

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Europe, Great Britain > Great Britain & Northern Ireland (Europe) > Extreme right / Fascism (Britain) > **June 9th demonstration: Tommy Robinson, English nationalism and Brexit**

June 9th demonstration: Tommy Robinson, English nationalism and Brexit

Tuesday 17 July 2018, by [STOWE Andy](#) (Date first published: 10 July 2018).

Three things strike you when looking at videos and photos of the neo-fascist demonstration on June 9th calling for the release from prison of the Islamophobic criminal Tommy Robinson writes Andy Stowe.

The first is the numbers who turned out. 10 000 is the most frequent shared estimate. This was a massive display of racists supporting Robinson. Anyone interested in the details of why he's in prison can find more here [\[1\]](#).

The second is the international dimension to the event. The most prominent speaker was Geert Wilders who told the crowd [\[2\]](#):

"Tommy Robinson is the greatest freedom fighter of Britain today. Tommy Robinson is a freedom fighter. He says what no-one dares to say. " A message of support was also received from Steve Bannon and it seems there were protests outside a number of British embassies and consulates.

The third is the massive number of England flags and union jacks. It was more than just a demonstration to have a racist criminal released. It was a display of neo-fascist English nationalism which seems to mark the emergence of a new coalition. This includes Ukip MEP Gerard Batten [\[3\]](#) who appears to have been inside the neo-fascist speakers' areas; a loose organisation of football hooligans called the Football Lads' Alliance and former members of the English Defence League. This new coalition is willing to use violence on the streets and some of them were seen attacking the police [\[4\]](#).

Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) [\[5\]](#) and Unite Against Fascism (UAF) mobilised about 300 people against them. Both these groups are front organisations of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and receive their political direction from its leadership. They are sometimes able to get Diane Abbott or Jeremy Corbyn to speak at their events but they have no relationship with Labour Party members and many on the left are unwilling to work with them because of their leaderships' role in dealing with an allegation of sexual assault. Whatever one's political judgement on that view, it's a fact which won't go away.

Immediately after the Brexit referendum Socialist Resistance concluded that "The referendum has legitimised racism and xenophobia as never before." [\[6\]](#) The collapse of Ukip following that result provided a huge number of new votes for the Tories and cleared the path for the re-emergence of street-fighting neo-fascists in England. It's part of the global rise of far right nationalist political formations in which we can include, in a list which is by no means exhaustive, Trump, Erdogan in Turkey, Duterte in the Philippines, Salvini in Italy, Hofer in Austria and Orbán in Hungary.

Brexit has re-energised British neo-fascism. The thousands of men, and people who were there say

it was an almost exclusively male demonstration, now have the political confidence to occupy central London for the day. Again, people who saw them say that the neo-fascists appeared to come from the belt of predominantly white towns and counties that ring London. For the racists London is not just the political centre of England, its multi-ethnic communities, who understood what it would mean, voted overwhelmingly against their Brexit project.

An ugly truth that the British left often refuses to acknowledge is that a lot of the country's working class and lower middle class is racist. In 2018 anti-Muslim bigotry is the main form it takes, a world view which is reinforced by Brexit supporting papers like the Daily Mail and the Sun, the house journals of mainstream British racism. These elements are now being mixed up with Steve Bannon's project of creating an intellectually coherent new neo-fascist international current, hence his appearance at the Front National's recent conference and his message to the mob yesterday.

British society is starkly divided over Brexit. Most Labour supporters are against it and most Tories back it. The further right in the political spectrum you go, the more violently pro-Brexit people are. And the further right you go the more violently anti-immigrant people are, literally and metaphorically.

What we saw on the streets of London was the violent face of English nationalist racism and, while 10 000 is 10 000 too many, they are massively outnumbered by 500 000 Labour Party members and 6.5 million trade unionists. We can sweep them from the streets and defeat them politically.

If the neo-fascists continue to organise large demonstrations the labour movement cannot continue to sub-contract dealing with them to a small Marxist propaganda party. We need to use our roots in our communities and our organisations to confront them with overwhelming numbers. Labour must start to take its voters' enemies seriously and reclaim our streets from them and with his visit to London on July 13th Trump is giving us a great opportunity to do just that.

Andy Stowe

P.S.

* June 10, 2018:

<http://socialistresistance.org/tommy-robinson-english-nationalism-and-brexit/12511>

Footnotes

[1] <https://thesecretbarrister.com/2018/05/25/what-has-happened-to-poor-tommy-robinson/>

[2] <https://www.breitbart.com/london/2018/06/09/london-massive-crowds-gather-to-hear-geert-wilders-demand-tommy-robinsons-release/>

[3] <https://twitter.com/GerardBattenMEP/status/1005448714935328769>

[4] <https://twitter.com/SocialistVoice/status/1005782837772144640>

[5] <http://www.standuptoracism.org.uk/violent-racists-draw-15000-in-london-to-support-tommy-ro>

[binson-and-scapegoat-muslims/](#)

[6] ESSF (article 38279), [Britain: Statement on the Brexit vote – A disaster but the struggle goes on.](#)