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Corbyn Victorious in Labour Leadership Election

By Laurence Humphries, RCIT Britain, 12 September 2015

Jeremy Corbyn has won the Labour leadership election by a big majority. The figures are: Corbyn: 59.5%, Burnham: 19%, Cooper: 17%, Kendall: 4.5%.

His victory represents a clear message from the vanguard of the working class and the youth that there has to be a change to the pro-austerity and pro-capitalist direction that the Labour leadership under Miliband and Harman have been leading the party.

The RCIT in Britain gave critical support to Corbyn. We sharply criticised his reformist outlook and his refusal to break with the Blairite wing in the Labour Party. However, we also pointed out that Corbyn, who was by far the most left-wing candidate in the contest, reflected in many ways *“the hopes of the progressive sector of the working class and wants to fundamentally steer the Labour party in a leftward direction.”* (1)

Corbyn was able to attract such support because he raised a number of progressive demands like:

- * *Against imperialist wars in Iraq, Syria and the Yemen.*
- * *Partial Nationalisation of Rail and other enterprises*
- * *Clear opposition to the Tories welfare reform proposals*
- * *The restoration of Clause 4 in the Labour party.*

Corbyn clearly wants to work with the Blairite section of the party now that he has been elected leader and chooses to ignore their pro-capitalist views. He is very close to the trade union bureaucracy and has a neo-Keynesian outlook. In Bulletin no 4 August 2015 we already drew attention to his economic approach which he stated in his *The Economy in 2020* platform. *“Labour must create a balanced economy that ensures workers and government share fairly in the wealth creation process.”* (2)

The centrists have either supported him uncritically or ignored his campaign. *Socialist Appeal*, the section of the *International Marxist Tendency*, has given totally uncritical support to Corbyn. *“A political earthquake is shaking the Labour Party to its foundations. An unprecedented 610,000 are voting to elect a new leader. The ramifications are being felt everywhere. The mood of anger and bitterness that has built up in society was desperately searching for an outlet. In Scotland, it found the outlet in the Referendum and the rise of the SNP. Now Corbyn’s campaign for Labour leader has acted like a lightning rod for this discontent. It appears to be unstoppable, with Jeremy Corbyn on course to win the Labour leadership contest.”* [2]

The *Socialist Party* (CWI) has supported Corbyn but see their own organisation TUSC together with Corbyn supporters as the embryo of a new workers party. *“If Jeremy Corbyn now goes on to win on 12 September – and mobilises the necessary mass*

campaign required to defeat the still dominant organised capitalist forces within the Labour Party – it will be a giant step towards creating a new workers’ party out of the dying embers of New Labour. The same opportunity to build a new party exists, of course, if he loses, but outside the constraints of the sterilised Labour Party structures”. (4).

The RCIT Britain advocates a united front policy where revolutionaries must work to establish committees of action amongst the supporters of Corbyn. We concretely propose that at the forthcoming *Labour Representative Committee* conference to be held in November that a national conference be organised to establish committees of action amongst the supporters of Jeremy Corbyn with the following demands.

* *Stop the Tory’s racist immigration policies! Open borders for refugees! For equality of black, Asian and migrant peoples! For all migrants’ full citizenship rights, for the right to use their native tongue, and the right to all their cultural rights including the right of dress!*

* *For the nationalization of rail and electricity under workers control! Nationalise all banks and corporations under workers’ control without paying compensation! Reinstate all public utilities that have privatised by both Labour and Tory led Governments!*

* *Cancel all household debts! Occupy empty housing and oppose evictions if carried out by local authorities!*

* *Repeal the Anti-Trade Union Laws! Legalise the right to strike and withdraw your labour!*

* *Oppose all imperialist wars! British army and air force – out of Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Northern Ireland! Support the resistance!*

* *For a general strike to bring down this hated Tory government!*

* *For a workers’ government based upon councils of action and for an armed workers militia!*

* *For a workers republic in Britain! For a United States of Europe!*

In order to enhance the struggle for such a perspective it is crucial to build a revolutionary party in Britain as part of revolutionary workers international. The RCIT Britain is dedicated to this task. If you agree with our perspective, join us!

Footnotes

(1) Laurence Humphries: British Labour Party Leadership Contest: Critical Support for Jeremy Corbyn! RCIT Britain, 17. August 2015, <http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/uk-corbyn-campaign/>

(2) Jeremy Corbyn : *The Economy in 2020*, p. 2

(3) Rob Sewell: Seize the moment! Vote for Corbyn! Fight for Socialism! *Socialist Appeal*, 19 August 2015, <http://www.socialist.net/seize-the-moment-vote-for-corbyn-fight-for-socialism.htm>

(4) Socialist Party: The Corbyn insurgency, Editorial of *Socialism Today*, No.191, September 2015, <http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/21244/25-08-2015/the-corbyn-insurgency>

The Trade Union Congress in Brighton from September 13th- 16th September 2015

By Laurence Humphries, RCIT Britain, 27 September 2015

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) met in Brighton on 13 to 16 September to face its greatest challenge. The Cameron government wants to introduce their *Trade Union Reform Bill* which is intended to shackle the Unions and seriously curb their rights and privileges.

The trade union bureaucracy recognises this fact. In the TUC campaign plan of 2015 presented to the congress it states: *"The government's proposals set out to undermine the right to strike by letting employers use agency workers as cover for striking workers"*. (1)

Further on they state that the government plans to *"introduce unreasonable hurdles such as fines if workers set up a Facebook account without giving two weeks' notice in advance of a strike, or letting an employer claim damages against a union if a picket supervisor forgets to wear their armband"*. The government also intends to *"introduce undemocratic strike ballot thresholds"*.

The trade union bureaucracy is in a crisis. It continually fosters illusions that British capitalism is in recovery and through a bit of tinkering the bureaucrats are hoping that a few reforms might come their way. In their *Campaign Plan* document the TUC bureaucracy continues to amplify these illusions: *"Britain is back in recovery"* and *"We will make the case for a strong balanced recovery that is fairly shared and where improved growth and tax revenues allow the public finances to improve while services are protected"*.

In fact the Marxists prognosis of the rate of profit to fall has been confirmed and the UK, as well as the world economy, is heading towards a new recession which will be even worse than that of 2008/09.

The *Trade Union Reform Bill* will have its second reading in the House of Commons on November 2nd. The TUC General council's response is:

- 1) *"To Demonstrate at the Tory party Conference on the 4th October in Manchester"*
- 2) *"Mass lobby of parliament on November 2nd when the Bill is being discussed in the House of Commons"*
- 3) *"Lobby your MP to oppose the Trade Union Reform Bill"*

While such actions should be supported by socialists, it is

necessary to point out that they will certainly not be sufficient to stop the government. This is why the RCIT Britain argues that the trade unions must organize an indefinite general strike until the Cameron government withdraws its bill.

Trade Union Bureaucracy

The total membership in trade unions in Britain has dropped to a total of 5,766,187 million people in Britain. This fall in membership reflects the cowardice and betrayal of TUC leaders since the miners' strike of 1984-5.

Leon Trotsky observed in 1938 that *"the historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership."* (2) That still remains the case in the 21st century. The trade union bureaucracy is incapable of understanding the crisis of British capitalism. The Tory government wants to atomise and destroy the working class in Britain by ensuring that workers and youth are reduced to slavery. They intend to transfer wealth to the rich in Britain. To achieve this they must eliminate state support through their welfare reform proposals and their *Trade Union Reform Bill*.

Unfortunately, the potential of the working class to fight back is seriously hindered by the chronic deficits of the labour movement. For example, the majority of migrants and the most oppressed in Britain are not organised into trade unions. There is a two tier workforce in Britain. The structure of trade unions with its undemocratic and bureaucratic structure favours the bureaucracy and the labour aristocratic workers who benefitted out of British capitalism during the boom years.

Centrists

The two main centrist groups in Britain – the *Socialist Party of England and Wales* (SPEW) and the *Socialist Workers Party* (SWP) – have developed a very close relationship with the trade union bureaucracy in Britain. The *National Shop Steward's Movement* (NSSN), the industrial arm of the

RCIT Britain

Web: <https://rcitbritain.wordpress.com>

Email: info.rcitbritain@aol.com

Tel.: 07863671658

Revolutionary Communist International Tendency

Web: www.thecommunists.net

Email: rcit@thecommunists.net

Tel.: +43-0650-4068314

Published by the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT). The RCIT has sections in Pakistan (Revolutionary Workers Organisation, RWO), Sri Lanka (United Lankan Workers Party, ULWP), Brazil (Corrente Comunista Revolucionária, CCR), Israel/Occupied Palestine (Internationalist Socialist League, ISL), USA (Revolutionary Workers Collective, RWC), and Austria (Revolutionary Communist Organisation LIBERATION, RKOB). In addition the RCIT has members in Yemen, Tunisia and Britain.

SPEW, has built an alliance with a number of left trade union leaders including Mark Serwokta of PCS, Matt Wrack from the FBU and Ronnie Draper from the Bakers union. They always speak on their platforms usually calling for a 24 hour General Strike.

The SWP also has an industrial arm called *Unite The Resistance* which, like the NSSN, has a close relationship to the left trade union leaders and they similarly always invite trade union leaders onto their platforms. The SWP usually adopts a more militant attitude but generally they have the same outlook in their relationship to their trade union work.

The most recent development has been the formation of a broad left organisation comprising 'Left Unity' in PCS (SPEW supporters) and 'United Left' (left bureaucrats and Stalinist fellow travellers in Unite around Len McCluskey, the general secretary of Unite).

However the election of Corbyn as Labour leader has shown that with imagination and a popular campaign youth and workers will respond in a fight against austerity.

Perspectives

As a first step, the RCIT in Britain calls for an end to a two tier workforce. It is crucial to organize workers of the lower strata – the precarious, poor, migrant and ethnical minority workers – in the unions and to give them a decisive influence in the unions. Likewise socialists must struggle to kick the bureaucracy out of the unions. An important step in this direction is the construction of a serious rank and file movement in the trade unions. Revolutionaries should try to establish communist fractions in every workplace and factory. The task for revolutionaries is the building of a pre-party organisation to overthrow imperialism and capitalism. We urge all workers and youth, migrants and the oppressed to study the platform of the RCIT and help us to build a revolutionary party.

The RCIT in Britain advocates the following demands.

** Stop the Tory's racist immigration policies! Open borders for refugees! For equality of black, Asian and migrant peoples! For all migrants' full citizenship rights, for the right to use their native tongue, and the right to all their cultural rights including the right of dress!*

** For the nationalization of major industries and corporations under workers control! Nationalise all banks and corporations under workers' control without paying compensation! Reinstate*



all public utilities that have been privatised by both Labour and Tory led Governments!

** Cancel all household debts! Occupy empty housing and oppose evictions if carried out by local authorities and Housing associations!*

** Repeal the Anti-Trade Union Laws! Legalise the right to strike and withdraw your labour!*

** Oppose all imperialist wars! British army and air force – out of Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Northern Ireland! Support the resistance!*

** For a general strike to bring down this hated Tory government! For the defeat of the Trade Union Reform Bill and the Welfare Reform proposals!*

** For a workers' government based upon councils of action and for an armed workers militia!*

** For a workers republic in Britain! For a United States of Europe!*

References

(1) TUC Campaign Plan 2015 New Challenges Changing Priorities TUC Publications. All quotes from the TUC Congress are from this publication

(2) Leon Trotsky: The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International. The Transitional Program (1938); in: Documents of the Fourth International, New York 1973, p. 181

The British Left and the EU-Referendum

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Greek Elections: Victory for the Reformist SYRIZA

Statement of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), 22.9.2015 (slightly shortened)

1. The Greek elections on 20 September resulted in a victory for SYRIZA, a bourgeois workers party, and a defeat for the main bourgeois party New Democracy (ND). The new left party LAE (Popular Unity), which recently split from SYRIZA, got only 2.86% of the votes, below the required threshold, and therefore just missed entering the parliament. Tsipras already announced the continuation of his popular front government together with the right-wing populist ANEL party.

2. These results are remarkable for several reasons. Participation in the election was down to 56.6%, 7% less than that in the January election. Nearly all parties lost votes. Nevertheless the reformist Tsipras leadership succeeded in convincing the majority of the working class that it is the lesser of two evils when compared to the main party of the Greek bourgeoisie, New Democracy. Hence, while SYRIZA lost more than 300,000 votes, it still remained the preferred option for Greek workers despite its treacherous support for the barbaric Third Memorandum dictated by the EU. It succeeded in doing so because Tsipras managed to present the election as a struggle between SYRIZA and ND and, faced with this alternative, Greek workers preferred "their" party compared to that of the bourgeoisie. This only emphasizes how much more struggle, experience and intervention of revolutionaries will be necessary to break the working class from the reformist SYRIZA leadership.

3. The fascist *Golden Dawn* (XA) was able to slightly increase its vote to 7%. While this represents no breakthrough, it means that the Nazis have managed to consolidate themselves in third place from where they are well-positioned for future successes. There is no doubt that, given the inevitable future betrayals of the SYRIZA-led government, the fascists will profit from wholesale worker disillusionment if a new, militant workers' party fighting against the EU's and the government's austerity attacks does not emerge in time.

4. The *Communist Party* (KKE), another left-reformist, bourgeois workers' party, retained their meager 5.5% result from the January elections. This means that they were entirely unable to gain from SYRIZA's betrayal. This is hardly surprising given the KKE's sectarian denouncement of SYRIZA, relinquishing a united front tactic which manifested itself when these Stalinists actually abstained in the fateful and historic 5 July referendum. All in all, after nearly seven years of crisis, numerous general strikes and political instability of the bourgeois rule, the Stalinist KKE is weaker than before. Nevertheless, it would be an error to ignore KKE's control of important sectors of the workers' vanguard. Likewise, it is clear that despite the apparent monolithic unity of the party, many supporters are dissatisfied with the party's line.

5. *Popular Unity* (LAE), the recent left split from SYRIZA, got more than 150,000 votes which meant that, with 2.9% of the vote, they failed to cross the 3% threshold required to enter the parliament. Their voting numbers reflect that this new force managed to rally a significant sector of the workers' vanguard. At the same time it failed to win over larger sectors of the working class which still adheres to SYRIZA. It is likely that LAE – a coalition of left-reformist and centrist forces – will now undergo an internal crisis. Those former SYRIZA functionaries who joined LAE in order to keep their parliamentary posts, will probably soon leave the new party. It also means that LAE is now under more pressure to prove itself as an activist party mobilizing on the streets and in the work-

places and trade unions. Under these conditions, and given the fact that the new force is still politically unconsolidated, it is urgent that revolutionaries intervene in the debates in LAE and try to win supporters for a revolutionary program and perspective.

6. ANTARSYA-EEK slightly increased their combined votes, but still gained only 0.8% of the ballots cast. ANTARSYA, an alliance of various centrist groups, has also failed to grow during recent years of the deep capitalist crisis and mass class struggles. We repeat our criticism that they have failed to apply the united front tactic by putting forth demands to SYRIZA and finding ways to engage the workers who trust the latter party in joint activities. Likewise, if ANTARSYA would have found a way to run together with LAE on a joint list both would have entered the parliament and used it as a tribune to denounce the popular front government.

7. All in all the workers' parties increased their share of the votes compared with the 25 January elections. The combined vote of (reformist and centrist) workers' parties was 44.7% compared with 42.5% 8 months ago. These numbers exhibit a dramatic change in support of the left when compared to the situation in the period between the 1970s and the beginning of the 2000s when workers parties (mainly the KKE) got no more than 10% of the votes.

8. Revolutionaries should now raise the slogan for a SYRIZA-KKE government which rejects the Memorandum. Of course we are well aware that the respective leaderships of SYRIZA and the KKE would not implement such demands. But such agitation would help revolutionaries get a hearing among the supporters of these parties. They should combine such a slogan with propaganda for a workers' government, i.e., one based on workers' and popular councils and militias whose goal is to expropriate the capitalist class and to open the road to working class power.

9. It would be wrong to believe that there is a politically stable future for the renewed SYRIZA-ANEL government. Quite the contrary, as the effects of the Third Memorandum are soon to be felt by the people in the coming months and only more attacks lie ahead. Rather it is far more likely that there will be new class struggles and internal tensions in SYRIZA.

10. To manage these challenges revolutionaries are now faced with two crucial tasks. It is decisive that they intervene in the ongoing debates among the workers' vanguard. They should advocate the formation of a workers' party – which most likely would be composed from forces in LAE, ANTARSYA, EEK, OKDE as well as potentially left splits from the KKE and SYRIZA. They should argue for a revolutionary program and a plan of battle for the looming class struggles. Likewise, revolutionaries should argue for the application of the united front tactic calling for joint struggles of all workers' parties (among which SYRIZA is of course the largest force). Such a tactic is necessary not because it can be easily realized (the hardened bureaucracy of SYRIZA and KKE may never agree to it), but because it is the best way to engage in joint activities with those workers who still adhere to these parties and who still form the bulk of the workers' movement. Under such conditions, revolutionaries will find it easier to get these workers to listen to their criticism of these leaderships. The RCIT looks forward to collaborating with all revolutionaries who agree with such a perspective!