

The Summit of Resistance: Britain's pseudo-left opposes a socialist political challenge to Starmer's Labour government

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The “Summit of Resistance—We Demand Change”, on Saturday March 29, seeks to conceal the refusal of all its main participants to build a real political opposition to Sir Keir Starmer's Labour government.

Its invocation of “resistance” refers only to the organisation of various protests under the leadership of the Corbynite left, sections of the trade union bureaucracy and their pseudo-left apologists, aimed at putting pressure on the government to ameliorate its most right-wing policies.

The summit was specifically called to conceal the fact that months of discussions on the formation of a new party with former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn at its head have so far come to nothing.

Corbyn has rejected all entreaties for him to head such a party, declaring that his focus will be building local “grassroots” forums while his group of five Independent MPs continues to “congratulate the government when it makes positive changes to people's lives but call it out where it falls short.”

The Socialist Workers Party, its offshoot Counterfire, the Socialist Party and the Revolutionary Communist Party have all made their calls for a new left party as a polite request to Corbyn, even when forced to make the occasional criticism of his record in office in refusing to challenge the Blairite right. Had he agreed to such a move, both his and their central orientation would have been the same.

Any such “broad left” party, with or without Corbyn, would act as a ginger group on the Labour Party, forming ad hoc campaigns and alliances with trade union bureaucrats, Labour's dwindling band of left MPs and local councillors to register token opposition to the savage cuts being imposed by Starmer—or to mount pacifist protests over Labour's support for the Gaza genocide.

It would be a matter of contention whether similar feeble protests would be made against Starmer's warmongering against Russia centred on Ukraine, given that most of the Labour “left” and the most prominent “left” trade union leaders are fully behind Starmer's anti-Russian measures and are critical only of his refusal to declare open political hostilities with the Trump administration.

Corbyn refuses appeals to lead a new party

The origins of the Summit of Resistance can be traced back to Corbyn's expulsion from the ranks of the Labour Party in Parliament

and deselection as Labour's candidate in Islington North in the months preceding last July's snap general election.

Many workers and young people assumed this would be a watershed moment, after the political rout of the Corbynites within the Labour Party, when moves would begin to form a new party. This expectation was reinforced by the launch of Collective, led by some of Corbyn's closest advisors—including former general secretary of Unite Len McCluskey, his partner Karie Murphy (Corbyn's former chief of staff) and Pamela Fitzpatrick (Director of Corbyn's Peace and Justice Project)—which declared its goal was to form such a party.

Instead, Corbyn declared that he would run as an Independent in his Islington North constituency, with Collective backing him and a dozen other independent candidates standing in opposition to the Gaza genocide—including Andrew Feinstein against Starmer. Aside from these candidates and where they stood their own, Britain's pseudo-left tendencies joined the Corbynites in calling for a Labour vote.

The election of Corbyn and four other protest candidates against Labour and the average 13 percent of the vote for all the Gaza protest candidates was the next “watershed moment”. With Corbyn's parliamentary bloc of five, and amid the broad anti-Labour sentiment especially among Muslims and young people, the media published leaked reports of various invitation-only gatherings of Collective and other groupings, declaring that Corbyn would form a parliamentary party around the five Independents, and that a broader party organisation would be set up as early as January 2025.

Corbyn responded with repeated denials, declaring after his election win, “Once our grassroots model [in Islington North] has been replicated elsewhere, this can be the genesis of a new movement capable of challenging the stale two-party system... to create a new, centralised party, based around the personality of one person, is to put the cart before the horse.”

His attendance at a Collective meeting in September last year was downplayed by a source “close to Corbyn” who insisted “his attendance was not an official endorsement”. Corbyn then told BBC's *Newsnight* on December 17, regarding his parliamentary “Independents' Alliance”, “We do not intend to become a party.” Fitzpatrick was obliged to tell attendees at an online meeting, “No doubt Jeremy will be involved, but he will not lead a new party.”

The shared reformist politics of Corbyn and his “revolutionary” backers

For months now, every one of the pseudo-left groups has been elbowing for position in a possible new Corbynite party. The Socialist Party was directly involved in discussions, as was the Revolutionary Communist Party.

For the SWP, which was denied participation, leading theoretician Alex Callinicos wrote, “The conditions are developing for the formation of a powerful radical left alternative to Labour,” citing the “remarkable successes” of Corbyn and the pro-Palestine Independents: “to make sure this happens, revolutionary socialists are needed to help initiate and build this alternative.”

For Counterfire, Chris Nineham wrote that a new “broad party of the left goes way beyond people who currently see themselves as revolutionaries” and would “help popularise basic socialist arguments, organise the left and return more left-wing MPs to parliament, people who could use their voices to build opposition to austerity and war.”

With Corbyn refusing all entreaties, the Summit of Resistance has stepped back from calls to form a new party. Instead the appeal for attendance only calls “on all trade unionists, campaigners and activists” to construct “a network of activists across campaigns and unions to turn the tide on despair” in line with Corbyn’s preferred model.

This amorphous call ensures that not only Corbyn but bureaucrats such as Sarah Woolley, General Secretary BFAWU, Daniel Kebede, General Secretary National Education Union, Sarah Kilpatrick, President NEU, Dr. Maria Chondrogianni, University and College Union President-elect, and others are happy to register their meaningless support.

The relationship between Corbyn and the pseudo-left tendencies is an alliance of convenience. Corbyn benefits from their promotion of him as the leading light of left-wing politics in Britain. Even after his refusal during five years (2015-20) as Labour Party leader to mount any political challenge to the Blairites—whether on opposing war, nuclear weapons and NATO membership, the implementation of Tory austerity or the filthy antisemitism witch-hunt against his supporters—they still act as servile courtiers.

In return, the pseudo-left tendencies can cite Corbyn and the dwindling handful of lefts gathered around him as proof of a continued fight for the soul of the Labour Party, and claim that the supposed “popularity” of his meagre reformist palliatives shows where even the most advanced workers presently stand politically—and that they must therefore form the reformist axis of any new party.

Nothing—not support for genocide, nor military rearmament at the cost of the most devastating offensive against the welfare state ever undertaken—will move them to mobilise a political movement independently of and directed against the Labour government. Theirs is the policy of acquiescence, not resistance, and their real hope is that no movement develops in the working class that challenges their routine protests.

Only a socialist and internationalist programme offers a way forward for the working class

The Socialist Equality Party stood against Starmer in Holborn and St Pancras in the general election, to spearhead a campaign directed against the entire Labour Party. We argued that what the working class needs is precisely the revolutionary party the pseudo-left oppose.

In a polemic explaining the difference between our approach and the Corbynites and their political apologists, we wrote:

The failure of Corbynism to provide a viable opposition to the rightward evolution of the Labour Party is not the result merely of poor leadership.

The development of transnational production and the global integration of finance and manufacturing has dramatically undermined the viability of the old trade unions and Stalinist and social democratic parties that were embedded in the nation state system, to which they all responded by junking their former reformist programmes.

The Labour “left” shares the right-wing’s nationalist and pro-capitalist programme, differing only in their advocacy of a few of the reforms the Blairites have abandoned.

Today, only a socialist and internationalist programme offers a way forward for the working class.

Every fundamental problem confronting workers is rooted in the deepening crisis of world capitalism. Above all, the danger of a new world war arises out of capitalism’s fundamental contradictions—between the development of an interconnected global system of production and the division of the world into antagonistic nation states based on upholding private ownership of the means of production.

Our manifesto explains that the international working class is the only social force that can stop the global eruption of war. The same contradictions driving imperialism to wars of global conquest provide the objective basis for social revolution by unifying the workers who produce all of society’s wealth in a global system of production. This pits them against the common enemy of giant transnational corporations and banks that dictate the policy of every national government.

The SEP is fighting in these elections for the formation of a mass movement against genocide and war based in the working class, one that is international, anti-capitalist and socialist.

Our aim is to link this fight to the growing struggles against inequality, poverty and the attacks on wages, jobs, healthcare, education and all the social rights of the working class. We intend to build a new socialist leadership, completely independent of and hostile to all political parties and organisations of the capitalist class, the Labour Party above all.

This is the programme which should be taken up by all those workers and young people who detest Starmer and the Labour Party and want to wage a real fight against them for socialism.



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