

UK Prime Minister Sunak joins hands with Italy's Meloni over immigration at far-right rally

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Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's weekend visit to Rome was a marker for the lurch to far-right, anti-migrant politics by the British ruling class. Without any social programme to offer the working class, capitalist parties across Europe are seeking to build constituencies based on the xenophobic nationalism associated with the fascist right.

Sunak was attending the Atreju festival in Rome, organised by Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni's ruling Brothers of Italy party. The convention was inaugurated in 1988 by the youth wing of the neo-fascist Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance) party, of which the Brothers are the political heirs. Meloni, a star of Italy's neo-fascist youth movements and a Mussolini admirer, was the event's organiser for many years.

Its name is taken from the protagonist of the 1984 film *The NeverEnding Story*, who must stop the Nothing, a dark, ineffable force, from engulfing the world. The intended allegory is not hard to draw. The theme of this year's convention was "Welcome back, Italian pride", with speeches focussing on immigration and the declining birth rate.

Previous attendees include Donald Trump's fascist former advisor Steve Bannon and Hungary's far-right Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Attendees this year included Santiago Abascal of Spain's Francoist Vox party and Elon Musk.

Sunak delivered a short, ardently anti-democratic speech, peppered with fulsome praise for Meloni. He paid her the highest compliment a Tory is capable of giving, given that Winston Churchill would be too much of a stretch, comparing Meloni with former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who set out to "revive her country both domestically and on the international stage" and "never shied away from the hard choices and the big

issues."

"Today," he continued, "there is no issue to which we need to apply Thatcher's radicalism and drive more than illegal migration."

Denouncing the arrival of asylum seekers on British and Italian shores—fleeing homelands devastated by imperialist-driven wars and climate and economic crises—as the work of "criminal gangs" who "exploit our humanity," Sunak warned that migrants would "overwhelm our countries".

Thatcher notoriously referred to the UK being "swamped" by immigration. Sunak extended this filthy rhetoric to cover the whole of Europe.

He went a step further, warning that, without a crackdown, "Our enemies will also see that we are unable to deal with this and they will also increasingly use migration as a weapon, deliberately driving people to our shores to try to destabilise our societies." Ignoring the problem "would put our countries at risk."

He declared it "a fundamental tenet of sovereignty that it is us who should decide who comes to our countries and not criminal gangs." If stopping asylum seekers crossing the border meant "amend[ing] post-war frameworks then we must do that."

By "post-war frameworks", Sunak means the international human rights legislation and treaties governing the treatment of migrants and asylum seekers implemented under immense popular pressure following the horrors of Nazism and the Second World War.

He went on to explain that both he and Meloni have been battling to overturn these laws, with Meloni having a deportation scheme blocked by judges in October, and Sunak the same in November.

Italy has since signed a deal with Albania—whose Prime Minister Edi Rama was also in Rome—whereby the

Balkan country will hold thousands of asylum seekers in centres exempted from Albanian law on Italy's behalf while the Italian government processes their claims.

Sunak is pushing through legislation to declare Rwanda safe by parliamentary fiat, deport asylum seekers to the African country from the UK and permanently settle them there. He has already indicated to the right-wing of the Tory party his intention to do more to overrule the European Convention of Human Rights.

The British prime minister gave his speech in Italy on the same weekend that Donald Trump channelled the spirit of Adolf Hitler to tell a campaign rally immigrants were "poisoning the blood of our country." He posted on social media afterward, "Without borders... you don't have a country."

By alleging that "our enemies" will "use migration as a weapon", Sunak came even closer than Trump did on this occasion to the Great Replacement fascist conspiracy theory—which claims shadowy elitist forces, in most versions the Jews—are engineering the replacement of white majorities by non-whites, especially Muslims.

It is significant that Musk—who tweeted his support for the theory in November, becoming its most prominent advocate—participated in the same event. He had been personally interviewed by Sunak a few weeks earlier at a summit on artificial attendance in Britain, also attended by Meloni.

Media commentators have made much of the close relationship, personal and political, between Sunak and Meloni. But while the British and Italian prime ministers seem particularly enamoured, and their parties share similar rhetorical styles, Meloni has hardly had difficulty making friends in Europe.

She is president of the European Conservatives and Reformists group in the European Parliament, founded largely on the initiative of the British Tories as a more right-wing alternative to the European People's Party and currently composed of 20 different parties from 16 countries.

She has become Europe's border-guard-in-chief, working closely alongside President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen to tighten Europe's borders through agreements with the North African states to brutally police their shoreline, and by imposing sweeping restrictions on the right to asylum. The pair have made heavily publicised joint visits to Tunisia and the Italian island of Lampedusa.

Meloni is looked on favourably because she represents a European far-right shorn of any hesitation over supporting

NATO's war against Russia in Ukraine. Sunak emphasised this point in his Rome speech, declaring, "If we give the Ukrainians the tools, they will finish the job, so let's get them the weapons and the ammunition they need. There is nothing conservative about allowing a country's sovereignty to be violated."

He concluded by thanking Italy for its "Staunch stance... alongside NATO in standing up to aggression on our continent."

On Tuesday, Italy announced that one of its frigates would join a naval provocation against Iran being organised by the United States in the Red Sea, joining Britain, Canada, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain. The deployment is part of the NATO powers' support for Israel's genocidal war in Gaza.

Meloni hosted UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron the same day, as part of his diplomatic tour to lobby "for unity in the European approach to the Israel-Hamas war, Ukraine and efforts to tackle unauthorised migration," in the words of the *Independent*.

This is the face of European politics today as it is reshaped by the ruling class, founded on the principles of war with Russia, a war against migrants and support for genocide in Gaza.

The drive by the imperialist powers to carve up the world and its people demands a stepped-up assault on the democratic rights and living standards of the working class, inevitably involving the promotion of fascist traditions and policies like those represented by Meloni.

The Tory Party confirmed as much in their response to the BBC's description of the conference in Italy as a "far-right rally". A party spokesperson told the *Daily Telegraph*, "The Beeb will happily brand democratically elected politicians like Meloni and [recently elected President of Argentina Javier] Milei far-right at the drop of a hat," before adding, "BBC bosses should rethink their careless categorisation".

Milei, welcomed by imperialist governments internationally, is an apologist of the military dictatorships which ruled Argentina in the 1970s and has promised economic "shock therapy" against the working class.



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