

# Corbyn's road map to a communist Britain

The Labour leader's inner circle have drawn up plans to turn the UK into a hardline socialist state which ruthlessly suppresses its opponents

BY GILES UDY

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 it seemed that communism, as a force in politics, was finally dead. The ideas that had inspired radicals around the world had lost their shine. As Marxism seemed discredited, market economies prospered. Only an older generation of greying revolutionaries remained to tend the faltering flame of world revolution. While they continued to squabble over minutiae of revolutionary history, the world moved on. By the turn of the millennium British students, once the vanguard of radicalism, were decried for their political apathy.

The 2001 9/11 terrorist attacks ended that. Fear took over from complacency. As the 2003 Iraq war loomed, the fractious British Left, in a rare moment of unity, formed the Stop the War Coalition and brought a million people out on the streets. Few of the unwitting participants knew that the march's organisers' ultimate goal was the overthrow of parliamentary democracy; none could have guessed that 15 years later the movement's first two leaders, the British Communist Party member Andrew Murray and left-wing activist Jeremy Corbyn, would be within reach of forming the first communist government in British history, Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party, Murray appointed as his "Special Adviser".

The crash of 2007 shook Western confidence still further. Left-wing commentators such as *Guardian* journalist Seumas Milne, an old communist comrade of Murray's, openly voiced nostalgia for the "huge social benefits" enjoyed under Soviet communism in the USSR and Eastern Bloc. Milne is now Corbyn's Director of Strategy and Communications.

In 1920 Lenin urged British communists to enter the Labour Party to subvert it from within. In 1936, Trotsky told his followers to do the same, but successive generations of Labour leaders resisted this "entryism", most famously in Neil Kinnock's 1980s campaign against the Trotskyite group Militant. Two young members of a group which tried to thwart Kinnock's campaign were Corbyn and Jon Lansman, later the founder of Momentum. That failure, reinforced by Tony Blair's New Labour reforms, convinced many leftists that the only option left was bring the government down by extra-parliamentary action and this was the context when John McDonnell, now Corbyn's Shadow Chancellor, made his call for "insurrection", a general strike and street protests in 2013.

The following year, after reforms in Labour's membership and leadership election rules, almost a century after Lenin's call, entryism was made possible for just £3. It is no surprise that among those expelled in the 1980s and '90s are some who have now rejoined the Labour Party and others who have committed their own

left-wing groups and parties to campaign for a Corbyn victory. One, Matt Wrack, is now chair of McDonnell's Labour Representation Committee group.

While, to an onlooker, the upheavals within Labour today seem little more than party political infighting, what has been happening cannot really be understood without reference to the Marxist worldview which drives it.

The Left's success has been to trumpet its socialism without being very specific about what it means. As Alexander Solzhenitsyn once remarked, many see socialism only as "a sort of hazy shimmering concept of something good, something noble" but understand little of it beyond that.

By contrast, for Marxists such those around Corbyn and McDonnell, socialism has a very specific meaning. Marx viewed history as a continuous series of conflicts between classes. Out of each conflict, a new class arises, which in turn gives birth to a third class and the process begins again. Marx predicted that the final conflict would be between capitalists and the working class which, as capitalism collapsed, would eventually rise up and seize power in a "dictatorship of the proletariat". When McDonnell told a gathering of supporters, "I am a Marxist. This is a classic crisis of the economy—a classic capitalist crisis. I have been waiting for this for a generation", it was this that he was referring to. His praise for students "kicking the shit out of Millbank" (the Tory HQ) as being the "best of our movement" raised eyebrows too but, once again, such sentiments are logical for a Marxist. Marx and Engels defended the use of violence in pursuit of the revolution. Engels wrote that "nothing can be achieved without violence" while Marx declared that "only revolutionary terrorism" could "shorten the bloody birth throes of the new society".

During the revolution all the "means of production" (factories, etc), transport, finance and the property of the ruling class would be taken into state ownership or "socialised". *Socialism*, therefore, can mean both the process of that takeover and its end result. Marxists believe that only when socialism is complete can full *communism*, a classless, moneyless utopia, come into being.

As political labels to describe followers of Marx, "socialist", "democratic socialist", and "communist" are virtually interchangeable. Herein lies another potential misunderstanding: Marxist "democratic socialism" is very different from "social democracy", the system adopted by Scandinavian countries (and New Labour) which allows the market economy but imposes controls upon it to ensure it benefits all in society. A Corbyn "democratic socialist" government would not turn Britain into another Sweden.

To get a detailed picture of what a communist Britain would look like we do not need to plough through all 50

**'The Left's success has been to trumpet its socialism without being very specific about what it means. By contrast, for Marxists socialism has a very specific meaning'**



Jeremy Corbyn (second left) and Andrew Murray (right) in 2003 at a press conference for the “Stop The War” coalition

volumes of Marx’s *Collected Works*. The Communist Party of Britain (CPB) has published its own 25,000-word programme, *Britain’s Road to Socialism*, which goes into considerable detail about the revolution that is to come.

The CPB lays claim to be the direct political successor of the Soviet-financed Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) which was established in 1920, adopting its new name in 1988 after the CPGB leadership began to abandon its traditional loyalty to the Soviet Union and the legacy of Stalin. Given that it had just 734 members in 2017 and gained only 1,229 votes in the 2015 general election, it is reasonable to ask why its manifesto should be taken seriously. The reason is simple: Jeremy Corbyn, since his election as leader of the Labour Party, has brought a number of former CPB members and other Marxists into his inner team. While the Left fights constantly about the merits or otherwise of Trotsky, Mao and Stalin, there is broad agreement about the theories of Marx and Lenin, and it is that consensus that *Britain’s Road to Socialism* reflects.

The most important of these individuals who are now on Corbyn’s inner team are Andrew Murray and Seumas Milne. Both Murray and Milne, together with another old comrade, Steve Howell, whom Milne brought in as Deputy Communications Director in February 2017, were originally members of Straight Left, a pro-Soviet faction within the CPGB, disparagingly referred ever since to as “tankies” because of their support for the Soviet invasions of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. Straight Left presented itself as a Labour organisation

but in fact it was a front which gave a route for communists to clandestinely influence the Labour Party and turn it to the left. One contemporary critic observed that “honesty and ideological openness are not its greatest assets”.

Murray is said to have left the CPB for Labour in December 2016. In April 2017 Corbyn appointed him to head Labour’s general election strategy. The CPB had just announced that for the first time in its history it would not field any candidates and would instead support Labour. After the election Murray returned to his full-time job as Chief of Staff at the Unite union, which had provided almost half (£4.5million) of Labour’s election fund, in time to head off a centrist takeover of the union which might have threatened that funding in the future. In February 2018, Murray was back in Labour again, this time in a permanent role as Corbyn’s “Special Political Adviser” consulting on strategy and vetting senior appointments. Soon afterwards, Murray’s former wife, Susan Mitchie, still a leading member of the CPB, announced that the CPB would now be working “full tilt” to get Corbyn elected.

“Does anyone seriously think Andrew Murray has changed his politics in the slightest?” asked one former comrade in a communist chatroom. The insistence by both Corbyn and McDonnell that Murray is now a “democratic socialist” is disingenuous: communists might easily describe themselves as such. Although Murray was a party member for more than 30 years, sat on its executive, had been on the advisory board of its theoretical journal *Communist Review* and was eminent ►

enough to be the party's choice to give the annual oration at Marx's graveside in Highgate Cemetery, his departure provoked none of the vitriol that would be customary after the defection of so prominent a figure in the dystopian world of hard-left politics where backbiting, splits and factions abound.

Murray also continues to write for the *Morning Star*, the CPB newspaper, so clearly he has not been blacklisted. The editorial position of the paper, which Corbyn, a long-time *Morning Star* columnist, calls "the most precious and only voice we have in the daily media" follows the CPB platform—the replacement of the capitalist system by socialism in order that a "fully communist form of society" might result. If either Murray or Corbyn took exception to that goal they would not write for it.

In a debate in 2017 I confronted shadow minister Chris Williamson with the accusation that Labour had been captured by the CPB and its allies and that its ultimate aim was a communist revolution that was virtually indistinguishable from the CPB's. I asked him to deny it. Williamson, whose copy of the *Morning Star* lay on the table in front of him, simply replied that the current system was "broken" and didn't work, adding, "Are you saying you want to keep it?", before insisting that the thousands who had joined Labour had done so because they "wanted change" and that was what Labour would give them.

I took that as a "no".

Trotsky once told his followers, "We hate or despise our enemies, according to their deserts; we deceive according to circumstances (and) play a double game with the enemies of the proletariat."

In April 2018, John McDonnell, a self-confessed follower of both Trotsky and Lenin, tried to calm fears in the City of London by assuring them that there was no hard-left "shadow manifesto", no radical agenda that it was keeping secret until a Corbyn government took office. It is not known if McDonnell does have his own "shadow manifesto" but Labour's ally, the CPB, certainly does—*Britain's Road to Socialism*. Andrew Murray is believed to have had a hand in writing its 2011 edition (from which all quotes in this article are taken) while he was still a leading member of the CPB.

*Britain's Road to Socialism* presents, in its own words, "an analysis of capitalism and imperialism in its current form", explains how a "revolutionary transformation" might be achieved and "what a socialist and communist society in Britain might look like". Capitalism, it declares, has taken "the planet and its peoples towards the edge of the abyss" and "must be overthrown". Only "state power in the hands of the working class can save humanity".

As the model form of government, it is the Soviet Union, it believes, which showed that "socialist state power, planning and public ownership could transform society in the interests of the mass of the population". The gulag and Great Terror, passed over briefly as "distortions", are put down to "the struggle to survive and to build socialism in the face of powerful external as well as internal enemies" whose political descendants now use those distortions in a "world-wide campaign of lies aimed at the concept of socialism".

The manifesto anticipates three distinct stages in the "revolutionary process". The first stage, a "substantial and sustained shift to the left in the labour movement", is where the Left would see its position today.

Stage two would follow the election of a left-wing government to Downing Street and would entail widespread nationalisation "in all major sectors" of industry and commerce. The list of targets is long and includes the financial sector, gas, electricity, water, oil, railways, buses, road haulage and air travel, construction, engineering, armaments, land and property, shipping and chemicals. Landed estates, luxury tourist estab-



**John McDonnell in 2015 with the leaflet calling for the disbandment of MI5 and disarming of the police**

ishments and "second homes" would also be brought under "public ownership". Prospects for financial recompense for wealthy stock and property owners don't look good. Compensation, if paid, would be "primarily to pension funds and *small investors and on the basis of proven need*". (My italics.)

Financial, property and advertising services would be "limited" and their "socially useful functions transferred to public bodies". Nationalising the advertising industry could open the way for a state propaganda office, and measures that would be taken to "decisively break the grip of monopoly conglomerates on the capitalist mass media" would curb resistance from the press. State funding for political parties would be banned and corporate donations would need to be cleared by a workers' ballot, which would permit the unions to block Conservative Party funding.

The programme would be financed by increased tax rates on higher rates of income, an annual wealth tax, a "Robin Hood" tax on City financial transactions, an increase in the rate of corporation tax, windfall taxes, and the closure of all tax havens under British jurisdiction (including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man). Council tax would be replaced by local income, wealth, land and property taxes.

Echoing Jeremy Corbyn's own past comments (which he has tried to downplay), the monarchy would be replaced by a "democratically elected and accountable" head of state. The House of Lords would be abolished and the Church of England would be disestablished. Leading Corbyn supporter Ken Loach, who has made three films for Labour, goes further: his "Left Unity" manifesto calls for all the assets of the royal family and CofE to be confiscated.

Turning to the subject of “Defeating Counter-Revolution”, the CPB anticipates that, by means of “covert and overt counter-revolutionary activities”, there will be “a significant fight-back by socialism’s enemies”. International capitalism is expected to launch “economic and financial sabotage” in the form of “an investment strike, the flight of capital, an attack on Britain’s currency, trade sanctions and a boycott of government bills and bonds”.

This is a threat that Labour is reported to be taking seriously. John McDonnell told the 2017 Labour conference that he anticipated a possible run on the pound and his team had been “war-gaming” to counter what might happen “when or if they come for us”. *Britain’s Road to Socialism* proposes the imposition of controls on the movement of capital, and the use of “requisite powers to control and liquidate British-owned economic and financial assets abroad”.

Nationalisation will be used defensively too: “There may be tactical value in prioritising the public ownership of sectors or enterprises according to the economic or political threat that they pose to the left government and socialist revolution.” Left Unity proposes the confiscation of any company “including the giant supermarket companies” which attempts to destabilise a left government or transfer assets and other essential services overseas. Tesco and Sainsbury’s should take note.

As is now beginning to dawn on many of Labour’s Remain supporters, the hard Left is fundamentally pro-Brexit. Its deep hostility towards the EU is based upon a Marxist assessment of it as a “neoliberal capitalist alliance”. The CPB anticipates EU sabotage too and, once in government, would ensure Britain’s swift withdrawal from the EU. Robert Griffiths, the CPB’s general secretary, was chair of “Left Leave” (“Lexit”) in the 2017 referendum.

The Left has long looked upon the police and security services as enemies. Before Corbyn’s election propelled the hard Left from obscurity, both Andrew Fisher, his policy adviser, and McDonnell had called for the disbandment of MI5 and the disarming of the police. In spite of signing an open letter and being photographed with a flyer which made these demands, McDonnell now denies that this is his position.

In a recent interview, Momentum founder Jon Lansman voiced fears of a British repetition of the overthrow of Chile’s socialist president Salvador Allende in 1973. These are echoed in *Britain’s Road to Socialism*. The “example of Chile”, it says, shows “the willingness of the US and British ruling classes to destroy long-established parliamentary democracy in defence of imperialist interests”, and this underlines the necessity of “replacing reactionary personnel in top state positions”. Accordingly, leading members of the police, the secret services, armed forces, the judiciary and civil and diplomatic services will be purged and replaced by “supporters of the revolutionary process”. For those remaining, “civic education programmes”—political indoctrination—will “break down oppressive and reactionary ideas and practices”.

As it progresses, *Britain’s Road to Socialism* becomes increasingly paranoid. “Enormous confrontations will signify that the revolutionary process has entered its third, most crucial stage”, it declares. The British ruling class and its allies, are prepared to be “utterly ruthless” and to use “every weapon at its disposal against the revolutionary movement and the left government”. It may resort not just to economic sabotage but to the use of “military force, anti-democratic subversion, military dictatorship, state torture and death squads”. “Private armies might form under the direction of ex-military chiefs, supported by big business leaders and sections of the mass media.” The idea of the editor of the *Daily Mail* taking to the streets with a Kalashnikov sounds like one of Monty Python’s

## ‘Socialists’ conviction that they alone have the keys to utopia sooner or later extinguishes their humanity towards any who think otherwise’

now classic spoofs of the 1970s’ Left but this is no joke. Some of those now around the leader of the Labour Party have entertained these thoughts.

In response, a left government “will use all the official and popular forces

at its disposal to crush each and every attempt at military subversion, rebellion or invasion”. A new paramilitary force—“the state’s corps of military reservists”—would gradually replace the army. Linked with “large workplaces and local working-class communities”, its recruitment, education and administration would be overseen by the trade union movement, an echo of the political commissars attached to all Soviet military units. In the 1920s, British communists tried to form an underground British Red Army. A century later, that dream would be realised.

Given its hostility towards America and Nato, the Left, unsurprisingly, believes that US and Nato military bases in Britain “might become centres of intrigue and subversion”. All foreign military bases in Britain would therefore be swiftly closed and Britain would withdraw from Nato. “The subservient alliance with US imperialism would have to cease immediately.”

Instead, a left government would strengthen relations with “communist, left-wing, progressive, anti-imperialist and non-aligned governments abroad (who) may be in a position to extend diplomatic, political and economic assistance”. As the hard Left seems to entertain fewer scruples about the human rights record of regimes opposed to America or Israel (during the period Corbyn broadcast for Iran’s Press TV, the country hanged more than 1,300 people), we might well see closer ties with countries such as Venezuela, Cuba, North Korea (praised in the past by Andrew Murray), Iran and Russia.

At no point is there any question of the revolutionary Left’s presumed right to overthrow the existing order and impose its own socialist system because it claims it represents “the interests of the working class and the *whole population*”—an intriguing conflation given that the Monster Raving Loony Party gained three times the votes of the CPB in the 2015 general election and the fact that all the far-left parties combined scored just 0.02 per cent of all the votes cast. But the arrogance is pure Lenin: the revolutionary elite *must* take power because the people do not know what is good for them. When the Left says it opposes rule by tiny elites, it exempts itself.

Finally, we are assured that the “dictatorship of the proletariat” will “displace the present unelected rule—or dictatorship—of a tiny capitalist class” and full communism will evolve. As “the danger of internal counter-revolution recedes, the role of the state as the coercive force used by one class to suppress another also diminishes”. History has shown time and again that socialism cannot exist without a police state to enforce it, and here lies a clear admission of that: the socialist state *will* be a “coercive” force and it *will* be used for suppression.

Socialists may start with the best of motives but their conviction that they alone have the keys to utopia sooner or later extinguishes their humanity towards any who think otherwise. George Bernard Shaw, Fabian Society leader and Labour’s most famous pre-war socialist, praised the Soviet secret police for their executions (“weeding of the garden”) and proposed that, in a socialist Britain, “compulsory social service on pain of death” would be introduced in order to render “resistance injurious”—in other words, labour camps. “Revolutionaries who take the law into their own hands”, writes Boris Pasternak in *Doctor Zhivago*, “are horrifying because they are like machines that have got out of control, like runaway trains.”

“For the sake of humanity, the future is communism,” *Britain’s Road to Socialism* concludes. Many, if they knew what it entailed, would have nothing to do with it. 