

After Syria vote, British pseudo-left pledge loyalty to Corbyn and Labour

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Every retreat by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn before his party's right wing elicits fresh pledges of loyalty from Britain's pseudo-left groups. His agreement to allow a free vote in parliament on December 3 over whether the UK would take part in bombing raids in Syria was no different. Corbyn gave a green light for war, with the first UK raid taking place just hours later. There is now speculation over whether the UK will launch air attacks on Libya.

The dangers posed were underscored by a *Daily Telegraph* report that British Tornados are to fly in pairs with the RAF's Typhoon jets, "amid growing concern over the possibility of accidental clashes with Russia."

In 2013, Labour under Ed Miliband felt unable to back British participation in military action in Syria—then advanced openly as support of regime change against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. In 2014, air strikes were again urged, but this time portrayed as targeting Islamic State. Labour was able to back this in Iraq, but still had to reject strikes on Syria.

Only a month ago, Cameron was being forced to deny reports that he had abandoned plans for a vote because he did not have the backing of the required number of Labour MPs.

Now, with Corbyn elected on an explicitly antiwar ticket, enjoying 75 percent majority support in his party and, more importantly, overwhelming opposition to war in the population, he has handed Conservative Party Prime Minister David Cameron victory with the assistance of a cabal of 66 Labour warmongers.

Before, during and after the vote, Corbyn insisted that there be no struggle against the party's right wing. During the Syria debate, he urged on Twitter, "Let us—all of us in the Labour Party—focus on building a party that can win in 2020. Let's do that in a comradely

fashion."

In response to demands that pro-war MPs be deselected, Momentum, the pro-Corbyn campaign group, stated that it would pose no "threat to MPs who voted for bombing. ... We have made clear that we will not campaign for the deselection of any MP and will not permit any local Momentum groups to do so."

Even as they formally urge deselection and campaigns to "democratise" the Labour Party, the pseudo-left groups oppose drawing any lessons from Corbyn's surrender.

The Stop the War Coalition acts as little more than a lobby group for Corbyn. Its entire energies were directed towards appeals to Labour MPs to back him.

Chairman Andrew Murray and Convenor Lindsey German issued a statement after the vote that was a masterpiece of political evasion and cynicism. "We are pleased that a large majority of Labour MPs voted with their leader, Jeremy Corbyn, to oppose this Tory war," they wrote. "We commend Jeremy Corbyn for his leading opposition to war. Stop the War will continue to support him in every way that we can."

The Socialist Workers Party tries to marry occasional and muted criticisms of Corbyn, as well as statements that Labour cannot be reformed, with the declaration by its leader, Alex Callinicos, "Of course, we all want to support Corbyn's struggle to change Labour."

Most striking of all is the response of those tendencies that broke from the Labour Party, supposedly in recognition that it had been transformed into an openly pro-capitalist party.

The election of Corbyn is all that has been required for their decision to be repudiated—first of all, in the case of the Socialist Party (SP), the former Militant Tendency, which spent 35 years as an entryist group within Labour before breaking with it in the 1990s.

The SP's Nancy Taaffe appeared on the BBC's *Daily Politics* show the day after the vote to describe Labour as “essentially two parties in one”—one led by Corbyn, and one led by “pro-austerity right-wing Labour councillors, MPs and shadow cabinet members.” She called for the Labour Party to allow the affiliation of the Socialist Party within a federal structure.

The SP based its call for a new party on the perspective of allying with sections of the union bureaucracy forced to distance themselves from Labour due to the disgust felt by their members, like the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).

Last month, however, the FBU leadership fought successfully to agree to re-affiliate to Labour. FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack cited the union's “two longstanding allies in key positions in the Labour Party,” Corbyn and Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, as proof that “there is a key battle in the Labour Party.”

The RMT is likely to follow suit, leaving the SP high-and-dry.

Left Unity was established three years ago by various smaller pseudo-left tendencies, led by the Pabloite *Socialist Resistance*. Using film director Ken Loach as a frontman, it urged a return to the values of the 1945 Labour government. Based on this political pedigree and programme, Left Unity's annual conference agreed to end all electoral activity and urged its members to join Momentum, prior to the Syria vote.

The gathering was much reduced, with a 150 in attendance, amid reports that 400 former members had already left to join Labour. Even this was not enough for 10 delegates who wanted Left Unity to “dissolve itself as a political party”, including its principal speaker, Salman Shaheen.

Shaheen wrote an explanation for his resignation on the *Left Foot Forward* web site. He states, “ In short, Jeremy Corbyn has changed everything I now fundamentally believe, like many who have already left Left Unity, the Greens and other progressive parties to join Labour, that the central priority is to ensure that Jeremy Corbyn is the next prime minister ...”

Ending on a pledge of unity, he promises the right wing, “I and others like me are not entryists.” Whereas, “there are many on the Labour right who disagree with

my politics ... I am not an infiltrator looking to stage some kind of hostile takeover.”

Shaheen makes the point that Left Unity was based on the notion that it “could shift mainstream political discourse and Labour's position with it to the left”—to which he declares, “mission accomplished!”

The pseudo-left's support for Corbyn is unconditional, not because they actually believe he is in the process of “transforming” the Labour Party. They aim to work with Labour, including its right-wing Blairite elements, to prevent the emergence of a revolutionary movement in the working class that breaks out of the deadly grip of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy.

When Labour was led by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown and earned the enmity of millions thanks to its pro-business, pro-austerity and militarist record, the pseudo-left groups were forced to take their distance. But they did so only in order to act as outriders on behalf of the bureaucracy to better police discontented workers and young people.

Corbyn's election manifested two things: a desire for a political fight and continued illusions in both Labour and a reformist perspective among sections of workers and youth. Everything done by the pseudo-left is to reinforce such illusions and to stop social and political discontent taking a socialist direction. He is lionised because the interests of a privileged layer of academics, trade union functionaries and local and national government officials rest on his ability to prevent the threatened collapse of the Labour Party.



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