

The Brussels gangster state



The view from behind the door of the Claridge as Brussels police barricaded National Conservatives inside.

Melanie Phillips writes in [substack](#).

On Monday, I journeyed from Israel to Brussels for the two-day National Conservatism conference where I was due to speak this morning. I travelled from one war zone. I hadn't expected to be entering another.

National Conservatism, a movement underpinned by the thinking of the Israeli-American philosopher Yoram Hazony, promotes the nation state and the defence of its historic values against the nihilism of the post-moral, anti-western and anti-human ideologies that pass for much progressive thinking.

This mainstream position is denounced as "far right" by left-wingers who use this smear to denounce anyone who dares oppose their agenda of destroying the western nation and its historic culture and values.

During last year's National Conservatism conference in London, left-wingers went nuts about the fact that it was happening at all.

This year's conference in Brussels produced meltdown before participants even started gathering in the Belgian capital. This was because speakers included some of the cartoon Hitlers of the feverish liberal imagination: Reform party president Nigel Farage, former Home Secretary Suella Braverman, representatives of "populist" parties such as the Flemish nationalists Vlaams Belang, the French anti-Islamist firebrand Éric Zemmour – and Satan's granddaddy himself, the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán.

Journalists who routinely smear people as “far-right” or “hard-right,” rather as if they use voodoo dolls to ward off any challenge to the purity of their partisan hatreds, deployed their familiar tactics of character assassination and guilt by association to call in advance for this “far-right” conference to be shut down.

Brussels, the headquarters of the European Union, has become ground zero of the totalitarian leftism that the NatCons fight. They therefore knew they would be gathering in the very belly of the anti-western, anti-nation state beast. But no-one could have predicted what actually then happened.

Bowing to left-wing protests, a Socialist Party Brussels mayor, Philippe Close – who last year invited Tehran mayor Alireza Zakani, a member of Iran’s tyrannical Islamist regime, for an official visit – pressured the NatCons’ venue, Concert Noble, to cancel the event. Concert Noble, a high-end event space, duly caved.

Undaunted, the conference organisers secured a second venue at the Sofitel hotel. Late on Monday, Sofitel also cancelled after a second Brussels mayor, Vincent de Wolf, applied the thumbscrews. Sofitel duly sought police help to eject the conference organisers from its premises hours before the conference was due to start.

The conference organisers went to court to seek an injunction against Sofitel. The judge threw that out. Hundreds of people were arriving in Brussels for a conference that had nowhere to meet.

With remarkable persistence and determination, the organisers located a third conference venue, a nightclub called Claridge. They worked most of Monday night setting up from scratch all the equipment, food and other supplies necessary for a two-day conference. By the time the conference registration opened at 8 am on Tuesday morning, it was all up and running – a

formidable achievement. This was, however, far from the end of the story.

For yet another Socialist Party Brussels mayor, Emir Kir, issued an order to shut down the conference. His reasons were

that [NatCon's] vision is not only ethically conservative (e.g. hostility to the legalisation of abortion, same-sex unions, etc.) but also focused on the defence of "national sovereignty", which implies, amongst other things, a "Eurosceptic" attitude..

He also said that some of the speakers "are reputed to be traditionalists" and that the conference must be banned "to avoid foreseeable attacks on public order and peace".

Mayor Kir, a man of Turkish origin who reportedly supports the Islamist president of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, then got to work using mafia-style tactics to get the conference shut down.

After his order was issued, three police officers turned up at the back of the hall demanding a shutdown with "immediate effect" on the grounds that the opinions of Farage, Braverman and other speakers could lead to public disorder. When the TV cameras swivelled round to film the police, however, they beat a retreat outside, doubtless aware that being seen to shut down prominent European politicians wouldn't be a good look.

In the negotiation that followed, the police said they would shut the conference down only "gradually". What that meant was that they wouldn't storm the venue to throw everyone out, but they wouldn't let anyone in and if anyone left they wouldn't be allowed back.

The mayor's lackeys repeatedly threatened the Tunisian-Belgian owner of the Claridge, Lassaad Ben Yaghlane, to force him to cancel the conference. They towed away his car, threatened his

family and said they would take away the venue's licence to put him out of business. They forced the company providing security for the conference to cancel its contract. They did the same to the companies providing catering services such as crockery or food. They threatened to cut off the venue's electricity.

With remarkable courage, however, Ben Yaghlane stood his ground, getting increasingly angry as the threats mounted against him and his family. The reason he lives in Brussels rather than Tunisia, he said, was because he valued the freedom to argue rather than resort to violence. He told the media:

I am open to discussion. These are not the people I normally share the same values with. But I prefer to debate, even if it is [with] Vlaams Belang.

What a hero.

So, barricaded into the Claridge with limited food and drink and apparently no plates or cups, on the conference went. A wartime spirit prevailed. Guest speakers were smuggled in through a back entrance; the Conservative MP Miriam Cates donned a headscarf as disguise. Somehow, the heroic catering staff rustled up reception-style food to keep everyone in the hall going.

The schedule was hastily reorganised to get the principal speakers on stage fast in case the police decided to shut the conference down altogether. Down the road several police vans were parked, waiting.

The whole thing could have been specially choreographed for Nigel Farage, the man who had warned for years about the threat to democracy posed by the EU and its Brussels bureaucracy. He duly bounced round the stage milking every moment, observing that the behaviour of the mayors and police

had now revealed to the world that Brussels was indeed the epicentre of illiberalism. The authorities' actions against the Claridge showed that "legally held opinions from people who are going to win national elections" were "no longer acceptable in Brussels, the home of globalism. This is cancel culture in a very, very big way," he said.

Next, on came Suella Braverman who spoke about the need for the UK to withdraw from the European Convention of Human Rights. She added:

The thought police instructed by the mayor of Brussels saw fit to try and undermine and denigrate what is free speech and free debate. What really concerns me is that, only last year, the mayor of Brussels was happy to host the mayor of Tehran. And yet he seems to be pretty offended by democratically elected politicians, people from all over the European continent, who are giving voice to millions of people talking about things like securing our borders.

Other supposedly terrifying topics discussed by the speakers were EU overreach, farmers' protests, the failing birthrate and the pressures of mass immigration.

Another speaker, German Cardinal Ludwig Müller, was visibly shocked by the police blocking the entrance to the Claridge when he arrived. "This is like Nazi Germany," he [said](#). "They are like the SA."

What was originally a small conference of no great interest to anyone beyond a few thousand political nerds was now creating waves across the world. Country after country voiced shock and outrage about the way it had been treated. Britain's prime minister, Rishi Sunak, called the attempt to shut down the conference "extremely disturbing". The events at the Claridge were trending on Twitter. It was publicity for National Conservatism beyond its supporters' wildest dreams.

But would the conference go ahead on the second day, featuring the appearance by the Dark Lord himself, Hungary's prime minister Orbán? At the door to the Claridge the police, who seemed uneasy about their role, said they wouldn't lock in participants until 10 am. If they arrived before then, the police would turn a blind eye.

However, on Tuesday afternoon Belgium's prime minister Alexander De Croo, a centre-right opponent of the Socialist Party, expressed his displeasure. In a [post](#) on social media, he said that what had happened was "unacceptable". He wrote:

Municipal autonomy is a cornerstone of our democracy but can never overrule the Belgian constitution guaranteeing the freedom of speech and peaceful assembly since 1830. Banning political meetings is unconstitutional. Full stop.

The police at the door started melting away. Hopes rose. Had the Belgian prime minister's intervention defused the crisis?

No. Mayor Kir promptly doubled down and instructed the police to allow absolutely no-one into the conference on Wednesday at any time at all.

For a second time, the conference organisers went to court to get the order quashed. Once again, the court batted them away.

With the second day of the conference now only a few hours away, a fourth venue was proving impossible to find. In desperation, the organisers decided that, if it came to it, all the conference participants would just turn up early and attempt to get into the Claridge, hoping that the police wouldn't relish TV footage being beamed round the world of the Brussels police manhandling hundreds of very unthreatening people with traditional views.

Meanwhile, the NatCons' lawyers filed a plea to a more senior

court, in a final attempt to get some sense out of the Brussels judiciary. At 2 am on Wednesday morning, that court ruled against the mayor. The barricade was lifted. The conference could go ahead as planned. And I delivered my own presentation, which I'll post up on this website as soon as the video becomes available,

As Yoram Hazony told the conference while we were all barricaded into the Claridge:

There are new rules for democracy: stop the other guy from speaking. We can't expect basic decency or any kind of grace from our opponents...

We want the possibility of controlling our own borders, controlling the immigration system, controlling our own budgets. There are not extraordinary things to demand... But our adversaries find us so frightening, so threatening, they can't even possibly allow us to speak, not even once when we turn up in Brussels, so frightening is the idea of National Conservatism.

We don't know whether we're going to win this time, but we do know we're going to win. We know because we're asking for decent democratic things, the inheritance of our forefathers and foremothers. It's not much to ask. It's the right thing to ask and it will triumph in the end of what we may have to describe soon as the former democracy.

And what was the reaction to this thuggery of those supposed British champions of the decent middle ground, Sir Keir Starmer's new model Labour party? While the conference was barricaded into the Claridge by the police, Labour's health spokesman Wes Streeting said in the Commons of Suella Braverman, to guffaws and general hilarity from the Labour front benches, that she

couldn't be with us today because she's currently in Brussels

surrounded by the police who are trying to shut down the event she's attending with some other far-right fanatics with whom she has much in common.

That's what the new model Labour party thinks about sending in the police to shut down a legitimate political gathering. It defames the victims of the tactics of a dictatorship while laughing at their plight.

What happened in Brussels was a moment of rare clarity. At a stroke, the people who smear conservatives as intolerant, oppressive and a threat to democracy were shown that it is in fact *they* who are intolerant, oppressive and a threat to democracy –indeed, they present a chilling threat to freedom in the style of the former Soviet Union or Chinese Communist Party. National Conservatism is now revealed as the resistance.

You really couldn't make this up. A big hand for those Brussels mayors who have scored such a spectacular own goal for their side.