

George Galloway declares for Nigel Farage's Brexit Party

Chris Marsden
24 April 2019

George Galloway's support for the Brexit Party in the May 23 European elections is a new low in the nationalist trajectory he has pursued since the calling of the 2016 referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union (EU).

Justifying his stand in support of former UK Independence Party (UKIP) leader Nigel Farage's new party, the former Labour MP Galloway tweeted, "Given the nature of Labour's Euro-fanatic candidates list and the crucial juncture we have reached in the fight for the full implementation of the #Brexit referendum result and for one-time only I will be supporting @Nigel Farage in next month's elections."

Galloway denounced critics who called Farage a fascist for contributing to "the alienation of many working-class people from Labour, now overwhelmingly liberal metropolitan and university educated."

Having spent over three years hailing the election of Jeremy Corbyn as a left rebirth of the Labour Party, he now parrots the claim that it is Farage whose politics articulate the views of the working class on what he insists is the main issue of the day—Brexit:

"I don't 'believe in Farage' I believe in #Brexit. Still more I believe in democracy," he wrote. Farage would win "at least 50% of the vote" because "The working class in the north are on the move."

A Farage/Brexit Party victory, he adds, would mean the "5th Column Euro-fanatics" in the European Parliamentary Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour Party would suffer a "rout" and might even "precipitate the break-up of the Conservatives ...

"This is a tactical judgement. I'm serious about #Brexit. I'm even more serious about democracy."

Galloway's paean to Farage and his portrayal of the divisions over Brexit as an alliance of the (Northern) working class with true democrats, who uphold the 2016 referendum result, against an anti-democratic liberal, metropolitan elite is reactionary to the core.

Instead of advancing a perspective for overcoming the dangerous division in the working class that he has helped to foster, he reiterates the self-serving claims of the pro-Brexit wing of the Conservative Party and its periphery, represented by Farage, that the referendum was a supreme expression of Britain's democratic order and articulated the "will of the people."

Neither those in official political, business and media circles now insisting on the sanctity of the 2016 vote, nor those who criticise it and call for a second "people's vote" are animated one iota by democratic principles. They all support austerity measures that penalise the poor and gorge the selfish appetites of the super-rich and defend wars of conquest carried out against the popular will.

The 2016 referendum was a disastrously ill-conceived political manoeuvre by Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron, aimed solely at resolving an intractable factional dispute within the Tory party over imperialist foreign policy, in which the mass of working people should never have taken a side.

The Socialist Equality Party called for an active boycott, explaining that

though presented as a vehicle for allowing the "people" to decide, the referendum was undemocratic to the core—offering only a binary choice for workers and young people to declare support for one of two officially constituted campaigns, led by pro-business, pro-austerity, militarist, anti-worker, anti-migrant forces drawn from opposed wings of the Tory Party.

The SEP is irreconcilably hostile to the European Union (EU). But as we explained during the referendum, our opposition is from the left, not the right. The EU is a mechanism for the subjugation of the continent to the dictates of the financial markets and a forum in which competing states fight amongst themselves and conspire against the working class. The Remain forces saw membership of the EU trade bloc and its single market as essential to their ability to compete internationally and for NATO to successfully pursue an agenda of militarism and war against Russia and China.

However, the agenda of the Leave campaign was dictated exclusively by right-wing forces, including the UK Independence Party. Their aim was to end all limitations on the dictatorship of big business and the financial parasites of the City of London by breaking free of the "Brussels bureaucrats," building closer alliances with the US and striking free trade deals with rising markets in China, India and elsewhere.

The xenophobia and anti-immigrant rhetoric of Farage and his ilk was not an incidental feature of their perspective, but essential in legitimising their pro-business agenda by blaming migrants for the collapse of essential social services gutted by successive Labour and Conservative governments and subordinating the working class to the "national interest."

The SEP made its call for an active boycott as a means to maintain the political independence of the working class, fighting for the adoption of a socialist and internationalist perspective that genuinely articulated workers' interests: Not the break-up of the EU through economic nationalism and anti-immigrant xenophobia, but the development of a common offensive across the continent against both the EU and all its governments and for the United Socialist States of Europe.

Our stand was taken against the Labour Party, Trades Union Congress and some of the smaller pseudo-left groups who backed the Remain camp led by Cameron, as well as the advocates of a "Left Leave" vote, such as the Socialist Party, Socialist Workers Party and the Communist Party of Britain.

Galloway portrays his support for Farage in the European elections as a one-off. It is not.

The central argument of the "Lexit" advocates was that a break with the EU would create the basis for a future Labour government to implement a national reformist policy, free from the constraints of Brussels. Meeting these objectives supposedly outweighed any considerations of a principled class character, including the fact that the Leave campaign was being led by the political right. The "Lexit" camp's de facto goal was for national protectionist measures to be applied by a Labour government, including ending the free movement of European labour as now openly championed

by Jeremy Corbyn.

Whereas the pseudo-left groups tried vainly to distance themselves from UKIP during the referendum campaign, Galloway was an enthusiastic advocate for a political alliance with Farage.

On February 19, 2016 he was given pride of place on a shared platform with Farage for the “Grassroots Out” campaign, alongside representatives of the arch-Thatcherite wing of the Tory Party such as Bill Cash, Peter Bone and David Davis.

Galloway was introduced by Farage as a “towering figure on the left of British politics.” Galloway’s remarks centred on the claim that the “left” and “right” must unite to defend British sovereignty, including “the right to decide who can come and live and work in Britain, who we can deport from Britain, what level of deficit we can run in Britain, or what our Foreign Policy in Britain should be.”

For the UK to be able to trade freely “with the Commonwealth” and “with Brazil, with Russia, with India, with China, with South Africa, with Iran where the sun is rising, not setting, and where most of the customers in the world actually live. ... Now that is internationalism.”

The SEP wrote that Galloway did not merely muddy the class lines—he obliterated them. This was in line with the Stalinist politics that have shaped his entire career. The Second World War was, he declared, “our finest hour. When we all went forward together—Mr. Churchill and Mr. Atlee and Mr. Bevan ... That’s what we are doing here tonight. Mr. Farage and me. Miss [Kate] Hoey and Mr. [David] Davis. Left, right, left, right, forward march.”

On Twitter, he added of Farage, “we are not pals. We are allies in one cause. Like Churchill and Stalin ...”

The SEP insisted, “The first responsibility of a socialist is to oppose the mixing of class banners. In the referendum, this means rejecting all appeals for working people to fall in behind one or another faction of the bourgeoisie who are fighting between themselves solely over which strategy best upholds the interests of British imperialism.

“To do otherwise and to in any way endorse the nationalist and pro-capitalist agendas espoused by both the ‘remain’ and ‘leave’ campaigns sows dangerous political confusion, weakening the political defences of the working class at a time when the noxious fumes of nationalism, anti-migrant xenophobia and militarism are polluting the UK, Europe and the entire world.”

Later in May, Galloway gave an interview with the Stalinist *Morning Star*, telling political editor John Haylett, “Our approach to politics is to build the broadest coalitions possible to achieve things that we believe are right.”

The SEP wrote, “The ‘our’ referred to by Galloway is the politics of Stalinism that he shares with Haylett. The history of the Stalinist parties in every country is characterised by political alliances with bourgeois parties, justified as building ‘popular fronts’ in defence of democracy, etc. But there are many examples of alliances entered into by Stalinist parties with overtly right-wing bourgeois tendencies in pursuit of Stalinism’s nationalist and pro-capitalist political agenda.”

The SEP’s 2016 referendum statement drew attention to the most notorious of such alliances—the support extended to the 1931 referendum initiated by Hitler’s Nazi Party by the Stalinised Communist Party (KPD). Citing a common goal with the Nazis of using the “red referendum” to remove the Social Democrats from power in Prussia, the KPD asserted this would be a step towards a “people’s revolution.”

The SEP explained how Trotsky’s critique of the KPD was a devastating indictment of the role played today by Galloway and the pseudo-left advocates of “Lexit” in the Brexit referendum.

Trotsky explained that the “red referendum” offered no means of distinguishing the opposition of revolutionary-minded workers to the Social Democrats for their role in defending German imperialism, from the counter-revolutionary nationalist agenda of the fascists. The KPD

ceded the political initiative to the Nazis, just as Galloway et al cede leadership to UKIP and the Tory right’s nationalist and pro-capitalist opposition to the EU.

Trotsky wrote, “If one could designate his party adherence on the ballots, then the referendum would at least have the justification (in the given instance, absolutely insufficient politically) that it would have permitted a count of its forces and by that itself, separate them from the forces of fascism. But German ‘democracy’ did not trouble in its time to provide for participants in referendums the right to designate their parties. All the voters are fused into one inseparable mass which, on a definite question, gives one and the same answer ...

“Whether the fascists vote together with the Communists or not would lose all significance at the moment when the proletariat, by its pressure, overthrows the fascists and takes the power into its own hands. ... To come out into the streets with the slogan ‘Down with the Brüning-Braun [Centre Party/Social Democratic Party] government’ at a time when, according to the relationship of forces, it can only be replaced by a government of Hitler-Hugenberg [German National Party], is the sheerest adventurism ... Consequently, we consider the coincidence of voting with the fascists not from the point of view of some abstract principle, but from the point of view of the actual struggle of the classes for power, and the relationship of forces at a given stage of this struggle.”

This attempt by the KPD to short-circuit the patient struggle to win reformist workers to a revolutionary perspective proved disastrous—ending in the triumph of fascism.

Three years on from the Brexit referendum campaign, the SEP’s warnings of its negative political impact and our struggle to arm the working class with a socialist and internationalist perspective have been vindicated.

Outlining “The way forward after the Brexit referendum” on June 27, 2016, the SEP gave the lie to the crude and dismissive insults hurled by Galloway and his Blairite opponents in the Remain camp against workers on either side of the Brexit divide:

“Anger at the result is most pronounced among the younger generation, who voted overwhelmingly to Remain. Like many thoughtful workers and middle-class professionals, they did so not because they are part of an ‘out of touch elite,’ but because they were repelled by the xenophobia of the Leave leaders and the encouragement they provided to the extreme right, as exemplified by the political assassination of Labour MP Jo Cox just one week before the ballot.

“Their entirely healthy belief that a broader European community, guaranteeing freedom of movement, is more progressive than ‘Little Englander’ chauvinism is now being exploited by leading Labourites and Tories with calls for the result to be overturned by various mechanisms.

“However, those politicians and media pundits beating their breast over the Brexit vote cannot explain why the EU project proved so vastly unpopular. They are unable to do so because the Remain campaign, in its depiction of the EU as a force for good, was no less dishonest than its Leave opponents.

“The Leave vote was a cry of social distress, particularly from the poorest layers of workers, who know that the European Union has been no less ruthless in its attacks on the working class than the Tories in Britain, above all in its destruction of Greece. The Remain campaign’s eulogies to the EU, citing the authority of world leaders and bankers, could never attract support among those who have suffered most from years of austerity and unemployment.”

In opposition to unifying workers in the struggle for socialism, Galloway offers whatever political credibility he has on a plate to Nigel Farage—in the cause of furthering the spread of toxic British nationalism.

Galloway claims to have no agreement with Farage other than support for Brexit. Achieving this goal, he claims, would lead to a parting of the ways as he sets out to get a Corbyn-led Labour government elected. However, despite portraying Brexit as the gateway to a new “British Road to Socialism,” Galloway has a large measure of agreement with the nationalist agenda of the Brexit Party.

Among his tweets justifying his support for Farage was one asking, “Can anyone explain how the whole of Romania—who fought against us in WW2—can move here, but Caribbean residents who’ve been here 60 years are being deported? Is this Brexit? Really?”

Galloway’s tweet linked to the website Westmonster, set up as a Breitbart-style news portal by former UKIP donor Arron Banks and co-owned by Michael Heaver, former press adviser to Farage. Galloway has written numerous columns for the site.

He also retweeted approvingly a statement from Veterans for Brexit, hailing the opportunities provided by leaving the EU for constructing a new fleet of British warships.

In an opinion piece for RT, “Why I’m voting Brexit in the European elections,” Galloway also declared his essential agreement with Farage on curbing immigration:

“In any case, being opposed to mass immigration is not (necessarily) racist. There is nothing left-wing about mass immigration ... Everybody knows this really—only Trotskyites and globalized capitalists really believe in ‘open borders’ ...”

It is more than eight decades since the KPD’s left nationalist policies, pursued under the leadership of the Stalin-led Communist International, ended in the greatest political disaster ever suffered by the international working class. KPD leader Ernst Thälmann’s slogan, “After Hitler, our turn!” came to epitomise this historic political betrayal. Galloway’s banal modern iteration, “After Farage, Corbyn!” should be rejected with the contempt it deserves.

The author also recommends:

For an active boycott of the Brexit referendum!
Statement of the Socialist Equality Party, British section of the
International Committee of the Fourth International
[29 February 2016]



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact