

The *World Socialist Web Site*, Corbynism and the struggle against opportunism

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I am speaking to you tonight during the congress of the Socialist Equality Party in the UK, which is discussing a draft resolution laying out the political axis for the work of the section during the explosive period of class struggle that lies ahead.

All our delegates are listening in. And everyone knows that the relaunch of the *World Socialist Web Site* provides the central axis for everything we are setting out to accomplish—the building of a new revolutionary leadership in the working class.

Our resolution states:

The central political responsibility of the SEP is to take full part in the development of the *World Socialist Web Site* as the authoritative voice of Marxism and the instrument through which the world working class will be unified in a struggle for socialism. The WSWS was relaunched on October 2 with a major redesign that is aesthetically pleasing and provides for heightened functionality. But the redesign was guided by an understanding that the historic crisis of the world capitalist system, accelerated by the coronavirus pandemic, is generating an immense resurgence of interest within the working class in socialist politics, history and theory.

I want to explain what the work of the WSWS means for the political education and clarification of the working class. Our congress resolution pays very close attention to the bitter experiences made during the five years when Jeremy Corbyn was leader of the Labour Party.

Corbyn was elected in 2015 on a mandate to drive out the Blairite right-wing and take up a struggle against a despised Conservative government that had imposed savage austerity measures leaving millions in poverty and millions more struggling to survive.

Instead, we are addressing these strategic experiences under conditions where Corbyn's betrayal of those who voted for him—through his opposition to all efforts to kick out the Blairites, allowing a free-vote on the bombardment of Syria, renewing the Trident nuclear weapons programme and supporting NATO, refusing to oppose the witch-hunt of his own supporters as anti-Semites, and his unswerving opposition to any struggle against the Tories—ended in a disaster.

Labour's crushing defeat in the December 2019 general election brought Boris Johnson to power, heading a criminal government whose "herd immunity" policy has led to tens of thousands of deaths during the pandemic. Corbyn we now know was told of this policy by Johnson and kept quiet about it. He then handed power in the Labour Party to Sir Keir Starmer, who, taking his cue from Corbyn, has pledged himself to "constructive opposition" to the Tories, his words, which means active collusion in the back-to-work, reopen schools drive that is guaranteeing tens of thousands more deaths.

This is the political legacy of the man hailed by all of the pseudo-left groups in Britain and internationally as the leader of a socialist rebirth of the Labour Party—the British equivalent of Bernie Sanders in the US and the wave of the future.

I am sure you can imagine the political confusion this would create if this grotesque lie wasn't challenged. But it was.

Our resolution cites an SEP statement from 2015, that is prior to Corbyn's election as Labour leader, which is based on the historic character and experiences of the working class with social democracy particularly its "left" varieties. We insisted that no change of Labour leader, nor even an influx of left-leaning members, could change the historically and programmatically determined character of Labour as a "right-wing bourgeois party... complicit in all the crimes of British imperialism"—one that "has functioned as the principal political opponent of socialism for more than a century."

That's the historical approach that we took.

It then cites a December 14, 2019, statement by the WSWS editorial board, which marked the final electoral debacle of Labour, but which linked Corbyn's treacherous record not only to the experiences made in Britain but to the betrayal of Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, and similar pseudo-left formations internationally—all of which represented a privileged upper middle-class stratum with a vested interest in defending capitalism.

That statement explained:

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, she said, would depend on his rejecting the 'traditional left political frontier... established on the basis of class'...

From this we concluded:

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 what the struggle against opportunism means. It is

the fight for principle, for a historically-based analysis, and the perspective of socialist internationalism against any adaptation to nationalism—the seeking after short-cuts based on adaptations to the domination of the working class by the Labour and trade union bureaucracy. It's statements like this that provide a strategic orientation for the working class, that stress the need to break from the perspective of national reformism, to shake off the stranglehold of Labour, and adopt the perspective of socialist internationalism.

It's a perspective that is fought for in irreconcilable opposition to all the pseudo-left opportunist tendencies. And we know that any worker or young person reading it can follow links to a vast trove of political analysis fighting for this perspective—over 100 articles on Corbynism, on other pseudo-left formations, polemics against the pseudo-left groups, on the role of the trade unions in betraying workers struggles, links to historical articles on Trotsky, on the Labour Party, on Stalinism, on Brexit, the mounting inter-imperialist antagonisms leading to trade and military war, and the necessity to base the struggles of the working class on internationalism, on the struggle for the United Socialist States of Europe.

When young people and workers begin probing the question of Corbyn, as analysed by the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee, and this is one example among many, that worker or young person can begin their political education as a Trotskyist.

That is what the redesign of the *World Socialist Web Site* makes possible. It will provide the basis for the education of the millions of working people coming into struggle. To educate them in the programme and principles of socialism, as embodied in the International Committee. The *World Socialist Web Site* is a pole of attraction for the best elements in the working class. And it is the forum through which the International Committee will be built as the world party of socialist revolution. That is what the struggle against opportunism represents. That is what we represent as a political tendency.



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