AM: Now I’m joined by Jeremy Corbyn, here earlier than you might expect because he needs to get to the Cenotaph and Mr Corbyn, you’re not going by yourself this year, you’re bringing one of your constituents. Just tell us about that.

JC: I’m bringing an old friend of mine, George Durak who was in the 7th Army Brigade in the Second World War in North Africa. Came back to Britain, worked in the post office all his life as a postal delivery worker, very active in his union, very active member of the Labour Party, very much in favour of a left and peace agenda in society, a very close and dear old friend of mine. He’s now aged 92 and I brought him –

AM: He’s a veteran, he’s 92 and he’s a peace activist?

JC: And he’s a peace activist and he’s a very proud member of the Labour Party and indeed a former councillor in my borough. He’s a great friend of mine and I wanted to bring George along today.

AM: Now we’re talking in the context of course of the aftermath of Donald Trump’s election victory. You said this week that you could understand the anger of many of those people who voted for Trump. What do you think it’s based on? Is it based on anti-immigrant feeling, or is it based on economic failure?

JC: It’s anger and left behind America. Michael Moore has portrayed this very well in his films. He talks about left behind America in Ohio and all the rust belt states of the United States where corporate America had de-industrialised, made huge profits out of it and as Bernie Sanders pointed out, put those profits in
tax havens elsewhere and left those communities to rot. Trump decided to use the populist agenda. He blamed Muslims, he blamed Mexicans, he blamed women, he blamed anybody he could think of except the very corporate America that in many ways he actually represents. The same arguments actually happen all across Europe.

AM: I was going to ask you because it’s very interesting. We go through this period of economic dislocation where lots of communities feel left behind and angry and the protests everywhere you look are going to parties of the right. They’re not going to parties of the left. Why is that? Why has the left failed to channel that anger?

JC: It’s time to move on from the third way, from the New Labour agenda. For the agenda which was essentially an incorporation of that free market liberal economic thinking which actually processed de-industrialisation in Britain and to a lesser extent in Germany, but to a greater extent in France.

AM: So the left was associated with globalisation?

JC: Indeed I think it was and I think what’s now happening is a much stronger left movement across the United States and across Europe. Bernie Sanders garnered a very large number of votes because of his attack on corporate America.

AM: Do you think he would have won by the way? Sorry to interrupt.

JC: Could he have won? Yes, I think he probably could have won.

AM: Now I guess the other aspect of this and it’s something that Donald Trump has talked a lot about and Marine le Pen talks
about in my interview with her as well, is protectionism. They’re people who say you have lost your industries because of globalism, therefore we need to put up barriers, we need to put more tariffs on foreign cars, foreign goods coming in. Do you basically agree with that?

JC: I think we have to invest in new industries. We have to have an investment strategy and that I’m putting forward of a national investment bank to promote good quality manufacturing industry. We also have to have fair trade agreements. So when we import goods they should be produced to the same environmental standards as we would respect. We will want human rights agendas to be on that trade agenda, so it’s not about closing down trade it’s about fair trade.

AM: Is there a silver lining for you in Brexit in this in the sense that we can now do our own new trade agreements with India, China and so forth and put in human rights, put in environmental protection in a new way into those deals?

JC: I’m already working on potential trade agreements that we could make with other countries. The human rights agenda, the environmental agenda, the sustainability agenda, those things are very important, but I’m also working very hard on an investment strategy for industry and working with many left parties across Europe who are themselves also opposed to the austerity agenda that’s been put forward. Look at it this way: over the past six years average wages in Britain have stagnated or fallen, most families are three and a half thousand pounds a year worse off than they were five years, six years ago. Public services have been cut, where is the achievement of six years of austerity other than cut public services, hospital waiting lists, overcrowding in so many places? We need an investment agenda. We need to go forward
on the idea that the public intervention actually can grow our economy not stagnate it.

**AM:** Now you’ve talked about Donald Trump demonising foreigners, including of course South Americans and Hispanics. Your own wife is Mexican, so this must feel fairly personal to you and yet, as a possible future Prime Minister you may well have to deal with Donald Trump. Wonder how you feel about that.

**JC:** I’m looking forward to the conversation between my wife and Donald Trump. She is a proud Mexican and she’s proud to live here as well and all of us want to live in a world where you actually tolerate and deal with each other.

**AM:** Can I just ask you how she and her family feel about the possibility of a well going up between Mexico and the United States?

**JC:** Absolute anger and outrage. Donald Trump should grow up and recognise the American economy actually depends on migrant labour. Last year they had a day without Mexicans, they certainly noticed it and I think the treatment of Mexico by the United States just as much as his absurd and abusive language towards Muslims is something that has to be challenged and should be challenged.

**AM:** Now, he has been highly successful obviously in channelling this anger and it is partly directed against immigration and what you have said suggests that you think that voters who go along with that have been conned or fooled or a victim of false consciousness or something. Is that not slightly patronising?

**JC:** No, it’s not patronising at all. I just think that the blame should be put where it belongs and that is the corporate investment decisions that have done so much damage to industry all over
Europe, including obviously in Britain but particularly in France and other countries in Europe. But we also have to be aware that we have to deal with undercutting, Len McCluskey made some very good points about this last week, that companies that bring in wholesale migrant labour to destroy local working agreements, destroy trade union recognition, undercut wages, that’s got to end. That’s why I’ve supported the Agency Workers’ Directive and why in the referendum campaign I made a great deal of emphasis on the question of posting of workers which is where you bring a group of workers from here, put them here in order to destroy local working arrangements. And also where there’s been a big impact on communities it’s local government that needs to be properly funded in order to deal with the needs.

AM: Do you think your message is going to cut through to those said – I don’t know how people get these figures – it’s said that 9 million Labour voters voted for Brexit and a lot of them were concerned about immigration and they may simply hear what you’re saying as a voice of the metropolitan, liberal elite or establishment. That doesn’t really understand how radically communities have been changed by immigration up and down the north coast for instance.

JC: Communities have been hit by de-industrialisation. Hit by deregulation. Hit by the Thatcherite Reagan model of economics in the 1980s that still plays out in former mining communities and many other places where there’s systemic unemployment or underemployment, low wages, low levels of investment and poor industrial development. So we need a government that is prepared to invest regionally, that does have a regionally based investment bank that does deal with those social issues. Communities coming together to improve education and health and housing work better together. Blaming minorities doesn’t build houses.
AM: Keir Starmer, who’s now on your front bench, said that he thought overall generally speaking immigration should be lower than it is at the moment. Do you agree with him?

JC: I think it will be lower if we deal with the issues of wage undercutting, deal with the issues of exploitation, but I think we should also recognise that the migrants that have come to this country work, the migrants that come to this country contribute and pay taxes, actually our National Health Service would simply not survive without the level of migrant labour and migrant doctors and others that are here, because we haven’t invested enough in high skills within our own economy.

AM: So it’s not your policy to push immigration down, but you think as a result of your policies immigration will come down?

JC: Absolutely. I think the policies will help a great deal. And also working with other parties across Europe, because I’m inviting all the Socialist parties across Europe and trade unions to come together in London in early February so that we have a good working relationship with them. Many of those parties are either in government absolutely or in government in coalition, they will help us get the kind of deal that we need on market access to Europe in the future when we leave the EU.

AM: Now I’ve been interviewing Marine le Pen rather controversially this week. Christiane Amanpour was pointing out that because of the change in the electoral world at the moment it is perfectly possible that this woman will become French President next year. She’s very anti NATO, she’s very anti the EU. She’s pro protectionist and she’s a hard right nationalist politician. How would the world change do you think if we had Marine le Pen as President?
JC: Well she uses awful and absurd language in France against Muslims. I was just talking to a group of demonstrators outside this morning who were here very angry at the language she’s used against Muslims and others in France, and so she uses this populism against minorities in order to get herself elected. The reality is she does not have an economic answer to the problems faced by left communities in France any more than UKIP has an economic answer to the left behind communities in Britain. It’s only communities coming together, public investment that can actually deal with the economic – fundamental economic injustices that are getting worse not better across Europe.

AM: Now UKIP distance themselves – you mentioned UKIP just now from the National Front, but Marine le Pen said in the interview that she sees the two of them as being quite similar in many ways, do you agree with that?

JC: I think they probably are because they both attempt the same shallow populist, nasty appeal. Because once you let this nasty - nasty thing out of the box called xenophobia and intolerance it’s very hard to put it back. It’s up to the left, it’s up to the democratic forces in society to say the only way forward is societies coming together. The only way forward is to build institutions like the National Health Service, the same approach we should take towards industrial development in our own country.

AM: The other thing she and Putin clearly agree on is that NATO is more of a problem than a solution and they’re both quite understanding as it were of Vladimir Putin’s posture. What do you think about that?

JC: Well, I have many, many criticisms of Putin, of the human rights abuses in Russia and of the militarisation of society. However, I do think there has to be a process that we try and de-
militarise the border between what are now the NATO states and Russia, so that we drive apart those forces, keep them further apart in order to bring about some kind of accommodation. We can’t descend into a new cold war.

AM: Absolutely, but do you think to put it very simply Trump is good for the Russian relationship at least?

JC: Well, I’m not quite sure of Donald Trump’s personal economic relationship with Russia but he clearly thinks he can have a good relationship with Putin on the basis that Putin is a strong leader. It’s not about strong leaders, it’s about strong movements towards coexistence and towards peace. We seem to be moving back to the language of the 1990s when the organisation for security and cooperation in Europe should have been the preeminent grouping. Maybe that grouping could be alongside the Council of Europe a forum by which relations can be improved with Russia, but we do have to condemn the human rights abuses in Russia, we do have to condemn many aspects of Russian foreign policy.

AM: Can I come back to the big domestic issue at the moment which is Article 50 and when that’s triggered because there’s been some confusion. Your party and your front benchers have said that they will not block Article 50 in the House of Commons but they expect that to be something that they can amend and debate. So there’s lots of things that have been suggested in the press are red lines for you about worker protection and so forth. Can I ask you straightforwardly, if you don’t get Article 50 amended as you would like it or Theresa May’s Brexit policy amended as you would like it would you block Article 50 in the House of Commons?

JC: We respect the referendum. We voted for the referendum. The result was the result we got. It wasn’t the one we wanted but
we have to respect it, therefore there’s going to be a departure from the European Union. As I pointed out there’s going to be relations with Europe in the future, that’s why I’m building these close relationships with Socialist parties across Europe. We will demand that we have market access, workers’ protection, consumer protection, environmental protection, justice issues through the European Court. We will not frustrate the bringing in of Article 50 but we will be holding the government to account on it during the process up to March when Article 50 starts. But also during the negotiating period and the negotiating period means that we can go behind the wire as well and work with colleagues all across Europe to make sure that we do get market access. Half of Britain’s exports go to Europe.

AM: I come back to the point. If you can’t or you decide on a principled position you will not block Article 50, so that will go through the House of Commons, how are you going to impose your red lines on Theresa May?

JC: Well we’ll still be demanding in parliament. We’ll still be voting in parliament. We’ll still be building alliances in parliament to demand the government stick to the points that I’ve laid out. And indeed the court decision means that parliament now has a role in this, obviously depending on the appeal, but we will continue demanding the whole point about market access and about workers’ rights. During the referendum campaign some of those on the Leave side said there was going to be a bonfire of regulations. They’ve kind of reduced the rhetoric on that a bit. I don’t want any bonfire of regulations. I want the protections we’ve achieved through European Union membership to continue and be put into British law and I want market access to Europe.

AM: One more local matter, the possibility of large members of Militant, what was Militant coming back into the Labour Party,
people like Derek Hatton and Peter Taaffe and those kind of people, has been raised. I wonder what your attitude would be to having those people back inside the Labour Party.

JC: Well if they’re not in a proscribed organisation then clearly people are free to join the party. If they are in an organisation that’s on a proscription list then they’re not. That’s a matter for the National Executive and our process, but look at it another way. There are now more than 550 thousand individual members of the party. There are 3 million affiliated members of the party. There is a vast, actually politically very broad and very diverse membership of the party, united on the idea that our party offers an economic alternative to left behind, to broken Britain, to poverty Britain.

AM: Your party has been growing, the numbers you’re getting in the opinion polls across the electorate as a whole have not and have even fallen. When does that start to change?

JC: I think it’s changing already actually. By election council – by election results are varied across the country but I’ll give an example, not so far away from here in Wandsworth 10% rise in the Labour vote last week, gains in a couple of seats in Scotland last month. We have varied results across the country, but I’ll tell you this, we are putting forward an alternative economic strategy. A policy of social justice. Attacking the government on the NHS. Attacking the government on the underfunding of mental health services and that’s the point Richard Dannatt made about the mental health conditions of former soldiers. We’re for an inclusive society that actually cares for all. Doesn’t have anyone left behind.

ENDS