

# Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn deletes criticisms of EU from his web site

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In an extraordinary act of self-censorship, UK Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has deleted hundreds of articles and speeches, spanning decades, from his web site. A video archive of his speeches was also removed. The earliest article remaining on the site is now dated June 8, 2015.

The archive included Corbyn's record on numerous topics he had addressed as an MP for 33 years. But the main reason for the deletions is to conceal his previous opposition to the European Union (EU), so as not to politically embarrass the Labour Party, which supports the UK remaining part of the EU in the upcoming June 23 referendum on membership.

The decision was taken after Corbyn was attacked by the party's right wing for not supporting the "Remain" campaign with sufficient enthusiasm. His act of self-censorship shows just how far he is prepared to go in making amends.

As a Labour councillor in 1975, Corbyn voted against Britain remaining a member of the then European Economic Community. Following his election as an MP in 1983, Corbyn voted against the position of three separate Labour Party leaders over the issue of the EU. He opposed the Maastricht Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty and supported calls for a referendum on Britain's EU membership in 2011.

The Maastricht Treaty was signed in February 1992 by the members of the European Community and led to the creation of the EU and the single European currency, the euro. The Lisbon Treaty, signed in December 2009, laid down the framework of an EU constitution for the enlarged bloc of 27 states.

At the time Corbyn entered the Labour Party in the mid-1970s, these positions represented the common platform of the Labour "left", who put forward the alternative economic strategy (AES). The AES was first

elaborated in a policy paper by Tony Benn as Secretary of State for Industry in the 1974-79 Labour government.

The AES was not a programme for socialism, but a limited extension of state regulation at a time of a significant economic crisis, backed by protectionist measures. It proposed a National Enterprise Board empowered to "take over profitable sections of individual firms in those industries where a public holding is essential to enable Government to control prices, stimulate investment, encourage exports, create employment, protect workers and consumers from irresponsible multinational companies, and to plan the national economy in the national interest".

On entering parliament, Corbyn joined the recently founded Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs, led by Benn. He also began writing a regular column in the *Morning Star*, the newspaper of the Stalinist Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), whose own take on a national reformist strategy was embodied in the parliamentary "British road to socialism" and an emphasis on the centrality of "national sovereignty".

The *Morning Star* and the much-reduced and renamed Communist Party of Britain are the leading political force in the anti-EU "Leave" campaign, through Trade Unionists Against the EU, which advances "For National sovereignty" as one of its main demands. It is this nationalist position that is articulated in many of the articles now deleted by Corbyn.

In one from 2009 that can still be accessed via a Google cache search, Corbyn complains of the EU's "ever-limiting powers for national parliaments", for example. In an article published in the *Independent* (which remains on his site), he wrote last year of his concern over "the direction and advance of EU foreign policy development with all new member states

required to join NATO, which suggests both a militaristic turn in Europe and the block that puts on an independent foreign policy”.

This defence of an “independent foreign policy” is wholly reactionary. Britain’s founding membership of NATO in 1949 was not imposed by “Europe,” but conceived as a means through which British imperialism could project its global interests in alliance with the United States.

One need only ask, what would British imperialism’s “independent foreign policy” look like in practice?

The last time the UK took a foreign policy decision in strident opposition to other major powers of Europe (Germany and France) was its support for the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Corbyn opposed the 2003 Iraq war and opposed NATO membership at one time. But while campaigning for the Labour leadership position last August, he abandoned this position, calling instead for a “serious debate about the powers of NATO” because there was not “an appetite as a whole for people to leave”. Last December, after becoming Labour leader, he played a central role in facilitating Britain’s participation in US-led bombing in Syria by agreeing to a free vote for Labour MPs, enabling Conservative Prime Minister Cameron to assemble the parliamentary majority he required.

Just a few months later, he has now signed up to the “Remain” in the EU campaign on terms aimed at whipping up anti-immigrant xenophobia as a prelude for even deeper attacks on the working class.

Once again, Corbyn is ready to discard positions he advanced only months earlier. In February 2015, he wrote in the *Morning Star*, “Greece stands out as the worst affected country as a savage economic experiment is rammed down its throat. The so-called troika—the EU, European Central Bank and IMF [International Monetary Fund]—that’s calling the shots is not concerned about balancing books. Its aim is to rebalance society—by privatising at will, selling off state assets and destroying hard-won working conditions, public services and rights”.

Now, Greece rates no mention by Corbyn as he advances the illusion of a progressive reform of the EU and “a social Europe of decent jobs and equality for all”.

Within five days of his election, he issued a joint

statement with his appointed Shadow Foreign Secretary Hilary Benn, stating, “We will make the case that membership of the European Union helps Britain to create jobs, secure growth, encourage investment and tackle the issues that cross borders—like climate change, terrorism, tax havens and the current refugee crisis”.

Benn told BBC Radio 4 that Labour would campaign for the UK to remain in the EU, “under all circumstances”.

Labour extended a blank cheque to Prime Minister David Cameron, who went on to renegotiate the terms of Britain’s continued EU membership on an anti-migrant and pro-big business basis. This includes limiting in-work benefits for migrants and protecting the City of London from financial regulation.

In a February 20 *Guardian* opinion piece, Corbyn himself indicated that Labour was involved in behind-the-scenes discussions in which it accepted the thrust of Cameron’s demands. He boasted, “Labour and the unions played a key role in making sure that employment rights—like guaranteed paid holiday, paid maternity and paternity leave, and agency workers’ protection—were kept out of Cameron’s negotiations”. In other words, what was kept in the negotiations, and what comprised the final reactionary agreement concocted with the EU, was signed off by Corbyn, the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress.

Time and again, Corbyn has either ditched or backtracked on any policy deemed unacceptable to the right-wing Blairites, in the name of maintaining “party unity”. There is nothing that he once proclaimed as an issue of political principle that he will not jettison. What is involved is not only his dutifully toeing the line of official Labour policy. Corbyn is making clear that he will do whatever is necessary to uphold the interests of British capitalism.



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