

Fascist Thomas Mair convicted of murdering Labour MP Jo Cox

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On Wednesday, the fascist Thomas Mair was convicted of the June 16 murder of Labour Party MP Jo Cox.

Cox represented the Batley and Spen constituency in West Yorkshire. She was shot three times and stabbed 15 times by Mair in broad daylight on the way to her surgery at the local library in Birstall, near Leeds.

Cox was killed just one week prior to the referendum vote on Britain's continued membership of the European Union.

At the conclusion of an eight-day trial, a jury at the Old Bailey in London found Mair guilty. He was sentenced to a whole life prison term by Justice Wilkie.

At the beginning of the trial Mair refused to enter a plea and the court recorded a "not guilty" plea, as is legally required. The trial was due to last longer but at the conclusion of the prosecution's case, Mair's lawyer Simon Russell Flint QC, told the jury that Mair would not be going into the witness box. Mair said nothing during the trial. It was revealed after the trial that Mair refused to answer all questions relating to Cox's killing.

After the jury returned their verdict, Mair requested to make a statement to the court. This request was refused by Justice Wilkie.

Some troubling questions emerge from the trial. Cox's killing was a high-profile political assassination—the first murder of a sitting MP since Ian Gow in 1990, who was killed in an Irish Republican Army bombing. Yet, months later, and after the conclusion of the trial, we know little more of the circumstances surrounding her death than we did a few hours after the murder took place.

There appears to have been little effort made to explore Mair's political connections. When he was apprehended shortly after the killing, he declared to the

arresting police officers that he was a "political activist". Moreover, at an earlier hearing before the trial, when asked to confirm his name, Mair told the court, "My name is death to traitors, freedom for Britain."

When they searched his home following his arrest, police found extensive evidence of indirect 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.'"

Cox had arrived at the library with her constituency manager Fazila Aswat, and caseworker Sandra Major. According to Aswat, Mair approached Cox from behind, stabbing and then shooting her. He also stabbed Bernard Carter-Kenny before shooting Cox again. Aswat said she could hear Mair shouting, "Britain first, this is for Britain, Britain will always come first." Another witness, Jack Foster, also says he shouted, "Britain first."

Britain First is the name of a UK fascist group.

Mair has almost always been portrayed in the media as being a disturbed "loner"—which he may or may not be. He had a history of mental illness and had sought help regarding his mental health state the day before he killed Cox. But given his extensive connections to far-right forces, going back to at least 1991, what investigations have been undertaken to establish

whether he did indeed act alone, whether he was acting in concert and, if so, with whom?

It was only revealed after the trial that police are still investigating who supplied Mair with the gun used to kill Cox. During the trial it emerged that Mair used a German-made .22 calibre bolt-action rifle, which had been sawn down to just 12 inches in length so it could be used with one hand. The licensed gun was supposedly stolen, along with ammunition, from a car in Keighley, West Yorkshire in August last year.

No evidence emerged in a search of Mair's home, or in the trial that he had modified the weapon, which points to the fact that he acquired it in its sawn-off state. Detective Superintendent Nick Wallen, who led the investigation into the killing said, "My suggestion is that Thomas Mair has not been responsible for cutting the weapon down. But how he—an antisocial loner with no previous history, no criminal ring or individuals around him—how he came to be in possession of that gun is very much an active line of inquiry and I would like any assistance I can get."

Citing police sources, the *Daily Mail* reported that the gun "was not thought to have fallen into the hands of Thomas Mair, 53, until about two weeks before he struck in Batley, West Yorkshire." The *Telegraph* and ITV also report that Mair acquired the gun around two weeks before he killed Cox—months after it was stolen. Yet in its report on the trial the *Financial Times* commented of the police investigation, once again without citing supportive evidence, "They have found no indication that Mair was part of a criminal or far-right network that could have supplied him with the gun."

Politically the trial was a cover-up.

Cox was killed at the height of the Brexit referendum campaign during which she was an active and outspoken advocate of a Remain vote. Among the items found in the search of Mair's home was a ring binder containing a press cutting of an article published on May 26 in a local newspaper calling for a Remain vote in the referendum. Cox wrote, "I believe that the patriotic choice is to vote for Britain to remain inside the EU where we are stronger, safer and better off than we would be on our own." Near the ring binder were press cuttings about Anders Breivik, the Norwegian fascist who killed 77 members of the youth movement of the Norwegian Labour Party in 2011.

Despite this, there was a decision by the prosecution not to make the Brexit referendum a factor in their case. The *Guardian* reported Wednesday, "Prosecutors acknowledge privately that the febrile atmosphere in which the EU referendum campaign was waged appears certain to have contributed to Mair's decision to murder his MP, but this played no part in their case. There was no need to refer to the referendum in order to establish his guilt."

Not to raise Mair's political motives in this way is extraordinary. But politically, to do so would cut across efforts by all sides to sanitise their own xenophobic stance. During the referendum, the Leave and Remain Campaigns competed over how best to clamp down on immigration—in or out of the EU. And following the Leave victory, Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May has committed her government to carrying out Brexit negotiations including a pledge to end the freedom of movement of EU citizens into Britain—a pledge also held up by Labour

Instead, the official narrative is that Cox must be held up as an example of a supposedly "inclusive" patriotism, whose maiden parliamentary speech declaring that "we are far more united and have far more in common with each other than things that divide us" can be cited by anyone to excuse their own rotten politics. To this end, sentencing Mair, Justice Wilkie said to him, "You affect to be a patriot... In the true meaning of the word she [Cox] was a patriot."



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