

The election of Boris Johnson and the failure of Corbynism

Statement of the WSWWS Editorial Board
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The electoral debacle suffered by the Labour Party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn in Thursday's UK general election is yet another example of the political bankruptcy of what passes for the left and labour organisations.

Corbyn confronted a widely-despised, internally-divided government, whose leader is viewed as part monster and part buffoon, amid record social inequality and growing support for socialism.

Yet, Corbyn and the Labour Party were not only incapable of capitalising on this situation, but suffered a landslide electoral defeat.

There will be no end of fraudulent explanations for Labour's debacle. The right will declare that Johnson's victory is the consequence of Corbyn's "hard left" politics, the threat to implement a socialist revolution, and so on.

To anyone even remotely familiar with the record of the Labour Party and Corbyn's leadership, this allegation is absurd.

The Corbynites will offer their own set of ready-made excuses, which will attempt to shift the blame from themselves onto the working class, whom they will denounce for having been insufficiently enlightened to cast their vote for Corbyn.

The international middle-class left greeted the outcome with a pathetic display of demoralization. "I'm Crying, You're Crying," sobbed a headline in *Jacobin Magazine*.

"The fight even to keep things the same will be much harder. But by way of consolation, at least now we have more comrades to cry with."

These people are crying for themselves, not for the consequences of their own actions in promoting the hated and discredited Labour Party.

The UK is now led by an extreme-right Conservative

government which, under Boris Johnson, is pledged to exit the European Union (EU) on January 31 in order to complete the "Thatcher revolution."

Johnson will move towards trade and military war in alliance with the Trump administration at the expense of jobs, wages and working conditions. His agenda is to destroy the National Health Service (NHS), whip up nationalism, impose anti-migrant measures and carry out a frontal assault on democratic rights.

Amid all the lies and filth spewed out by the media in this election, one thing they said was true: Corbyn was widely unpopular.

He was unpopular because, in the four years since he won the Labour Party leadership in a landslide, he utterly betrayed the confidence of those who voted for him. Weak, feckless, lazy, unwilling to demonstrate any capacity whatsoever to fight, Corbyn personified cowardice and capitulation.

Corbyn opposed efforts to kick out the Blairites, allowed a free-vote on the bombardment of Syria, pledged to renew Trident, supported NATO spending targets and issued statements that he would consider using nuclear weapons. His key supporters were driven out of the party based on bogus accusations of anti-Semitism, without Corbyn lifting a finger in their defence.

However, Corbyn's personality was the expression of his bankrupt politics. His entire political career, centred on an alliance with the Stalinists of the *Morning Star*, involved distancing himself from the greatest political crimes of the Labour Party, such as the 2003 Iraq War, without ever endangering his position in Westminster.

What is exposed in Labour's debacle is a type of politics that seeks to deny the revolutionary nature of the working class.

Under Corbyn's leadership, Labour ditched any class

appeal in favour of promoting an agenda based on the identity politics of race, nationality, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.

The ideologist of the middle-class left, Chantal Mouffe, described Corbyn as potentially the most successful example of a new wave of “left populism,” because he “stands at the head of a great party and enjoys the support of the trade unions.” The outcome would depend on his rejecting the “traditional left political frontier... established on the basis of class.”

What those now crying over Corbyn’s defeat are discovering is that their own delusions and wishful thinking were not shared by the broad mass of the population, who had Corbyn’s number.

The tragic truth is that, had Corbyn won the election, he would come to Buckingham Palace to kiss the hand of the queen, and then announce a cabinet dominated by the Labour right. The political heirs of Blair would be welcome in Corbyn's cabinet.

Corbyn’s betrayal would have been even more abject than the “radical left” SYRIZA government in Greece, which turned the country into a vassal of the IMF and EU, a foul prison for refugees, and a virtual police dictatorship.

There would not have been a hint of social reform in Corbyn’s government. The only difference is that appointments would have been made to satisfy various ethnic, racial, gender, and sexual criteria in line with the requirements of identity politics.

Corbyn’s debacle is the exposure not just of the Labour Party, but of the entire perspective of the “parliamentary road to socialism.” The great questions of war, poverty, and social inequality are not going to be solved with cleverly-run election campaigns.

The precondition for resolving any of the great social problems confronting mankind is a massive mobilisation of the working class and the intensification of the class struggle on a global scale.

Only a movement that identifies itself with this struggle, that breaks through the miserable nationalist debate over Brexit, and fights for a programme of international proletarian unity, will be able to win the confidence of the working class and lead it in the fight for socialism.

This is the perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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