

# The anti-Corbyn coup and calls for a second referendum on Brexit

Statement of the Socialist Equality Party (Britain)  
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The attempted putsch against Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn is being mounted by a right-wing cabal, working in intimate collusion with the security services in Britain and the United States. Its main propaganda organ is the *Guardian* newspaper. The aim is to overturn the result of the June 23 referendum and ensure British membership of the European Union (EU) through the election of a suitably refashioned Labour Party, or its incorporation into a coalition government.

Almost every key figure in the moves against Corbyn that began following the Leave campaign's victory is associated with the party's Blairite wing. This involves not only the current crop of Labour MPs and shadow ministers, but the inner circle around former Prime Minister Tony Blair—Alastair Campbell, David Blunkett, Jack Straw and others. Vetted and approved by MI5 and MI6, and taking their instructions from the CIA, these unindicted war criminals have been activated to purge not only Corbyn but his support base from the party.

Corbyn's declared opposition to austerity and militarism is viewed as an intolerable affront by the Blairites. From the 1980s onwards, culminating in the election of "New Labour," they transformed the party into an instrument for implementing Thatcherite economic policies and pledged to an unconditional alliance with the United States in its wars of colonial conquest in Afghanistan and then Iraq.

They have long viewed his election last year as the illegitimate consequence of the flawed decision to change Labour's constitution and allow a popular vote for leader by members and supporters. But removing Corbyn became imperative after the referendum vote. The strategic interests of the ruling elite in Britain and the United States—especially as regards NATO and its military provocations against Russia—require that the result be rescinded. With Brexit forces now dominant inside the Conservative Party, Labour is the chosen

instrument for this reactionary project.

Washington's demands were made clear by US Secretary of State John Kerry, who informed reporters Wednesday that the referendum result could be reversed. "I think there are a number of ways" to do this, he said, although he didn't "want to throw them out today."

The next day, the *Guardian* published an op-ed piece by Robert Hunter. Its readers were not informed that Hunter is a high-level US state operative. The former president of the Atlantic Treaty Association, and US ambassador to NATO—amongst numerous other key US military appointments—he is described on Wikipedia as "helping to 'recreate' NATO, and breaking down barriers between NATO and the European Union."

Hunter insists that the referendum vote is an example of "mob rule" that should be ignored and that parliament should overturn the result through elections for a "new leadership and a new government."

The Blairites have translated this instruction into political action. It is they who engineered the vote of no confidence in Corbyn—based on the charge that the Labour leader "betrayed" the pro-EU aspirations of the younger generation. The same edition of the *Guardian* features an article by Jonathan Powell, Blair's former chief of staff. He declares that Labour must now "speak for the 48% of the country who want to Remain in the EU." Corbyn "clearly can't be that person", so a new leader is needed "to run in the general election on an explicit promise to negotiate with our partners to salvage our position in Europe..." If elected, Labour's first task would be to hold a second referendum, he writes.

Yesterday, Labour's Geraint Davies and Jonathan Edwards of Plaid Cymru (Party of Wales) presented a motion to parliament calling for a second referendum on whatever terms are agreed for a British exit from the EU.

The Socialist Equality Party condemns these manoeuvres. They recall nothing more than the actions of

the Syriza government in Greece, which last year called a referendum on whether to accept a further round of EU austerity measures in the expectation that they would be agreed. When a massive no vote was returned, Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras repudiated the result and carried on regardless.

Tremendous confusion has been created around the Brexit vote, above all by the right-wing and xenophobic forces leading the Leave campaign. This has been reinforced by concerns over the economic impact of leaving the EU—so that Davies and Edwards were able to cite a petition calling for a second referendum that has now secured upwards of four million signatures.

However, any attempt to overturn or bypass the vote is antidemocratic and aimed at creating the conditions for a deepening offensive against the working class. That is why it is accompanied by the cultivation of a vile political narrative, denouncing the millions of working people who voted Leave as “stupid,” “ignorant” and “racist.” This torrent of abuse expresses the social outlook of a layer of the upper-middle class who view the EU as a guarantor of their privileged lifestyles and in many cases a direct source of personal wealth.

The contrasting hostility of working people to the EU, which functions as an instrument of the major powers and big business for imposing austerity and pursuing trade and military war, is entirely legitimate.

In the referendum in which the Leave campaign was led by a right-wing faction of the Tory Party and the UK Independence Party and centred on nationalism and anti-immigrant rhetoric, such anti-EU sentiment could find no progressive expression. This was reinforced by the fact that the Remain campaign—led by a government hated by millions for its savage austerity measures—was supported by the Labour Party under Corbyn.

What is now taking place is a systematic attempt at manipulating public opinion to lend legitimacy to a drive by the dominant sections of the bourgeoisie to maintain UK membership in the EU. Above all, this demands that Labour assume the role of the primary pro-EU, anti-Brexit party around which a supposedly “progressive” and “globally oriented” alliance can be formed with the Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru, sections of the Tories and others.

The professional purveyors of identity politics and postmodernism employed by the *Guardian* will be rolled out to attack any opposition to this project in the working class as an expression of “backward, insular nationalism,” while the frontal assault on jobs, wages and essential

services is stepped up. But this is a project with support extending across the official political spectrum. Phillip Stephens, in yesterday’s *Financial Times*, wrote, “Many centrist Tories have more in common with their counterparts on the Labour side than with English nationalist Brexiters; and, likewise, middle-of-the-road Labourites are closer to pro-European Tories than to Mr Corbyn’s brand of 1970s state socialism... the space may be opening up for a new, pro-European, economically liberal and socially compassionate alternative to pinched nationalism and hard-left socialism.”

Making clear what the “compassionate alternative” means for the working class, Stephens continued, “The wait, of course, would be infuriating for Britain’s erstwhile partners. Europe cannot afford a year of uncertainty. But at least Berlin, Paris and the rest have had the experience of dealing with Greece.”

The SEP urged an active boycott of the referendum because, in the absence of any significant force expressing a progressive opposition to the EU, a Leave vote could only strengthen the right wing. We warn now that efforts to overturn the result of the referendum not only spread dangerous illusions in the EU, but will strengthen far right forces by allowing them to pose as defenders of the “popular will” against “the elites.”

What is necessary is to advance a perspective that cuts across all attempts to drag workers behind rival sections of the capitalist class—based upon the development of a mass movement across Europe against austerity, militarism and war. Genuine European unity must come from below, not above—through the overthrow of the EU and all its constituent governments and establishing the United Socialist States of Europe.



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