

Elon Musk proclaims inevitable “civil war” after UK’s anti-migrant riots

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Elon Musk’s intervention in the UK’s far-right riots highlights the multi-hundred billionaire’s role in the cultivation of a global fascist movement.

On August 4, Musk tweeted under a video of a far-right riot in Liverpool, “Civil war is inevitable”, now viewed 9.6 million times. The video was originally posted by the British fascist leader Tommy Robinson. Three days earlier, Musk replied with two exclamation marks to a post from Robinson attacking British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer’s response to the riots, helping it reach 4.2 million views.

A spokesperson for Starmer responded to the August 4 post by saying tamely, “There’s no justification for comments like that.”

Musk then tweeted (with 5.6 million views) one of the slogans of the far-right mobs, “#TwoTierKeir”, which absurdly accuses the UK government of policing right-wing thugs disproportionately harshly compared to left-wing or Muslim protesters.

Another Musk tweet (28 million views) asked, “Is this Britain or the Soviet Union?” in reference to the arrest of a man on the charge of posting a message “grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character”. Two more (108 million views between them) promoted material designed to stoke the narrative of migrants as a dangerous criminal class in the UK.

This week, Musk retweeted a fake *Telegraph* newspaper headline, “Keir Starmer considering building ‘emergency detainment camps’ on the Falkland Islands”, alleging they would be used to detain far-right rioters, depicting them as embattled martyrs.

The episode is a window onto the development of 21st century fascism, in which a racist and xenophobic minority are emboldened by a social media audience gathered around figureheads like Nigel Farage, Robinson, Laurence Fox, and others not as well known nationally but with a considerable global following.

Far-right agitators trade in the fears and angry feelings of inadequacy brought about by economic insecurity, lack of purpose and broken communities, turning them against the

racialised scapegoats of Muslims and asylum seekers provided by mainstream politicians and media.

They gain traction under conditions in which social and political solidarity has been undermined by the prolonged disintegration of the labour movement and systemised attacks on working class and socialist politics relentlessly promoted by academia, the mainstream media and the major political parties, with the former Stalinist and social reformist parties such as Labour in the forefront.

This has left many workers without a clear sense of their common interests as part of an international class and prey to the nationalist witch-hunting of foreign workers and migrants as competition for jobs, education, housing and health services that have been brought to the brink of collapse by decades of cuts and underfunding.

Musk is one of the lead conductors of this hellish orchestra. Taking control of Twitter in October 2022, he has overseen a surge in far-right activity—including using his own weight on the platform (193 million followers) to promote fringe fascist material, or tweet it directly.

In the week after his takeover, according to data compiled by the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH), anti-black slurs on Twitter/X were appearing at triple the weekly average of the year before, and anti-Jewish slurs increased by 23 percent. Across the first month of Musk’s leadership, anti-black slurs were still appearing at three times the daily average rate before his takeover and engagements with these tweets (replies, retweets and likes) increased by 2.7 times.

As part of a “blanket amnesty”, the suspended accounts of Donald Trump, his fascist disciple Marjorie Taylor Greene, Robinson, and many other far-right figures removed from the platform for inciting racial hatred, were reinstated.

A June 1, 2023 study by the CCDH found 99 percent of posts from 100 “Blue Tick” users reported by researchers for breaking Twitter/X’s own hate speech rules remained online. Among them was the claim that “The Jewish Mafia wants to replace us all with brown people”.

A report published in September 2023 explained that 86 percent of 300 posts reported for hate speech, from 100

accounts, remained online one week later, as did 90 percent of the accounts—with over one million followers between them.

Examples included posts labelling Hitler “A hero who will help secure a future for white children”; claiming “Blacks don’t need provoking before becoming violent. It’s in their nature”; encouraging users to “Stop Race mixing”; and promoting conspiracies that Jews promote mass migration and “control the blacks”.

Musk tried to sue the CCDH for its reports, but the case was thrown out this March with judge Charles Breyer describing the suit as one of the “most vapid extensions of law that I’ve ever heard.” He explained, “This case is about punishing the defendants for their speech.”

Another study of X after Musk, carried out by a researcher at the University of Edinburgh, published in August 2023, found a 70 percent increase in retweets for a random sample of Blue Tick users active in far-right online networks—an increase which “outstripped any general engagement increase for other users.”

None of which absolves large sections of the traditional media of responsibility for the eruption of far-right violence—from the newspaper crusades against migrants to the BBC referring to fascist mobs as “pro-British” and “protesters”. The particularly noxious thing about X, and all the billionaire-controlled social media companies, is that this is done in the name of a more democratic, even anti-establishment, platform, “giving the people what they want”.

Musk’s role is not accidental. Aside from the motivations of his personal reactionary views, he makes a large part of his fortune out of controversy: through revenue-generating scrolls on X and by helping him build a huge public persona which he leverages to secure similarly large loans and investments.

He makes the other part of his fortune from industrial production which directly benefits from the cheapening of labour through attacks on migration. Reports of Tesla’s extreme exploitation of migrant workers in the construction of its factories and in the factory workforce are widespread. As are those detailing the rampant abuses involved in the supply chain of minerals essential to the company’s production—against workers kept in conditions of super exploitation in part by heavy border controls.

Tesla’s expanding interests in South America, source of most immigration to the US, are an extra incentive to his support for the anti-migrant crusade. Whether Latin American workers are unable to leave and secure remittances or arrive in the US under ghettoised and terrorised conditions, they are left more vulnerable and exploitable.

Musk speaks for a broad section of the ruling class animated by these concerns, and with an interest in whipping up racial hatreds to divide the working class. He is, for example, only the latest in a long line of super-wealthy financial backers to have boosted Robinson’s profile.

Among them are Robert Shillman—another US tech billionaire, who helped Robinson secure a \$5,000 a month position at Rebel Media—the Middle East Forum headed by arch reactionary Daniel Pipes, the David Horowitz Freedom Center, and the Gatestone Institute. Behind the MEF stands Nina Rosenwald, heiress to the Sears-Roebuck retail fortune; behind Gatestone, billionaire financier Robert Mercer; and the list goes on.

In Musk, the far-right agenda of this growing faction of the super-rich and the thuggish loudmouthing of the likes of Robinson are combined in one person. He is exactly what Karl Marx spoke of in describing the French finance aristocracy of the 1840s: the social layer which “made the laws, was at the head of the administration of the state, had command of all the organized public authorities, dominated public opinion through the actual state of affairs and through the press” and which got rich “by pocketing the already available wealth of others.”

Characterised by “an unbridled assertion of unhealthy and dissolute appetites,” the “finance aristocracy, in its mode of acquisition as well as in its pleasures, is nothing but the rebirth of the lumpenproletariat on the heights of bourgeois society.”

As far as Musk’s actions provoke a rebuke within the ruling class over his relations with the far-right, as in a muted way with Starmer, it is purely a case of one faction cautioning the other not to let the carefully channelled movement overflow its banks and provoke a popular response. The spat also provides a useful cover for Starmer’s rolling out of new police and censorship powers, which will inevitably be turned against the working class.

The lesson to be drawn by the working class from Musk’s involvement in the UK riots is that waging the fight against fascism through to the end means taking on the oligarchs. Their vast wealth—used to promote reactionary social forces—must be seized and redistributed to address the bleeding sores on society on which the far-right feeds.



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