

Oppose the coup plot against Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn

Statement of the Socialist Equality Party (Britain)

28 June 2016

The Socialist Equality Party denounces the campaign to remove Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader. It is not only an attack on the right of hundreds of thousands of Labour Party members to determine their leadership; it is an effort to shift politics further to the right that threatens the entire working class.

The unfolding coup operation was instigated by a right-wing cabal of Labour MPs. But there is no doubt they did so only after discussions at the highest levels of the British state, including the security services—MI5, MI6 and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ)—as well as with the US State Department and the CIA.

Those involved never accepted the legitimacy of Corbyn's election as Labour leader last September. They view him as an interloper, placed at the head of the party as an unintended consequence of the new electoral process instituted by former leader Ed Miliband to supplant the union block vote with individual votes by party and affiliated trade union members and a new category of Labour supporters. They were bitterly hostile to the fact that Corbyn won the support of nearly 90,000 people on the basis of his declared opposition to austerity and militarism.

The immediate trigger for this move is the seismic shock of the Leave vote in the June 23 referendum on UK membership of the European Union. In the global turmoil that has resulted, with Britain's ruling elite facing its deepest political crisis since the Second World War, the highest echelons of the British state have concluded that no oppositional sentiment whatsoever to austerity, militarism and war can be tolerated.

The ruling Conservatives are in disarray, with the resignation Friday of Prime Minister David Cameron and a contest to elect a new leader scheduled within

weeks. Amid record falls in the value of sterling and shock waves threatening the break-up of the EU, there is widespread talk of a snap general election in the autumn, opening up the possibility of new government combinations and an overturn of the referendum result.

Washington is directly involved, motivated largely by fears of the impact of Brexit on US plans for military aggression against Russia and China. US Secretary of State John Kerry, after discussions in Brussels, arrived yesterday in the UK. The *Financial Times* reported that his mission was “to urge both sides [the EU and Britain] to limit the damage to economic stability and security cooperation ...”

The newspaper added that the Obama administration “will be absorbed by dealing with the widening divisions in the region—both to shore up the EU and to prevent the Brexit crisis from spilling over into NATO.”

It is striking that in the aftermath of a referendum—the result of a faction fight between two equally right-wing sections of the Tory Party—it is Labour that has been sent into free-fall. Under any other circumstances, it would be expected that Labour, whose party membership voted in the majority to remain in the EU, would be demanding an early election against a Tory Party that failed so signally to mobilise its base of support.

Instead, the majority of the parliamentary Labour Party is intent on removing its own leader.

Within hours of the result, by midday Friday, Dame Margaret Hodge and Ann Coffey MP had submitted a motion of no confidence. In the early hours of Sunday morning, Shadow Foreign Secretary Hilary Benn, notorious for leading 66 Labour MPs in backing the British bombing of Syria last autumn after Corbyn had allowed a free vote, told Corbyn he had lost confidence

in his leadership, forcing Corbyn to sack him.

This was the signal for a series of resignations from the shadow cabinet, timed at regular intervals. On Monday morning, Labour Party Deputy Leader Tom Watson told Corbyn he no longer had the support of the parliamentary party and should consider standing down. By the time the no confidence motion was taken at yesterday's meeting of the parliamentary Labour Party, two-thirds of the shadow cabinet members had resigned and reports indicated that up to 70 percent of Labour MPs would vote for Corbyn to go today at 4 p.m.

This is an extraordinary and unprecedented event, even in the rotten annals of the Labour Party. Since Corbyn's election, on every single issue— austerity, NATO membership, the renewal of Trident, war in Syria, EU membership—Corbyn has appeased the Labour Party right wing. In the name of "party unity," he selected all the right-wingers in his shadow cabinet who have overwhelmingly lined up to stab him in the back, and opposed calls for them to be deselected.

So far, Corbyn has resisted demands to step down, while holding out an olive branch to the right. He is fully cognisant of the pro-imperialist and right-wing forces mobilising against him. Yet, speaking at a rally in his defence in Parliament Square, he said nothing about the referendum result and did not even mention the coup plotters as he pleaded once again for unity.

This is the culmination of months in which Corbyn has repeatedly handed the political initiative to the right wing. But something far more fundamental than his weakness is revealed by the revolt of the parliamentary party.

While solidarising with the many people, especially young people, who had signed up to support a Corbyn leadership challenge last September, the Socialist Equality Party urged them to draw the lessons of history, most fundamentally as regards the pro-imperialist character of the Labour Party. Against those in the pseudo-left who spread the illusion that Corbyn's victory opened up the possibility of Labour returning to its reformist past and functioning as an anti-austerity party to defend the interests of the working class, the *World Socialist Web Site* explained, "The British Labour Party did not begin with Blair. It is a bourgeois party of more than a century's standing and a tried and tested instrument of British imperialism and its state

machine. Whether led by Clement Attlee, James Callaghan or Jeremy Corbyn, its essence remains unaltered."

The coup confirms this appraisal of Labour as a vital part of the machinery of the state.

Following Corbyn's election, the WSWS drew attention to the statement of an unnamed "senior serving general" that should Corbyn ever become prime minister, there would be "the very real prospect" of "a mutiny" against him. The bourgeoisie has determined that removing Corbyn can best be achieved through the parliamentary Labour Party rather than the army.

Britain is entering uncharted waters. As a major bourgeois pillar of power within the UK, Labour will be called on to play a key role in safeguarding the strategic interests of the British bourgeoisie. This may involve forming a government, or taking part in some form of national coalition government. It will certainly involve imposing massive attacks on jobs, wages and essential services and committing the UK to take full part in NATO's war plans.

The conclusion that has been reached is summed up by yesterday's *Financial Times* editorial, "Labour must act now to remove Jeremy Corbyn," urging Labour MPs "to spell out to the whole Labour movement the consequence of the false path the party has embarked upon ... having unsheathed the dagger, Labour MPs cannot now draw back."

The SEP pledges its support for every effort made to defeat the right-wing coup plotters and their state-orchestrated conspiracy to shift the political system even further to the right. But we warn those workers and youth seeking to take up such a political fight that this cannot be achieved within the confines of the Labour Party. It demands the building of a new and genuinely socialist leadership to wage the struggle against the ruling class and its political lackeys without compromise and to the very end.



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