

The far-right danger in the UK and the soporifics of the SWP and RCP

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Workers and young people must draw sober strategic conclusions from the weekend's far-right demonstration, led by fascist agitator Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, who goes by the alias Tommy Robinson. None of which can be found in the writings of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) or the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP).

Both used the fact that the rally mustered fewer numbers than the previous rally last September, which was the largest far-right mobilisation in the UK in history, to sow political complacency of the worst kind. This was buttressed with references to the larger pro-Palestinian Nakba demonstration the same day.

The SWP wrote that "Palestine solidarity marchers and anti-racists celebrated a decisive victory in London on Saturday as they outnumbered fascist Tommy Robinson and his supporters." Robinson himself "cut a sad and dejected figure on the stage." The RCP agreed that Saturday was "an encouraging victory for the left", with Robinson betraying a "hint of desperation", his initiative having "backfired".

Underlying the superficial optimism of these comments is a deep political pessimism and a refusal to explain clearly to workers the dangers in the situation, challenge their illusions in false solutions, and persuade them of the necessary revolutionary conclusions.

Both the SWP and the RCP champion other social forces or abstract social and historical processes as a means of combating the growth of the far-right, excluding the decisive role which must be played by the revolutionary party to establish the political independence of the working class, and in that way change the course of history.

The Socialist Equality Party is waging a fight among workers and students for an entirely opposed perspective, to win them to a genuine socialist struggle against the far-right. We base ourselves on the lessons not only of the twentieth century but of the twenty-first, which has seen a fascistic cabal rise to the heights of power in the world's premier imperialist country, the United States.

The nature of the far-right threat, historically and today

Marxists do not view the fight against fascism and the far-right as a question, fundamentally, of numbers, but of political perspective. In the most important example—Germany in the 1920s and 30s—the organised ranks of the socialist working class vastly outnumbered those of the Nazis.

That did not stop the coming to power of the Third Reich for two reasons. One—the Nazis were invited into power by the dominant faction of the German ruling class, at a time when their vote was falling. Two—most importantly, the working class was prevented from intervening to stop this by the leadership of the Stalin-led Communist International, its refusal to forge a United Front with the Social Democrats to secure common action by the working class, and its disastrously complacent

policy: "After Hitler, Us!"

The RCP is pursuing an "After Robinson, Us!" version of the same policy today, writing that the strengthening of right-wing forces "is just one, ephemeral facet of a deeper polarisation in society, driven by the crisis of capitalism... They are miniature colossi with feet of clay, destined to crumble in due course. The forces that they have conjured will tear them down, as night follows day."

This is politically criminal. What is wrong for the 1920s and 30s is even more so for the 2020s, when the far-right threat does not currently present itself in the form of a mass street movement: the simple fact of outnumbering it at a protest, abstracted from questions of political perspective, guarantees nothing.

Today, the danger is that the total disenfranchisement of the working class—the fact that it has no party which even vaguely represents its social interests—allows far-right leaders to gain power electorally. As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote of Robinson's previous rally:

Fascist ideologues like Robinson and more "respectable" figures like [Reform UK leader Nigel] Farage are only able to exploit social distress and the widespread hatred felt towards the Starmer government because widespread left-wing sentiment in the working class has been systematically suppressed—by those claiming to be on the "left".

Robinson was explicit about the far-right's strategy, telling his demonstration that the next "Battle of Britain would be the 2029 election. "We have to get political, we have to get involved. I'm not going to tell you which political party you need to join. We're a cultural movement. I'm going to tell you that you have to join a political party. I don't care if it's Reform, if it's [far-right splinters] Advance [which he backs], or it's Restore, or it's the Conservative Party."

He spoke less than two weeks after Reform emerged as the runaway winner of local government elections, confirming its leading position in polls of general election voting intention—with 26 percent, trailed by the Conservatives on 18 percent, and Labour and the Greens on 17 percent.

The far-right political conspiracy against the working class

These figures make clear that the issues very starkly posed by Robinson's September 2025 event have not gone away simply because his latest effort was substantially smaller.

The far-right does not have an organised and disciplined base, or a committed popular constituency, even of a confused kind. What it does

have is substantial political and financial backing with which to run campaigns taking advantage of social anger unaddressed by the official left and steering it along populist nationalist, anti-migrant and anti-Muslim lines.

The WSWS wrote of the September rally in this regard:

[B]y far the most significant presence was Elon Musk, who once again gave his support to Robinson, called for the Starmer government to be brought down and urged a violent confrontation with the left...

Just as he and other super-rich oligarchs supported Trump's fascistic MAGA movement, the world's second richest man is now lending his wealth and the social media he controls to the promotion of Britain's far-right just as he has already done with the AfD in Germany.

More right-wing influencers took part last weekend, backed afterwards by US Vice President J.D. Vance, who denounced "this idea that the way to generate prosperity is to bring in millions and millions of unvetted people and drop them into your neighbourhoods," adding, "To everybody in the UK who rejects that idea, I'd encourage them to just keep on going. It's OK to want to defend your culture. It's OK to want to live in a safe neighbourhood."

More than verbal encouragement is on offer. Robinson announced in his speech that he had been given £200,000 to fund the September rally by a US businessman, revealing a small fraction of the finances actually provided by his backers.

These include the Trump administration itself, which identified "cultivating resistance to Europe's current trajectory [of "civilisational erasure"] within European nations" as one of its National Security Strategy priorities. \$20 billion was made available to far-right Argentinian President Javier Milei to help his election campaigning and Vance publicly, though unsuccessfully, campaigned for the re-election of Victor Orbán in Hungary.

Far-right violence and dictatorship

The smallness of the far-right's forces compared with earlier historical periods is no cause for complacency. Today, helped into power, it can avail itself of the far more extensive repressive apparatus of the capitalist state, following the model set by Trump's Project 2025, his "operation dictatorship".

The danger was sharply summed up on the weekend by the presence at the rally of UK Independence Party leader Nick Tenconi, who in January told a UKIP meeting that the military should be used "to round up and deport the Islamists, illegals and the communists."

UKIP today is an electorally irrelevant force. Founded by Farage, it helped him lead the Brexit vote, served as a launching pad for his Brexit Party (now Reform UK) and largely collapsed with his departure. But it expresses in undiluted form the political poison Farage is now seeking to pour down the UK's throat with spoonfuls of rhetoric about genuine social issues.

Tenconi's comments codify the violence seen on Saturday, when a man drove a van over someone taking down provocatively placed St George's Cross flags, before carrying on his way to London for Robinson's march where he was arrested.

The same day, a 19-year-old neo-Nazi was jailed for at least 15 years for

trying to behead a Kurdish man because she wanted to "kill all Jews and Muslims". In the last ten years, the number of referrals to the UK's counter-terror Prevent scheme for far-right extremism has increased from 759 in a year, to 1,798 (now more than double the share of referrals for Islamist extremism).

A Farage government, or a government in which Farage holds a powerful position, would ramp up the oppression of migrants, scapegoating of ethnic minorities, and repression of political opposition.

It would embolden the fascist thugs of UKIP, Britain First—whose leader Paul Golding also attended the march—and others. There will be more attempted racially motivated murders, more St George's Crosses raised above migrant communities and more far-right marches through those streets under police protection.

This would be coupled with attacks on protests against the Gaza genocide and the war in the Middle East, left-wing political meetings and strike pickets.

How the SWP creates a political cover for the Labour Party and the trade unions

The most significant political mechanism for the strengthening of the far-right is the Starmer Labour government, by generating social anger with its pro-business austerity agenda, and by directing it towards migrants, Muslims and the left.

Labour has legitimised anti-migrant narratives and touted its record of deportations. It has draped itself in the Union Flag and declarations of patriotism and British values. Under its oversight, London's police moved the Palestine demonstration off its normal route to make way for Robinson, while Prime Minister Keir Starmer slandered opponents of the Gaza genocide as the main source of racial hatred in the UK.

The trade union bureaucracy acts as this government's praetorian guard, restraining the class struggle and frequently channelling workers' resistance into nationalist campaigns, as with British Steel. The Labour "lefts", the Green Party and Your Party specialise in turning left-wing opposition into fuel for ineffectual pressure campaigns on the Labour government and "Stop Reform" parliamentary alliances between capitalist parties.

Stand Up to Racism, now buried in the Together Alliance, is the SWP's contribution to this effort. The *Socialist Worker* eagerly reported Your Party MP Zarah Sultana's comments to the rally, and the fact that it "was joined by trade union leaders including Andrea Egan from Unison, Daniel Kebede of the NEU [National Education Union] and Fran Heathcote of the PCS union."

Its writings confirm the Socialist Equality Party's critique of Together for advancing "a perspective of defeating the far right with an empty agreement to oppose racism on the part of pro-capitalist politicians, trade union bureaucrats and well-meaning liberals."

This, we explained, "deliberately blocks the necessary political reckoning with the Labour and trade union bureaucracy by inviting dozens of its MPs into the fold... Nothing could be more disorienting to the fight against fascism."

How the RCP disarms the working class

The RCP, swinging in traditional fashion from one position to the next, wrote of Robinson's demonstration last year that it was a "damning

indictment of the left”.

They argued that “The most pernicious role of all lies with Stand Up To Racism,” who “want to build a ‘broad church’: a cross-class alliance of all and sundry; a popular front of religious and community leaders, business owners, and all sorts of liberal, middle-class elements.”

Moreover, “By providing a convenient left cover for the trade union bureaucracy—who affiliate to and subsidise SUTR—they allow the tops of the labour movement to sit on their backside and merely pay lip service when it comes to the fight against racism.”

Six months later, however, it was “positive to see Britain’s largest trade union leaders such as Unison’s Andrea Egan, and PCS’s Fran Heathcote at the final rally.” It was merely “unfortunate that the Together Alliance [the latest SUTR front]—which is backed and led by various trade unions—failed to mobilise for, or even endorse, the Nakba Day demonstration.”

Any party which can write these two articles within half a year of each other should be viewed with the utmost political suspicion. The RCP squares the circle by writing that “the left has sleepwalked its way to success in the past few months.”

Arguments like this, which in Lenin’s words “worship... the spontaneity of the working class movement,” have a long and rotten political history. Inevitably, Lenin explained, they lead to “a strengthening of the influence of bourgeois ideology upon the workers.”

A real fight for socialism is necessarily the most conscious of political movements, rigorously analysing events, thoroughly exposing political misleaders and establishing the independence of the working class. The only thing the left can “sleepwalk” into is disaster, which is what is threatened if the political soporifics of the RCP and SWP are not dispelled.



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