

## **“For Peace and Socialism”**

**JEREMY CORBYN** has been very wise in the aftermath of the Manchester attack to accept the advice of his aides; fighting Teresa May in compliance with the old Stalinist slogan “For Peace and Socialism” is, I suspect, a winner all round. He can make use of the almost bottomless pit of hatred for Tony Blair and the invasion of Iraq in order to popularise the Stop The War Coalition’s contention, that we in the West have laid ourselves open to Islamist terrorism because of our military interventions in the Middle East.

It is certainly an argument that has some basis in fact. The Muslim Brotherhood, the great grandfather of modern Islamism was founded in Egypt in 1928 in response to British rule, which the Brotherhood argued had resulted in the degradation of Arab lands and of Islamic culture. The solution advocated by Hassan al-Banna, the Brotherhood’s founder, was a process of moral rearmament in which the reassertion of Islamic virtues should guide the struggle for independence. Accordingly it was asserted that precepts derived from the Quran, and Hadith, and the decisions of Sharia courts, should govern society. Secular government should be swept away and be replaced by the fatwas of Islamic scholars.

However, for many decades, the rival narratives of nationalism, ba’athism, and the anti-colonialism promoted by the Soviet Union, and communist parties from Iran to North Africa, held sway, keeping the Brotherhood’s revivalism firmly in check. However, al-Banna’s project did not weaken or disappear. By combining extensive Islamic charity and social work with political activism it was able to set down strong roots in Muslim majority countries throughout the world.

Following the disintegration of both nationalist and communist responses to Western domination through the eighties and nineties this political patience has paid off handsomely – the Brotherhood’s advocacy of government by religious authority has won mass support across a number of different schools of Islamic thought from Morocco to Turkey, and from Pakistan to Indonesia.

The founding anti-colonialism of Islamism has now developed into clash of civilisations in which Islamist clerics and ideologues have promoted the idea that there is a war against the Ummah, against the Community of Believers (Ummat al Mu’minin). Islamists are attempting to corral a billion and a half Muslims who between them, belong to many different races and cultures, to numerous modes of religious expression, who speak hundreds of dialects in dozens of different languages in scores of different countries, into a single Muslim community.

It is this mythical community that Islamists argue is the particular target of a war being waged against them by the United States and its allies. It is in this junction between Islamism and anti-imperialism that the left finds broad agreement with al-Banna and his descendants. Consequently, it is Western intervention that exacerbates Islamist insurgencies; it is Western intervention that is a contributory factor in the recent murder and maiming of people in Manchester.

This is the narrative being pedalled by Jeremy Corbyn and his comrades in the Stop The War Coalition. Tony Blair, the Presidents Bush, Nato, and its member states are culpable, and we should focus our attention on “the causes of terrorism” – colonialism, neo-colonialism, and liberal interventionism – rather than on the those who advocate subservience to God, and the scholars and imams who alone in this world should be allowed to chart the course of nations and governments throughout the world.

Corbyn is happy to describe the Islamism of al-Banna and his descendants as “a perversion” of

Islam, rather than what it actually is – a sustained and major political current in the Muslim world, and to lay the blame for “ungoverned spaces” in Somalia, Libya, Syria, and elsewhere, not at the door of the terrorists committed to destroying lawful government, but on the doorstep of the Whitehouse, Number 10, and the Élysée Palace.

This is because Stop the War and Jeremy Corbyn are clearly attempting to avoid discussion of the motivation of Islamists. It is not the result of a sleight of hand on my part that I refuse a distinction between violent and non-violent Islamists. The reason I am asserting a continuous thread connecting the old bearded, apparently peaceful sages of the movement, with the blood soaked enthusiasts for violent jihad, is that both stem from the same tree which is opposition to bourgeois democracy, civil equality, religious freedom, and government by secular law, rather than any particular action taken by the Western powers. After all Islamist terror pre-dates by some years the American-led overthrow of Mullah Omar’s regime in Afghanistan or the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

I am also not aware that Egypt’s Coptic Christian community has a foreign policy regarding Western intervention, but this does not stop the Islamists from routinely murdering scores of Christian men, women, and children in Egypt, simply because they are Coptic Christians, and not Muslims. The same goes for Christians and blasphemers in Pakistan and gay lads in Indonesia, who despite not having a foreign policy or Western backers of any sort find themselves the victims of Islamist terror, along with Danish cartoonists, Dutch filmmakers, and English novelists.

However, in support of Jeremy Corbyn and the Stop the War Coalition’s narrative about the causes of Islamist terror Owen Jones became greatly exercised on television a couple of days ago insisting that we need to have “a grown up discussion”. What he meant by this was a conversation in which we must acknowledge the contribution that Western foreign policy makes towards Islamist terror. In the course of

his rather intense delivery he explained that the bombing of Islamic State sanctioned by Donald Trump was catastrophic, killing women and children, and consequently, leading increasing numbers of people to join the forces of the Caliphate. As a result, Owen, in support of Jeremy Corbyn, and the Stop the War Coalition, in practice opposes all and any military action being taken against Islamist terror, regardless of anything they might actually do.

Owen's irate mood makes abundantly clear that nothing will stop the Corbynista's 'peace offensive'. When Baroness Chakrabarti, echoes Jeremy Corbyn by saying "We should only go to war when it is absolutely necessary and when we have a plan that has a chance of delivering peace" we can, of course, all cheer. But in the desire to find enemies with whom we can negotiate Jeremy Corbyn is sowing the seeds of surrender to Islamism. This is because in reality there is no basis for negotiations between people who want to throw homosexuals off the roof, to stone adulterous women to death, or behead Jews, atheists and other blasphemers. Whatever the Labour left has to say, there is no basis for negotiations between us, and the Islamist enemies of secular democracy.

We simply cannot agree that respect for national sovereignty gives tyrants, or patriarchal clerics a free hand to brutalise or slaughter their own people. The idea that we should tolerate, 'respect', or 'understand' cultural traditions which insist upon the denial of equal civil rights to people because of their gender, their sexual orientation, or their religious or atheistical convictions is clearly a non-starter.

Of course, this does not mean that military intervention to topple regimes or remove offensive governments is always possible or practical or likely to produce better outcomes than doing nothing at all – but this does not mean that we can negotiate with them about anything except making our commercial and diplomatic ties with them contingent upon them moderating the oppression of their people and taking positive steps to promote religious and other freedoms

by ending clerical rule and government by a particular set of religious injunctions.

Jeremy Corbyn's Churchillian stance that "Jaw, jaw, is better than war, war" is uncontroversial. However, it is little better than a pious sentiment unless it is backed up by a determination to have nothing to do with Hamas, Hezbollah, or a host of other warlike entities associated with the Labour left in recent years in their overwhelming desire to dismantle the state of Israel on behalf of the anti-Jewish forces in the region. When Corbyn counterposes negotiation to bombing in the Middle East, or to Nato troop movements in the Baltic States, he is missing the point that negotiation without the prospect of military leverage is unlikely to achieve anything at all. Wars as he surely must know can be prevented by the timely threat of force, but once the first punches are thrown, wars are won or lost; they are rarely, if ever, stopped.

No doubt this truth will not deter Saint Jeremy from offering to negotiate with all and sundry, regardless of the whether or not there is anybody to negotiate with or anything to negotiate about. By being on the side of the angels – a man of peace, and a friend of the poor – Jeremy Corbyn has greatly increased his chances of entering Down Street on the 9<sup>th</sup> June. No matter how comical it is to see the British left demanding more police on the streets, Corbyn has struck gold.

Maybe.

Because in times like these with armed police and soldiers on the streets the mass of the people can be relied upon to vote for 'the party of order'. The problem is that at this juncture it's difficult to tell who that is – miserable Mrs May's "Strong and Stable" cabal, or cagey Corbyn's comrades.

For every person who sees Tory cuts in policing, Teresa's failure to bring down immigration, and her problems with social care for the elderly, others will be fully aware of Jeremy Corbyn's inability to give straight or unequivocal answers on Trident, on Nato, on military action against Islamic State, or raising government debt. Similarly, although the *Guardian's*

John Crace called Jeremy “slightly disingenuous”, his caginess and guile in depicting his sustained support for armed republicanism in Ireland as ‘striving for peace’, will also not go unnoticed or unremarked.

Consequently, it is worth pondering the steps that the capitalist class and the personnel of a host of state institutions would take in the event of a Labour win. Clearly, as stock prices fell a significant number of the great and the good would initiate a range of measures aimed at destabilising the Labour Government, McDonnell’s calculations would very rapidly prove illusory. Our oligarchy will strain every anti-democratic sinew in order to prevent Labour from implementing its manifesto commitments. Corbyn and McDonnell, committed as they are to promoting the prosperity of British capitalism, together with the welfare of the working class, and the defence of the British state, will find themselves in an interesting predicament, as these contradictory goals collide.

From this perspective Corbyn simply cannot win however well he does in the election. This is because the British state and the British economy are designed to protect and promote capitalist enterprise. Despite the Labour left’s protestations of innocence in this regard – the powers that be regard cagey Jeremy as flaky when it comes to the deployment of armed force, and to defending the interests and the institutions vested in the market economy.

No doubt those waving Momentum’s red flags will regard all this as par-for-the-course in their expectation of revolutionary crisis – but our erstwhile Bolsheviks will prove as flaky as Jeremy when it comes to a fight with the millions from all sections of the population who continue to support centrist Labour and the Tories in their belief that the judicious management of capitalism is their best option. Indeed, the painful paradox, underlying Saint Jeremy’s radicalism – his new style, his new thinking – is an appeal to precisely this mainstream desire – for the judicious (or sensible) management of capitalism.