The fight against Trump must become the struggle for socialism

Chris Marsden
4 June 2019

Tens of thousands throughout the UK are protesting US President Donald Trump's state visit.

The nauseating display of official pageantry and sycophancy stands in stark contrast to the outpouring of popular hostility to Trump and the fascistic politics he personifies. A massive demonstration is expected today in London as Trump meets with Prime Minister Theresa May, with other protests taking place in towns and cities throughout the country.

For millions, Trump is associated with the grotesque enrichment of billionaires, the gutting of welfare provision and anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim racism. He is the leading representative of a worldwide re-emergence of the far right, represented as well by such figures as Marine Le Pen in France, Matteo Salvini in Italy, Viktor Orban in Hungary and Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage in Britain.

Workers and young people want to fight back against the growing danger of war and dictatorship, spearheaded by Trump's threats against China and Russia. But the precondition for such a struggle is the rejection of all calls for an alliance with rival capitalist powers and parties, all of which are turning sharply towards protectionist measures, rearmament and authoritarianism.

Leading figures across the political spectrum are claiming to oppose Trump because of his racist immigration policy and attacks on democratic rights. Within a Labour Party rent by factional infighting, bitterly opposed forces profess that they can "Unite Against Trump."

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn declared in April that he would not attend yesterday's state banquet in Trump's honour due to the US president's "racist and misogynistic rhetoric." He is due to speak at today's protest in London. Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry branded Trump a "racist and sexual predator." Mayor of London Sadiq Khan declared his stand against "one of the most egregious examples of a growing global threat" from the far right.

This is so much hot air. The prostration of these figures before US imperialism is made clear by their complicity in the arbitrary detention, under conditions the UN describes as tantamount to torture, of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange. Khan, the mayor of the city where the world's leading political prisoner is detained, has said nothing, while Corbyn and Thornberry have lined up behind the witch hunt of Assange by calling for his extradition to Sweden.

Their anti-Trump rhetoric expresses the fact that, as astute representatives of big business, they know that mass political sentiment is moving sharply to the left even as official politics shifts ever further to the right. There is no principled content to their opposition to Trump. The real substance of their conflict with Trump and his allies within the UK is over how best to defend the interests of British imperialism under conditions where tensions between the US and Europe, above all Germany, are at the breaking point.

The pro-Brexit Tories, the Brexit Party and their "Left Leave" apologists such as the Socialist Party, the Socialist Workers Party, Counterfire and individuals such as George Galloway portray themselves as "true democrats" who are honouring the 2016 referendum vote. But Trump has made clear that the real agenda of Brexit is a reinforced alliance of British imperialism with the US against Europe.

Trump embraced Brexit in 2016 as a means of breaking up the European Union along national lines. He has described the EU as a "foe," placing Europe alongside China and Russia as a geo-strategic threat to US hegemony. In advance of this week's state visit, he used Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* and *Sunday Times* to again come out for Brexit, back hard-line Brexiteer Boris Johnson to replace May as leader of the Conservative Party and prime minister, and call for Farage to head up talks on breaking with the EU.

Trump made clear his animosity towards the European Union, advising the British government: "If they don't get what they want, I would walk away." A trade deal with the US would, he promised, more than compensate the UK for any loss in trade with the EU, and it could be concluded "much quicker" than in a year. "We have the potential to be an incredible trade partner with the UK… I think much bigger than the European Union," he declared.

© World Socialist Web Site

Trump then warned the UK to "be very careful" not to jeopardise intelligence-sharing with the US as part of the "Five Eyes" network alongside Canada, Australia and New Zealand by working with China's Huawei on its 5G network.

His national security advisor, John Bolton, made clear the military dimensions of such an alliance, telling the *Daily Telegraph* that Brexit "will help us in NATO in particular to have another strong and independent country that will help NATO to be more effective, and that has to be a plus."

Trump has even used Wednesday's D-Day commemorations to snub Europe, joining a British-led event in Portsmouth, from where US and UK troops were dispatched to wage war on a continent occupied by Germany.

Opposition to tying the fate of British imperialism so closely to the US is what motivates those political figures posturing as democratic opponents of Trump. They are not seeking to align themselves fully behind Germany and France against the US, and fear being tied exclusively to Europe. Rather, their efforts to maintain relations with the EU are coupled with an appeal to that wing of US imperialism represented most clearly by the Democrats, who are opposed to Trump's unilateralism because it endangers Washington's interests.

The *Guardian*'s diplomatic editor, Patrick Wintour, explained: "Since the signing of the Atlantic charter in 1941, the central tenet of British foreign policy is that the UK can act as a bridge between the US and Europe, or as a pivot on which transatlantic relations turn… For all the talk about strengthening links with the US and the markets of the future, there will be many in Whitehall urging caution about letting the bridge to Europe fall into disrepair, and ridiculing Trump's suggestion that a US trade deal can compensate for the loss of European markets."

Outgoing Liberal Democrat leader Vince Cable told the *Financial Times* that Trump "is doing what he can to destroy the international rules-based order on which the government's 'Global Britain' strategy is based… Mr Trump's crude mercantilism—based on bilateral trade balances—will not suit a country such as the UK with a trade surplus… And his crude protectionism has placed the world on the brink of trade war between the US and China, with an exposed Brexit Britain stuck in the crossfire."

Considerations of imperialist foreign policy led Corbyn to temper his complaints against Trump's state visit by noting the "important" relationship between the UK and the US and stating that he would welcome a meeting with the president to "discuss all matters of interest." In government, he would do whatever was necessary to maintain relations with US imperialism, as has been proven by his commitment to NATO and the retention of Britain's US-controlled Trident nuclear missile system.

Whatever high-sounding rhetoric is used, history, above all that of the 1930s, proves that there is only one endpoint to a policy of manoeuvres between hostile imperialist powers. The post-World War II "rules-based" order has broken down irrevocably, bringing the danger of war once again. Germany's Angela Merkel has already declared, "The times when we could rely on others are over," and that "We have to create a European intervention unit with which Europe can act on the ground where necessary."

The working class has no ally among the ruling elites of Britain and Europe in the fight against austerity, far-right reaction and militarism. Amid a deepening economic crisis, workers have faced savage austerity and had their democratic rights trampled on by all of Europe's governments. The sole concern of all of them is that Europe's major corporations and banks be positioned to compete with their US competitors as well as other rivals, and that their armies be equipped with ever more deadly weapons of war.

The Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) stand for an independent social and political intervention by the working class.

In the US, the SEP has alerted workers to the "palace coup" strategy by the Democrats and sections of the Republicans in their conflict with Trump, emphasising that their differences are over whether US aggression should focus more on Russia or China, and warning that victory of the anti-Trump faction of the ruling class would offer only an alternative route to war.

The European sections of the ICFI have insisted that the struggle against the re-emergence of the far-right must be directed against Europe's governments and their policies. This means the unification of the British, European, American and international working class against capitalism—a struggle already unfolding in an eruption of class struggle throughout the world.

As Leon Trotsky explained, the task of the working class is "to follow not the war map but the map of the class struggle." This means the building of revolutionary leadership—parties of the ICFI—to take forward the fight for the United Socialist States of Europe.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site