

Dear all,

I'm going to unsubscribe from the BHPSC Email List (as well as one or two others). If you want to contact me from now on please do so directly to my personal email.

I find that I am spending far too long each day dealing with my emails, and I have to reduce this activity. It is not that the messages I receive on the BHPSC list are of no interest or that I do not read them - rather the contrary - but they no longer seriously add to my understanding of the Palestinian issue. To put it another way, they are largely variations on the same well-worn theme. Furthermore, I have found that my comments on them elicit very little constructive discussion. I suspect this is not entirely due to a lack of interest in what I have written, but because of a fear of being branded antisemitic.

As most of you will know, I did not re-stand for the BHPSC committee at the AGM at the beginning of June, though of course I remain a member of BHPSC itself. I will still receive the newsletter and other mailings, and will support our activities as far as I can consistent with pursuing my other interests. I believe PSC has a vital role to play both in reaching out to the undecided and as a resource on the Palestine issue. But I'm afraid I have also come to believe that changing public opinion is insufficient in itself to bring about substantial change on the ground. We need a change of culture, and this is inevitably an intellectual task.

The issues which seem to me most pressing are as follows:

1. The development of a comprehensive existential theory of group psychology, language, identity and power.
2. The creation of an ethics of power.
3. An analysis of modern mainstream Jewish identity and its relation to Zionism if, indeed, the two are separable.
4. The deconstruction (including history) of the concept of antisemitism.
5. The deconstruction of 'Holocaust' mythology.
6. Validation of the neutral concept of Jewish power (this should follow from 1 above).
7. An assessment, in terms of 2 above, of the current situation of Jewish power in relation to other forms of power.

Put very briefly, I believe that the last would indicate an imbalance in favour of Jewish power in the contemporary world, and a consequent need for redress. This does not mean that Jews, as a collective, should not have power. It does mean that they - and this applies to any other collective - should not have specially privileged and protected power. Much of this (1,3,4 and 5 above) I was saying ten years ago. All these years I continued to hope that PSC would embrace the task of tackling these issues. Now at last I have come to realise that the very nature of PSC - a campaigning organisation which seeks to attract support from as wide a range of people as possible - makes this impossible. Opposition to the policies of the Israeli government is the uncomplicated common denominator - and that's fine for what PSC seeks to do. But the intellectual battle needs to take place elsewhere.

I set up BHPSC - or strictly speaking revived a branch which had been dead for over a decade - in 1997, and was for several years Chair. I was also the Chair of national PSC for two years over the period 1998 to 2001. I have, therefore, a story to tell, whether or not you agree with my views. For those who are interested, read my 'Reflections on Twelve Years of Involvement in Campaigning for Palestine'.

Best wishes,
Francis