

Your Party's collapse—Time to build the Socialist Equality Party

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The following report was delivered by Socialist Equality Party (UK) National Secretary Chris Marsden in Manchester, Assistant National Secretary Tom Scripps in London and Sheffield, and National Committee member Steve James in Glasgow.

This report will give an explanation of the collapse of Your Party—founded and run by Jeremy Corbyn and his allies. And it will use that explanation to make a case for building the Socialist Equality Party, and the international movement it is part of.

To do so, we must begin by describing the social, economic and geopolitical situation which confronts the working class. Because political parties claiming to be socialist rise or fall on their ability to measure up to that situation: to understand it correctly and put forward a programme which answers that challenge.

There are three decisive features of the world today, from which everything else that affects the working class flows: social inequality, war, and the growth of the far-right.

On social inequality, you hardly need to say more than one name: Elon Musk. The world's first *trillionaire*—that is one thousand billion. But Musk is just the most extreme example of a *global* oligarchy; the richest 0.001 percent of humanity (56,000 people) who control three times as much wealth as the poorest 4 billion people. The richest 10 percent control more wealth than the other 90 percent.

That basic fact *dominates* all others; without which nothing can be understood. It is what underpins *global* inequality, between countries, and the domination of *every* country by a tiny super-rich layer of the population. It is what is starving essential social services and denying workers even a basic standard of living, no matter how hard you work, while a small few enjoy grotesque levels of luxury.

And it is what fuels the runaway disaster of the climate crisis, just a small taste of the consequences of which we have experienced in the last month. Just last week Goldman Sachs (of all people) warned of higher global temperatures sparking a food price shock, lasting into 2028, of something like a 15 percent price increase—which, for millions of people, is the difference between survival and starvation.

The existential danger presented by war can be made by listing several countries: Palestine, Lebanon, Congo, Sudan, and, most importantly, Iran and Ukraine. Hundreds of thousands of Russians and Ukrainians have been killed; a society of 2 million people has been destroyed in the Gaza genocide. Much of Iran's vital infrastructure has been demolished, and thousands of people killed, in a war that constantly threatens to reignite.

We have witnessed terrible atrocities, blood and destruction, rising on a tide of military spending which reached its highest ever global total last year of \$2.9 trillion, surging in Europe in particular.

What should be clear from these figures is that governments are looking beyond the current wars to even more serious conflicts—conscription and nuclear weapons are now regularly discussed.

We argue that what we have seen in the wars of the last four years or so is the opening stage of a third global conflict in which the imperialist

powers, led by the United States, will seek to redivide the world—its territory, markets and resources—between them, setting them on a collision course with Russia and China.

When it comes to the far-right, I could, again, simply say Elon Musk! But the most serious example is the President of the United States Donald Trump, who is working to establish a presidential dictatorship on the foundations of a paramilitary Gestapo, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) forces, neo-Nazi militias and sections of the police and the military.

He does so while declaring “communism” and “socialism” as America's Enemy Number One.

In Europe, his co-thinkers in the French National Rally, the Alternative for Germany and other parties are lining up to play a similarly barbaric role with their anti-migrant, Islamophobic, anti-socialist campaigns and pledges to strengthen the police powers of the state.

These three phenomena—inequality, war and the far right—are closely interconnected. The drive by an ever-smaller section of the population to seize an ever-larger portion of the world's wealth is what ultimately underlies the drive to war. The growing power of the super-rich oligarchy is ultimately fatal to all forms of democracy. State repression and the cultivation of the far-right is the solution turned to by the ruling class to divide and suppress the working class to make war and dictatorship possible.

All of which is rooted in the capitalist organisation of society around the pursuit of profit by private companies, and the division of the world into competing nation states.

British society and politics, like everywhere, has been shaped and disfigured by these three decisive trends of modern capitalism.

A fifth of the population is in poverty, while most of the rest scramble to get to the end of every month. Over a million young people are not in employment, education or training—abandoned without a future. Millions of people of all ages are in miserable, stressful, insecure work. Most look at reaching pension age with a sense of dread about what the hell they're going to do.

Public services are falling well behind the population's needs, meaning hundreds of thousands of people without a home, millions waiting for medical treatment, children not learning in schools, elderly relatives not looked after, local communities falling apart.

Meanwhile, the richest 1 percent have amassed a combined fortune of roughly £3 trillion, and the Labour Party tells us there is no money to solve these problems, no chance of even beginning to fix them because doing so would upset the super-rich investors who finance the UK's national debt.

There *is* money, however, tens of billions more a year, to pay for soldiers and weapons of war, including modernised nuclear weapons. There is also money to spend arresting thousands of political protesters, throwing young anti-genocide campaigners into prison for years as “terrorists” and rounding up and deporting refugees from the disasters

created around the world with the help of the British government.

All of these policies were seamlessly taken over from the Tory Party by the Labour Party of Keir Starmer, and the same is now happening with the handover to Andy Burnham. Every government wages war on the working class on behalf of the super-rich.

This has produced, not only in the last few years but in the last decade and more, widespread social discontent and anger—expressed in strikes and protests and a search for an alternative. It has provoked a questioning of capitalism and a new interest in left-wing ideas and socialism.

Many parties have put themselves forward as the answer. In this country: Corbyn's Labour Party, and the Green Party, under Zack Polanski. Internationally: Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, the Left Party in Germany, and many others, up to Zohran Mamdani and the Democratic Socialists of America, and Jean Luc Melenchon's Unsubmissive France.

These are responses to a left-wing shift in the population. But as the revolutionary strategist Leon Trotsky once summarised the same problem, "they are *expressions* of a shift but also its *brake*".

These new parties or movements would not have been formed if left-wing sentiment had not developed up to a certain point, but their programmes and leaderships act to restrict the development of that sentiment—with consequences that are disastrous for the working class, if left unchallenged.

This is the case with Your Party, but in explaining this it will become clear that the same fundamental points apply to all the organisations and individuals I have referenced and more.

We are not dealing with simple mistakes, or problems with individuals, but with political tendencies and the class interests they represent. Marxism is such a powerful and indispensable tool because it allows the working class to identify the social interests which lie behind political movements and parties, and judge them on that basis.

Your Party, contemporary capitalism and the dead end of Corbynism

Your Party was formally announced, after a rocky start, last July, with a statement referencing the millions living in poverty alongside "giant corporations make a fortune", criticising the government for providing "billions for war" and its "complicity in crimes against humanity"; calling for a "mass redistribution of wealth and power" and for the defence of "the right to protest against genocide".

It added that it is "ordinary people who create the wealth... and it is ordinary people who have the power to put it back where it belongs."

At that point it had roughly 800,000 people signed up to its mailing list, with a view to becoming members.

This was, as we said at the time: "a milestone in the ongoing breakup of the Labour Party. Millions of workers and young people have drawn the conclusion that Labour, under the leadership of Keir Starmer, is an irredeemably right-wing, pro-business party of warmongers and defenders of genocide in Gaza..."

"Millions," we explained, agreed with the ideas set out in the launch statement "and see the need for a new party to put these ideas into action."

But, we continued, "this is not that party. Although Corbyn has been forced to make an organisational break from Labour, his new party does not represent a political break from Labourism." All he would offer, we explained, was "betrayal and defeat".

Moreover, we added:

None of this is changed, or will be changed in the future, by the

immediate and universal support for this initiative given by numerous pseudo-left tendencies which profess to be revolutionary. The role of groups such as the Socialist Workers Party, Revolutionary Communist Party and Socialist Party will be as cheerleaders and apologists for this new reformist party. It is they who will adapt to the politics of Corbyn, and not the other way around.

Now I doubt that anyone today, a year later, would dispute that this is *exactly* what happened. But none of the organizations who enthusiastically signed up to and championed Your Party predicted such an outcome and none now offer any account of their role in this debacle. Today they solemnly explain that this is all the inevitable result of Corbyn and Sultana's "reformist outlook". But why then was the Socialist Equality Party alone in warning of such an outcome and opposing efforts to promote Your Party as the natural leadership of the working class?

We based ourselves on two fundamental points: On our analysis of the world situation, of contemporary capitalism and, over a long period, of Corbyn himself, of his allies, and more importantly of the political tradition which he represents.

I have already described the conditions of social inequality, war and far-right reaction which we confront, which are all the product of capitalism: production for profit, organised within competing corporations and nation states.

But here I want to be more specific about the character of contemporary capitalism and in particular what this means for politics.

The 2008 financial crash—the Great Recession—was a turning point. It was the moment in which processes which had been building up for decades finally produced an explosion which unleashed their consequences on the international working class.

Those processes were:

One) the globalisation of production—the growth of *transnational* corporations whose activities, not just their products, spanned the whole world, allowing them to play different sections of workers against one another;

Two) falling rates of profit—a complicated issue, but which means employers must squeeze ever greater levels of exploitation out of their employees to stay competitive;

And three) massive financialisation—the enormous growth of money printing, speculation, stock market prices, all shifting money and power upwards, out of workers' hands, into share portfolios and investment funds.

Combined, these processes have driven an onslaught on the working class and totally undermined the ability of the old workers' organisations like the trade unions—today dominated by right-wing bureaucracies functioning as partners of the corporations and governments—to resist and to advance the interests of the working class, even in a limited sense.

Society and economy has outgrown the parameters of the nation state. For the capitalist class, this means the intensification of the most brutal forms of international competition, from trade war to military conflict, piling pressure on workers to fuel that competition.

As we have written previously, "The order of the day for world capitalism is trade and military war for the control of essential resources and markets and class war at home to impose the brutal levels of exploitation and destruction of essential services to make this global conflict possible."

For these reasons, it has become impossible to combine capitalism with policies of even very limited social reform. Rather, the major reforms of the past—national healthcare, education, pensions, secure employment and so on—are under sustained attack and face destruction.

Above all, the working class can only resist, let alone overcome, the

capitalist class through *international* struggle. As our movement argued several decades ago, when this situation was first taking shape:

It has long been an elementary proposition of Marxism that the class struggle is national only as to form, but that it is, in essence, an international struggle. However, given the new features of capitalist development, even the form of the class struggle must assume an international character... no struggle against the ruling class in any country can produce enduring advances for the working class, let alone prepare its final emancipation, unless it is based on an international strategy aimed at the worldwide mobilisation of the proletariat against the capitalist system...

If a party is not prepared to mount such an internationalist and revolutionary challenge to capitalism—to fight to bring the fortunes of the oligarchy into public ownership; to put workplaces and local authorities under the democratic control of workers; for an international working-class federation to end the division of the world into competing nationalist states—if it is not prepared to do that, then the alternative is submitting to the increasingly brutal demands of the ruling class.

There was never any question about Corbyn and Corbynism's response to this choice. This is a political project born out of a stated desire to bring about a left-wing rebirth of the Labour Party: one of the two trusted parties of British capitalism, which Corbyn was a member of for a third of its 120 year existence—years in which it abandoned its old reformist programme and became, under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, a nakedly pro capitalist, essentially Thatcherite, party of imperialist warmongers.

That project was such a disaster that the Corbynites, after 5 years, had handed the Labour Party back to Starmer so unchanged that the Blairites were able to rout the last vestiges of left-wing sentiment out of the party, and Corbyn along with them.

In the course of his Labour leadership, Corbyn abandoned his opposition to NATO and nuclear weapons, retreated before the slander campaign alleging “left antisemitism”, letting his supporters be driven out of the party and the ideological basis be created for crackdowns on mass protests against genocide. He protected the Blairites, instructed Labour councils to carry out Tory-ordered austerity cuts, and he presided over—with his rhetoric of compromise and social harmony—some of the lowest levels of strike activity on record.

This was not at all a unique experience. In the years before Corbyn became Labour leader, a party called Syriza came into government in Greece on the back of massive popular support for its pledge of opposition to the austerity measures being demanded of the country to bail out the banks.

It won a landslide and then proceeded to implement austerity even after a referendum vote, another landslide, against it, all while building up the military and implementing anti-migrant measures.

A very similar role was played by a party in Spain called Podemos—in that case in coalition with the Socialist Party—and by the Left Party in Germany in local governments.

Their actions were not accidental; they were the inevitable result of a particular kind of politics: one which is fundamentally pro-capitalist, anti-revolutionary and therefore anti-socialist, and which is rooted in the right-wing trade union bureaucracies, in sections of the middle class (especially in academia), and in the most conservative layers of the working class—which have their dissatisfactions with the status quo but want to see it preserved in all essentials.

Yanis Varoufakis, Syriza's finance minister, put it into words when he said his task was to “save European capitalism from itself”. An idea that was repeated almost word for word by Corbyn's shadow chancellor John

McDonnell, who said he and Corbyn were “the stabilisers of capitalism”.

The only difference Corbyn had with Syriza and similar was that they were too radical. Syriza was a left split away from the Greek equivalent of the Labour Party, PASOK, which had collapsed under the weight of popular hatred for its right-wing record. Corbyn said he ran for Labour leader to stop that happening, to preserve the Labour Party from Pasokification.

Even after he was kicked out of it, he showed every sign of retiring to a quiet life in Islington, as a backbench MP. He mobilised no struggle against Starmer whatsoever. Even in the 2024 election he did not want to run against the Labour Party; when he was forced to, he did so on an entirely local basis.

So there was no reason for us or anyone else to expect anything different from Your Party. And our assessment was confirmed at every stage.

Firstly, by Corbyn's enormous reluctance even to sign off on launching the organisation as a challenge to Labour: he only agreed when it became impossible not to.

Then by his attacks, all the way up to a legal challenge, against Zarah Sultana for trying to push the project a bit more to the left to secure popular support. Then by the expulsions of anyone associated with an organised “socialist” group, its anti-democratic founding conference and the policy statement which did not mention the word “capitalism”.

Finally, by running in a leadership election on a platform pledged to rip up internal democracy and have everything run by Corbyn's allies at the centre.

Which is what they have now done, totally neutering the party and in effect destroying it. The last time Corbyn spoke publicly as leader of Your Party was on the day he was nominated. Today he speaks of himself as an Independent MP, offering friendly advice to Andy Burnham while his acolytes immerse themselves in vaguely left-talking local campaigns—which is more or less what Corbyn always wanted. He was, is and always will be a left apologist of the Labour Party.

We've all spent the last ten years living through these events. And there's a danger that comes with that of becoming numb to the consequences. So, I want to heavily underscore the point: this is a full *decade* of potential political preparation and struggle which has been lost to the working class, as a result of Corbyn's leadership. All while the threats confronting us have grown.

NATO and Russia are locked in a proxy war which comes ever closer to a direct conflict between nuclear-armed powers.

A new US imperialist war has been launched in the Middle East, against Iran, which no supposed ceasefire has stopped. Trump is threatening the annihilation of a society of over 90 million people, and endangering the food and fuel supplies of hundreds of millions more around the world.

10 years in the climate crisis is a desperately long time: every year of failure to tackle emissions is decades more heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, storms and floods.

And we have been brought to the precipice of another global economic crash, which would dwarf 2008. The total value of the world's stock markets is 135 percent of world GDP. Public and private debt is *three times* global GDP. This cannot continue indefinitely and when it comes crashing down, the lives of every worker on earth will change, for the worse, overnight.

All this confirms what we said in our campaigning material for these meetings—that we do not have all the time in the world to build a movement against these dangers. To spend year after year sitting on and sabotaging left-wing sentiment is a terrible political crime.

Growing numbers of socialist-minded workers and young people have come to understand that. But they must also understand *how* it was that Corbyn and his allies—who are hardly political titans—were given the opportunity to play this role, when the sentiment in the working class is so much more militant.

In understanding that, you prepare yourself for the fight to stop the same thing happening again and to open a new way forward. That's what I want to address now: how we build a genuine socialist alternative.

The fight for socialist consciousness

Clearly, when Corbyn came forward as the head of the mass movement which made him leader of the Labour Party, no organisation claiming to be revolutionary and socialist was in a position to prevent that happening and immediately gain the leadership of the working class itself. The decision was: how to respond to Corbyn, how to create the basis for a genuinely socialist turn by the working class?

That question has been posed before Marxists for well over a century. How do you conduct yourself when the working class, in the large majority, is looking for solutions to individuals and parties who propose to reform capitalism, is for the moment trusting them to lead them forward, and is not yet convinced of a revolutionary socialist perspective?

The correct answer has been established time and again, through all the major experiences of the 20th and now the 21st century. Of course, you solidarise yourself with the leftward-moving sentiments and with the struggles of workers. But you never for an instant accept their current leaders: you never hide or minimise a single one of their weaknesses, you never cover for or excuse their betrayals and you never let the working class forget either.

You use these experiences to educate the working class to see further ahead, to look more discerningly. Because how else can it learn to go beyond the likes of Corbyn, not to trust them, but to instead put forward their own leaders who are uncompromising in putting workers' interests before the demands of the super-rich and the military?

No one argued this more clearly than Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky.

Let me first explain the reason we pay so much attention to Lenin and Trotsky, the reason we quote them in a meeting in 2026, the reason our members spend hours reading their books and speeches and studying their actions. It's because they led the world's first socialist revolution, in Russia in 1917, established the world's first and only genuine workers' state, and laid the foundations of a world revolutionary movement.

They wrestled with and went a long way to solving the same essential issues which confront us today. To carry out socialist politics without basing yourself, through the collective knowledge of a party, on the writings of Lenin and Trotsky is like trying to do physics while ignoring Einstein.

This is how they described the problem of what was called "opportunism"—that is, opportunistically *adapting* to the existing lefts and labour leaders. Lenin raised the example of people who justified supporting these individuals by pointing at the support they received:

We do not want, they say, to break away from the masses and mass organisations! But just think how Engels put the question. In the nineteenth century the 'mass organisations' of the English trade unions were on the side of the bourgeois labour party. Marx and Engels did not reconcile themselves to it on this ground; they exposed it.

And Lenin goes on:

[I]t is not so much a question of the size of an organisation, as of

the real, objective significance of its policy: does its policy represent the masses, does it serve them, i.e., does it aim at their liberation from capitalism, or does it represent the interests of the minority, the minority's reconciliation with capitalism? ...

The only Marxist line in the world labour movement is to explain to the masses the inevitability and necessity of breaking with opportunism, to educate them for revolution by waging a relentless struggle against opportunism.

Trotsky made the same points in the context of the 1926 British general strike whose 100-year anniversary we marked in a series of meetings earlier this year.

He said the way to build a socialist movement in Britain was "not only through an irreconcilable struggle against capital's special agency in the shape of" the right-wing Labour Party leadership, "but also through the systematic unmasking of the left muddleheads by means of whom alone" they "can maintain their positions."

Those so-called leftists, Trotsky explained, were "systematically poisoning the labour movement, clouding the consciousness of the proletariat and paralysing its will." He added that "it must be clearly understood that all the traditions, organizational habits and the ideas of all the already existing groupings in the labour movement in different forms and with different slogans predispose them either towards direct treachery or towards compromise."

Socialists had to fight to smash apart those groupings. And Trotsky was fierce in his criticisms of those people who claimed to be socialists but did the opposite, whose "historical mission", as he wrote, consisted in supposedly "correcting" the Labor lefts, "in creating a safety valve for the discontent of the masses, in blurring the edges and in dissolving cogent thought into a formless 'leftism'."

These lines were written when the Labour and trade union lefts were far more militant and had vastly more political authority, real connections with millions of workers, and associations with political struggles than the pale imitations that exist now. Every word written then applies with a hundred times more force and sharpness today, when the issue is far less that the working class is really committed to the Labour left, or the Greens, and more that it is simply disaffected from politics as a whole as a result of successive betrayals.

That was the tone and approach taken by the Socialist Equality Party. Again, quoting our first statement on Your Party, we concluded:

The Socialist Equality Party will do everything possible to alert workers to the situation and arm them with the necessary programme and leadership. We will not be advocates of and apologists for 'Your Party'. It is not ours. We will engage energetically with the many workers and young people who currently look to Corbyn for leadership and seek to educate them in the fundamental historical experiences of the past decade and beyond, which point to the necessity for a revolutionary, internationalist and socialist perspective and party.

Our aim is to ensure that the working class does not spend its energies in a demoralising campaign for a party which will lead them to betrayal and defeat, to ensure that illusions in Corbynite reformism are dispelled as quickly as possible in preparation for the revolutionary class battles ahead.

The polar opposite approach was taken by every other major party and individual currently considered part of the left. I want to stress this, because it's fundamental to understanding the situation we're in and to

counter efforts to blame the working class for that situation.

From the Revolutionary Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party, who put on a radical face, to *Tribune* magazine, which swims in the stagnant puddle of the Labour Party left—and the very many other organizations and individuals in between—there is a political bloc whose function is to prevent workers getting past Corbyn or whoever the next similar figure ends up being, whether it's Zack Polanski or even the self-promoting charlatan Andy Burnham!

When Corbyn became Labour leader, these organisations proclaimed this to be the beginning of the party's socialist transformation by a left-wing movement led by Corbyn. In fact, as we said it would be, it proved to be a right-wing suffocation of that left-wing movement by the Labour Party, with Corbyn as the point man.

But the SWP, the RCP, the Socialist Party and others excused or waved aside every betrayal. Corbyn was still the guy. You could make a few muted complaints but no serious criticisms, certainly no effort to organise workers and young people *against* his capitulation. For the four years after Corbyn bowed out of the Labour leadership, it was the same story: if anyone was going to build a left-wing challenge against Labour, it had to be Corbyn.

When Your Party came along, the same project went into overdrive. The Socialist Workers Party was championing the organisation even as they were being witch-hunted out of it. The Revolutionary Communist Party issued its usual ludicrous letters of advice to “Jeremy” and “Zarah” about how they could adopt revolutionary policies.

Only after the total shipwreck of Corbynum, which has squandered for a decade the willingness to fight of hundreds of thousands if not millions of people, do they turn their attentions elsewhere, to Polanski's Green Party and to a ‘Stop Reform’ campaign that invites alliances with everyone from the Labour Party's dwindling left wing to Burnham himself—*exactly* the same politics with new names and faces.

For Polanski—a far less substantial figure than Corbyn and with an even worse political record—to now be promoted as the face of left-wing hopes, and for the committed Blairite Burnham to be the person we're supposed to be pressuring, demonstrates the utter bankruptcy of this politics.

Trotsky saw and wrote scathingly about exactly the same thing being done by organisations during the 1905 Russian Revolution, which was a historical dress rehearsal for 1917—and it was only by recognising and defeating these organisations that the Bolsheviks were able to succeed. Trotsky explained:

Tired of its own inadequacy and unreliability, it goes in search of “allies.” It hurls itself avidly upon the dung-heap of liberalism [or Corbynum]. It implores it, it appeals to it, it invents special formulae for how it could act... It rushes from place to place, grabbing possible allies by their coattails. It harangues its own adherents, admonishing them to be considerate towards all potential allies. “Tact, more tact, still more tact!”

It's as fresh as if it were written yesterday.

What socialist-minded workers and young people will have to come to understand, if they are to move forward in building a revolutionary movement against capitalism, is the necessity of defeating the forces that advocate this sort of politics. They sit right at the crossroads, that point where workers and young people start abandoning reformist solutions to capitalism and looking for a revolutionary answer, and they send them in circles.

They sow illusions in the Corbyns and the Polanskis as they're growing, they subordinate more radical, left-wing workers to their extremely limited programmes, they make excuses for their betrayals, and when it all

falls apart they draw a veil over the experience and work to prevent anyone learning anything.

Then they gear up to do it all over again. *Tribune* is hosting an event at the end of July with Oliver Eagleton, Barnaby Raine, Grace Blakely and Matt Kenard, all of whom were with Corbyn every step of the way—Eagleton literally wrote, or at least edited, the book on Your Party. They're on the new editorial board of the magazine and they will be discussing “Where next for the left?”

Well, excuse me: but what right do they have to answer that question? If you hire an engineer to build a plane and it falls out of the sky, killing everyone on board, you don't go back to the same person to build the next one.

When we wrote in our leaflet for this meeting, “The Socialist Equality Party's message to workers and students is that it is time to break out of this cycle of betrayals,” and then, again, “The SEP is the revolutionary opposition to this politics of repeated defeat”, never has a sentence been written with more feeling!

We're Marxists: that means we're not given to frustration and our politics is not driven by emotion. But it also means we're partisans of the working class, and we're not unmoved by the experience of watching this happen again and again. Every atom of our being is straining to see this situation changed.

And if I could use this to make a separate point, briefly: there is a really pernicious attitude that is encouraged in sections of “the left” which can be summed up as: everything that happens was meant to happen, or was always going to happen.

You get that in a pessimistic form: 101 reasons why nothing can be done, usually blaming workers themselves. Exactly that took place at the Socialist Workers Party's recent grossly misnamed “Marxism” event, at which pessimism had its own dedicated session! Corbyn was invited and sat next to people he had expelled from Your Party, and described as a “principled left reformist”, while one of the SWP's leading members blamed the collapse of Your Party on the conservatism of the working class!

Perhaps even more dangerously, and this what the RCP specialise in, you get it in the form of a false, complacent optimism in which each defeat and betrayal that is suffered by the working class is just another necessary experience, another step on the road that is nonetheless leading towards socialist revolution.

It's not true. It is a caricature of Marxism. The working class will undoubtedly go through many experiences and it will suffer more defeats. But there must be no complacency about that. Because defeats extract a bitter price, and an increasingly bitter price.

Look at Germany, where decades of trade union partnership with management have now allowed the major manufacturers to slash hundreds of thousands of jobs this year alone. Or at Venezuela, where the betrayal of mass popular movements by the so-called Bolivarian socialists has handed the country over as a direct US colony.

You pay a heavy price for defeat, and if it cannot be prevented then you must learn from it to prevent it happening again. That's what a genuine socialist movement fights for: to extract from every experience all that can be learned by the working class, to raise its level for the next confrontation.

It ruthlessly exposes all the illusions, all the misleaders, and recruits people who are prepared to fight them fiercely when they come up again. Because if you can't oppose Corbyn when he tries to strike a balance between the working class and the oligarchy, good luck fighting the oligarchy itself.

Take the two examples I just raised: you are dealing with the German and the Latin American bourgeoisie—a ruling class with a history of utterly brutal repression, of some of, and indeed *the* worst, crimes of the 20th century. That's what we're up against.

Again, it was Trotsky who best skewered this “the historical process will work itself out” attitude; what he called this “passive, conciliatory, wait-and-see attitude towards the treacherous leaders on the pretext that they reflect the present stage of development of the working class, that ‘they are the best there is’.”

He described this as “merely an effort to shirk revolutionary tasks by shifting them on to the shoulders of the so-called historical process.” An approach which “stems entirely from a failure to understand the role and the significance of the party in the movement of the working class”.

Build the Socialist Equality Party!

I’ve spoken about that role already, in terms of building a revolutionary opposition to Corbyn and others like him, but I want to use the concluding part of this report to expand that explanation, to put it in as concrete and practical terms as I can.

Because as another great figure in the history of the socialist movement, the American Trotskyist James P. Cannon, once said: the hardest and most important question in all of politics is “What to do next?”

We wrote in an open letter to supporters of Your Party that “Yes, a mass socialist party of the working class is needed urgently.” And we set out our criteria for what the party must be:

Such a party must be international, linking British workers with their class brother and sisters worldwide; it must be based on the political independence of the working class from the capitalist class and its servants in the labour and trade union bureaucracy; and it must encourage the growth of rank-and-file organisations in every workplace and neighbourhood to mobilise the working class to expropriate the wealth of the oligarchy, break the resistance of the state, and place economic and political power in the hands of the working class, the overwhelming majority of the population.

That’s the path ahead: the only path that leads out of this crisis-ridden world of inequality, war, and far-right reaction, the only outcome which the necessary hundreds of millions of workers can be convinced to fight their way towards. And we can take steps along that path in countless different ways:

? By being active in your workplace—not in the way the trade union bureaucracy would like, essentially representing the employers, but by building support for more determined strike action, building the networks and resources to make that possible, putting new demands and slogans on the agenda and fighting for democratic accountability.

? By being active in your neighbourhood, fighting for decent housing, against service closures, police harassment, immigration raids and anti-migrant violence and intimidation.

? By helping build up and popularise, against the capitalist media, the media of the working class—that is, the *World Socialist Web Site*—sending in reports, letters, photos, videos and inviting reporters to cover issues that are ignored.

? And by taking every opportunity, on protests, in campaigns and meetings, to advocate for Marxist ideas and socialist policies.

Moreover, and decisively, in all of these actions, we must be fighting to strengthen the revolutionary party, which is what informs, coordinates and develops these struggles up to the point of the seizure of power and the fortunes of the oligarchy, and the establishment of a socialist society based on democratic planning to meet human needs.

The programme and strategy of the party and the struggles of the working class in which its members participate are intertwined; neither can advance without the other.

We have to study the experiences of the working class and the lessons of history so we can provide correct leadership.

Equally, we must prove our right to leadership not on paper but in practice. We have to show it is possible to win people to our point of view and to organise and mobilise those people to change the balance of forces.

For these reasons we have launched, this year, a Socialist Equality Party Supporters campaign. We want people to join our party and take on the responsibilities that involves.

And they are serious responsibilities; as we say in our launch statement for the initiative: “The liberation of society from capitalism is the most difficult challenge ever posed before humanity, fought for against the dangers of war, fascism and all forms of barbarism; it will not be accomplished by the fond hopes and goodwill of political amateurs.”

But we also appreciate that there are many people who agree with us strongly but don’t yet feel ready to take that step, and we don’t want that to be a barrier to work we *can* do together—there is plenty to do.

Becoming an SEP Supporter means being invited to local party campaigns and education classes, helping to advertise meetings, being put in touch with a dedicated SEP member contact for discussion, and many, many other areas of collaboration.

We see it, after decades in which the working class has been deprived of meaningful political activity, as our responsibility to create an environment in which this sort of work is possible. Above all, we hope it creates the conditions in which we can convince those not yet convinced to join the party as a member.

So, if this is your first contact with the party, or something has held you back until now, you should join it. If you want to know more before doing so, become a Supporter.

We want to build this party as the political heart of the working class, infusing its every struggle with the historical knowledge, the strategic experiences and hard-won principles which are collected in the international Trotskyist movement.

If this can be done, then a global socialist revolution can be carried out to avert the wars, recessions, social and environmental catastrophes threatening billions of lives.

That’s why the title of this meeting is “Time to build the Socialist Equality Party”.

• **To sign up as an SEP Supporter and join the fight for socialism visit our Supporters page.**



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact