

Corbyn's "Your Party" reboot at The World Transformed: Europe's pseudo-left politicians display their bankruptcy

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"Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ... A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them." The Gospel of Matthew 7:16-20

Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana came together at The World Transformed (TWT) festival in Manchester on October 10 to declare their new left party project was "back on the road" after bitter factional warfare between them had threatened a shipwreck.

"Obviously, you've all seen what's happened over the past few weeks," Sultana told hundreds of supporters, "but I'm here to tell you the show is back on the road." Invoking the reunion tour by long-feuding Oasis band members Noel and Liam Gallagher, she declared, "If they could do it, of course me and Jeremy can."

The dilapidated Edwardian architecture and dirt-encrusted Baroque revival plasterwork of the Nia Centre's main theatre —testimony to the collapse of reformism and decades of underfunding and neglect—was a fitting venue for this crisis-ridden reboot. Neither Sultana's glib cultural references, nor repeated appeals for unity could disguise the ongoing tensions and differences within Your Party over its direction.

Leanne Mohamad, a close Corbyn ally, set the tone for the gathering as chairperson, insisting that "Real change takes a broad movement, a coalition of people and parties with a shared vision of justice, equality and hope."

She was opening the session, "A World to Win: What is a Party For?", where Corbyn and Sultana would give their answer to this question alongside Janis Ehling from Germany's Left Party, Nathalie Oziol from La France Insoumise and Peter Mertens from the Workers Party of Belgium, outlining their "shared struggles of transformative change in their own context, from parliament to the streets, from community organising to global solidarity."

Sultana spoke first. She received louder applause than Corbyn did from TWT's audience drawn from numerous pseudo-left groups including the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party, Revolutionary Communist Party, Counterfire, RS21, Anti-Capitalist Resistance, Socialist Alternative, etc., and former Labour Party members, Greens, independent socialists and anarchists.

TWT began in 2016 as a fringe festival at the Labour Party's annual conference. Its declared aim was to transform Corbyn's insurgent leadership of the party into a launching pad for "21st-century socialism".

On Friday, Sultana's insistence on Your Party being for socialism and "working class power" was more rhetorically charged than ever. Having addressed packed meetings across Britain, she is pitching to growing left-wing sentiment in the working class and among young people:

So what are we fighting for? Put simply, we're fighting for socialism. Not tweaks, not lowering bills here and there, or a wealth tax, but a fundamental transformation of society, the means of production controlled by workers and the workers controlling all the wealth they produce.

Working class people aren't turned off by class politics. They live class politics every single day. They see class war when their bills go up and when their energy companies report record profits. They see class war when landlords hike up rent and evict families without a second thought. They see class war when bankers get bailed out, but they shoulder austerity. And they see class war right now when the richest 50 families in the UK hoard more wealth than half the population, and we have more food banks than McDonald's restaurants in the sixth-richest country in the world. So, I say let's embrace class war, and this time, it's time we won.

She continued in this vein, calling for Britain's withdrawal from NATO, the expulsion of Israel's diplomatic staff from Britain, and for Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his former Foreign Secretary David Lammy to join Netanyahu in the dock at The Hague. She declared once again, "We're done begging for crumbs off the table. We're coming for the fucking lot."

From her fiery speech, one would never guess that Sultana was elected Labour MP for Coventry South in 2019 based on a party manifesto that endorsed NATO, supported the Trident nuclear weapons programme and declared: "Businesses are the heartbeat of our economy".

That was Corbyn's own manifesto.

She was re-elected last year, having endorsed the party's nakedly right-wing manifesto authored by Sir Keir Starmer.

Sultana is a politician able to reverse positions overnight. Her critique of "Corbynism" published less than two months ago in *New Left Review*, attacking his "capitulations" (his refusal as Labour leader to challenge the "left-wing antisemitism" witch-hunt, allowing thousands of his supporters to be expelled by the Blairites) was shelved on Friday. She declared instead, "When Jeremy was elected leader of the Labour Party, it gave millions of us hope that politics could be about honesty and decency again, about peace, solidarity and working-class power. But the establishment waged an all-out war against the left, trying to drive us out of public life. Yet here we are fighting back."

None of her overhyped claims for Your Party will survive. Her own capitulations—to Corbyn and his clique apparatus—do not suggest someone ready to take on British imperialism and its state apparatus. During his own address in Manchester, Corbyn made clear the new party's policies will be confined to vague semi-reformist measures around which "unity"

can be built with the worst political scoundrels.

Germany's Left Party

Janis Ehling is General Secretary of Germany's Die Linke (The Left Party). Mohamad introduced him as part of "a new generation of leadership within the German left, focused on building inclusive, forward-looking and truly progressive movements".

Ehling observed that "Parties are always formed in situations of deep crisis of society", saying he would explain "how our party was formed and how it did during the last elections". He offered a potted history of the Left Party aimed at concealing its rotten political foundations and record.

When the SPD government of Gerhard Schröder (1998-2005) "turned against everyone Social Democracy should stand for", Ehling said, this led to "a lot of different currents of the left, [trade] unionists, Greens, socialists, coming together and forming a party." In fact, the Left Party was founded by the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), successor to the Stalinist party that ruled East Germany until 1990, and sections of the SPD and trade union bureaucracies in the West, a fusion sponsored in 2007 by leading SPD politician Oskar Lafontaine aimed at controlling working-class resistance.

Ehling explained, "The goal of our party was to push the social democrats to the left" and to make "our country... more equal". But the rise of the far-right AfD was now "a whole different situation".

He told TWT's audience that "our party was nearly dead last year" and that people were "losing hope". Indeed, having overseen budget cuts in Berlin, Bremen, Thuringia, Saxony and elsewhere, and having supported anti-immigrant measures and remilitarisation, the Left Party was in meltdown. Its stated goal of pushing the SPD to the left and achieving "social justice" under capitalism lay in tatters. Ehling explained, "We were polling at 3 percent, and then we said, okay, we have to make something completely different."

This involved drawing, rhetorically at least, "a very clear line against the fascists", opposing the scapegoating of immigrants, demanding the abolition of the billionaires, calling for affordable housing, and opposing the genocide in Gaza. He explained, "To be totally honest, I'm a pessimist. But I have had only lovely surprises..." Over the past year, the Left Party had tripled its vote share at the polls, and membership had risen from 40,000 to 120,000.

A new wave of working-class radicalisation has seen party leaders cynically tack left, controlling and diffusing anger from below. The Left Party remains a capitalist party and functions as a loyal opposition to Chancellor Friedrich Merz as he woos the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD), escalates NATO military aggression against Russia, and supports the genocide in Gaza, enforcing brutal repression against opponents of genocide and fascism.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, has written extensively on the history and political record of the Left Party, including here, here, and here.

La France Insoumise

From France, where the working class has repeatedly entered direct class battles against austerity and state repression, arousing the hopes of workers across Europe, Nathalie Ozol brought greetings from Jean-Luc

Mélenchon's La France Insoumise/Unsubmissive France (LFI). Her political musings—incorporating postmodernist attacks on "class essentialism" and Marxism—underscored the role of France's affluent pseudo-left milieu in retarding the working class's political consciousness and blocking its political independence.

Her answer to the question, "What is a party?" (answered more than 100 years ago by Lenin) was that "LFI... is not a political party, it's a political movement, and that is a deliberate choice on our part".

She continued, "In France and maybe elsewhere as well, society is now fragmented, divided. It does not so much correspond to the traditional classification, categorisation, in social classes, which used to justify what a political party was meant for. Because, well, the political party used to be the organised form of the industrial working class, right?"

Oziol said that LFI advocates "social movements", a model which "does not necessitate any form of financial contribution. It is based on action, political action". They organise "meetings, reunions, to decide on the week's planning, the week's actions. And this leads us to be deeply... connected to social movements, such as the most recent one... Block Everything."

She outlined LFI's "radical platform": revocation of pension reform, retirement at age 60, and "breaking with the traditional or capitalist system" via a wealth tax, and a Sixth Republic, which she said she did not have time to "develop".

Oziol made only a passing reference to the explosive crisis in France, a breakdown of bourgeois-democratic rule without parallel since the 1930s, where the far-right are being groomed for office to enforce brutal austerity, state repression and military rearmament with far-reaching consequences across Europe.

Opposing any fight to mobilise the working class in an industrial and political offensive for socialism, the LFI insists on a response solely utilising existing constitutional methods, the impeachment of President Macron and calls for fresh elections, while its Socialist Party allies in the New Popular Front (NFP) prop up Macron's disintegrating government led by Prime Minister Sebastian Lecornu.

Mélenchon ran third in the presidential elections in 2022, winning 7,712,520 votes, and used this position to bolster Macron as a supposed counterweight to the rise of Marine Le Pen's National Rally. As a result, three years later, a far-right government is a real and immediate threat. The following articles by Alex Lantier, national secretary of the Parti de l'égalité socialiste (PES) and Peter Schwarz are essential reading.

Belgium Workers Party

In laying out the carpet for Peter Mertens, Workers' Party of Belgium (PTB) president (2008-2018), who has represented the PTB in the Belgian Federal Parliament since 2019, Corbyn and Sultana are making clear their call for "left unity" will embrace all varieties of Stalinism.

Mertens joined the Maoist PTB's youth movement in 1987. Neither the bloody suppression by the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy of the 1989 mass strikes and student protests in Tiananmen Square, nor the naked turn to capitalist restoration by the Chinese Communist Party would shake Merten's loyalty to the nationalist utopia of "Socialism with Chinese characteristics".

Mertens' predecessor as party leader, Ludo Martens, in his 1994 book, *Another View of Stalin*, celebrated Joseph Stalin's bloody purges against Trotskyists aimed at destroying Lenin's party and annihilating all those with any connection to the internationalist traditions of October 1917. It was only in 2008 that Mertens initiated a process of "Renewal", claiming to reject the party's Maoist and Stalinist past. But his and the PTB's

commitment to a national-reformist programme and to populist cross-class “people’s initiatives” has deepened.

“The capitalist society is in a deep crisis everywhere”, Mertens stated, explaining, “In this turmoil, things that are small can become big and great, very rapidly if we manage it.” He advised, “We don’t have to be afraid of the turmoil”, telling Your Party’s founders to “stay cool and build”. While some people may have “a very strange point of view on some details, it doesn’t matter. Build bridges with them.”

The left across Europe had organised “collective depression” when instead it needed to “create hope” and “make the working class great again”. But true to his Stalinist pedigree, socialism was consigned to the indefinite future. He cautioned there was a clash between patience and impatience, emphasising that building a socialist movement was “a long-term project.”

Jeremy Corbyn

Corbyn, as the final speaker, was introduced as “the best prime minister we never had”, as Mohamad urged the audience to “come together with gratitude and hope and give a heartfelt applause for a man who changed the course of our politics.”

Corbyn’s lacklustre speech, replete with half-truths and half-measures, acknowledged these were serious times, with “the rise of the extreme far-right,” and “a horrible, dangerous atmosphere all across the continent”, but offered no serious opposition.

He criticised the Conservative parties for trailing the far-right, while “to their shame, the socialist and social democratic parties have moved in that direction to fill that gap”. He depicted this process as one of mistaken thinking rather than deliberate decisions by bourgeois parties, in response to the global breakdown of capitalism, hellbent on waging war against the working class.

Pointing to Starmer’s invocation of Enoch Powell—his claim that immigration to Britain had created “an island of strangers”—Corbyn appealed to his frothing right-wing party: “Don’t concede ground to the racists and the far-right. It doesn’t end well.”

Corbyn depicted Your Party’s goals in terms of a commitment to “local democracy”, offering no programme to combat Starmer’s authoritarian government, or the rise of Reform UK and its fascist periphery. Ahead lay the prospect of “deliberative meetings where people give their views on the kind of local democracy we want, the kind of accountability we want, and the sort of policy areas we want. We’ve set out the general view, which is about peace, is about justice, it’s about economic equality, it’s about opposition to racism. We’ll then develop other policies.”

Instructing his audience at TWT to keep demands for more radical measures in check, he warned those running Your Party’s local branches, “Internal debate is important, of course, and working out roughly what you’re doing. But above all, let’s make sure we are 100,000 percent relevant all the time to the community that we’re involved with.”

This would involve monthly open meetings to discuss “local issues, local transport, local education, whatever it happens to be, and then feed that all in to a policy-making process so we become a force for good within our society.”

“Self-destructing”

Islington. His Fabian, municipal socialism, eclipsed more than a century ago by the Labour Party’s birth, is ludicrously outdated. Corbyn’s fundamental principle is opposition to the class struggle in Britain and internationally.

Indeed, not one of TWT’s speakers even mentioned events in the United States, where President Donald Trump is erecting a presidential dictatorship based on the military, police and fascist agitators.

Trump has deployed the military onto the streets of Washington D.C., Portland and Chicago, while his Gestapo ICE agents roam neighbourhoods snatching immigrants off the streets. Working directly from the Nazi playbook, his fascist cabal has declared war on the left, with opponents of fascism and genocide denounced as “terrorists” in preparation for widespread repression.

Such events are a searing indictment of the reformist Your Party vehicle Corbyn and Sultana are cobbling together.

Unsurprisingly, their show of unity was dramatically eclipsed later that evening in a TWT session headlined, “Who’s Got the Power? – ‘Your Party’ Democracy”. Billed as a “debate on democratic structures for the new party”, it quickly descended into bitter factional conflict between panel discussants and audience members.

According to a report in the *Spectator* (“Jeremy Corbyn’s new party is self-destructing”), this included Max Shanly (a co-founder of Momentum who was a key player in policing the insurgent movement behind Corbyn after 2015), denouncing Alan Gibbons, an independent councillor in Liverpool who is a close ally of Corbyn.

The *Spectator* reported:

Max’s issue – in fact it seemed to be an issue for most of the 50 or so people who had assembled that evening to discuss the new venture’s organisational structures—was that from the promise of Your Party’s founding had emerged an undemocratic and Stalinist horrorshow of which Corbyn is the ineffective and reluctant icon, puppeteered by advisers who want another doomed crack at power. ‘There are people at the top of this party who want by hook or by crook to remain the hegemonic force in it,’ Max said, referring I think not just to Alan but to Karie Murphy and her allies, who came under repeated attack during the evening, and at the wider conference. Murphy was Corbyn’s chief-of-staff when he was Labour leader, and to British socialism’s various factions today she is a kind of Beelzebub figure.

It was left to the Revolutionary Communist Party’s Fiona Lali, a leading cheerleader for “Jeremy” and “Zarah” to plaintively mourn at how “The momentum into the founding conference has been lost”.

Your Party’s crisis, and that of its pseudo-left backers, points to the underlying bankruptcy of the party’s reformist programme under conditions of extreme class tensions. Its leading participants, above all Corbyn, have a sense of the volcano beneath them and are working to prevent its eruption by seeking to block the development of a conscious working-class movement for socialism.



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Corbyn would like a new left party managed like his garden allotment in