

MP's murder exposes role of neo-fascists in British Leave campaign

Robert Stevens**20 June 2016**

Thomas Mair, arrested last Thursday following the killing of Labour MP Jo Cox, was charged with her murder on Saturday. He was also charged with grievous bodily harm against a 77-year-old pensioner, Bernard Kenny, who intervened to try to save Cox's life; possession of a firearm with intent to commit an indictable offence; and possession of an offensive weapon.

Mair is to appear Monday at London's Old Bailey, the Central Criminal Court of England and Wales. Asked to confirm his name, he told the court, "My name is death to traitors, freedom for Britain."

His statement confirms that Mair holds fascistic views. His murderous assault on Cox underscores that the most right-wing and disoriented elements are being whipped into a frenzy by the nationalism and xenophobia surrounding Thursday's referendum on the UK's European Union membership.

The killing took place outside the library where Cox, a prominent advocate for a Remain vote, was about to hold a surgery in the town of Birstall in her West Yorkshire Batley and Spen constituency. Mair was seen by several witnesses repeatedly stabbing and shooting Cox.

Evidence began very quickly to emerge regarding Mair's connections to far-right and neo-Nazi organisations. Several witnesses told reporters that he shouted "Britain first" as he killed Cox. Britain First is the name of a splinter from the fascist British National Party.

After being questioned by police locally, Mair was driven 200 miles south to Westminster Magistrates Court in London. Prosecuting barrister David Cawthorne told the court that as Mair was being arrested, he told police officers he was a "political activist."

After Cox got out of her car, "almost immediately [Bernard Kenny] saw she was approached by an unknown male who began to attack her with a knife." Kenny rushed

to help but was stabbed by Mair in the abdomen, forcing him to retreat to a nearby sandwich shop where staff helped him.

Mair was seen to stab Cox "repeatedly." Cawthorne said that when Cox fell to the ground, Mair took a firearm from a black holdall and shot her three times. He then continued to stab her.

"Whilst doing that, Cawthorne said, "the defendant was heard to say words to the effect of 'Britain first, keep Britain independent, Britain always comes first, this is for Britain.'" Mair then left the scene "calmly" while Cox was rushed to hospital.

The prosecution summary of the crime also states: "Initial searches [of Mair's home] have recovered newspaper articles relating to Jo Cox and ideological material relating to extreme right-wing and white supremacist organisations/ individuals."

Mair subscribed, at least until 2006, to *S. A. Patriot*, a South African magazine published by the pro-apartheid White Rhino Club. Documents were published on social media and in newspapers showing he also purchased books from the US-based neo-Nazi group National Alliance.

A note in a 2006 newsletter of the London-based far-right Springbok Club read, "Thomas Mair, from Batley in Yorkshire was one of the earliest subscribers and supporters of 'S.A.Patriot.'" The note asked if subscribers knew Mair's current address.

The same edition of the newsletter advertised the latest activities of the far-right London Swinton Circle, which it supported.

The London Swinton Circle was set up as a Conservative Party fringe group in the 1960s by admirers of Tory right-wing xenophobe Enoch Powell. The newsletter noted that the London Swinton Circle publication *Tough Talking from the Right* "held a special readers' meeting and buffet in the City of London

recently, where the guest speaker was Mr. Nigel Farage MEP, the co-president of the Independence and Democracy Group in the European Parliament.” It added, “There was a packed attendance at this gathering, who heard Mr. Farage deliver a most enlightening and succinct overview of the current dangers still facing Britain if membership of the EU were to continue.”

Farage, a prominent spokesman for the official Leave campaign in this week’s EU referendum, was in 2006 and remains today the leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP). He has played a leading role in the dissemination of anti-migrant filth throughout the referendum campaign.

He is a co-founder of the anti-EU Leave organisation Grassroots Out, whose launch earlier this year was supported by Conservative MPs Peter Bone, Tom Pursglove and Liam Fox, as well as Labour MP Kate Hoey and Sammy Wilson of the Democratic Unionist Party. A key speaker at the event announcing the formation of Grassroots Out was George Galloway, the former Respect MP for Bradford West.

Just hours before Cox’s death, Farage rolled out the latest poster in his Leave campaign, depicting a long line of refugees with the caption “Breaking Point. The EU has failed us all.”

Earlier in the referendum campaign, he echoed the notorious speech of Powell, who said in 1968 that if immigration into Britain was not halted, “Like the Roman, I seem to see ‘the River Tiber foaming with much blood.’” Speaking to the BBC, Farage said, “I think it’s legitimate to say that if people feel they have lost control completely—and we have lost control of our borders completely as members of the European Union—and if people feel that voting doesn’t change anything, then violence is the next step.”

Within a month of this statement being made, Cox was brutally slain.

The London Swinton Circle maintained close connections to the Conservative Party as a fringe group. In 2014, Liam Fox and Owen Paterson, two former Conservative government cabinet ministers and now prominent Leave supporters, addressed separate meetings of the London Swinton Circle. In 1998, then-Conservative MP Neil Hamilton, who later defected to UKIP, spoke at a meeting of the Springbok Club. He was photographed at the meeting speaking in front of the national flag of apartheid-era South Africa.

Everything is being done by the right-wing supporters of the Leave campaign in Britain and internationally to dismiss the political character of Cox’s murder and its

connection to the Brexit campaign.

National Front leader Marine Le Pen told French TV Friday, “It’s clearly hard to have an explanation... above all, it’s important to hold back from any use of it for political purposes.”

In an article published in the pro-Leave *Sun* tabloid, owned by billionaire media mogul Rupert Murdoch, columnist Louise Mensch, a Tory MP from 2010 to 2012, asserted, “If [Cox’s] killer was indeed a sufferer of severe long-term mental illness, then any racist tendencies are beside the point. It is being reported that he was a neo-Nazi who had bought explosives manuals and books on how to make bombs and had done so for years—long before an EU Referendum was even thought of. His psychopathy therefore had precisely nothing whatsoever to do with Brexit.”

Mensch concluded, “The Vote Leave campaign bears no responsibility, not the tiniest sliver, for any part of what happened and neither do its supporters.”

Tory Prime Minister David Cameron and the leader of the opposition Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, who are aligned in the Remain campaign, have as yet said nothing about the blatantly political character of Cox’s murder. Speaking to the BBC Sunday, Corbyn merely stated that Cox’s murder was “an attack on democracy, an attack on the right of somebody to be elected to represent you and to go about their business,” passing over Mair’s extreme-right connections.

Today parliament will be recalled, at Corbyn’s request, for tributes to Cox. It is reported that MPs are planning to sit not in their traditional party blocs on either side of the House of Commons, but to mingle together in a show of “national unity.” This only underscores the complicity of the entire political establishment in pushing nationalist and anti-immigrant policies and legitimising far-right figures and organizations.



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