

Labour rolls out the full fash playlist

Far-right glee tells you all you need to know about the government's asylum plans

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Plans announced by the Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood to “shake up the asylum system” have finally achieved what Labour appears to have hoped for: the support of far-right extremists, if not their voters.

Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (a.k.a. Tommy Robinson) has been quick to claim that Labour's moves have shown that ‘the Overton window has been obliterated’, meaning that far-right politics are now mainstream. Given Yaxley-Lennon epitomises Labour's own fantasy caricature of the imaginary ‘white working class’, this probably means Labour are getting what they wanted from this with his quasi-endorsement. That and the gushing headlines in the right-wing press.

That support though should tell you all you need to know about what these policies mean. This is fascism, which needs to be described unequivocally as what it is. The fact that it is a transnational phenomenon or that electoral politics has not merely failed to stop it but actively enabled it should not stop us calling it out.

The plans—which include attacks on those provisions in the European Convention of Human Rights which aim to ensure the right to a family life and to protect individuals from torture—are, put simply, heinous. They aim to reduce refugee status to a temporary affair, with continued uncertainty hanging over refugees for decades, unable to achieve permanent status until they have been in the country for twenty years. And of course, being a policy from Starmer's Labour, there's the customary genuflection to AI, which will supposedly be used to verify refugees' ages, something mooted earlier this year.

Labour has rolled out the full fash playlist. Jewellery can be confiscated from refugees to pay for processing them, as one minister gleefully told the press—seemingly blissfully unaware of the horrific echoes such a despicable policy conjures up.

Indeed, those with living memory of the Holocaust or with a family connection to it have been amongst the quickest to call out Labour's plans for what they are. Alf Dubs, who fled Nazi persecution in 1939, was clear that Labour's plans sought to “use children as a weapon”.

It has been a long road to here, and though the rise of the far-right is international, the variant in Britain gives the lie to myths the British state has long fostered about Britain's status as a ‘welcoming nation’. Indeed, despite much rewriting of history, in the 1930s and 1940s Jewish refugees were often met with prejudice and legalised discrimination if they even made it to England.

Claus Moser, ultimately a leading statistician and Establishment figure at LSE and Oxford in the post-war period, was placed in an internment camp despite his family fleeing persecution at the hands of the Nazis four years' earlier.

But history isn't relevant to technocratic centrist politicians, for whom every political question is merely a cost-benefit analysis of fiscal implications or polling data. As far as elites are concerned, the BBC's much-vaunted TV series *The Nazis: A Warning from History*, broadcast the same year Blair came to power, seems to only have reinforced the view that the experience has no relevance for now.

Instead, centrists not actively convinced by fascism and far-right politics have resorted to the 1990s playbook of contrarianism and triangulation. But you cannot 'triangulate' fascism. As scholars have noted, with a force that wishes to destroy freedom and whole communities, there can be no middle ground.

The non-fash press continues to persevere with weasel-words such as "populism" and 'both sides' perspectives, as if those doomed advocates of greater social spending and council housing in Parliament were of the same ilk as those wishing to open concentration camps. Otherwise, it seeks to report in the depoliticised language of the 'game', the hyper-personalised style that makes a big deal of who's up and who's down in Westminster rather than making any attempt to consider why people across the country have embraced far-right politics.

This tells us something else, a truth we anarchists know too well: that no salvation is coming from centrist parliamentary politicians or their media outriders. Societies are only so receptive to hate on this scale thanks to their complicity in the destruction of what passed for political choice in favour of an oligarchic dystopia, where the donors pay well and news moguls own Downing Street

Those who have fuelled a fire won't douse it. That task falls to us, and those many outside our movement who also know that the answer to fascist politics—in parliament as in the streets—is a total lack of compromise and a total emphasis on human dignity and solidarity.

Institutions cannot do that for us. As one of our predecessors reminds us, we must always and everywhere act for ourselves in practices of mutual aid that know no boundary of border or nationality to combat a fascist menace that is itself international, and which cannot be appeased but which must be destroyed.

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