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Fascists blocked by mass mobilisation

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Exiting the Overground from Hackney to Hoe Street in Walthamstow, it was clear that the demo against the far right was going to have an enormous turnout. The carriages were already filling with a similar crowd to those we have seen on the many Palestine solidarity marches.

Young people, ethnically diverse, along with recognisable older left activists. were ignoring all the 'official' advice from the police, local mosque leaders, the local MP and the Labour Party generally to stay away. Leave it to Sir Kier and your new government of public service. Tough sentences, new anti-riot police squads and denunciations of mindless thuggery would take care of the situation – move along, nothing to see here.

Already when we got off the train and saw the end of the high street people were three or four deep on the pavement. By 7.15 there were already several thousand people at Hoe Street outside the immigration solicitors the fascists had promised to attack. By 7.30 you could not see the end of the demonstration – it filled the whole road. Someone spotted far right agitator Calvin Robinson with a small entourage, but it was quickly apparent that the right could muster no real presence.

Left groups like the Socialist Party, the Socialist Workers Party, the Revolutionary Communist Party and Anti-Capitalist Resistance attended with their banners. Demonstrators held up placards, but the overwhelming majority were not their members or even their supporters but Londoners appalled at what the fascists did last week. Groups had come up from South London and from neighbouring boroughs. Many were present from local ethnic minority communities.

Homemade cardboard signs with original slogans were held high – always a sign that this was a real mass mobilisation and not just the radical left. Stand Up to Racism had worked hard to help coordinate the protests. Some local union branches had their banners. On a national level, in striking contrast to the Labour Party, there had been calls to come out and support anti-fascist demonstrations from some union leaders.

People chanted 'Refugees Welcome Here', 'Whose streets, Our streets', 'We are the people...', 'The people united will never be defeated'. Nobody struck up: No to mindless thuggery, Tougher sentences now or more police riot squads.

Starmer, after some delay, had finally added 'far right' to the thuggery epithet by the time of yesterday's demonstrations. But at no time had the Labour Party made calls for people to demonstrate against the fascists. Even less was there one word in defence of refugees or migrants, which everyone could see was the key target of the fascists.

No Labour spokesman told the truth about what the fascists were doing in Rotherham, Tamworth or elsewhere. These were fascist pogroms against migrants, asylum seekers, Muslims and Black people. It was not – as a lot of the media presented it, 'anti-immigrant protests', as if they were standing around with placards or giving out leaflets. No, they were out to burn down refugee hotels, to injure and kill people. Improvised road blocks checked cars to see if there were white or Black people in them. Social media posts blatantly called for this violence.

Both the Tories and Labour fail to challenge the fascists' narrative about migrants and asylum seekers. They say stop the boats, they say there are too many immigrants and back local racists who want to close down the 'tax payer

funded' hotels. Labour is terrified about being seen as soft on migrants. Instead of providing safe and legal routes for asylum seekers or recognising that immigrant workers are essential for both public services and the economy, Labour talks up new anti-terrorist style squads to stop the boats and pledges to cut migrant numbers.

Labour's whole strategy at the recent election was to win back Tory voters, particularly in the Red Wall seats where some of the worst fascist violence took place. Rather than challenging prejudices and mounting a huge campaign with the real facts about migrants they adapt to their reactionary views. Yes, they won the election handsomely but Farage's Reform UK won four million votes and we are now seeing a revitalised band of street fascists.

Last night does give some hope. You could feel the exhilaration and confidence in the crowd as they really felt how we can reclaim the streets. The national failure of the fascists to repeat last week's violent disorder exposed their organisational limits. Although they can get 15,000 in Trafalgar square on a one-off mobilisation they cannot organise and coordinate actions in 40 different places.

The far right overwhelmingly draws from atomised layers of society, sometimes radicalised by alt-right and QAnon style conspiracies that inculcate racism and culture war pseudo concerns about the dangers of vaccines, immigration and trans existence. They are pushed into these views by both social media but also by the so-called mainstream, by opportunistic politicians and journalists who lend credence to prejudice to build their careers.

Prosecutions have exposed how many of them are small business owners rather than representative of an imagined working class anxiety over the erosion of vague nationalist abstractions. As was the case with the January 6 United States Capitol attack, those who participated were often privileged but insecure people susceptible to the divisive rhetoric of the powerful because this mirrors their alienated lives. But almost as concerning as those who showed up to terrorise the vulnerable, are the many more who merely echo their views and uncritically repeat racist and bigoted ideas.

Faced with a well organised mass anti-fascist movement the weaknesses of these formations was thankfully exposed. Thousands also turned out notably in Newcastle, Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, Finchley, Oxford, Sheffield, and Brighton on a weekday night at relatively short notice. The media and politicians have overdone the importance of social media to downplay how the anti-migrant narrative and austerity have helped the fascists. Social media exists in a wider social context, and it is contradictory. Yesterday a lot of people heard about the mobilisations via social media as well as through the efforts of established anti-racist organisation.

Watching breakfast TV across the channels this morning we can see victories have many new found parents. The media and the political establishment had told people to stay away from the protests. All the front pages of the press, including the reactionary Daily Mail and Daily Express, which often run anti-migrant stories, were exultant about the way the people had turned out to roll back fascist violence.

At least one ex-police chief on BBC breakfast news had the good grace and honesty to accept that the mass mobilisation was the decisive factor last night and not the capacity of the police or just the deterrence of tough sentences. Local Walthamstow MP, Stella Creasy, who before last night had called on people to stay away, was hypocritically praising the mobilisation in the aftermath.

What is not said publicly is an important political reality. Currents outside the Labour Party today have a certain capacity to mobilise thousands of people independently. We have seen this with the Palestine solidarity movement; we are seeing it today with the anti-fascist movement. There are now a number of independent MPs who can support such movements – Jeremy Corbyn and the four independent 'Gaza' MPs put out a statement backing the counter mobilisations. If the radical left can work in a non-sectarian, united way then we can achieve significant

progress.

We need to work within the social movements that have emerged against racism, in solidarity with Palestine, to oppose runaway global warming, as well as with independent MPs, the small number of Labour left MPs who defy Starmer and above all inside the unions to keep building a fighting alternative to a government that is betting everything on a partnership with capital. Its policies will not generate the radical structural change that can reduce inequality and cut the ground from the fascists who exploit people's anger at austerity and disillusion with politicians.

Yesterday as a battle won and as Socialist Worker aptly put it – fear changes sides. However the fascist threat remains and the eco system which feeds it – Reform UK and the mainstream political consensus defining migrants as the 'problem' – means they are not going away anytime soon. Our website and groups like Stand up to Racism will keep you informed about the upcoming protests.

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Source: [Anti*Capitalist Resistance](#).

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