

# DANGER!

## TRUMP, BREXIT AND THE GLOBAL FAR RIGHT SURGE

These are dangerous times. We are facing the biggest upsurge of the far right since the 1930s. Everywhere they are using racism and hostility to migrants to build support and spread hate and fear. Trump's election victory and the Brexit vote were welcomed by the far right everywhere.

All over Europe, including Britain, they are on the march, and building strong international links. Here the June 9th 'Free Tommy Robinson' demonstration in London saw the emergence of street fascism at a level not seen since the 1930s, while the Tory press stokes a toxic environment of anti-migrant and Islamophobic racism. Extreme right-wing groups were joined by UKIP, collapsing at the polls but now trying to build a base among these street thugs.

In Hungary, Denmark, Austria, Italy and Poland the far right is in the government. Harsh measures against migrants, refugees and Roma people are already underway, as well as sweeping attacks against democratic rights, women and LGBT minorities.

Why did this happen? Centre-left as well as centre-right parties administered neoliberal cuts and privatisation policies from the 1980s and supported America's wars. Since the 2007–8 economic crash, sections of the working class and oppressed have been thrown into poverty and despair by this same neoliberal offensive. Backed by the immensely powerful right-wing media, governments are blaming migrants for the economic crisis brought about by their own policies.

There has been a political polarisation, with some advances for the left, but overall the right has made much more electoral progress.

In Britain, anti-racists and opponents of Tory Brexit have to recognise two central facts. First, Islamophobia is the cutting edge of racism, as it is in the rest of Europe. And second, that anti-migrant racism was at the heart of the campaign for Brexit. The Brexit vote strengthened the far right, deepened Islamophobia, and led to an increase in xenophobic and racist attacks.

## TRUMP, TRADE WARS, MILITARISATION: 'AMERICA FIRST'

How can we explain the Trump phenomenon? He is the personification of the far right response to American economic decline. For over 20 years the United States has tried to re-establish its economic and political dominance through neo-liberalism at home, impoverishing millions, and militarism abroad, through endless wars and trying to tie its NATO allies to its economic and political demands. Trump is the latest and most extreme manifestation of this.

The on-again, off-again threats against North Korea are in part aimed at pressurising China. Sanctions against Iran target the billions of dollars of trade re-starting between Iran and Europe. Now Trump's 2018 defence budget – over a trillion dollars – is arming the US military with high tech weapons to wage simultaneous wars against Russia, China and Iran. US troops are on the ground in Yemen, supporting Saudi Arabia's genocidal war, in Syria and in a dozen African countries. America is massively increasing its military capacity to hit China, and beefing up its military forces in Eastern Europe to confront Russia.

Trump and his team – reinforced by the addition of national security advisor John Bolton and secretary of state Mike Pompeo – are escalating their economic nationalist policies by launching a global trade war. Retaliation against steep US tariffs has come from both Europe and China, and this conflict risks tipping the world economy into a new recession. On top of that Trump has pulled the US out of the Paris climate change accord, further threatening the world's environment.

Trump's international and domestic policies are closely interlinked. Militarisation and trade wars have deepened a new wave of anti-Black and anti-Latino racism, which is topped off with family separation and other punitive measures against migrants at the Mexican border, and the purge and witch hunt being run by agents of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), conducting large sweeps in communities from Georgia to Los Angeles, going into homes and factories, and deporting many thousands. Like anti-Communism in the Cold War, anti-migrant and Islamophobic racism are the essential props of Trump-style xenophobia and the centre of his political support.

This 'hostile environment' towards migrants extends to people of colour and has resulted in the shooting of dozens of mainly young Black people by the increasingly militarised police forces, and repression of Black Lives Matter demonstrations. Full spectrum attacks from Trump have also resulted in the growing war against abortion rights, with access to abortion hedged around with conditions making it increasingly difficult to obtain legally. Dubbed by Mike Pence as 'the most pro-life president in history', Trump was the first president to appear on the annual 'March for Life' and now has the opportunity to reverse 'Roe v Wade' through his new appointment to the Supreme Court.

## THE FAR RIGHT IN GOVERNMENT AND ON THE STREETS

Far right parties in Europe strongly welcomed the Brexit vote and the election of Trump. Marine Le Pen of the Front National in France, Geert Wilders of the Dutch Party for Freedom, Filip Dewinter of the Vlaams Belang in Belgium, and the leaders of Alternative for Germany all rushed to heap praise on Trump and Brexit. The far right is in power in the White House and thus have governmental power in the world's most powerful country.

Complacency about the success of the far right is the opposite of what is needed. In Austria the Freedom Party has the vice-chancellorship, as well as the interior ministry, the defence ministry and the foreign ministry under its control. In Italy the far right Lega (formerly Lega Nord) formed the new government alongside the Five Star movement; bad news for immigrants, women and LGBT minorities. Lega leader Matteo Salvini, the new interior minister, started off by telling migrants to 'pack their bags', and proceeded to get boats carrying refugees driven away from the Italian coast. He followed up by threatening to deport hundreds of thousands of Roma, in a chilling echo of their persecution by the Nazis. Families minister Lorenzo Fontana is an ultra-Catholic and anti-abortion activist, and represents the serious threats posed by his party, and this new government, to the rights of women. In Hungary Prime Minister Victor Orban, leader of the Fidesz party, won re-election in April on an anti-migrant platform, with both Islamophobic and anti-Semitic propaganda. Just like Turkey's president Erdogan, he is crushing any opposition in the media, judiciary and political life more generally. On his right he is flanked by the openly fascist Jobbik, the third largest party. In Germany Alternative for Germany calls for a ban on the building of mosques, says 'Islam does not belong in Germany', and threatens to shoot anyone crossing the border illegally. It won 12.6% of the vote in the 2017 Federal elections and has 94 deputies in the Bundestag. When Donald Trump attacked Angela Merkel's immigration policy, he knew exactly which party in Germany would benefit. In the Netherlands the Party for Freedom holds 15 seats in the Dutch parliament, calls for the closing of all Islamic schools, recording the ethnicity of all citizens, and withdrawal from the EU. Its Islamophobe leader Geert Wilders is piling up support. In the 2017 presidential election in France, the leader of the Front National Marine Le Pen won a fifth of the votes in the first round, and a third of the votes in the second round. In Belgium

the Vlaams Belang has, for the moment, small levels of support (just one MP and three MEPs). It is led by Filip Dewinter who has spoken up for those Belgians who collaborated with the Nazis in the war. Their 3–4% support at an all Belgium level is much higher in the Flemish-speaking region.

## THE FAR RIGHT SURGE IN BRITAIN

In Britain the far right is mushrooming, based on rising Islamophobia and hostility to migrants. Its street manifestation is the 'Free Tommy Robinson' campaign. It is fed by the toxic atmosphere created by the Tory right – together with their media backers – in their anti-free movement, anti-migrant campaign. The Home Office continues its deportation policies, shockingly exposed by the Windrush scandal and its devastating human consequences.

This government's 'hostile environment' policy feeds the commonplace lies about migrants – that they take British jobs, freeload on welfare and 'health tourism', and lower the wages of British workers. These are just a few of the racist stereotypes that underlie the 'arguments' that there are too many migrants and we are being 'swamped' or as Trump says 'infested'. These are baseless allegations used by the government: the blame for the crisis in our society and economy lies with decades of neo-liberal economics, pursued by New Labour and Conservative alike. Yet these slurs, taken together with vicious Islamophobia, create a poisonous cocktail which drives the Brexiteers' 'take back control' slogan. Control, as it turns out, is being increasingly handed to the right wing of the Conservative Party, all too happy to benefit from the Daily Mail's pernicious racist muckraking.

## MOBILISE AGAINST THE FAR RIGHT

The alarm has been sounded. We need the broadest united front to mobilise against this threat from the far right. They need to be confronted on the streets, wherever they organise, and their ideology of hatred defeated. Left and progressive forces must advance new economic and political policies which reject austerity and cuts, and which redevelop our society in the interests of all, redistributing wealth so that every community can benefit – in the interests of the many, not the few.

Since 2015 the number of migrants and refugees seeking to enter Europe has fallen dramatically. There is no migrant crisis but there is a political crisis. The shift to the far right has led to the reinforcing of the EU's shameful 'Fortress Europe' policy – refugees and migrants continue to be left to drown in the Mediterranean but now aid ships are to be prevented from saving them. We must organise across Europe to defend and extend freedom of movement.

Many of the far right parties in Europe and beyond have fascists in their leadership, in their membership or both. They may not have Nazi-style insignia or uniforms (although in some cases they do). They may appear in smart suits rather than jackboots. But they are often playing the same role that fascist parties played in the 1930s; in power they won't only attack migrants, but all will come under attack, including trade unions and minority communities, as well as democratic rights in general. To meet this growing threat, the work of the anti-fascist and anti-racist movements must be supported and developed on a much greater scale. We urgently need a new strategic approach to make this possible – the far right is organising internationally and so must we.

## THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW

**LEFT UNITY, together with its European sister parties and other progressive organisations, is planning a European conference to develop strategy and action to help turn back the tide of the far right. Please join us and get involved now:**

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