



As Bad As They Say

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Yes, Jeremy Corbyn really is that bad. Maybe worse, according to unauthorised biography *Dangerous Hero: Corbyn's Ruthless Plot for Power*.

Yes, Corbyn is an unreconstructed Stalinist. Yes, he clings to all manner of radical socialist ideas that were discredited decades ago. Yes, he has been an apologist for the IRA even when it was at its worst. Yes, he has happily stood alongside the most extreme of terror groups and even sympathised with their 'struggles'. And yes, Corbyn does deny being anti-Semitic, but a long string of comments and incidents suggests otherwise.

All of this shocking baggage is laid bare by the book's author, British investigative journalist Tom Bower. Bower is well-known in the UK for his hard-hitting biographies, usually on business tycoons and newspaper proprietors. Interestingly, Bower is a reformed Marxist himself, and wrote

this year that “back when I was known as ‘Tommy the Red’, I could not have imagined I would ever write a book describing the leader of the Labour Party as a communist”. But that he does, and then some.

But while Corbyn is extreme in ideology, the man himself is unremarkable, even mediocre. Corbyn is no great thinker, nor even a competent administrator, as his record as a London councillor shows. Nor is he, surprisingly, a person of great ambition.

Rather, Corbyn drifted towards hard- left politics in his youth and never developed the intellectual maturity to leave it. He is a political misfit, a previously benign and irrelevant protest politician thrust into the Labour leadership.

As far as Corbyn’s ideology goes, Bowen notes Corbyn is a lifelong champion of “equality of poverty, not equality of opportunity to earn wealth” and the “universal confiscation of the middle class’s wealth to benefit the poorest”.

This particularly nasty strain of the politics of envy is driven more by instinct than idealism, and can be traced back to Corbyn’s early life in which he cultivated his disdain of the successful. Every litter has a runt, and for the Corbys—a Labour-voting, though reasonably affluent family—it was Jeremy. Corbyn’s three elder brothers did well at school and went on to university. Jeremy did not.

Instead, Corbyn set off for Jamaica for a short stint as a volunteer teacher. Corbyn’s political ‘awakening’ apparently occurred there, his revolutionary tendencies sparked by the cross-currents of radical Latin American and local Jamaican politics. As Bower explains:

[Anti-colonialist] ideas, picked up after his year in Jamaica, thereafter became the foundation of Corbyn’s principles and way of looking at the world. He loathed imperialism— Spanish, American or British. He never sought to understand how Greek, Roman and successive European empires were the foundation of Western civilisation, but stuck resolutely to his belief in the unalleviated evil of white colonial oppression.

This undergraduate brand of leftist ideology followed Corbyn back to London, where he found work as an official for various trade unions. He joined his local chapter of the Labour Party and gravitated towards its openly Marxist fringe. From there, the hitherto directionless Corbyn became one of the hard left’s most energetic and devoted organisers.

And so began his lifelong passion: joining the long march through the British Labour Party amid the motley crew of Trotskyite weirdos in which Corbyn found, seemingly for the first time, a sense of belonging. “Corbyn was transformed,” Bower writes, “and politics became his life.”

Still, Corbyn had no great interest in political philosophy, nor public policy. Bower notes that, according to Corbyn's first wife, "throughout the four years of their marriage, he never read a single book. He did not think deeply about ideology or political philosophy". No, Corbyn's jam was raw political combat, largely within local party branches. He had all the tenacity of a person in student politics, but without the intellect to be an actual student.

Corbyn's intellectual vacuousness explains why, deep into the 21st century, his unrefined political philosophy is basically identical to that he had as a young radical in the 1970s. Unlike many fellow travellers in his era, Corbyn has never been able to see through the empty promises of socialism because he never really understood it. He has not been able, to paraphrase the old adage, change his mind when the facts change.

That's why Corbyn kept agitating for greater state control over Britain's economy, despite the chaos of central planning that came home to roost in the 1970s winter of discontent. It's why Corbyn continued to champion nationalisation of industry, despite the clear benefits of privatisation during the Thatcher years (one particularly memorable anecdote from Bower is that of British Telecom, which under state ownership kept Britons waiting as long as six months for the installation of a phone line). It's why Corbyn was relegated to a tiny fringe when he entered Parliament in 1983, and was increasingly isolated as his party cast off its socialist baggage as the 'New Labour' era dawned.



And it's why Corbyn has notoriously surrounded himself with some dubious bedfellows. A fixation on the twin evils of colonialism and capitalism has hobbled Corbyn with a warped world view, a pathological tendency to embrace the most noxious ideologies, brutal dictatorships and extremist terror groups, so long as they're in the crosshairs of his own country and its allies. From the IRA and Stalinist Russia in his youth, to the likes of Saddam Hussein, Hamas, and Hezbollah more recently, Corbyn seems to have never encountered a "victim of western oppression" he doesn't

like.

Naturally, one historically-oppressed group for which Corbyn has expressed no sympathy is the Jews. The instances of apparent anti-Semitism are well documented by Bower, traced all the way back to Corbyn's dealings with self-employed Jewish tailors as an official for the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers.

Naturally, Corbyn's affinity with Palestinians and hatred of Israel as an "American colonialist project" cemented his latent suspicion of Jews, to the point where Corbyn presides over a Labour Party from which nine MPs resigned over concerns about anti-Semitism in 2019, and the Equality and Human Rights Commission has started its own investigation (no such body should exist let alone investigate a political party, but that is what it's come to).

So how has the UK ended up with a man like Corbyn as alternative prime minister? Simply put, Corbyn has been at the right place at the right time. Changes to leadership rules meant Corbyn could be elected by an influx of radicals who were able to join the Labour Party for a negligible fee. The failure of Blairite MPs to find an alternative candidate helped stave off a challenge during the disastrous early years of Corbyn's leadership.



The incompetence of Theresa May and the Conservatives in 2017 boosted Corbyn's legitimacy via an unexpectedly good electoral performance. And a fiercely loyal band of Corbyn acolytes has helped him stamp his authority on the party, systematically hounding out internal enemies. But there is more to the Corbyn ascendancy than blind luck. The sad reality is that the times suit him. We have come full circle, and the twisted ideology for which Corbyn was once one of the few defenders has come back into vogue, like some kind of kitsch 1970s fashion revival.



Black armband hand-wringing has made Corbyn's evils-of-colonialism shtick believable. Identity politics and the fetishisation of victimhood have lent themselves to Corbyn's misguided notions of perpetual class struggle. Postmodern deconstructionist hogwash has given generations of university graduates the idea that all the world's injustices (real or imagined) can be attributed to invisible power imbalances and that the only antidote is to forcibly tear down thousands of centuries' worth of civilisation and start over.

And so now, a once great country is frighteningly close to handing the keys to Number Ten to a dim, dangerous and deeply dispiriting disciple of a failed Marxist project.

Hopefully, when polling day comes, there will be enough 'quiet Britons' to prevent that from happening.