briefed hostile journalists and expelled left-wing members, the new shadow cabinet stonewalled every attempt to resuscitate an earlier kind of social democracy. Less than a year into his tenure 23 shadow ministers had resigned, and Corbyn was subjected to relentless personal abuse by MPs intent on ‘breaking him as a man’. Most leaders would have quit, writes Jones, ‘but Corbyn was no normal leader’. Because his movement ‘rejected the parliamentary focus of traditional Labourism’, drawing its strength from a newly politicized mass membership, his position remained secure amid successive coup attempts.

Yet the leadership was plagued by strategy and communications failures, which Jones itemizes in a long chapter titled ‘Dysfunction’. The mishaps began with Corbyn’s refusal to sing ‘God Save the Queen’ at a Battle of Britain memorial service and reluctance to wear a white tie at a Buckingham Palace banquet. A few months later, the Leader of Her Majesty’s Opposition came perilously close to giving the monarch a jar of mouldy homemade jam for her ninetieth birthday. Corbyn shunned media trainings and autocues, preferring to speak off the cuff and often failing to hit the talking-points provided by his team. He avoided antagonism at all costs, unable to make crucial decisions for fear of alienating supposed allies—including the shadow cabinet members bent on his destruction. Jones writes that Corbyn’s strategy should have emerged from ‘the party’s electoral aims, the key demographics being targeted, the organizing on the ground, the policy positions’; yet in practice it was ‘just an extension of comms’—the daily news stories determined his strategic orientation, rather than the other way round. These problems were exacerbated by communications director Seumas Milne, who, despite working twelve-hour days, would ‘turn up to strategy meetings late and would waltz in and out, often munching on food, much to other participants’ irritation.’ Since he refused to answer correspondence, ‘decisions would be made based on snatched conversations in Milne’s office during his rare appearances’, while his ‘political idiosyncrasies’ gave the tabloids ready-made attack lines. When Milne questioned the knee-jerk assumption of Russian state culpability in the poisoning of Sergei Skripal, the front pages were instantly emblazoned with ‘PUTIN’S PUPPET’ and ‘CORBYN, THE KREMLIN STOOGÉ’.

This episode underscores a distinction that runs throughout Jones's book, between Corbyn and Milne as clumsy, obstinate amateurs, and McDonnell as consummate tactician, determined to professionalize the operation and 'avoid pointless controversies which delivered no political gains'.

Despite these internal rifts, the 2017 election saw Corbyn almost clinch the prime ministership, aided by a revitalized campaign team and a perpetually faltering opponent. Given his increased political capital, writes Jones, 'it was the ideal moment for Corbyn to make categorically clear that Labour would never support a new referendum, and would seek to implement the 2016 decision'. But instead the leadership kept its position 'intentionally vague', convinced that a robust Leave stance would needlessly enrage the members whilst bailing out the beleaguered Tories. While autopsies of Corbynism invariably identify the Brexit polarization as a fatal turning-point, *This Land* is unique in detailing how Corbyn's ambiguous position was partially responsible for creating that chasm in the first place. His protracted indecision generated a political vacuum that enabled the arch-centrist Remain movement to grow throughout 2018, winning over previously sceptical figures like Starmer and McDonnell. By May 2019, both had embraced the need for a second referendum, and duly scuppered negotiations between the government and opposition—forefeiting the final opportunity to secure a 'soft' Leave option. Starmer 'frankly just didn't want a deal' due to his Europhiliac instincts, while McDonnell deemed the Corbyn–May compact a tactical error. He calculated that anything other than a decisive Remainer turn would split the party, demoralizing activists and empowering the centrist breakaway Change UK. McDonnell thus formed a second referendum pressure group inside the shadow cabinet, swaying the perennially indecisive Corbyn after purging the Leave faction from his office. Jones acknowledges the disastrous electoral fallout of this policy, but he concludes that 'Labour had no real choice'. 'Whatever decisions the party made', he writes, 'it would not have ended well'.

As Brexit 'destroyed Corbyn's appeal as a straight-talking man of principle', his moral credibility was detonated by 'the antisemitism crisis'. Here Jones offers an almost verbatim repetition of Pogrunder and Maguire's argument: that the British left, and Corbyn in particular, were insensitive to antisemitic hatred due to an economic view of prejudice that failed to see how relatively 'privileged' groups like white post-war British Jews could be its target. Jones accepts that Corbyn 'could point to an extensive record' in this area—signing Early Day Motions opposing antisemitism, fighting fascists during the Battle of Wood Green, campaigning to save Jewish cemeteries, championing the cause of Yemeni Jewish refugees—but that does not affect his verdict that antisemitism had 'become a blind spot' for the leader. Immune from blind spots himself, Jones goes on to provide an

account of the Israel–Palestine conflict that contains no mention of the Nakba. (Towards the end of the chapter Jones makes a passing reference to the expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland, yet this is entirely absent from his Israel-for-beginners potted history, which frames the entirety of his subsequent analysis.) ‘The collective communities of the kibbutzim seemed like incubators of a new socialist society’, he writes, fulfilling the ‘incontestable need for a Jewish homeland’. After the Six Day War, ‘Israel came to resemble a colonial occupier’, and ‘to some, the Palestinians came to resemble the Algerians’; yet ‘Israel’s occupation of Palestinian lands was—and is—fundamentally different from those projects of European settler-colonialism’ because its founders were fleeing their home nations, rather than extending their dominion. However, ‘with the arrival of Likud in power, Israel jettisoned its original socialist principles’ and set the country on a ‘depressing right-wing trajectory’ which alienated its progressive allies. The state’s noble origins have thus been gradually eroded since the late 60s, a virtuous pre-occupation Israel hijacked by Netanyahu’s Chicago School ascendancy. For Jones, those who failed to recognize the socialist kernel at the heart of Zionism assumed that accusations of antisemitism were merely an establishment ploy, and responded with unhelpful ‘defensiveness’. Countless opportunities to defuse the issue through constructive dialogue were supposedly missed. Corbyn should have made an official visit to Israel, written apologetic articles in the *Jewish Chronicle*, unhesitatingly accepted the IHRA definition of antisemitism, given a speech at the London Jewish Museum, and spent more time engaging with the ethno-nationalist Jewish Labour Movement. Had he done all these things, Jones assures us, the antisemitism controversy ‘need never have happened’.

This was the course prescribed by McDonnell. Yet impervious to such common sense, Corbyn steered the party into the 2019 election with catastrophic polling. By then the leadership ‘had become resigned to his terrible ratings, as though they were simply a fact of life. There were never genuine, strategic discussions about how to turn around those public perceptions—which itself seemed an admission of the impossibility of the task.’ While the Tories hammered home their fidelity to the 2016 referendum, Labour’s election plan offered little more than ‘airy’ reflections on Britain’s power imbalance, its manifesto adopted a ‘scattergun approach that would give the electorate a sensory overload’, and its Brexit ‘compromise’ had no cut-through on the doorstep. Woolly-hatted Momentum activists were chased off lawns throughout the Midlands. An increasingly glum Corbyn turned up late to meetings and wore deliberately shabby clothing to annoy his aides. He refused to be briefed, preferring to converse with fellow passengers in his train carriage, and consequently struggled in interviews. When the exit poll dropped, showing Labour’s worst defeat since 1935, Corbyn sat in silence for

a few moments before joking that he would ‘ask for a full recount’. The news cameras immediately focused on McDonnell, who blamed his own Brexit policy for the result.

Previous reviewers of *This Land* (James Butler in the LRB, Ed McNally in *Jacobin*) have pointed out that, although it claims to tell ‘the story of a movement’, street-level politics disappears after the first chapter, yielding to a narrow focus on Westminster reminiscent of *Left Out*. Despite Corbyn’s recent assertion that ‘the greatest resistance I had within the party bureaucracy and structures was to the establishment of community organizing’, Jones ignores the Community Organizing Unit and member-led campaigns like Labour for a Green New Deal. This is perhaps justifiable since Corbynism never achieved its intended fusion of social agitation and electoral engagement. The first was always subordinate to the second, and Jones’s framing reflects this fact. Yet even within the confines of ‘history from above’, the context provided by *This Land* is limited. One would expect a Westminster-centric narrative to assess the balance of forces in each party; but whereas Jeremy Gilbert sets Corbynism against the Tories’ right-populist makeover, the government hardly features in Jones’s analysis: its metamorphosis under May and Johnson goes unmentioned. And while *Left Out* gives a detailed picture of the PLP wrecking operation, Jones compresses this constant feature of the Corbyn premiership into a single chapter, minimizing its role in the other debacles he describes. The result is a hyper-narrow focus on several individuals in the leader’s office, whose alleged incompetence is thus inflated beyond reasonable proportion. Jones’s accusation of strategic failure—a reactive approach to media-communications, an absence of ‘vision’, an unpardonable short-termism—is shorn from the conditions that bred it. We get no sense of the daily firefighting, against any number of concocted crises, that was required simply to keep the project afloat. The fact that Milne would snack on pastries during strategy meetings is given more weight than, say, the sustained efforts of backbenchers and City bankers to push Corbyn towards a second referendum.

This Land’s structure is partly responsible for these distortions. Its thematic layout means that each issue (Brexit, antisemitism, the PLP, etc.) is treated in isolation, while the connections between them are largely unelaborated. Because ‘The War Within’ gets its own chapter, the role played by the right inside the party apparatus scarcely features in Jones’s analysis of antisemitism. The EU referendum is addressed in a self-contained Brexit section, so it only makes a fleeting appearance in his account of the 2016 ‘chicken coup’. We learn that Corbyn improved his poll ratings in the 2017 election campaign, but the broader dynamics that enabled this about-turn are opaque. Time and again, events seem to occur in a political vacuum: a standpoint which heightens the emphasis on personal qualities (like

‘competence’ and ‘professionalism’) at the expense of conjunctural factors. Elsewhere, *This Land’s* eschewal of linear narrative allows the author to zig-zag between years, selecting the details that conform to his McDonnellite perspective, and spiring others away to distant pages. When Jones recalls the party’s poor communications strategy throughout 2016–17, he cites as evidence its response to the Skripal poisoning—which took place in 2018.

Such misdirection not only influences the overall presentation of Corbynism; it also alters our image of Jones’s role in the history he describes. The bare facts of his participation are present, but their significance is obscured by the book’s scrambled chronology. In 2015, Jones’s first choice for leader was Lisa Nandy—the ‘heartlands’ authentocrat who has since become Labour’s resident China hawk. He predicted that Corbyn would secure a ‘derisory’ vote share, leaving the left ‘permanently marginalized and discredited’. When this turned out to be false, Jones campaigned for Corbyn but refused an offer to join his team. He defended the party’s economic platform but despaired of its PR skills, favouring a savvier frontman with greater political flexibility. In the summer of 2016, just after the PLP launched its coup, Jones wrote a verbose blog post effectively calling for Corbyn to resign. His reasons were identical to those of ‘soft-left’ MPs like Starmer and Nandy: no quarrel with the progressive policies, but dejection at the poll numbers, frustration at the feeble leadership, and desire for a more coherent strategy. Nonetheless, he saw that Owen Smith was not the answer, so Jones voted for Corbyn a second time. In March 2017, when Labour’s disappointing local election results sparked another round of establishment rebellion, Jones once again called for the leader to step down, and manoeuvred to install Clive Lewis, the chest-thumpingly pro-NATO Afghan war veteran elected to parliament two years earlier. After Theresa May lost her majority, he rang up Andrew Murray, apologized for his waywardness and pledged to back Corbyn from then on. But, while steadfastly defending the leader’s economic programme, he soon broke ranks on Brexit and anti-semitism. Having coined the term ‘Lexit’ in a 2015 column arguing that the left should consider supporting Leave, he fell in line with the People’s Voters once their campaign got underway; and having previously used his column space to criticize Israeli war crimes, in 2018 he urged the party to adopt the full IHRA definition, foreclosing solidarity with Palestine.

Just as *This Land’s* timeline is manipulated to indict Milne, it is also used to exonerate the author. He addresses his ‘period of disillusionment’ in the chapter on ‘Dysfunction’ but removes it from the account of PLP sabotage: as if it were a straightforward response to Corbyn’s strategic disorientation, rather than a capitulation to the political prevailing winds. Instead of detailing his efforts to replace Corbyn with Lewis, he writes elliptically that ‘I had a conversation with a couple of Labour MPs in which Clive Lewis’s name came up’, and again represses the wider context of his actions, which

coincided with a Blairite campaign to oust Corbyn three months before the 2017 election. In hindsight it is clear that Corbyn's departure at this point would have denied Labour its biggest swing since 1945 and gifted the party to the right. Yet Jones defends his subterfuge on the grounds that 'even though he was inexperienced', Lewis 'was photogenic, handsome even, someone you could imagine playing a prime minister in a fictional political drama'. The author rightly draws a distinction between his 'good faith' criticisms of the leadership and the 'bad faith' machinations of the PLP; but a more forthright account would have acknowledged that the former aided the latter at a decisive political moment. In a book whose stated aim is to help the left learn from its mistakes, Jones's refusal to take responsibility for his errors tells its own story.

The same double-standard is evident in Jones's disinclination to criticize his political mentor. In order to sustain the representation of Milne as obtuse Stalinist and McDonnell as master strategist, the latter's political misjudgements must either be neglected or downplayed. Like Jones himself, McDonnell warned against Corbyn's leadership bid; opposed the leader's anti-imperialist agenda (including his widely popular response to the Manchester bombings); advocated IHRA; cosied up to New Labour leftovers like Alastair Campbell; and pushed the party towards Remain out of an irrational fear of Change UK. A serious account of Corbynism would recognize the damaging effect of these climbdowns. Yet Jones's tribute to 'Labour's lost leader'—who could have led the party to victory given his 'seriousness about power' and 'administrative competence'—is consonant with his own unself-critical approach, in that it relies on an elision of such inconvenient details. What this selective method produces is less a history of Corbynism than a prolonged apologia for McDonnellism. The shadow chancellor's proclivity for 'tactical compromise' is abstracted from its concrete political manifestations (which were at best ineffectual and at worst deeply harmful) and alchemized into a golden rule, which Corbyn and Milne are said to have ignored at their peril. The discussion of Salisbury is a case in point. YouGov polling from 2019 found that, among voters who previously supported Corbyn before turning against him, his 'positions on defence were mentioned by just 1 per cent of respondents, whilst nobody mentioned his response to the Salisbury poisoning'. The media firestorm around Skripal had no demonstrable impact on the polls. Yet Jones portrays it as a major meltdown because, on the surface, it appears to confirm his view that the path to victory involves perpetual compromise with the right.

The origins of this instinctual conformism can be found in a recurrent feature of Jones's writing: reluctance to stray outside the thought-world of the *Guardian*. In *The Establishment*, Jones devotes an entire chapter to the relationship between elites and the media, but says nothing at all about his own employer, bastion of the Blairite consensus. *This Land* likewise

provides a detailed rundown of the media campaign against Corbyn from which Jones's home newspaper is glaringly absent. There is no mention of its daily op-eds entitled 'Jeremy Corbyn's politics are fantasy—just like Alice in Wonderland', or 'Corbyn's Labour is a party without a point, led by a rebel with a cause'. Jones is as radical as one could hope for within his institutional setting, but he will not offend the New Labour fortress he inhabits. In some cases this means omitting it from the 'establishment' roster; in others it means accepting the groupthink of his seniors: Toynbee, Freedland, Behr and Rawnsley. Jones is correct that we must criticize Corbynism so as to move beyond it. But it's no coincidence that each time he dissented—on Brexit, IHRA, NATO, 'competence'—he has sided with the York Way opinionators against the socialist movement.

These ideological constraints affect the entire premise of *This Land*. When Jones writes in the introduction that we must either accept that Corbynism 'shot itself repeatedly in the foot' or embrace the 'fatalistic conclusion that any radical political project will inevitably be destroyed', it is important to ask *which* self-inflicted injuries he means. There have so far been two positions on whether a 'fatalistic' view of Corbynism is warranted. One of them, associated with Lavery and Trickett, holds that the structural conditions for a Corbyn government were in place until certain erroneous policy decisions unravelled them. The other, articulated by Guinan (and, to a lesser extent, Gilbert), is that such conditions were absent due to an incomplete war of position: an effective left administration required more extensive groundwork. At first Jones appears to adopt the former view; but as the book goes on it becomes clear that his critique of Corbynism has little to do with policy, except as an extension of media strategy. *This Land* is uninterested in whether policy decisions were 'right' or 'wrong'. Its primary concern is with how they were communicated to and received by the press (which is metonymized, in Jones's mind, by the *Guardian*). This is the ultimate criteria by which the 'competence' of the leadership is judged. Did their decisions make for a good photo-op? Did they get a positive write-up from Rawnsley? The downfall of the Corbyn project is thus reduced to an effect of poor image management. From this limited vantage point, it is no wonder that McDonnell, a preeminent smooth-talker willing to bend his principles whenever he speaks to a journalist, is praised above his peers. If only Corbyn were more like him—more adaptable, polished, articulate—then the press would have been appeased, and catastrophe averted.

When one grasps that Jones's 'shot in the foot' argument is in fact a veiled commentary on Labour's relationship with the *Guardian*, its irrationality becomes apparent. For if this was the crux of its 'strategic failure', then what alternative strategy would have pleased the likes of Freedland? The answer, patently, is none—apart from that currently being pursued by Corbyn's successor. Under Starmer, 'seriousness about power' is equated with maximum

flexibility, ‘administrative competence’ is elevated over political substance, and every strategic decision is geared towards the establishment press. Starmerism is the end-point of McDonnellism, the logical result of Jones’s prescriptions. As if to acknowledge this fact, the book dodges the difficult question of Starmer’s rise and ends abruptly after the 2019 election. Jones may not have much affection for the new Labour leader, but he cannot criticize him within *This Land’s* analytic framework—so it is better to stay mute.

Of course, Jones is most aligned with his *Guardian* colleagues on The Antisemitism Crisis (which he places centre-stage, awarding it more coverage than any other topic). Here again, press relations are the overwhelming concern—a fixation evidenced by the semantic fluidity of the term ‘crisis’. Sometimes Jones suggests that antisemitism had reached crisis-levels within Labour; sometimes he describes a PR crisis rather than a real one. A similar sliding of sense afflicts the word ‘failure’: it is unclear whether Corbyn failed to deal with a racist infestation, or failed to rebut a smear campaign—as if Jones cannot distinguish between the objective reality and the media representation. He accepts that allegations of antisemitism have sometimes been cynically deployed to gag critics of Israel, but he would presumably lose his column space were he to describe the charges against Corbyn as a politically motivated miasma. So instead he strives for ‘balance’ through a series of self-contradictions. Corbyn is a lifelong campaigner against antisemitism, yet he has a ‘blind spot’ on the issue. Only 0.3 per cent of Labour members were accused of antisemitism, yet it is a ‘crisis’ within the party. The leadership team vastly improved the disciplinary process, yet their response suffered from ‘a lack both of strategy and emotional intelligence’. The party produced a thoughtful pamphlet ‘designed as a political education tool for members’, yet it ‘never rolled out political education’. Alongside such incoherent formulations is a summary of Israeli history which ‘could have been written by Shimon Peres’, as one critic has remarked. The description of Israel’s foundation as a valiant socialist endeavour, worlds away from ‘settler-colonialism’, which subsequently degenerated under a series of reactionary leaders, is a rehearsal of liberal-Zionist *hasbara* that betrays scant engagement with scholarship on the region.

Moreover, Jones’s claim that the crisis could have been averted if only Corbyn had made further concessions is belied by subsequent events. The Labour left has made every possible compromise: accepting IHRA, forcing Socialist Campaign Group MPs to praise ‘Zionism’, welcoming the intervention of an ‘Equality and Human Rights’ quango staffed by state-appointed bigots and pledging to implement their recommendations in full. Has it helped? *This Land* scoffs at the idea that Labour members could ever be suspended or expelled for expressing solidarity with Palestine, even if the party embraced the demands of the Jewish Labour Movement. Now Corbyn has had the whip withdrawn for saying that claims of antisemitism were

'exaggerated', and the current leadership has vowed to purge 'thousands and thousands' of his supporters. It would be the ideal time for Jones to admit his mistake and mount a defence of internationalism. But he will not. Instead he has branded Corbyn's remarks 'tone deaf' and called for him to apologize, while describing his suspension as an unhelpful distraction from the task of tackling antisemitism.

If this timid response to Starmer's purge is a symptom of Jones's unconscious Guardianism, it is also a feature of his conscious, biographically-inflected Labourism. In *The Establishment*, Jones claimed that Labour had been intent on 'challenging those with wealth and power' up until 1994, when it suddenly made an accommodation with the ruling class. The book depicts several standard-bearers of the Labour right (Neil Kinnock, Tom Watson, Angela Eagle) as straightforward opponents of 'the establishment', rather than its loyal retainers—with Jones earnestly seeking their counsel on how to combat elite interests and self-serving politicians. The Corbyn years have clearly been somewhat of a wake-up call in this regard. *This Land* leaves no doubt as to the reactionary composition of the PLP, which its author now describes as a collection of 'jumped-up thugs' and 'vicious, horrible people'. Yet his basic analysis remains unchanged: that Labour is the party of the working class, temporarily captured by its opponents from 1994 to 2007 (or, in *This Land's* adjusted timeline, 1976 to 2007). That viewpoint in turn limits his political horizons. He may challenge the current leadership over its broken promises on public ownership and progressive taxation; but he cannot accept that its 'tough action on antisemitism' is a proxy for anti-socialism, for that would entail a more extensive reckoning with the party's DNA. Although he writes that Corbynism's strength lay in its repudiation of 'traditional Labourism', Jones's plan to sustain the movement under Starmer amounts to little more than a reiteration of Labourist tropes: stay in the party, push for progressive policies, and forge a 'critical friendship' with its rightist flank. If this is the McDonnellite prognosis, then it offers nothing new. Corbyn, on the other hand, has just launched an internationalist campaigning organization called the Project for Peace and Justice, and continues to fight for migrants' and workers' rights despite his ejection from the PLP. He remains unwilling to abandon Palestine for the illusory goal of Labour unity, and his criticisms of the government's COVID-19 response have put his party's reticence to shame. He may be the old-guard *par excellence*, but Corbyn's vision for the future of the Labour left is more inspiring than *This Land's*.