

Participants in the anti-Trump rallies in the UK speak out

Our reporters
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Demonstrations continued in Europe over the weekend against the presence of US president Donald Trump, a widely hated figure.

On Sunday, several thousand people protested against Trump in the Finnish capital of Helsinki, ahead of his arrival for a meeting in the city with Russian president Vladimir Putin. Reuters reported that 16 demonstrations were expected to be held in Helsinki on Sunday and Monday.

Protests against Trump's visit to Britain continued Saturday with thousands demonstrating in Edinburgh and outside the Turnberry golf resort in Ayrshire in south-western Scotland. Turnberry is one of two golf courses Trump owns in Scotland. Police mounted a massive show of force, involving 5,000 officers and costing £5 million [US\$6.6 million].

On Friday, protests against Trump's visit were held in London and various towns and cities across the UK.

Socialist Equality Party members and supporters intervened at protests in Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield, and distributed copies of the SEP statement, "What does it really mean to 'Stop Trump?' The working class must be mobilised against capitalism and for socialism".

In Leeds, a rally in Dortmund Square was attended by 600 protesters, who after listening to speeches marched through the city centre.

Veteran Trotskyist Barbara Slaughter addressed the rally. She said, "Tens of thousands of people are marching today to express their disgust and opposition to the policies of Donald Trump and the American government. Trump is not an aberration, but a living expression of the rotten, degenerate condition of the world capitalist system.

"The big question that faces workers and youth all over the world is how the fight against everything Trump represents should be conducted and on what perspective."

Referencing a previous speaker's support for both Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party and the Labour Party in Britain, Slaughter argued, "Hillary Clinton does not represent the working people of America in any way. She was the favoured candidate of Wall Street. She was secretary

of state for many years under President Obama and advocated every war waged by the US since Iraq.

"Rather than protecting the rights of refugees fleeing from the war-torn countries of Central and South America, she boasted that on numerous occasions she had voted to make money available to build a barrier to stop them from entering the US."

On Labour's record, Slaughter explained the situation facing WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange and took note of the recent vigil outside the Ecuadorian Embassy in London where Assange has been incarcerated for six years. "He is being hounded by the US government because, along with Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning, he exposed the war crimes and political conspiracies of the American government against the peoples of the world.

"The Labour Party did not support the vigil. Nor did any of the pseudo-left groups that claim to be defenders of democratic rights. They have all totally abandoned Assange. Jeremy Corbyn himself has not uttered one word in Assange's defence since he was elected to the leadership of the Labour Party in 2015. He is busy proving to the British ruling class that he is a 'safe pair of hands' if the [Conservative Party's Theresa] May government falls and Labour wins the next general election.

"There is only one way to oppose Trump and the capitalist system he defends. The working class must unite across national boundaries in a common struggle against this system to end austerity and war. And that requires the building of a new, international, revolutionary, socialist party, the Socialist Equality Party."

Slaughter received a round of applause and cheers from a portion of the crowd.

Bethany, a PhD student, told WSWs reporters, "I came down here today in opposition to the rise of neo-fascist politics, be that through Trump or what is happening in Britain—it is permeating the political landscape. It would be easy to criticise Trump in isolation, but we need to stand up to Trump in the context of what is happening in our country, in terms of immigration, racism and the rise of fascism in

Europe.

“Trump is a symptom of something much wider going on historically and politically. Trump’s policies and image can’t be considered in isolation from previous presidents and once Trump is out, we can’t return to a previous complacency.”

Stan attended with Rosie and Jenny, who are all sixth form pupils at Archbishop Holegate School in nearby York.

Stan explained he had aspirations to work in the film industry, especially in documentaries, to “highlight the problems in the world.”

“There are so many problems in America, problems with the economy, social issues, poverty, lack of jobs.” He said. “There is great fear for the future and Trump and his supporters have harnessed that fear and blamed all the problems on immigration.

“I believe that most Trump voters are good people. They have been conditioned to believe that the problems they face have been caused by immigrants and not by the right-wing government, which is whipping up resentment between groups to carry out policies that benefit a very small minority.”

Sally, a support worker from Leeds, was holding a placard highlighting the scandal of contaminated drinking water in Flint, Michigan:

“I am carrying this to highlight the situation in the city of Flint in the US where the people are being poisoned by the water supply. It is unbelievable that people don’t have access to clean water in an advanced country like the United States of America. It should be a basic human right to have clean water.

“Trump’s policies are utterly divisive. The government is trying to sow divisions, making neighbour blame neighbour, instead of understanding the truth that it is all about the power of big business.”

Tahmineh, a post-graduate student in bio-medical science at Leeds University, commented, “We live in a dangerous world because governments, especially in America, are spreading hate in an attempt to separate people.

“I am an Iranian and I can see that Trump’s policies are directed against the people of Iran, and other countries, of course. The US government claims it is fighting terrorism, but it is a lie. It is all about the interests of big business. For example, take his support for Saudi Arabia. The children of Yemen are in a terrible condition. They are starving. Normal people do not support what Trump and his government are doing. But they have the power and they do what they want.

“It is not just Trump as an individual, of course. It could not be the work of just one person. He represents a whole layer. He represents capitalism.”

In Manchester, around 2,000 people demonstrated against

Trump in the city’s main Albert Square.

Beth from the Abortion Rights Campaign told the WWS, “I am here today because I believe that Trump is a threat against pro-choice, and what he is doing affects women not just in the US, but here as well. Trump will roll back the gains that have been made, legitimise and give life to the so-called pro-life movement here.

“I believe that Trump is flippant and reckless in the way he behaves, and he does not represent working class people. He has exploited these people, who are downtrodden. He is anti-democratic and has made attacks on civil liberties.”

Zoran , an unemployed worker, attended the protest “because I am sick of the right-wing Brexit and the fascist Trump. He is out of control in what he is doing.

“With his being elected, the risk of war is greater, and with all the economic problems and tariffs being imposed, what’s going to happen next? I think he is a fascist the way he has treated the Mexican children. It’s disgusting, locking kids up in cages, separating them from their parents.”

Roger, a regular reader of the WWS, told us, “What has brought me here is my abhorrence of imperialism, war, neo-liberalism and fake democracy.”

In Sheffield, around 2,000 attended a protest outside the City Hall.

Helen, a 26-year-old former student from Sheffield, who is unemployed after losing her job through ill health, said, “Trump is a powerful man with the world literally at his fingertips. He is the most powerful person on earth and it scares me to even say that.

“I’ve noticed the large number of placards and banners and most of the slogans are directed at Trump’s treatment of women. It should be an issue we have to oppose, but the fear of war is far more important to me.

“It’s disgusting the way refugees are treated across the world, and the Mexican families being abused by Trump and his aides should stand out more.

“I consider myself a socialist, not a member of any party but becoming more aware of the class differences. All the wealth people like Trump have and the poverty of the homeless have made me more politically aware. I support Jeremy Corbyn, but can’t bring myself to join the Labour Party.”



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