

Neo-Nazi planned assassination of second UK Labour MP

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The plot by a neo-Nazi, Jack Renshaw, to murder Labour Party MP Rosie Cooper was finally revealed following the end of a seven-week trial at London's Old Bailey.

Renshaw was on trial, accused of being a member of a fascist organisation, National Action, which was banned by the Conservative government in November 2016 and proscribed as a terrorist group. Last July, the leader of National Action, Christopher Lythgoe, was jailed for eight years after being found guilty of membership of the group. Another fascist, Matthew Hankinson, was jailed for six years for membership. They had been arrested by police who were investigating the plot to kill Cooper after a tip-off.

That court heard evidence that Lythgoe was aware that Renshaw, then aged 22, intended to kill Cooper, the MP for West Lancashire. At the beginning of that trial, Renshaw pleaded guilty to preparing to kill Cooper and admitted that he purchased a replica 19-inch Roman Gladius sword for that purpose.

He had spent just under a month planning to kill Cooper, explaining, "I wanted to send a message to the state that if you beat a dog long enough it bites—she [Cooper] just happened to be my local MP."

He planned to "turn up at one of her social events" and then "hack" at her jugular vein with the knife. He also admitted planning to kill a police officer, Victoria Henderson, who was investigating him for sexual offences, including grooming children for sex.

The plot to kill Cooper was initiated just one year after the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox by the fascist Thomas Mair, who stabbed and shot her to death outside a library in her west Yorkshire constituency of Batley and Spen. The killing took place on June 16, 2016, just one week before the referendum on the UK's European Union (EU) membership.

National Action, which was established in 2013, was banned after it hailed the murder of Cox.

At their trial, Lythgoe, Renshaw and four other defendants denied membership of National Action between December 2016 and September 2017. The court heard that just days before the ban, Lythgoe sent out an e-mail to National Action members as to how they would respond: "It's going to be a piece of p**s. We discard the name and symbolism of National Action... The important thing is that what we've built up stays together... Secondly, at the regional level we should all split up into autonomous regional groups. Though behind the scenes it'll still be run much the same. We'll keep away from the proactive stuff for now... just focus on effective activism."

The plot to murder Cooper came to light after a former National Action member, Robbie Mullen, contacted Matthew Collins, a member of the Hope not Hate anti-racist organisation in July 2017. Mullen became disillusioned with the fascist outfit and began to inform on its activities that April.

Collins said he received a message from Mullen while on holiday in Portugal, asking him to "call me ASAP". When they spoke the following morning, Mullen told Collins that Renshaw had discussed killing Cooper during a meeting in a pub in Warrington.

Lythgoe was found not guilty of encouragement to murder Cooper, but the jury heard a tape recording of him telling Mullen that he would prefer it if a Conservative MP, Amber Rudd, was killed instead.

The jury failed to reach a verdict on whether Renshaw was a member of National Action after it was banned, leading to a retrial, which began last month. At his latest trial, another jury were also not able to reach unanimous or majority verdicts on whether Renshaw was a member of National Action. He will be sentenced

on May 17, in relation to his admission that he planned to kill Cooper.

Still in his early 20s, Renshaw has been heavily involved in fascist organisations since his youth. Aged 15, he joined the English Defence League (EDL), founded by Tommy Robinson before joining the British National Party (BNP). He met its then leader, Nick Griffin, and became a leading figure in BNP Youth. In October 2014, he stood as a candidate for the BNP in a Blackpool council ward by-election. As a BNP member he worked for a period at the European Parliament in Brussels. He was forced to leave a university course at Manchester Metropolitan University in 2015 after an investigation into his incitement of racial hatred.

By 2015, Renshaw was a member of National Action. At a “Yorkshire Forum for Nationalists” event of the group, he called for Jews to be “eradicated”. Described as a National Action “spokesman” he stated, “Hitler was right in many senses but you know where he was wrong? He showed mercy to people who did not deserve mercy... As nationalists we need to learn from the mistakes of the National Socialists and we need to realise that, no, you do not show the Jew mercy.”

Last July, Renshaw was charged by the Crown Prosecution Service for incitement to racial hatred related to statements made at a demonstration in 2016 in Blackpool of another fascist group, the North West Infidels (where he described Jews as “parasites”) and at a Yorkshire Forum for Nationalists event the previous month.

In January 2018, Renshaw was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison for the offences.

Between this conviction and sentencing he was jailed, in June, after being found guilty of four counts of inciting a child to engage in sexual activity, after grooming two boys online, aged 13 and 15.

The cases of Renshaw and Mair and the horrific massacre of 50 Muslim worshippers—carried out at two mosques in New Zealand by Australian fascist Brenton Tarrant last month—confirm the warnings made by the Socialist Equality Party that a significant layer of the far right are now engaged in the planning and carrying out of terrorist activity, including the killing of elected politicians.

Under conditions of a systemic crisis of the capitalist system and mounting social and political tensions in every country, fascist and other right-wing forces are

targeting those they consider to be the “left” and “Marxists”. On March 3, while Renshaw was appearing in court, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn was violently attacked by a pro-Brexit thug who had previously stated on a Facebook page that he would like to kill opponents of Brexit.

The author recommends:

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