

Scotland & Britain: A good weekend for the left - Massive anti-racist, anti-Trump demonstrations

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

While it's probably wrong to categorise Trump as a neo-fascist, he is the rallying symbol for the new nationalist hard right globally writes Andy Stowe. His visit to England and Scotland on the weekend of July 13th and 14th was an opportunity to gauge just how much he is loathed.

It was a test of strength between the left and neo-fascist right in Scotland as well as several English town and cities. It was a big victory for the left.

In Scotland it wasn't even a contest. The right didn't mobilise to welcome Trump and the left was out in force. Even the Scottish Conservative Party leader Ruth Davidson sent messages indicating her support to the participants in the Pride march and the anti-Trump protests, reminding them to drink water and use sunscreen [\[1\]](#).

Friday in London saw what was the largest demonstration in the city since 2million that marched against the war in Iraq in 2003. The police estimate that 250 000 people took to the streets to show Trump he's despised and unwanted. Even the Evening Standard, edited by former Tory Chancellor the Exchequer George Osborne, had a front page which conveniently doubled as an anti-Trump placard.

Few of the marchers would have been natural Tory supporters and, while thousands of organisations were represented, the most striking feature of the day was the huge number of homemade signs, placards and banners, always an indication that what you are seeing is a real movement of people who are organising themselves. Trafalgar Square was the first of Jeremy Corbyn's two major speaking engagements of the weekend [\[2\]](#). Addressing the demonstration his speech marked a major departure from previous Labour leaders' practice of grovelling to American presidents. Like his audience, he is an internationalist and anti-racist and he was not prepared to compromise on these things.

The next day was another major working class demonstration, the Durham Miners' Gala. It was attended by over 200 000 people [\[3\]](#) and Corbyn spoke at that too. So, in two days the labour movement got over 450 000 people onto the streets in a celebration of trade union solidarity and to reject a racist imperialist president. While this was happening, Theresa May was watching her days old Brexit deal disintegrate in front of her eyes. The ever-helpful Trump had told the world that he thinks she's useless and would prefer to have Boris Johnson as prime minister.

Just over a month before we had noted that a significant neo-fascist movement had managed its largest mobilisation in some years when about 10 000 had turned up demanding the release of their figurehead Tommy Robinson [\[4\]](#). On that occasions the anti-fascists were heavily outnumbered. They

were on the streets again on Saturday July 14th and this time the numbers were more evenly matched and about 5000 Robinson and Trump fans turned up. The smaller event shared some features with the earlier one. Ukip were there; it was extremely Islamophobic and there was more evidence that they are co-ordinating internationally. Their major coup was Steve Bannon calling for Robinson's release on a radio show hosted by Nigel Farage [5]. In that interview Bannon went more or less said that he wants to see racial violence in Britain: "You're going to have to fight to take your country back, every day." This will have been understood by his neo-fascist followers as an encouragement to physically attack immigrants and Muslims. Coincidentally, the most memorable image of the Saturday was of a Muslim woman being taunted while sitting in the cab of the bus she was driving by a half-naked thug [6]. Looking at that incident it's easy to see how pogroms start.

The anti-fascist coalition contained some new elements. Red London marched with a banner bearing a hammer and sickle and the downright odd slogan "paedo gangs and racists off our streets". "Paedo gangs" is a trope used by the right to describe Asian men and those behind the banner know that. The Anti-Fascist Network were also there in serious numbers wearing masks that suggested they were keen to have a physical confrontation with the fascists. There is a tactical discussion to be had on that, but the balance of forces on Saturday were not favourable enough to have made that a realistic option. The violent attack in a pub on trade union activist Steve Hedley shows that the stakes are serious and political violence is much more a part of the right's culture than the left's.

Last weekend was another reminder that British politics is polarised between a pro-Brexit, nationalist, often racist alliance that includes Farage, Rees-Mogg and Tommy Robinson's supporters on one hand and, on the other, a leftward moving Labour Party which is pulling together the internationalists and anti-racists, the overwhelming majority of whom are anti-Brexit [7]. Its challenge now is to capitalise on the success of the 13th and 14th and mobilise to get the Tories out.

Andy Stowe

P.S.

* July 17, 2018:

<http://socialistresistance.org/a-good-weekend-for-the-left/12801>

Footnotes

[1] <https://twitter.com/RuthDavidsonMSP/status/1018046965001617409>

[2] <https://www.commondreams.org/news/2018/07/13/massive-london-protest-labours-jeremy-corbryn-trashes-trump-calls-world-justice-not>

[3] <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/huge-turnout-durham-miners-gala-12916003>

[4] ESSF (article 45313), [June 9th demonstration: Tommy Robinson, English nationalism and Brexit](#).

[5] <https://www.lbc.co.uk/radio/presenters/nigel-farage/steve-bannons-call-to-arms-fight-for-county/>

[6] <https://metro.co.uk/2018/07/16/free-tommy-fans-harass-muslim-bus-driver-7719882/>

[7] <http://socialistresistance.org/council-election-results-reveal-polarised-situation/12283>