

# Jeremy Corbyn spurns George Galloway's offer of an alliance of "socialists"

Thomas Scripps  
6 March 2024

The landslide election of George Galloway as MP for Rochdale in a campaign based mainly on opposition to the genocide in Gaza highlights the dangers posed to Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer ahead of a general election. Galloway's victory expressed the enormous opposition that exists among workers and young people to the Labour and Tory parties' collusion with and support for Israel's criminal assault.

Of essential significance for the political development of this growing anti-war movement is the exposure of Jeremy Corbyn's bankrupt combination of opposition to Israel's genocide against the Palestinians with an abject refusal to mount his own political challenge against Starmer and the Labour Party.

Speaking to "Not the Andrew Marr Show" on Sunday, Galloway made an extended pitch for a Corbyn-led "socialist" alliance:

"I don't know why he [Corbyn] has procrastinated so long in making a final, total break with Labour and leading something himself. If he was here now, I would say to him, you saw what happened last night, set up, announce an alliance of the remaining socialists in the country. You lead it, I'll support it, you be the leader, and let's go. Time is running out; the general election might be three months from now.

"And I wish I knew why he had procrastinated, because if he had left Labour at the moment that he should have, at the peak of his powers, he'd have taken a couple of hundred thousand people with him, and that's a force, you know, not many parties in Europe have a force like that.

"He could have led it, and he must avoid being a wasting asset. He is a very considerable asset, and everyone loves him, but he should be very careful that he doesn't waste the remaining opportunity that exists.

"If he won't then we will, we'll run ourselves, we'll support independents where we don't ourselves, and

we'll do that, but we'll be weaker because of the absence of Jeremy Corbyn at the head of it."

Corbyn gave his answer to this offer the next day.

On winning their seat in parliament, new MPs are required to be escorted into the House of Commons by two fellow MPs to swear allegiance to the monarch. Galloway had indicated his expectation that the former Labour leader would join him. But Corbyn absented himself from the chamber and observed a complete silence on the matter. Galloway apologised on his behalf: "Jeremy Corbyn was supposed to be my sponsor but then he realised he had a long-standing commitment."

Prior commitments remembered at the last minute ahead of politically difficult moments are something of a trend with Corbyn. Another occasion in 2016 saw him miss a vote on a motion calling for an investigation into Tony Blair for "misleading" parliament over the Iraq War.

Nor was any other Labour member on hand to escort Galloway. Galloway was instead partnered with Conservative Sir Peter Bottomley, who stepped in as required as Father of the House because no one else would, and Neale Hanvey of the Scottish nationalist Alba Party.

There are many valid reasons not to form a political alliance with George Galloway and his Workers' Party of Great Britain. He espouses a nationalist populism, rooted in his Stalinist political history and rejection of the revolutionary role of the international working class, which has seen him denounce "mass immigration", share platforms with Nigel Farage and Steve Bannon, and even attempt to run for Farage's Brexit Party.

The political bedrock of such manoeuvres is his advocacy of a "left-right" alliance. This is advanced as the basis for defending a supposed British national interest, whether by advocating for Brexit or for the UK not to follow US imperialism in waging wars such as Iraq and Ukraine and instead take a reduced position within a

new “multipolar world” dominated by China.

None of these are the determining reason for Corbyn’s rejection of Galloway’s hand of friendship. He wants to make absolutely clear his continuing refusal to launch a movement opposed to the Labour Party, even as he appears on innumerable platforms pledging to oppose the Gaza genocide that Starmer’s party defends to the hilt.

Galloway has said his party’s “job” is “to take chunks out of Labour, and it’s our intention to replace Labour.” His candidates, he boasts of a potential 90, will stand in seats against Labour to “win or make sure that Keir Starmer doesn’t win”. He specifically named Deputy Labour leader Angela Rayner’s constituency as a target. He also pledged support for other electoral challenges.

This is anathema to Corbyn, who was opposed to unseating right-wing Labour MPs even when the party membership organised to do so during his leadership. His likely stand as an Independent for his Islington North constituency against a Labour candidate is a purely personal exception, a necessity forced upon him while he continues to defend the Labour and trade union bureaucracy from his enforced political exile.

The immediate implications of Corbyn’s loyalty to the Labour right were highlighted by the response in the last days to Galloway’s deputy in the Workers’ Party, Chris Williamson. Immediately following Galloway’s Rochdale victory in the early hours of March 1, a BBC reporter challenged Williamson over whether he would condemn the October 7 incursion into Israel by Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups. Williamson replied that “the two main parties have not condemned or indeed called for a ceasefire; they have not condemned the Israeli regime’s activities.”

Under repeated questioning, he added, “You can’t expect to live in a situation where people have been oppressed for 75 years and not expect a reaction... What about the Palestinian people that had been massacred over nearly 76 years now actually? Where is the media outrage at that. What do you expect? In international law oppressed peoples have an absolute right to armed resistance...”

That night, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak gave his televised address outside 10 Downing Street denouncing Galloway’s election as “beyond alarming” and proposing a raft of attacks on Gaza genocide demonstrators portrayed as violent “extremists” and a threat to “our democracy.”

Tory MP David Davis, who sells himself as a defender of free speech, had agreed to escort Galloway into

parliament. But with the witch-hunt of Muslim and left-wing protesters kicked into a new gear, he withdrew after declaring that Williamson had “crossed the line”.

Williamson, a former Labour MP, was expelled from Labour for trying to defend Corbyn against the antisemitism witch-hunt. Corbyn refused to defend him in return. Nothing has changed. Davis says openly what Corbyn makes clear in practice—Williamson and Galloway have “crossed the line” and neither they nor anyone else targeted for attack can expect any fight from him in their defence.

This is the real political character of the man Galloway and others still portray as a socialist tribune. It is why Corbyn “has procrastinated so long” in breaking with the Labour Party, because he understood very well that he would have taken hundreds of thousands with him.

Galloway still makes his pitch to Corbyn because, apart from a willingness to break organisationally with the Labour Party, they are kindred political spirits who seek to prevent the working class from drawing revolutionary conclusions about British capitalism and imperialism. They stand for an exclusively parliamentary orientation, advising the ruling class to moderate its worst excesses. Throughout his career outside the Labour Party, Galloway has presented himself as “real Labour” and a challenge to the Labour Party to rediscover its supposed values.

The Socialist Equality Party has systematically exposed Corbyn’s slavish support for the Labour Party, his abandonment of opposition to NATO and Britain’s nuclear weapons while leader, and numerous other retreats. By combating political illusions in Corbyn and the chimera of a “left rebirth of the Labour Party”, we fought to create the basis for a genuine socialist alternative.

Today the mass movement against the Gaza genocide is radicalising ever broader layers of workers, above all the younger generation. They will come to understand the urgent necessity for the building of a genuinely independent socialist party and the industrial and political mobilisation of the working class in Britain and around the world against the Tory government, its Labour accomplices and all their international counterparts.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**