

Thousands demonstrate against far-right in Britain, but offered no perspective by Stand Up To Racism

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Anti-fascist protests continued throughout the UK Saturday, with the largest held in London under the auspices of Stand Up To Racism (SUTR).

SUTR is a Trades Union Congress funded campaign, led politically by the Socialist Workers Party.

The London protest began with around 2,000 demonstrating outside the headquarters of Reform UK, the right-wing anti-migrant party of Nigel Farage that secured 14 percent of the vote (4.1 million) in July's snap general election.

This was in line with the central orientation of the SUTR of seeking to wall off the larger support base of Reform UK from the more thuggish and overtly fascist elements taking their central lead from anti-Muslim and anti-asylum seeker demagogue Tommy Robinson, who inspired the recent attacks on hotels housing refugees and spurred on riots in immigrant areas by a broader layer of impoverished workers and youth.

The demonstration then marched to parliament after being met by feeder marches at Trafalgar Square and swelling to 4-5,000. This demonstration and those in other cities activated several hundreds and thousands in Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham, with one in Glasgow 3,000 strong and Edinburgh 2,000.

A demonstration in Belfast saw 15,000 people take part.

All the protests mobilised significant numbers of young people and workers determined to take a stand against the far-right and in defence of asylum seekers and migrants. But the message delivered by organisers was both complacent and politically disorienting.

Following large anti-fascist counter demonstrations Wednesday evening, and a virtual no-show by the far-right after announced provocations at asylum seeker

accommodations and immigration lawyers, the message, as summed up by the *Socialist Worker* was, "The tide has now turned sharply and unmistakably against the recent far right surge of murderous attacks.

"It's mobilisation by massive numbers of people on the streets that achieved this, not the cops and the courts...

"But Saturday's day of unity, organised by Stand Up To Racism (SUTR), was bigger in many places."

The SUTR and the SWP figures in its leadership proclaimed success for their position of mobilising general anti-fascist sentiment, centred, as indicated by the protest outside Reform UK's HQ, on walling off the "parliamentary" vehicle for racism and xenophobia from the thugs organised by Robinson—whose 30,000 strong rally on July 27 drew its support from the layers who attacked refugees and migrants exploiting the July 29 murder in Southport of three young children attending a Taylor Swift-themed dance party.

This downplays the connection between the far-right danger and the systematic promotion of anti-migrant and nationalist rhetoric by the official parties, diverting from the central task of opposing the Labour government of Sir Keir Starmer which came to power on July 5 based on pledges to "stop the boats" and deport "illegal" migrants.

Above all it diverts attention from the essential task of challenging the austerity and social desperation on which the fascists feed, and the wars against Russia in Ukraine and Israel's genocide in Gaza that determine Labour's efforts to whip up nationalism and xenophobia.

Socialist Worker concluded its report regarding the fascists that "Only the utmost anti-racist vigilance will

keep them caged.

“That’s because the bitterness in society, the squeeze on ordinary people and the racism of mainstream politics constantly give opportunities for the far right to exploit.

“This week must be the basis for a mass attack on state racism and Islamophobia, as well as fascist Tommy Robinson and his admirers.

“Let’s use the momentum from this week to crush Nigel Farage and Reform UK.”

References to fighting unnamed “mainstream parties” once again give way to opposing Robinson and Farage.

SUTR co-convenor and SWP member Weyman Bennett was joined on the platform of the London rally by Ulrike Schmidt. Extraordinarily neither mention the attack by fascists on their home at 5a.m. on Friday. Bennett told *Socialist Worker*, “They came to the house. They couldn’t get in but smashed up cars. They had weapons and it was deeply unpleasant.”

Under these conditions to encourage a celebratory attitude to the protests on Wednesday and Saturday is illusory. The fascists cannot be defeated merely by confronting them on the streets, as the SWP insists.

Robinson plans another national demonstration on September 7, while Farage continues in his efforts to build a far-right constituency among millions of people who voted for Reform, having previously backed his “take back control” Brexit campaign for Britain to leave the European Union.

Farage and Robinson depend on the noxious political climate in which Labour and Tories both demand an end of “mass immigration” and back the closure of “asylum hotels”.

Shabbir Lakha, a leader of the SWP splinter group Counterfire and the Stop the War Coalition, said from the platform of the Labour Party “We don’t need their thanks, we don’t need their help. They are the ones that are driving the fascists.”

Yet week after week Stop the War have appealed to the Labour Party to perform a Damascene conversion and oppose Israel’s slaughter of the Palestinians.

Similarly leading SWP member Lewis Nielson declared demagogically, “And we’ve seen you, Keir Starmer, we’ve seen you, for not calling out the racism and Islamophobia for what it is.”

Having “seen” something everyone at the protest was all too aware of, Nielson proposed nothing.

To underscore the SWP’s political bankruptcy, the *Socialist Worker’s* report insisted on the “need to confront the police who harass and sometimes kill black and Asian people.”

After Starmer said the police would clampdown on “all violent disorder that flares up, the SWP warned August 5, “Don’t back police and state to stop fascism”, cautioning that all measures justified with reference to the far right invariably provide “a weapon to use against the left—pickets, strikers and anti-war activists.”

Yet now, with the police, having set up a 6,000 strong specialist national riot squad and begun mass arrest of fascists and rioters amid threats to impose 10-year prison sentences, the SWP blithely urges “confrontations” that would justify mass arrests of pickets, strikers and anti-war activists.

And their sole political demand is for everyone to “Use the statement” drawn up the SUTR and signed by various leading trade union bureaucrats and various Labour “left” MPs “in your workplace and your local area.”

The SWP then calls for attendance at the “Emergency Campaign Launch” to “stop the far right” on “Saturday 17 August with Jeremy Corbyn, [National Education Union leader] Daniel Kebede, [drag artist] Bimini and many others.”

Corbyn is the foremost practitioner of appeasing Labour’s right-wing and will never, under any circumstances, lead a struggle against the Starmer government. He spent his entire period as Labour leader (2015-2020) capitulating to the Blairites on every front, including having demands for migration controls in both his 2017 and 2019 general election manifestos.



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