

# Attack on UK Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn over nuclear first strike

Chris Marsden, Paul Mitchell  
25 April 2017

The systematic political offensive against Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, portraying him as a threat to national security, reached new depths of depravity on the BBC's Andrew Marr Show.

Not only did Marr conduct the political equivalent of an ambush, but he did so on the obscene basis of demanding a pledge that Corbyn commit to waging nuclear war.

Marr's interrogation had a deranged character. His first question noted that, should Labour win the June 8 general election, Corbyn's first task would be to write four letters to the captains of Britain's nuclear submarines "instructing them what to do if this country's attacked in a nuclear strike. So what will you be telling them... You have to say fire or don't fire... You have to give them in those letters a strict instruction."

Corbyn replied that his "strict instruction" would be to "follow orders when given."

This prompted Marr's rejoinder, "Can I ask you directly; are there any circumstances in which you'd authorise a nuclear strike? Any circumstances?"

Corbyn replied that "any use of nuclear weapons is a disaster for the whole world" and that "nuclear weapons are not a solution to the world's security issues. They're the disaster of the world's security issues if ever used." He expressed concern at the build-up of tensions between the US and North Korea, as well as "the Trump administration's trying to unpick President Obama's deal with Iran."

Marr followed this rather muted criticism of Donald Trump's cabal of warmongers by questioning which "world leaders" Corbyn would "call first" after taking power.

He then returned more directly to topic, asking, "And do you tell ... President Trump that we are no longer a

nuclear-armed power ... Would a Labour government cancel the Trident programme?"

Corbyn, who has stated his personal opposition to the Trident nuclear programme, replied evasively that Labour is presently undertaking a strategic defence review—even though Labour reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining the nuclear arsenal last July, when 140 of its MPs voted for renewal, against 47 who voted no and 41 abstentions or absences.

Marr raised that the former head of NATO, General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, had described Corbyn as a threat. [Last September Rasmussen said Corbyn's "refusal to clearly state that as a possible prime minister of the UK, he would not be sure that he would defend NATO allies," would tempt Russian President Vladimir Putin "to aggression to test the resolve of NATO."]

Corbyn replied that he "would want to work with NATO leaders in building up an effective, sensible relationship with non-NATO countries such as Russia" to "de-escalate tensions around the world. President Trump seems to be going very much in the opposite direction."

Marr could not conceal his hostility, declaring, "Your enthusiasm for getting around the table with people and talking to people is well known."

He then demanded that Corbyn answer for his opposition to the deployment of 800 British troops to Russia's border with Estonia; whether he would tell President Trump "that we will no longer be taking part in air strikes in Syria and Iraq" and whether he would agree to "take out" Ab? Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, with a drone strike.

Marr's performance will have cemented his standing in ruling circles as a reliable hatchet man.

It should be noted that the content of the four letters

to Britain's nuclear submarine commanders is, by tradition, confidential—Only Labour's James Callaghan has ever indicated the contents of his. And they deal only with the UK's response to a nuclear strike by a hostile power.

But this is no longer to be tolerated. Britain's ruling elite is set on establishing that the fundamental criteria for leading the country is a readiness to launch World War III and end all life on earth.

This was already made clear when Prime Minister Theresa May was asked during the July 2016 parliamentary debate on Trident renewal, "Are you prepared to authorise a nuclear strike that could kill hundreds of thousands of men, women and children?"

May replied firmly, even enthusiastically, "Yes."

The response to the Marr-Corbyn interview by the Tories was to up the ante.

Defence Minister Sir Michael Fallon not only denounced Corbyn for "questioning strikes against terrorists," "refusing to back the nuclear deterrent," and "querying our Nato deployment" in Estonia. Fallon told the BBC's Today programme, "In the most extreme circumstances we have made it very clear that you can't rule out the use of nuclear weapons as a *first strike*." [Emphasis added]

Significantly, Fallon took pains to praise the "brave Labour MPs" who backed the renewal of Trident and who had "corrected" Corbyn.

He was referring to the immediate response of the Labour Party to the Marr interview. Within hours, a party spokesman insisted, "The decision to renew Trident has been taken and Labour supports that." On Monday morning, Labour's election campaign chair Andrew Gwynne told BBC Radio 4's Today programme that renewal of Trident would "absolutely" be in the party's manifesto and was not part of a defence review. He concluded that "Jeremy knows that Trident is Labour party policy. ... Jeremy has set out his views on defence and that is absolutely that we are committed to making sure that Britain is well defended."

Whatever Corbyn may believe as an individual, when it comes to a readiness to uphold the predatory interests of British imperialism through militarism and war, there is nothing to distinguish Labour from the Tories—even if this means pushing the nuclear button. And Corbyn is incapable of waging a genuine fight

against war, because this would demand a call for an insurrection by the working class not only against the Tory government, but against his own party.

The dangers this raises for working people are acute.

Behind May's calling a snap general election is an attempt by the ruling elite to provide a veneer of democratic legitimacy to her government's agenda of trade and military war through hopefully securing a large majority at the expense of Labour. Only this can explain the furious campaign against Corbyn, portraying him and anyone who supports him as a threat to national security.

However, the reality is that there can be no democratic mandate for policies that are antithetical to the social interests of millions of working people and which centre on plans for possible war waged in alliance with the US—in Syria, against North Korea and even the nuclear-armed powers of Russia and China.

This agenda requires brutal state repression, as is underscored by the gang-up of ex-military chiefs against Corbyn renewing demands that he should be prevented from coming to power at all costs.

Former First Sea Lord Alan West, formerly a Labour minister responsible for security and an adviser to then Prime Minister Gordon Brown, warned ominously that Corbyn's views will lead people in the forces to ask, "Is this chap really fully supportive of us in the military?"

Former British Commander in Afghanistan, Colonel Richard Kemp, stated, "Quite literally if Jeremy Corbyn as prime minister enacted the policies he describes, he would have blood on his hands. These comments show why he must never be elected to lead this country."

Former chief of defence staff, Lord General Richards, said, "Jeremy Corbyn, unlike many of his distinguished predecessors in the Labour Party from Clement Attlee through Denis Healey and beyond, has demonstrated why he should not be trusted with the ultimate responsibility of Government—that of the nation's defence and security."



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**