

Trial of fascist accused of murdering UK Labour MP Jo Cox begins

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The trial of Thomas Mair, the fascist charged with murdering Labour Party MP Jo Cox on June 16, began this week.

Cox, who represented the Batley and Spen constituency in West Yorkshire, was shot and stabbed multiple times in broad daylight on the way to her surgery at the local library in Birstall, near Leeds.

When asked to confirm his name at an earlier hearing before the trial, Mair told the court, "My name is death to traitors, freedom for Britain." He refused to enter a plea and the court recorded a not guilty plea.

Opening for the prosecution, Richard Whittam QC said Mair "clearly held views that provided him with a motive--utterly misplaced of course. The prosecution suggests that motive was such that he killed her because she was an MP who did not share his views."

Whittam introduced evidence to substantiate the political nature of Cox's killing. Police had discovered Mair had spent at least six days researching the attack on computers at the public library where Cox's surgery was due to take place, the court heard. The day before Cox was killed, Mair had accessed several far-right websites. These included *Occidental Observer*, which covers "politics and society from a white nationalist and anti-Semitic perspective," Whittam said.

Computer records from two days before the murder showed that Mair had also looked at Nazi material and had researched the effectiveness of .22 ammunition, including a site that answered the question, "Is a .22 round deadly enough to kill with one shot to a human's head?"

His research included viewing the Wikipedia entry for the Conservative MP Ian Gow, the last parliamentarian to be murdered, who was killed by an IRA bomb in 1990.

The jury were shown CCTV footage of the vicious

attack, in which passer-by Bernard Carter Kenny was also seriously injured. The 77-year-old former miner, who had intervened to try and help Cox, has recovered following surgery.

The jury were told Cox had been shot twice in the head and once in the chest using a .22 Weihrauch bolt-action weapon with its stock and most of its barrel removed, leaving it just 12 inches long. The effect was "what the pathologists describe as 'through and through' gunshot injuries to her hands, consistent with her hands being used to protect herself," Whittam said. She also received 15 stab wounds to her heart, lungs, abdomen and right arm from a doubled-edged dagger with a seven-inch blade.

Although the emergency services arrived promptly and carried out an emergency operation, her injuries were too traumatic and Cox died at the scene.

Cox had arrived at the library with her constituency manager Fazila Aswat, and case-worker Sandra Major. According to Aswat, Mair approached Cox from behind, stabbing and then shooting her. He then stabbed both Cox and Carter Kenny before shooting Cox again. Aswat said she could hear Mair shouting, "Britain first, this is for Britain, Britain will always come first."

Taxi driver Rashid Hussain, whose cab was immediately behind the car in which Cox had arrived, confronted Mair demanding that he leave Cox alone. Mair then told him, "You just go away, otherwise I'm going to stab you."

According to Hussain, Mair said words to the effect of "Britain first". Another witness, Jack Foster, who saw Mair shoot Cox, also says he shouted, "Britain first."

When Mair was arrested shortly afterwards, a knife and a firearm were found in his bag. As police

recovered the weapons, Mair stated, “I’m a political activist.”

When they searched his home following his arrest, police found extensive evidence of Mair’s links to fascist and far-right groups. Mair had purchased books from the US-based neo-Nazi group National Alliance, founded by William Pierce, author of the notorious racist tract *The Turner Diaries*. These included guides on how to build homemade explosives, guns and a copy of *Ich Kampfe*, a handbook for members of Hitler’s Nazi Party. He also subscribed to the South African white supremacist *S.A. Patriot*. 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.’”

What have not yet been addressed in the trial are the broader circumstances that led the undoubted fascist Mair to carry out his heinous murder of Cox.

The day of her killing was just one week before the Brexit referendum on Britain leaving the European Union (EU), in which Cox was an active and outspoken advocate of a Remain vote. A prominent advocate of imperialist military intervention in Syria, she had also campaigned publicly for Syrian refugees to be admitted to the UK. In January, she took to Twitter to denounce a demonstration in support of a vote to leave the EU held near her constituency by the neo-fascist and anti-immigrant organization, Britain First.

Both the Leave and Remain campaigns engaged in whipping up nationalism and xenophobia, particularly around the issue of immigration. The Leave campaign focused on the issue of immigration almost exclusively in the last weeks of the campaign. On the day Cox was murdered, the leading proponent of Leave, United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) leader Nigel Farage was photographed standing in front of a massive poster depicting a long line of refugees and the slogan “Breaking Point. The EU has failed us all.”

Top Labour pro-Remain figures, including deputy leader Tom Watson, declared that Labour too would no longer support free movement and would demand stronger policing of borders.

Nationalist, racist and Islamophobic violence spiked in the immediate aftermath of the Brexit referendum. On August 27, 2016, 40-year-old factory worker Arkadiusz Jó?wik, a Polish citizen, was attacked in

Harlow, Essex. He died two days later as a result of his injuries. Police are treating the attack as a hate crime and are also investigating an assault on two Polish men in Kitson Way, Harlow on the following day. In September, the National Police Chiefs’ Council released figures showing a 49 percent rise in such incidents to 1,863 in the last week in July, compared with the previous year. The following week logged a 58 percent increase in recorded incidents to 1,787.

Speaking at the end of September at a hearing at London’s City Hall, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe said hate crime showed signs of decreasing after a sharp rise in June and July, but that it had still not returned to pre-referendum levels. Hogan-Howe told the hearing, “We couldn’t say it was absolutely down to Brexit, although there was obviously a spike after it. Some of them were attributed to it because of what was said at the time. We could attribute that, and eastern Europeans were particularly targeted within the race-hate crime [category].”

In October, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published its fifth report on the UK. It noted “considerable intolerant political discourse” in the UK, particularly focusing on immigration. “It is no coincidence that racist violence is on the rise in the UK at the same time as we see worrying examples of intolerance and hate speech in the newspapers, online and even among politicians,” said ECRI Chair Christian Ahlund.



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