

Tommy Robinson holds far-right rally in London weeks after UK election

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Up to 30,000 supporters of fascist leader Tommy Robinson rallied in London on Saturday. It was the largest such protest in living memory, promoted as a “patriotic show of force” under the banner “Uniting the Kingdom”.

They marched from the Royal Courts of Justice to Trafalgar Square where far-right speakers including actor Laurence Fox, former UK Independence Party (UKIP) candidate Carl Benjamin, Pentecostal preacher Bishop Ceirion Dewar, and former Tory MP Andrew Bridgen spewed out anti-immigrant poison.

Robinson began by hailing Britain’s Armed Forces, “Let them know how grateful we are for the service they give.” Simon Bean MBE, who served with the British Army in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and the Middle East and addressed the rally in military uniform, declared, “I will keep fighting ‘til I’m lying on the streets choking on my own blood.”

Fox told those assembled, “There are no political solutions. You are the solution—each and every one of you. Take back your country and unite the United Kingdom—God Bless the King!”

Benjamin declared that immigration had turned Britain into “an occupied country,” with “foreigners taking the benefits that were meant for us”. He told the crowd the liberal political class “don’t recognise your existence” but, “you are footing the bill... you are the underclass they seek to create.”

Robinson called Saturday’s rally as part of efforts to create an organised far-right movement off the back of the large vote for Nigel Farage’s Reform UK. Robinson asked of the recent general election, “How many people here voted for Labour?” and “How many people here voted for the Conservative Party?”, both questions eliciting boos from the crowd. But a sea of hands and cheers followed the same question for Reform UK, with Robinson appealing to an absent Farage to stop expelling his supporters from his party: “This is your constituency

Nigel”.

2024 general election

Saturday’s rally confirms the warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site* following the July 4 general election: that Labour’s right-wing programme and the capitulation of “lefts” such as Jeremy Corbyn, who is determined to block a mass socialist movement in the working class, risked driving sections of workers into the arms of the fascists.

While Labour came to power with a 174-seat majority, its share of the popular vote is the lowest for an incoming government in history. An election contest between two parties of austerity and war produced the largest abstention rate since the granting of universal suffrage, with Labour’s vote share dropping from 41 percent in 2017 under Jeremy Corbyn, to just 33.8 percent.

Labour picked up a swathe of Tory-held seats thanks in large part to the surge in support for Reform UK. Reform UK won five seats, but ran second in a further 98 constituencies, and came within 10,000 votes of winning in 10. In 15 seats taken by Labour, the combined Tory and Reform UK vote was higher than Labour’s.

The WSWS warned that Reform UK’s 14 percent vote total “is a warning that the rise of Trump and Le Pen is rooted in a global process of betrayals of working class interests.”

Pseudo-left counter-protest: a dead-end

The political bankruptcy of the official “left” in Britain was on display at a counter-demonstration of around 3,000 people called by Stand Up to Racism (SUTR) led by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and whose featured speaker was Corbyn.

Corbyn joined others including SUTR co-convenor Weyman Bennett, in shielding the Labour Party and the trade union bureaucracy in their role as chief enablers for the growth of the far-right.

Never mentioning Starmer by name, Corbyn stated: “If a government, any government anywhere in Europe fails to deal with the issue of the crisis of falling living standards, the crisis of poverty, the millions that access food banks, all across this continent, then the blame culture against minorities, refugees and others will take over, that is the atmosphere in which the far-right and the fascists thrive.

“So our campaign is, yes, to oppose racism in any form, but is also for a more decent, more equal, more inclusive society that gives hope to all people, in all circumstances. That is what unites us together.”

A report of the rally in *Socialist Worker* saw Corbyn echo these themes, telling the SWP, “The conditions under which fascism arose in the past in Europe, particularly in Germany, are beginning to be here again... We need to push back against it by serious economic policies and demanding the redistribution of wealth.”

But Corbyn opposes launching a party to challenge Labour’s pro-capitalist programme. Needless to say, the words “capitalism”, “imperialist war”, “working class” and “socialist revolution” were absent as Corbyn dished out his familiar reformist bromides.

The political consequence of Corbyn’s politics is the blocking of a revolutionary socialist and internationalist opposition to the real source of the far-right danger: the capitalist system.

For this reason, there can be no struggle against the far right without the systematic mobilisation of the working class against the Starmer Labour government and its defenders in the trade union bureaucracy. This is underscored by the actions of the Labour government since it took power less than a month ago.

History shows the far-right develops on the basis of decaying capitalism, expressed in extreme social inequality, militarism, the collapse of democracy and the drive to world war. The Starmer government confronts the working class as the embodiment of these morbid symptoms, ramping up NATO’s war against Russia, committing billions more to the military; targeting

immigrants and asylum-seekers for repression; and whipping-up “country first, party second” nationalism and patriotism.

Labour’s Home Secretary Yvette Cooper responded to youth riots in Leeds provoked by police violence, racism and austerity, with a law-and-order crackdown, backing gestapo tactics by police against immigrant families, and emboldening the far-right.

Starmer’s suspension of seven MPs for supporting a toothless amendment to abolish the two-child cap on benefits shows he will brook no opposition. Chancellor Rachel Reeves has today announced savage spending cuts to fill a £22 billion “black hole”. Her measures include ending winter fuel payments to around 10 million pensioners “to fix the foundations of our economy”, with Reeves warning that Labour’s autumn budget “will involve taking difficult decisions to meet our fiscal rules across spending, welfare and tax.”

Saturday’s counter-protest concealed everything that must be tackled by the working class. Eddie Dempsey, Assistant General Secretary of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT), declared that concerns over living standards, jobs and wages were “class issues”, but failed to mention his union’s role in sabotaging the 2022-23 strike wave. RMT officials divided and betrayed the largest combined rail strikes in decades, working with the rail companies and the Conservative government to impose sellout pay deals. RMT leader Mick Lynch cynically exploited his standing as a “left” to head off calls for a general strike and corral workers behind an incoming Labour government.

The Socialist Equality Party will be commenting further on the weekend’s events, including Robinson’s arrest and interrogation under Prevention of Terrorism legislation. Such state repression merely emboldens the far-right, allowing its leaders to pose as martyrs. The emergence of far-right movements in Britain, across Europe and the US can be combatted and undercut through the development of a socialist mass movement of the working class internationally, uniting workers against capitalist austerity, authoritarianism and war.



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