AM: Good morning, Mr Corbyn. First of all what do you say to those Labour colleagues in the Shadow Cabinet who are convinced now that the case has been made for war?

JC: Ask them to look very, very carefully at the whole issue, look at what will happen if we bomb Raqqa, look at the message that’s printed in today’s Observer from people who live in Raqqa who say there’s going to be large numbers of civilian casualties however carefully targeted the bombs are, and think through this whole thing. There is no second plan, there is no effective ground force to back it up, the government’s already ruled that out and we’re going to be relying on groups in the Free Syrian Army apparently, who are hundreds of miles away, whose main interest is fighting Assad anyway. And also think through, two years ago the government that is now asking us to link up with lots of forces in Syria to oppose Isil actually asked us to join a coalition two years ago to fight Assad. We seem to be changing sides.

AM: Are you against bombing in Syria under all circumstances?

JC: I don’t think it will solve the problem that’s there. I think what will help to solve the problem are two things. One is the political process, which is encouraging but very slow, what’s happened in Vienna. But the other one is cutting off arms, oil sales and money to Isil. That is an area that I think no government has done enough on. Where are they getting the money from? They’re selling oil, maybe into Turkey, maybe somewhere else.

AM: So when you have these conversations with Hilary Benn and Tom Watson and so forth, do they simply not understand this?

JC: We have a discussion, we have had many discussions and we’re going to have more discussions. That is what politics is about, having that discussion. But you have to ask yourself the
question, appalling as the events in Paris were, absolutely shocking, there has to be security response in Paris, in Brussels, in London and everywhere else, but there also has to be a recognition that if we bomb in Raqqa we’re actually going to take out civilian lives, we may not in effect do very much damage to Isis, and actually may make the situation worse not better. The experience of Libya, where there was no follow-up plan, it shows that these things can be very dangerous.

AM: It does sound to me like you’re against bombing under all circumstances. Are you a pacifist, would you describe yourself as a pacifist?

JC: No, I wouldn’t describe myself as a pacifist, but I would describe an act of violence, an act of war, as absolutely a very last resort. You basically don’t bring about peace by bombing, you bring about peace by all the other processes, particularly the political process. Now, it’s been too slow, and Iran wasn’t brought on early enough, because Iran was at Geneva 1 but not at Geneva 2, but is now in Vienna, which is a good thing.

AM: Right, now I put myself through the brief piece of homework of reading the Labour Party resolution, which I think in party terms is the kind of foundation for everything that follows. And in that, you know, there was a call for a UN resolution, which has happened, there was a call for a better plan for refugees, which is being put together now, and there were various other calls for things, many of which the Prime Minister would say he has delivered. You set a high bar, he might say, Mr Corbyn, and I have got over that bar, and you’re still saying you’re against it. So you’re against this under all circumstances whatever the Prime Minister says. There’s nothing that he can pick up – if he could pick up a phone to you now and said, ‘ah, Mr Corbyn, I have got a new thing to say to you’, is there anything he could say to you that would change your mind?
JC: I’d obviously listen to what he has to say, because that’s the responsibility of every MP to do that. But the point is...

AM: Of course, but if anything could change your mind –

JC: - the resolution talks about a UN resolution to be carried, indeed one was carried. This is not a UN-inspired attack, this is an attack on Isil groupings, whatever you want to call them, in Raqqa, which is actually a coalition between Britain, France and the USA. Other countries such as Australia and Canada have already withdrawn from this. This is not a UN–organised thing, this is not a Chapter 7 resolution which is mandatory on member states.

AM: Because you see, you know, the Shadow Cabinet members who disagree with you have gone through those resolutions passed at conference and said by and large we think it’s been met, and that therefore the hurdles have been covered. But the trouble with Jeremy Corbyn is, in his heart he’s there on the streets with the Stop the War coalition and there’s nothing that can be said that’s going to change his mind.

JC: There’s nothing wrong with my heart, except wanting a peaceful world and wanting the best for my country.

AM: It’s on the left, I suspect.

JC: Well, it’s a socialist heart as well, but let’s go back to the issue of how we deal with the problems of the region. Surely it is much better to pursue the political option which will eventually bring about a ceasefire, hopefully quickly, in the Syrian civil war. Hundreds of thousands of people have already died in the Syrian civil war. Millions have been driven into exile. This is a crisis of unimaginable proportions for the whole region, and it’s now affecting Europe more and more. Surely it’s the political process that’s the key thing. This is in effect a distraction from the political process.

AM: Now, your view could hardly be clearer on this, and it’s something that you are now trying to push through the Labour
Party. You want the Labour Party to agree with you, and you’ve written to Labour Party members and encouraged them then in turn to write to their MPs or contact their MPs. Some of your – again some of your Shadow Cabinet people are pretty upset that you didn’t tell them that you were going to do that, and they feel slightly betrayed by that.

JC: I was elected with a very large mandate on a very high turnout of Labour members and supporters, many of those supporters have now become party members. I was asked, quite specifically by a number of people, what my view was. Straight after the Shadow Cabinet meeting on Thursday many colleagues who have a different view to me and want to support the government on bombing had already fully informed the entire media of exactly what their position was. It would be a bit odd if my position was kept a secret thereafter, and so what I’ve done is what I said I would always do, I would try to democratise the way the party does things. Yes, I have sent an email to party members, and actually do know what happens? 70,000 have already replied with their views. I don’t know what all the views are, obviously, I haven’t read them all. But we’ll be analysing those. Surely we must recognise that in a democracy the Labour Party has a very large membership, nearly 400,000 members, they will want to express their point of view, and MPs have to listen to it, have to try and understand what’s going on in the minds of ordinary party members. They’re the people who knock on doors, they’re the people who get us elected.

AM: So how are you going to resolve this? Because to make it – to simplify it rather, forgive me, you’ve got the leader and a large part of the membership think one thing, and in between them you’ve got a lot of MPs who think something entirely different. How do you resolve this?

JC: Well, a lot of MPs have yet to make up their mind actually. I’ve been talking to colleagues over the past couple of days, many are thinking the whole thing through very carefully, reading all the
analysis. They’re reading some papers such as the Telegraph, that go into hyperdrive against the Labour Party, then they’re looking at a more balanced, more nuanced approach that’s taken in some other papers, such as the Observer. But they’re also listening to people on the streets. Many people tell me that they’re frightened of what will happen if the bombing goes ahead, they’re frightened of the growth of intolerance within our society, be it anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, racism or whatever else. There has to be a political process, that’s my point.

AM: When you say people are frightened by what will happen if the bombing goes ahead, are you saying that if we bomb in Raqqa we will make the streets of London and other British cities less safe?

JC: Obviously I don’t want our streets to be less safe, and that’s why I opposed all the cuts that the government’s proposing to make in the police, and I support the increase in security operations in Britain to protect people. But the danger is, the danger –

AM: (Talking over) I’m not really asking about that –

JC: I know you’re not –

AM: The specifics –

JC: I think it’s an important point. The danger is a small number of people become radicalised as a result of this. We have to reach out to those communities, we have to reach out to all those communities and ensure that young people of all faiths in our society feel included, not rejected. That’s the important duty...

AM: So to be absolutely clear about this, if Britain votes to bomb Raqqa or bomb in Syria and the bombing takes place, you think more people will be radicalised and attack us on the streets of Britain?

JC: I would hope not, and I would do everything I could to persuade them not to be. But the – unfortunately the whole record since Afghanistan in 2001, Iraq 2003, Libya some years later, has been a growth of some quite terrifying degrees of
radicalisation across the whole piece and that is something we've all got to reckon with. We have to reach out to communities, support communities, be inclusive of communities.

AM: Because this will remind some people of what Ken Livingstone said about the 7/7 bombers, when he said they gave their lives as a result of what we were doing in the Iraq war and so forth, and that caused a lot of offence. Do you agree with him?

JC: I prefer to remember the brilliant words Ken Livingstone used after 7/7 in 2005, when he single-handedly united Londoners, saying Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, we will be united, we will not allow the bombers to divide us or defeat us.

AM: When we first talked, I think at the time of the Labour Party conference, we talked about some of these issues, and you said you thought matters of peace and war should be left to individual conscience, it was such an important matter. And as a result of that are you going to whip Labour MPs one way or another?

JC: No decision has been made on that yet. I will go and find out what MPs think. Obviously there are strong views on both directions. We’ll have a further discussion about this. My view –

AM: You can't really whip them, can you?

JC: Well, my view about the membership of the Labour Party is they must have a voice. Labour MPs need to listen to that voice, need to try and understand where people are coming from on this, and we will come to a decision as a party. But, I say this, why can't the government –

AM: So they have their own consciences and intelligences as MPs.

JC: Of course they do.

AM: And they presumably have to use those consciences.

JC: We will make that decision, not at this moment, later on.

AM: I understand that. I still ask you again, given –

JC: I thought you would. It's your job.
AM: It’s my job. Given your background, given your own history, you can’t really whip Labour MPs to vote against the government if they believe something else.

JC: Listen, I understand dissent. I understand disagreement from leadership. I talk to people who don’t agree with me, I talk to people who agree with me, just as when I was a backbencher myself I often talked to people with whom I actually had some disagreements, but it doesn’t have to be abusive, it doesn’t have to be personal, it doesn’t have to be nasty, it can be respectful, and I’m respectful of differences of opinion within our party.

AM: And just to clear up the kind of – the kind of legal basis of all of this – not the legal base, but the traditional base of it. Diane Abbott says this decision on whipping or not whipping is for the leader, is for you alone. But there’s been a suggestion that actually it is something that could be decided by the Shadow Cabinet, so which is it?

JC: It’s the leader who decides.

AM: The leader who decides. Alright, that’s fair. And you will make up your mind when?

JC: I’ll make up my mind in due course.

AM: In due course, alright.

JC: Do you want to be the first to know?

AM: I was hoping we’d all be the first to know.

JC: No, no, you can’t be the first to know this morning, it’s Sunday morning.

AM: Alright, never mind. Let’s move on to, I suppose, the fundamental criticism made of your leadership over all of this, which is in the end people just don’t think the streets of Britain will be safe under Jeremy Corbyn.

JC: Well, I want our streets to be as safe as they possibly can be. I’m MP for an inner city multicultural community, I work very closely with our local police and with all of our faith communities and non-faith communities to try and make sure our streets are safe. The safest way to live in Britain is to have policing by
consent, is to have respect for communities, is to have a policy of inclusion. Do we need a strong security presence to prevent people doing terrible things such as done in Paris or Brussels or Beirut or Ankara? Yes, we do. That’s why I supported the government on increased expenditure on security services, and because of Labour pressure from Andy Burnham, from myself and others, the government has retreated on the cuts they were about to make to the police force. Labour has had a big influence over the last few months. They’ve retreated on tax credits, they retreated on the Saudi prison contract. Labour is putting a lot of pressure on this government, and it’s having an effect.

AM: I was encouraging you to say that you would –
JC: What were you encouraging me to say?
AM: - you wouldn’t whip Labour MPs. Let me now encourage you to say you would whip Labour MPs, because if you did whip Labour MPs, there’s evidence from today’s papers the government would simply pull the vote and you would, as it were, win.
JC: Look, I hope the government will understand there’s a serious debate about here, and it ought to be a debate about the kind of foreign policy we’ve got, what we do in a very difficult area of the world such as the Middle East, what our influence is and could be, what our influence for human rights could be, but instead increasingly Conservative ministers seem to be presenting this whole thing in very narrow party political terms of seeking advantage over another party. That’s not a very responsible way of behaving.

AM: One more try. You’ve seen the military intelligence briefings and so forth now, there is a widespread view that so long as there are safe havens for Isil in Syria we are not safe. They have a place they can plan their attacks, they are planning their attacks right now, they’ve attacked in Paris, they could be attacking this afternoon or tomorrow in London or Birmingham or Glasgow, and we will not be safe entirely until those safe havens are eradicated
and for everything you have said, however reasonable it sounds and all the rest of it, you are against eradicating those safe havens.

JC: They could - those attacks could be planned absolutely anywhere. There is also a very strong view amongst a lot of military people and military thinkers that bombing without any continuation of what we’re going to do is actually a very risky thing to do. The idea that we’re going to go, we’re going to go into a bombing operation supported by ground forces hundreds of miles away, some of whom are Jihadists themselves, some of whom are offshoots of Isil anyway, there aren’t any reliable allies there. Look at what happened to the Turkish shooting down of Russian planes, is this really a very sensible process that we’re about to embark upon? Should we not be a bit more cautious about this?

AM: The Prime Minister said there’s 70,000 potential allied troops on the ground who will take the fight to Isil. Do you think that number is fictitious?

JC: I seriously question that. I seriously question the number. I seriously question the motives and the loyalty of those forces. They themselves are either focused on fighting Assad or fighting each other or having some kind of civil war between themselves, as some Jihadist groups with Isil. These are not reliable allies, this is not a standing army one can rely on. Surely the process has to be a political one to end this ghastly conflict in Syria. Two years ago the same Prime Minister wanted us to go to war against Assad. He now, at last, I’m pleased, recognises the need for political process and maybe at some point Assad will go, there will be some kind of technical government in Syria. You and I, I’m sure, agree on that and hope that to be the case.

AM: I have no views on anything.
JC: No, sure, I agree. I’m sorry, I don’t wish to involve you in political opinions.

AM: Except for the fact that is has been a terrible, terrible few weeks for the Labour Party. Did you ever think it was going to be like this when you became leader?

JC: It hasn’t been terrible at all. Party membership has gone up, we’ve forced the government into in retreat on tax credits, we’ve forced the government in retreat on police cuts, we’ve forced the government into retreat on a Saudi prison contract which would have involved British prisoner – British prison company –

AM: Regrets over your comments about not shooting terrorists?

JC: My regret is the way in which that was spun and dealt with by the media. The issue was that I was – can I explain? The issue was that I take the view of liberty that shooting to kill on the streets of Britain purely based on suspicion is illegal and dangerous. Involving a direct intervention by security forces as happened in Paris to stop somebody setting off a bomb, shooting a gun directly at somebody, it’s a reasonable form of response and that’s my clarification.

AM: Now we can never entirely know what can be trusted in the papers or not, but there have been quite a few stories about potential coups against you. Some of your colleagues trying to find out, trying to get legal advice on whether if they putched Jeremy Corbyn they could stop you standing in the subsequent leadership election campaign. Do you feel there are moves against you inside the party?

JC: I feel there are some people who haven’t quite got used to the idea the party is in a different place, that it is much bigger than it has been in all of my lifetime, and that we have a very open electoral system. I took part in a hundred days of an
election campaign, a long campaign I have to say. I spoke, as did other candidates, at 31 different hustings, open to all party members. I addressed probably 60 or 70 other meetings all around the country and the result was a very, very clear mandate for me as the Leader of the Party.

AM: And you’re not going anywhere?

JC: I’m not going anywhere. I’m enjoying every moment of it.

AM: You don’t feel under threat, you’re not worried about the polls and finally, is Oldham a fair way to test your leadership?

JC: We’ve got a great candidate in Oldham, we’ve got a great campaign going in Oldham. I was talking to people who have been campaigning there yesterday and other times, I was there for the start of the campaign, I’m very confident that Jim McMahon’s going to be elected MP for Oldham on Thursday.

AM: Am I looking at the next prime minister of Britain?
JC: I hope you are.

AM: Jeremy Corbyn, for now, thank you very much indeed.

ENDS