

MELBOURNE WRITERS FESTIVAL

Lipstadt on 'antisemitic enablers'

PETER KOHN

SPEAKING in Melbourne this week, US academic and Holocaust historian Professor Deborah Lipstadt has described President Donald Trump and British Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn as “antisemitic enablers”.

Delivering “Face of Hatred”, this year’s Melbourne Writers Festival (MWF) John Button Oration, dedicated to the late senator, Lipstadt told her State Library of Victoria audience on Tuesday that Trump and Corbyn “have shown themselves to be absolute antisemitic enablers”.

Trump “has created a campaign and a rhetoric that appeals to white nationalists ... I’m not saying Donald Trump adheres to these ideas but he certainly has given them comfort. He has ... telegraphed the message which leaves many of these extremist white supremacists feeling that he shares their views”.

“I’m not suggesting he’s an antisemite. I don’t know ... he has Jewish grandchildren ... he’s probably not, but he enables this kind of hatred. He is definitely an enabler. I think when you talk about whether he’s a racist, that’s a different story. I think the evidence there is much clearer.”

Corbyn’s behaviour mirrors “some people on the progressive left ... he doesn’t indulge in antisemitism himself, it is that he indulges



Professor Deborah Lipstadt delivers the John Button Oration during the Melbourne Writers Festival.

Photo: Peter Haskin

the antisemitism of others”, said Lipstadt, recounting an incident over a London mural depicting “elderly formally dressed men playing Monopoly on a table on the backs of slave workers ... the depiction of the men around the table could have come out from *Der Sturmer* ... the artist himself said this is a depiction of Jews, he left no doubt about it.

“When people protested ... Jeremy Corbyn’s automatic response was ‘why remove it?’” defending it as freedom of speech, she said.

Lipstadt said criticising Israeli policy “is not antisemitism”, but “a myopic view ... when one sees only wrongs on one side” is antisemitism.

While antisemitism originated in the medieval Church’s narrative of Jewish deicide, it has long since been embraced by secularists. It is

practised not just by mass-killers at synagogues but by “the salon antisemite”.

At the MWF, Lipstadt also took part in a forum, “The Fifth Estate: Antisemitism”, with Anti-Defamation Commission chair Dvir Abramovich. At Bialik College, she was on a panel with principal Jeremy Stowe-Lindner. Earlier, she addressed multiple sessions of the Antidote Festival in Sydney.

Lipstadt made headlines in 2000 when a British court dismissed a libel suit against her by Holocaust denier David Irving, with the judge stating Irving had “persistently and deliberately misrepresented and manipulated historical evidence” and that “he is an active Holocaust denier; that he is antisemitic and racist”. The court battle was portrayed in the 2016 movie, *Denial*.