

UK's Jeremy Corbyn prostrates himself before NATO on Radio Free Europe

Thomas Scripps
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There are no lines Jeremy Corbyn will not cross in his campaign to return to the Parliamentary Labour Party.

His most grotesque act of obeisance yet was his interview by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty on the war in Ukraine, in which he aligned himself totally with the NATO war drive against Russia.

Since the war broke out, Corbyn and his allies in the rump “left” of the Labour Party have come under renewed attack by leader Sir Keir Starmer. His assault initially centred on a February 16 Stop the War Coalition statement signed by members of Labour’s Socialist Campaign Group (SCG) opposing NATO’s eastward expansion and accusing the UK of pouring “oil on the fire” in Ukraine.

Starmer demanded that all Labour signatories, including 11 MPs, retract their names or have the party whip removed. Only Corbyn and Claudia Webbe, who have both already had the Labour whip withdrawn, did not retract their signatures. Corbyn went on to speak at a Stop the War rally in London as both of his two longest-standing allies, John McDonnell and Dianne Abbott, bailed.

Finding himself abandoned by his few remaining supporters, and doubtless under pressure from the SCG MPs, Corbyn gave an interview to Times Radio on April 20 to plead his case. A Corbyn-led Labour Party, he assured the ruling class, would still be “supporting Ukraine’s right to defend itself”. He did not “blame NATO for the fact Russia has invaded Ukraine.” All that his anti-war opposition amounted to was an appeal for the freedom to dream of “a world where we start to ultimately disband all military alliances.”

Four days later Starmer replied with a kick in the teeth, telling BBC’s *Sunday Morning* that it was “very difficult to see” how Corbyn could be readmitted to the Labour Party after his remarks. Earlier this month Starmer told the *Times* he would expel any Labour MP who did not declare “unshakeable support for Nato”.

Corbyn responded with a further capitulation. Going one better than the Murdoch-owned *Times*, he clarified his position on the war in Ukraine in an interview with the CIA’s own Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)

Founded in 1949, Radio Free Europe was established by the National Committee for a Free Europe, an anti-communist CIA front organisation under the direction of Allen Dulles, who in his time as head of the CIA oversaw the 1953 Iranian and 1954 Guatemalan coup d’états and the MKUltra torture experimentation programme. Radio Liberty was established in 1951 by another CIA front organisation, the American Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia. The now joint stations continue to serve as a lever of American imperialism under the United States Agency for Global Media.

Corbyn, who once had a column in the Stalinist *Morning Star*, knows this history and that the interview may as well have been held

in the Pentagon. But he calculated that his choice of platform would underscore his willingness to do whatever is asked of him.

Asked by Vazha Tavberidze, a Vaclav Havel Journalism Fellow working with RFE/RL’s Georgian Service, where he attributed blame for the war, Corbyn replied, “Russian, particularly President Putin’s, aggression against Ukraine.” He insisted that while “those in Russia that advise Putin” might have thought Ukraine’s integration into US and European security structures “was some kind of threat to Russia, I don’t agree with that.”

NATO’s key propaganda claims in the war are that the alliance is defending freedom and democracy in innocent Ukraine against unprovoked and inexplicable Russia aggression, and that it has never had any designs on Russia. Corbyn endorsed this myth, abandoning the position he put forward just months ago.

The February 16 Stop the War statement, which still lists the former Labour leader first as a signatory, demanded a “halt” to NATO’s “eastward expansion” and refuted “the idea that NATO is a defensive alliance”. It called for a settlement which “addresses Russia’s security concerns,” in recognition of the fact that the US was preparing Ukraine as a staging ground for a NATO war with Russia in all but name. It argued that British arms shipments and troop deployments to Eastern Europe were “inflaming tensions and indicating disdain for Russian concerns.”

Neither Stop the War nor Corbyn could provide a political perspective to combat this predatory war drive, but they could, at this point, acknowledge political realities. Two months later, fully aware of NATO’s warmongering, Corbyn flatly denies any hostile intentions by NATO against Russia. He went on in Saturday’s interview to shrug his shoulders at the further rapid extension of the military alliance. Asked by Tavberidze about Sweden and Finland’s planned membership of NATO, he replied, “That’s a matter for them.”

Again, Corbyn knows better, but spouts the required propaganda. NATO has relentlessly escalated tensions on Russia’s borders, forcing countries to pick a side, and coupled this with ongoing diplomatic pressure and the deeper integration of the Baltic and Eastern European countries into the military structures of the US and its European allies. Sweden and Finland have been presented with an ultimatum and are in turn working to present their populations with a fait accompli on NATO membership. This process was graphically underscored by Johnson’s announcement Wednesday of UK military alliances with both, pre-empting their official participation in the alliance and making clear that British imperialism, unlike Corbyn, makes no pretence of neutrality on the issue.

Corbyn would not even oppose NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia. Asked if he would welcome such a move, he replied, “it

seems very unlikely”. Squirring to the point of incoherence he continued, according to the transcript, “Although I do obviously support the decisions that have been made [inaudible] in the case of Georgia, for example, as with Ukraine,” before returning to theme to say, “what I don’t understand is why Russia... has chosen to go down the route of invasion and war.”

The former Labour leader’s inability to give a straight answer is due to his desperate triangulating between two audiences: Starmer and his party of warmongers and the ruling class they serve, and the following Corbyn has built up with his criticisms of the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq and other imperialist interventions. He wants to prove his loyalty to the British bourgeoisie without totally alienating his traditional supporters and ending any political use value he has in channelling anti-war sentiment into harmless semi-pacifist phrase-mongering.

Corbyn went as far as possible in neutering his already craven comments to Times Radio without openly abandoning the pretence of an anti-war position, suggesting “the growth [but not maintenance?] of military alliances in the long term [but not now?] is not necessarily [but not definitely?] the way forward.” NATO’s “global role”, he added as a limp caveat, “has not always been a good thing.”

This was in stark contrast to his repeated denunciations of the “illegal”, “wrong”, “disgraceful”, “wrong at every level and conclusively” Russian invasion. The clear message is that whatever his qualms about British militarism, he can join in the demonisation of Russia with the best of them.

Corbyn explained his preferred policy would be to force Russia to agree a ceasefire and negotiated solution through “a combination of political pressure” and what he euphemistically described as “what’s happening on the ground”. What is “happening on the ground” is a NATO proxy war against Russia. “Pressure” is being applied through sanctions, destroying the living standards of the world working class.

In plain English, a Corbyn-led Labour Party or Britain would participate in the NATO war. Asked if the UK was doing enough to help Ukraine, he replied uncritically, “We’re giving a lot of aid, yes.”

Again, the “aid” referred to is close to £3 billion in military assistance, including tens of thousands of weapons, missiles, and heavy artillery pieces as well as training for Ukrainian soldiers delivered by the UK’s professional killers in the special forces. With customary sleight of hand, Corbyn doffs his cap to these efforts before adding that “humanitarian aid is also important.”

Corbyn is all but declaring, “I may personally dream of a world without war, but I will not fight to oppose it and I will peacefully coexist in a party of warmongers.” All he asks in return is the freedom to wring his hands from time to time and call for peace, dialogue and diplomacy, largely in order to bring onboard a section of the middle class generally supportive of the war but repelled by Starmer’s unhinged sabre-rattling.

More than any other issue, it was Corbyn’s record of parliamentary opposition to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars of Tony Blair that won him two overwhelming Labour leadership elections. Hundreds of thousands voted for him to wage a fight against the Blairite war criminals. Instead, as leader, Corbyn dropped his opposition to NATO and allowed the party a free vote on bombing Syria and renewing the Trident nuclear weapons system, which they duly backed. He made no moves whatsoever against Blair or his disciples.

Corbyn’s record since handing leadership of “the party of NATO” to Starmer has confirmed that “party unity” with the right-wing MPs and apparatus running the Labour Party remains the alpha and omega

of his politics, based on an unshakeable hostility to any movement of the working class outside of the safe channels of parliament and the Labour and trade union bureaucracy. Not even the threat of a war with Russia risking a Third World War can break his commitment. On the contrary, it has strengthened it, for fear that the consequences of the war drive will push the working class into revolutionary struggles.

Corbyn’s actions discredit not only him, but the Stop the War Coalition. Since its foundation, the STWC has insisted that opposition to war must be based on an orientation to “lefts” in the Labour Party and the trade unions. This bankrupt perspective demobilised the mass movement built up over the war in Iraq. Over time, Stop the War developed a semi-official status as an advisor to British imperialism, advocating a less warmongering, less US-aligned foreign policy.

With the further rightward march of Labour and the unions, dragging the SCG in their wake, the STWC has all but collapsed, struggling even to fill a platform in the UK as its patrons abandon their past association. Corbyn, the last holdout and Chair of Stop the War for four years, has now given a NATO-friendly interview denouncing Russia to Radio CIA.

The development of the war crisis to the current far advanced stage is inseparable from the betrayals and false perspective of Corbyn and Stop the War. The bloody US campaign for global hegemony since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, with Britain as its leading ally, has produced a well of opposition in the working class, as has the explosive growth of social inequality. But this opposition has been denied any means of intervening against the war-austerity drive and its architects.

Building an anti-war movement requires a political reckoning with Corbynism and the STWC. These forces must be broken with, and a turn made to the socialist perspective put forward by the Socialist Equality Party and its sister parties internationally: to oppose the imperialist war drive of the NATO powers and the reactionary, nationalist response of the Russian government through the prosecution of the global class struggle and its elevation into a political fight against capitalism—the source of all war, inequality and oppression.



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