

FIGHTING TALK

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Fighting fascism in the nineties

Blood and Honour

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The ANL's French farce

JOURNAL OF ANTI-FASCIST ACTION

INCORPORATING CABLE STREET BEAT

FIGHTING TALK

The fascists in the elections

The 1992 general election was an important testing ground for the far right in Britain. Compared to the performance of the Front National in France or the Republikaner Partei in Germany, the British National Party (BNP) and the National Front (NF) polled very few votes indeed. This apparent lack of success has already had the predictable effect of encouraging complacency on the left, which is content once again to ignore the fascists. Because the fascists did not secure a mass breakthrough on the scale of their European counterparts, all too many on the left have interpreted the results as a defeat for the BNP and NF. This is a serious miscalculation, and if it is used to justify demobilisation it could prove a dangerous one for the working class.

No doubt many genuinely feared the fascists here might repeat the pattern witnessed elsewhere in Europe and emerge after April as a national force in electoral terms. In the cold light of day, though, no such transformation of their fortunes was on the cards. On the contrary, their organisational weakness was such that both the BNP and the NF were forced to concentrate their forces in a relatively limited number of areas in order to maximise their impact. It had become clear that this would be their strategy quite early on, despite the rumours of fifty plus candidates from the BNP alone.

The decision to concentrate forces in a few strategic areas was in keeping with the fascists' activities in the recent period. Designating the East End of London as an area of national priority, the BNP has been working on the creation of a solid base there for some time now. Far from being a failure, the election results – some 2,500 votes for the BNP in Tower Hamlets – showed how well this tactic had paid off. 2,500 votes might be very little compared to, say, Le Pen's support in Marseilles, but for the BNP in East London it means an important step forward.

With 2,500 first preference votes, the BNP has the possibility to consolidate a very strong local organisation. It is a long way from the 100,000 votes that the NF got in its heyday in London, but it still represents a mass base, albeit on a small and local scale. The result shows that the BNP is no longer isolated, at least in this part of London.

In short, the result in Tower Hamlets marks a qualitative breakthrough for the fascists. Their task now is to turn that electoral support into an active organisational force. It does not need to be spelt out what that would mean if they were to succeed.

Elsewhere, the BNP and NF did not do so well, but neither did they expect to do so. Even so, in a whole number of constituencies, the fascists polled between

400 and 700 votes. In cases such as Bermondsey, this represents renewed growth in areas where fascist organisation has been relatively weak for some time. In other areas, such as the traditional NF strongholds in the West Midlands, such results reflect a solid bedrock of support which has been maintained over long periods. In neither case are there the slightest grounds for complacency. Even in areas where the vote was lowest, if sufficient numbers can be drawn together into active membership, the fascists will have greatly increased their organisational and combative capability.

The damage that an active branch of as few as 100 fascists could inflict in terms of breaking up workers' meetings, race attacks etc, is potentially immense. Since the fascists recruit through action rather than through abstract propaganda, even relatively small advances can make a big difference.

But the real significance of the gains that the fascists have made can only be grasped when seen in the context of the weakness of the left and the overall dynamics of the general political situation.

In Tower Hamlets, the Communist Party of Great Britain stood a candidate. In an area which once boasted a Communist mayor and a Communist MP, they polled barely a tenth of the BNP vote in the Bethnal Green and Stepney constituency. Barely a tenth of the vote! The fascists are consolidating and growing in this solidly working class area, while the revolutionary left is dangerously isolated. Judged in comparison with the electoral performance of the left, the BNP and NF results have an added significance.

The last election was fought during the worst recession in this country since the 1930s. Neither of the major parties offered any alternative to the present system; rather, they offered largely indistinguishable variations on the same theme of capitalism in crisis. As in Britain, so in the rest of Europe. The inability of the traditional parties to tackle the real problems produced by modern capitalism has led to a political impasse in which voters are increasingly turning away from the mainstream parties.

On one level, this is a general feature of capitalism in crisis, and it was certainly the case in the 1920s and 1930s, when fascism first emerged as a mass movement. But in contrast to the 1930s, there is no strong, working class based radical alternative to capitalism. Instead, there is a dangerous vacuum outside of the mainstream parties that the fascists are aiming to fill.

And as the last election shows, in some areas they are at present showing themselves more capable of doing that than the left is.

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With more organisations and individuals now apparently taking the growth of fascism seriously it is appropriate once again to pose the question of what kind of anti-fascist movement we need, argues Joe Blakey

Fighting facism in the nineties

Anti-Fascist Action has a clear position, distinct from the other organisations which aim to fight the fascists. We believe that our perspective is the correct one, and the only one which can be effective against the fascists. When we criticise the Anti-Nazi League, the Anti-Racist Alliance or other groups it is not because of any narrow sectarianism – we criticise them because their activities are ineffective, and in the fight against fascism, ineffectiveness is dangerous.

AFA is not a protest movement, content to shout slogans at the fascists from behind the police lines. Our intention is to plan activities that will make it as hard as possible for them to operate in working class areas. Unlike some anti-fascist organisations, our opposition to the fascists is not based on the fact that they are "nasty" or "evil" people, nor indeed just because they are racist, but because they are the enemies of the progressive working class movement.

It has always been the function of the fascists to divide the working class, and then smash all progressive elements. Don't forget, the first people in the concentration camps in Nazi Germany were the left.

In this country, the main tactic (but not the only one) the fascists use to divide working class people is racism. They recruit people to the idea of racial unity at the expense of working class unity. The 11,821 votes the fascists got in the general election, and in particular the 2,500 votes the BNP polled in the solidly working class East End of London,

show that some sections of the white working class are ready to turn to the fascists, rather than to the revolutionary left, as a radical alternative to the present system.

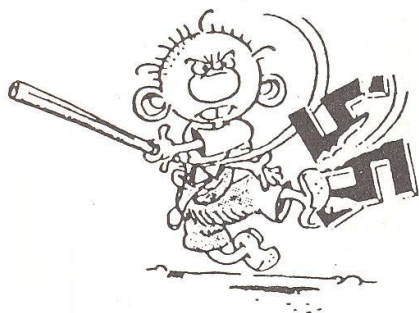
Why do they do this? And more importantly, how can this process be checked and then reversed?

The fact is that the left has failed to build a credible alternative in the eyes of its natural constituency – the working class. As capitalism goes deeper into crisis, and as the traditional parties pile on the pressure to make the working class pay for the crisis, the lack of a radical left alternative creates a vacuum in which the far right can operate. Their gain is our loss.

The fight against fascism cannot be a simple matter of defending the present system, but must at the same time be a fight against capitalism in all its forms. AFA is a united front, not a political party. Within AFA, there are groups and individuals from a wide range of political backgrounds, from anarchists through to socialists and communists. Our aim is to create the space in which a genuine working class alternative to capitalism and fascism can grow.

To do this, though, we have to show working class people two things: firstly, that fascism is their enemy, and secondly that we can stop the fascists physically. The fascists thrive on fear and intimidation by showing people, who have been betrayed by a weak and ineffective left, that they – unlike the

Continued over



left – can do things, that they are a party of action. We have to show them that they are wrong, that it is the left that can really bring about change, that the left can really make a difference.

Unfortunately, much of what the left does in the name of anti-fascism does the opposite – it reinforces the idea that the left is weak and ineffective while the fascists defiantly get on with their plans.

Look what happens when the fascists hold a public meeting, like the one at York Hall in Bethnal Green. [see pg 7] All too often, the left is content to stand on the other side of the road from the fascists,

behind police lines, shouting slogans. Meanwhile, the fascists go about their business unmolested. What real effect does this have? What real difference does it make?

The fact is that the BNP today are not at all put off by having someone shout “Nazi scum” at them. This is not the 1970s, when the National Front were trying to hide their Nazi past behind a respectable image. This is the 1990s where, on the back of the success of the far right in Germany and France, the fascists are proud to be Nazis! Their reply to the taunt “Nazi” is to shout “commie” back at you. In the present political climate,

many will see the latter as the greater insult.

What is more, the fact that the opposition isn’t confident enough to do more than protest peacefully across the road just reinforces the notion that the fascists have the upper hand on the street. This encourages the potential recruits to the BNP while demoralising the potential opposition.

When the fascists hold meetings, it is possible to do a lot more than hide behind crash barriers. In Glasgow and Rochdale, anti-fascists were able to completely disrupt BNP meetings because AFA set out from the very start to confront the fascists. The difference here is that while the ANL and ARA set out to simply protest at the fascists’ presence, we set out to stop them.

These successes were made possible by a combination of good intelligence work, careful planning, and the level of commitment necessary to physically drive the fascists out. In the 1970s a number of fascist meetings were also stopped by occupying the hall beforehand, but even this tactic doesn’t seem to be on the agenda for these other groups.

When the fascists try to operate “on the street”, every anti-fascist activity should be designed to, at best, stop them, or, at least, disrupt them. The fascists have to be challenged, otherwise you have missed the point of how they operate. The harder it is for them to work freely in an area, the less they will be able to do. Their numbers are still small, but unless anti-fascist activity does make it hard for them, they will grow – and the more they grow, the harder it will be to stop them.

It is not possible to go into all the tactical options in an article like this, but anti-fascists should start to give serious thought as to how to stop fascists activities. Assembly points for marches can be occupied, paper sale pitches can be taken over, travel to and from events can be made difficult. Not everyone has to be in the same place either – after all, why make it easy for the police to hem you in.

The guiding principle behind every activity must be to try to implement a policy of “No Platform

How they did in the General Election

British National Party

Constituency	Candidate	Votes	%
Bethnal Green and Stepney	Richard Edmonds	1,310	3.6
Blaby	John Peacock	521	0.8
Bow & Poplar	John Tyndall	1,107	3.0
Cardiff North	John Morse	121	0.3
Clydesdale	Steve Cartwright	342	0.7
Darlington	Dr Donald Clarke	355	0.6
Dewsbury	Lady Jane Birdwood	660	1.1
Edinburgh West	David Bruce	133	0.3
Erewash	Laurence Johnson	645	1.0
Peterborough	Richard Heaton	311	0.5
Rochdale	Ken Henderson	620	1.2
Southwark & Bermondsey	Steve Tyler	530	1.4
Uxbridge	Michael O'Rourke	350	0.7














National Front

Constituency	Candidate	Votes	%
Birmingham Hodge Hill	Eddy Wicker	370	0.9
Birmingham Yardley	Pauline Read	192	0.4
Bristol East	Ian Anderson	270	0.5
Coventry SE	Norman Tomkinson	173	0.5
Derby North	Peter Hart	245	0.4
Dudley East	George Cartwright	675	1.2
Ealing North	John Hill	277	0.6
Leeds West	Bob Tenny	132	0.3
Slough	Andy Carmichael	290	0.5
Southwark & Bermondsey	Terry Blackham	168	0.4
Torbay	Bob Jones	268	0.5
Walsall North	Ken Reynolds	614	1.2
West Bromwich West	John Lord	477	1.1
West Hertfordshire	John McAuley	665	1.0

Independents

Constituency	Candidate	Label	Votes	%
Cheltenham	Melvyn Rendell	Anti-Federal Europe	655	1.0
Leicester East	Dennis Taylor	Ind Brit Homeland	308	0.6

Where you can vote BNP

Bow & Poplar JOHN TYNDALL		Baby JOHN PEACOCK	
Bathnal Green & Stapsney RICHARD EDMONDS		Erawash LAURENCE JOHNSON	
Southwark & Bermondsey STEVE TYLER		Rachdale KEN HENDERSON	
Uxbridge MICHAEL O'ROURKE		Dawsbury LADY JANE BIRDWOOD	
Cardiff North JOHN MORSE		Darlington Dr. DONALD CLARKE	
Peterborough RICHARD HEATON		Clydesdale STEVE CARTWRIGHT	
<small>Shown here is the list of British National Party candidates who will be contesting the coming general election. Together with the names of the constituencies in which they will be standing, be careful to note if these constituencies include your own. And if they do, vote BNP on June 9th!</small>		Edinburgh West DAVID BRUCE	

for the Fascists". What is the point of having a demonstration against fascism if the fascists are going to be left free to organise a march two hours later? It has happened! Anti-fascist activity must confront the fascists, not accommodate them.

It is revealing to look at the response of some members of certain left wing groups (no prizes for guessing which ones) when AFA took the Bermondsey paper sale pitch away from the NF and BNP during the election campaign.

One local who watched while the NF candidate was unceremoniously sent packing told AFA members that "it was about time someone sorted that lot out." Unfortunately, our "revolutionary" friends did not share these sound working class instincts. Instead, they told us that it was alright for us, but that next week they would have to face the consequences when they tried to sell their papers next to the fascists.

On paper, these organisations recognise that the fascists' aim is to smash all working class organisations, but in practice they are happy to tolerate the presence of fascist paper sellers standing next to them, to allow fascists a free ride in a working class area – in short, anything for a quiet life. Now, if they believe in a policy of live and let live, that is up to them; but when they talk about "smashing the Nazis" but in reality stand meekly

up the road hoping to God that the fascists leave them alone, they just expose their weakness.

Remember, this was the area where an anti-racist march was attacked last year by fascists who were able to mobilise and lead hundreds of locals, an area where sections of the white working class see the fascists as the radical alternative, not the left. Tolerating their presence every week will not change this trend in the slightest. Accommodating the fascists in effect makes them an acceptable part of the political agenda – and that is the thin end of the wedge.

Stopping the fascists being openly able to sell their papers does not get rid of the problem, of course, but leaving them alone is a sure fire way to help them grow and to make sure the problem gets worse. It is vital to deny the fascists the opportunity to operate freely and openly. That is why, for example, AFA and Cable Street Beat moved quickly to drive the neo-Nazi music organisation Blood and Honour underground again when they started to operate openly in Carnaby Street. This was a double victory – it made it harder for them to distribute their stuff, and it showed their supporters that they were too weak to do anything about it.

Of course, while anti-fascists should gear their activities to confronting the fascists when they appear in public, there is also plenty of opportunity for non-confrontational activities at other times. It should not be a question of "either-or". Both approaches must be used to complement each other. AFA has shown its commitment to this dual approach – physical and ideological opposition – since it was launched. Carnivals, marches, meetings, gigs, educational activities and so on are integral parts of our strategy, but they are never a substitute for what is necessary when the fascists take to the streets – physical opposition.

One mistake that is commonly made by anti-fascists is to call for state bans on fascist groups and activities. When the Public Order Act was first introduced in the 1930s, its proclaimed purpose was to curb Moseley's fascist Blackshirt movement. In reality, the Act was

used against the left, and it has continued to be used to this end ever since. In simple terms, if fascists are banned, militant anti-fascists will also be banned, if their marches are banned, then so will ours be. Such appeals end up providing the state with extra weapons to clamp down on the left.

Not only that, but the very fact that we call on the capitalist state to come in and do our dirty work for us reinforces the notion that we are too weak to deal with the fascists ourselves. Once again, this is not only ineffective but counter-productive. We need to win young working class people to the fight against fascism by offering them the opportunity to fight for their own interests. We can't do that by calling on their class enemy – the police – to do the job for them.

There is one final point that needs to be emphasised here.

AFA believes that it is absolutely critical to focus propaganda on the potential recruits to fascism – the white working class. All too often, anti-fascist groups seem to write off the white working class as a lost cause, when they should be putting out propaganda aimed at exposing the BNP's "Rights for Whites" rhetoric.

Organisations which won't confront the fascists physically are a perfect home for liberals and armchair socialists. They are cross-class alliances and debating societies. Any militant anti-fascists who may have joined them in the hope of actually fighting fascism should stop wasting their time, and should instead join up with AFA, the only national organisation with the tactics and strategy that can actually make a difference.

AFA is an organisation for activists, not a talking shop, and we see a need for a realignment in the anti-fascist movement. If you want to protest from the sidelines, join the other groups. If you want to make a real impact on the fascists, join AFA.

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Members of Anti-Fascist Action around the country have been busy since the last issue of *Fighting Talk* appeared. Here we report on some of the activities we have been involved in.

AFA takes on BNP in Rochdale

On the morning of Saturday 28 March a group of AFA activists took over the paper selling pitch usually shared by the BNP, NF, and SWP in Bermondsey gaining the support of many local people in the process. The action was a complete success despite the BNP taking a late decision to peddle their poison in the Roman Road area of East London.

Later the same day we participated in the "March for Justice" in Newham called by, amongst others, the Newham Monitoring Project (NMP) to protest at a racist killing and on-going state harassment of black and Asian people.

However, the afternoon commenced with a visit by the police to the AFA rendezvous point where they suggested that the march organisers did not want us around. This was completely untrue. In fact the NMP welcomed our contingent onto the march, and placed us with the left groups just ahead of the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) participants.

The ANL were clearly dis-

In their post-election issue of *Spearhead*, the British National Party (BNP) boasted that they had held two "successful" rallies during their campaign. They had hoped it would be three. But the attempt to hold one in Rochdale, where ex-Tory Ken Henderson was the BNP candidate, came to grief on 4 April.

Most of the BNP's top brass, including Richard Edmonds and John Peacock, went to Rochdale to boost Henderson's campaign. But Anti-Fascist Action upset their plans to stage a gala race-hate meeting.

AFA mobilised over 200 people to oppose the BNP rally. We even successfully managed to persuade the ANL to join a demonstration at the fascists' redirection point, rather than simply give out leaflets miles away from them.

The fascists thought that they would get an easy ride. After all, their friends in the police had arrested leading AFA activists and raided their homes the evening prior to the AFA counter-demo (only for them to be released without charge after the demonstration). They hoped this would take the sting out of our protest. It didn't.

Having occupied their first redirection point and driven away a number of BNP thugs who were being

ANL demonstrate their sectarianism

mayed at the arrival of the AFA contingent and when the march was moving ANL stewards called on their contingent to slow down and open a gap between us and them.

ANL stewards then told the police that they feared we would attack them. They requested that the police join the march as a buffer between AFA and the ANL. Neither AFA members nor the NMP stewards could believe this! The march organisers immediately demanded that the ANL withdraw their invitation to the police, that the police leave the demonstration and that the ANL stop creating a divide in the march.

The ANL did close the gap between the contingents though they continued to discourage those marching behind their

banner from either talking to or mixing with the Anti-Fascist Action demonstrators.

It is ironic that the so-called revolutionaries of the Anti-Nazi League find it impossible to accept AFA invitations to speak on our platforms, do not want to march with us in defiance and opposition to police harassment of the Asian community, but see no problem in inviting the police to march with them.

The damage to the anti-fascist movement this sort of sectarian behaviour does cannot be under-estimated. Now, with the growing success of the far right throughout Europe and in Britain in the general election, is the time for maximum unity to reverse the tide of fascist growth.

bussed in for the rally, AFA learnt that the main fascist force had moved to another pub. Immediately we argued that the demonstration should follow them.

Once AFA arrived at this pub we made our presence felt and after a vigorous encounter in the pub with the master race's goon squad we left them cowering inside awaiting police protection. When the bulk of the other counter-demonstrators arrived we simply surrounded the pub, withstood police attempts to clear us off and kept the fascists pinned down for almost three hours.

Finally, instead of a rally, the fascists were escorted out of town by the police, tails between their legs and with the shouts of AFA members ringing in their ears. Memories of AFA's actions at their "secret" rendezvous were still ringing in quite a few of the BNP's heads!

The BNP's failed attempt to hold a rally showed the effectiveness of AFA's strategy in confronting the fascists. But the 620 (1.2%) votes Henderson got in the election shows that he does have a base in Rochdale and much more work needs to be done to counter this. In particular, the need to build AFA's influence in Rochdale itself – much of the work in the election and before having been done by Manchester AFA – is urgent.

With this in view AFA has followed up its success with a concerted leafletting campaign in the area and has continued to mobilise against the BNP's attempts to capitalise on their vote.

On 25 April news that Henderson and his gang were planning to leaflet a local estate resulted in 120 anti-fascists from all over the north assembling in Rochdale to stop them. Once again the fascists were pinned down in one of their watering holes by AFA, this time having to make their getaway (with police protection of course) on foot. Their "Littleborough High School Bus" (which they bought in an auction) was in no fit state to be driven following the demonstration.

Unfortunately, the following

week the fascists did manage to hold a rally on the steps outside Rochdale Town Hall. This was a blow to anti-fascists in the area, because up to that point we had quite clearly kept the BNP on the run. However, it was largely due to a last minute change of plans by fascists, who by now were terrified of meeting up with AFA yet again, and their collusion with the police.

AFA leafleted the estate where the rally was supposed to be taking place but by the time we found out where the BNP were they had a strong line of blue standing between them and us. Mind you it was standing between them and the "public" they were supposed to be addressing, so all was not lost.

All three events do point to the need to build AFA in Rochdale. The BNP have clearly made Rochdale one of their northern priorities. But there are hopeful signs. It is vital that a solid anti-fascist presence, building on this, is organised to challenge them.

BNP York Hall rally

The centrepiece of the British National Party's general election campaign in London's East End was a rally held in York Hall, Bethnal Green, on Monday 6 April. It was a show of strength for them in the area they had given top priority to, and a clear provocation, so it was absolutely necessary that anti-fascists mount a serious challenge.

As well as the mobilisation by Anti-Fascist Action, both the Anti Nazi League (ANL) and the Anti Racist Alliance (ARA) staged protests against the rally.

The ANL and ARA demonstration attracted a substantial crowd – they outnumbered the fascists by around three to one. Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, the ANL and ARA were content to stage their demon-

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National Front office

Anti-Fascist Action currently has no branch in the West London area. The above advertisement, recently received, indicates the potential for organising in the area. Interested anti-fascists in West London should contact AFA with a view to setting up a branch to challenge the BNP and NF for this area.

strations in the space allocated to them by the police – on the other side of the road from the meeting, behind the police crash barriers.

This decision effectively ruled out any real confrontation with the fascists. To have disrupted the meeting from where they were standing, they would have first had to fight through the police lines, something the organisers clearly had no intention of doing. Indeed, the ANL stewards were so passive that when the police snatched individuals from the crowd they stood by and let them do it.

This type of posturing has no effect on the fascists. In fact, it simply confirms what they say – that the left are too weak and too

Continued over

spineless to actually do anything about them. The ANL and ARA watched the BNP march in, and the few who were left at the end watched them march out again. What is the point in that?

Rather than boycott the passive demo, AFA supporters went along to argue for a more confrontational approach with any genuine working class youth who might have been there.

At the same time we used our limited resources to make sure that the fascists were disrupted in some way, even though alone we were not in a position to stop their meeting taking place.

Having found out where the BNP were planning to go drinking after the rally (the Weavers' Arms in nearby Roman Road - used regularly by the BNP throughout their election campaign) AFA occupied the pub.

When the fascists marched out of the meeting under police escort

they were taken to the Weavers' Arms, no doubt as arranged. AFA stood its ground outside the pub while the BNP, which had maybe three times as many as AFA by this stage, had to march by and make alternative plans for the evening's drinking. While not a big victory in itself, this incident does raise three important issues.

Firstly, it clearly demoralised the local working class youth the BNP had attracted to their meeting. They expected to see the left watch on passively while the BNP went on with its plans. Instead, despite their superior numbers, despite their bragging, despite their reputation as "men of action", the BNP had to be content to watch powerlessly rather than drive AFA out of "their" pub. In short, they were not up to the job of getting rid of us.

Secondly, as noted in a rather confused way in the press, this small gesture of defiance by AFA was not lost on the locals watching from their

windows and balconies. In fact, a small group of youngsters came out and jeered at the BNP. AFA gave the local working class people a taste of what can be done, even in relatively small numbers. The passive demo at York Hall did no such thing.

The third issue, the most general one, concerns the central question: who actually disrupted the fascists on the day? The ANL and ARA may have got media coverage, which was probably all they were after anyway, but the fascists themselves laughed openly at their impotence. At the Weavers' Arms, they had to put a brave face on to cover up their own impotence. One tiny but real victory like that is worth far more than passive protests behind police lines.

● Four weeks after the rally, East London AFA mounted a picket of the Weavers' Arms after the landlord had gone on the radio saying that the BNP were "good customers".

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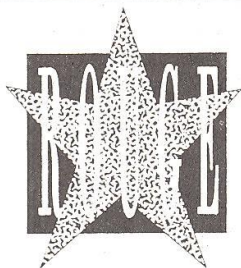
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Street cred

There was a time when there was only one candidate for the title of chief fascist pavement kisser - Tony "Tarmac" Lecomber, who could boast that he was always on the street (normally face down). With Lecomber temporarily out of the (af)fray - last seen in HMP Brixton - the race is on to take the vacant title.

Which leading BNPer will emerge victorious? Will it be Steve Tyler, who followed his recent (very close) examination of Bermondsey street life with an inspection of the local hospital facilities? Or Richard Edmonds, recently seen with his ear to the ground in Kings Cross and nose all over the pavement in Bethnal Green.

We wish Edmonds and Tyler every success in this particular venture, although we must make it clear that we are non-partisan and will assist each and every contender in the competition to be fascist pavement kisser of the year.



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Left wing students in higher education gave the relaunch of the ANL a mixed response. Some were grateful that the largest organisation on the British far left was taking the resurgence of fascism seriously at last. Others saw it as a cynical attempt by the SWP to recruit new members. Many questioned what possible role the ANL had to play in advancing the struggle against either racism or fascism.

AFA supporters in the colleges responded by stressing the need for unity in action, while debunking the SWP's mythology of the organisation's success in the 1970s. We also pointed to their refusal to implement "no platform" against the fascists, and the SWP's determination to ensure it kept control of the ANL firmly in its own hands.

Suddenly AFA's work began to receive good publicity from an unexpected quarter – the Union of Jewish Students (UJS).

The UJS is the largest single Jewish student grouping in Britain. It promotes Jewish cultural identity on campuses but it is also an ardent defender of the Israeli state. Its members hold a range of views about the current Israeli government but a basic unity exists around pro-Zionist ideology.

While individual members of the UJS have been outstanding AFA activists, the organisation has not affiliated to, or become regularly involved in, AFA.

Model motions, designed for the National Union of Students' (NUS) spring conference, were moved at several union general meetings including at the London School of Economics, Bristol University and Manchester Poly, heaping praise on AFA and scorn on the ANL.

Many charges the UJS aimed at the ANL were correct. Despite SWP protests to the contrary, the ANL has remained its property lock, stock and barrel. But underpinning the whole argument against the ANL was the charge that the SWP is an anti-Semitic organisation.

Ironically the UJS, by equating opposition to the state of Israel with anti-Semitism, would find many individuals and organisations within AFA as "culpable" as the SWP.

But the SWP never suggested

AFA's student organiser looks at the controversy sparked in many colleges by the ANL's relaunch and finds that the SWP have no monopoly on sectarianism.

Right target, wrong ammo?

that ANL members had to adopt its anti-Zionist stance. At some colleges ANL bookstalls have apparently featured copies of the SWP pamphlet, *Israel: The Hijack State*. But this is merely tactical stupidity rather than a conscious policy of alienating pro-Zionist Jews.

In the 1980s the SWP committed other tactical blunders, especially around the banning of a Zionist Jewish Society at Sunderland Poly. However, they have mobilised for demos against the desecration of Jewish cemeteries in Enfield, Wembley, Newham and Manchester. SWP members have been attacked verbally and physically, not just as "reds" but as "Bolshevik Jews". A member of the SWP's sister organisation in Denmark was killed in a bomb attack this March, almost certainly carried out by fascists.

For us in AFA a united front against fascism in Britain and elsewhere in Europe need not concern itself with the issue of Zionism. Despite the many political differences separating us, the history of racism and anti-Semitism and the reality of a crisis-ridden capitalism have presented us with a common foe whom we recognise and must fight against as one.

NUS spring conference rejected sponsorship of the ANL, partly as a response to the UJS motions. Of course we don't know if the arguments that swung votes were good or bad ones. Public knowledge of

madcap adventures, like the Tower Hamlets leafletting session which nearly turned into tragedy, couldn't have done the ANL any good. Certainly, ARA supporters would also have been pleased at the vote. Hopefully, however, the argument that the SWP, and thus the ANL, are anti-Semitic organisations was not the key.

After years of putting up with ridicule from the SWP – which has at times even tried to deny AFA's existence – giving the SWP a taste of its own medicine may seem only fair to some who support AFA's work. But if this obstructs unity in action it will not advance the struggle against the BNP, NF and the like.

We offer the UJS as a whole and its individual members an open invitation to join AFA. But the same door is open to Palestinians, Arab students and other anti-Zionist forces. It is also open to those SWP supporters who recognise the need to go beyond ANL-style passive protest and build an anti-fascist organisation that tries to mobilise rank and file workers to actually confront the fascists and not just seek the blessings of trade union bureaucrats and media stars.

For us in AFA a united front against fascism in Britain and elsewhere in Europe need not concern itself with the issue of Zionism.

CABLE STREET BEAT REVIEW

The return of Blood and Honour

**The fascist skinhead music organisation is back on the scene.
 Nick Stone looks at who they are and what they are up to**

Blood and Honour, the self-styled "nationalist anti-red music movement", is back. These self-declared champions of race and nation have regained some degree of political prominence through their influence on the far right skinhead groups emerging across post-Stalinist Europe.

In 1990 Blood and Honour band "No Remorse" successfully toured in Europe and the USA. Swedish band "Ultima Thule" this year headlined a "freedom rally" in Estonia. Members of Ian Stuart Donaldson's "Skrewdriver" have been arrested while taking part in fascist activities in Germany.

Blood and Honour emerged in the 1980s from the ruins of the National Front's Rock Against Communism movement (RAC). At its peak RAC could organise gigs with attendance of 500 plus, by word of mouth publicity alone. However, the 1986 split in the National Front shattered RAC as well, and left Donaldson along with bands such as No Remorse and Sudden Impact, to strike out on their own.

While people like the British National Party's (BNP) John Tyndall still dismissed rock music as "jungle music", Donaldson had sussed that normally mundane activities such as worshipping Rudolf Hess could be made more appealing if supported by a few badly played power chords.

Sudden Impact summed it up:

"Skinheads may have started off as a mixed race cult listening to nigger music, but now it's a way of life for true white people."

The middle class left had long since decided that all skins were racist, giving Blood and Honour a golden opportunity to become a Trojan Horse

for the middle class far right to recruit some working class youth to its ranks – intervening in a youth movement which had originally begun as a celebration of bluebeat and ska!

George Marshall describes a typical Blood and Honour gig in his history of the skinhead movement, *Spirit of '69* (see *Fighting Talk* 2):

"The atmosphere generated by bands like Skrewdriver and Brutal Attack . . . is nothing short of a mini-Nuremberg Rally. Hundreds of

***"Eventually there will
 be a race war and we
 have to be strong
 enough in numbers to
 win it. I'll die to keep
 this country pure and
 if it means bloodshed
 at the end of the day,
 then let it be."***

**Ian Stuart Donaldson
 Sunday People interview
 1988**

skinheads chanting 'Seig Heil! Seig Heil!' as Ian Stuart and Ken McLellan do their bit for Adolf and country."

The Blood and Honour movement exists primarily as an underground phenomenon. Most major record companies and distributors find the idea of racist skinhead bands a fairly unattractive marketing prospect. Consequently Blood and Honour have built up a production/distribution network with bases in Germany, France and

England through which they market their wares across the world. Most material is sold by mail order. The major producer is Herbert Egoldt's Rock-O-Rama Records – almost all the major Nazi bands sell records through Rock-O-Rama.

In 1985 Gael Bodiks, a racist gig promoter, established another openly fascist record label, Rebelles Européens, in Brest, France with close ties to Blood and Honour. As well as records by fascist bands, it specialises in T-shirts, books and Nazi military music. Bodiks says of his outfit:

"The reason for its creation was quite simple. No label wanted to produce politically engaged bands without self-censorship . . . I had to give them the same opportunity to do so as other bands. Music is an excellent way of spreading those ideas and it was becoming more and more necessary to have these skinhead bands known."

Donaldson claims Rock-O-Rama has helped him consolidate the fascist youth movement across Europe, and align it with the "old men" of the movement's "heyday":

"They are some of Adolf's SS who escaped the war trials and are now successful business men. I visit them and they visit me at our concerts and we discuss our common goals . . ." (*Sunday People* interview)

It is clear that even at a time when Blood and Honour had had to retreat from the arena in Britain, their links with European fascists enabled them to help fill the political vacuum left by the collapse of Stalinism and the retreat of the left across Europe.

In Britain too, Blood and Honour has played its part in the re-emergence of the British Movement (BM) after

The rise of the far right across Europe highlights the need for an international response to fascism. An AFA delegate to a recent anti-fascist conference in Holland reports on the new links being established between militant anti-fascists

Over the past few years it has become clear that fascist groups are co-operating with each other, both nationally and internationally.

There is evidence that a sophisticated international network exists which provides mutual support for legal and illegal activity. This ranges from advice and assistance with organisation and fund-raising, through provision of safe havens for fascists and Nazis on the run, to the supply of speakers and facilities for meetings and rallies. This network seems to be getting bigger and stronger all the time.

Clearly it is vitally important that anti-fascists develop networks at least as effective as the fascists' links.

To this end Anti-Fascist Action accepted an invitation to attend the European anti-racist and anti-fascist conference held in May at Eindhoven in Holland. The conference gave AFA the opportunity to strengthen informal links already in existence as well as developing new contacts. We were also involved in arranging separate meetings for the more militant elements over the two days. It was an extremely successful weekend which saw the emergence of a militant European anti-fascist network committed to a radical strategy.

The original conference was attended by a number of groups from all over Europe. Discussion was centred around a draft manifesto published by the Anti-Fascist Front of Antwerp, Belgium, which aimed to set up a European anti-fascist movement. This manifesto was composed of a series of liberal demands on the state to criminalise fascists and thus defeat them. This is a completely useless strategy which AFA couldn't consider as a basis for joint work.

In conjunction with other European militants AFA attempted to move the debate away from this terrain and towards an acceptance

of the need for class-based confrontation to oppose fascism. Unfortunately, due to the political composition of the conference the original manifesto was accepted as the basis for discussion. The AFA delegates decided to abstain from voting on the manifesto and only participated in votes around action. We were criticised by some who interpreted our abstentions as meaning that we had no views on the subject, rather than accepting that we considered the document under discussion to be a complete waste of time.

The group founded on this manifesto is doomed to failure, having refused to adopt a clear working class orientation. We argued strongly that physical opposition to fascism is not simply an option available to anti-fascists, but an inevitable necessity that the fascists will force on us, as and when they feel strong enough.

In stark contrast to the main conference an "alternative conference" of militants from Britain, France, Belgium, Greece, Sweden, Holland, Norway and Germany were in broad agreement about the strategy required to be effective against the fascist gangs, and have agreed to keep in close contact to develop that understanding.

Just as important as setting up this network was the opportunity to

meet groups from other countries who, like AFA, operate at the sharp end of the struggle. Like AFA they too are criticised by other anti-racist and anti-fascist groups in their home countries. The rapport we shared in discussion with each other helped bridge any minor language difficulties.

Both Campaign Against Fascism in Europe and the Lesbian and Gay Campaign Against Racism and Fascism attended the conference, claiming to represent the British anti-fascist movement. We welcome the support of the handful of people represented by these two groups, but the claim that they represent any significant forces is simply not true. In any case they undermined their attempts to occupy the moral high ground of British anti-fascism by bargaining and bartering themselves into a position of accepting the liberal document as long as their amendments were also accepted.

Anti-Fascist Action calls on all militant anti-fascists to reject the idea that we can call on the state to intervene against fascism in favour of the proven strategy of physical and theoretical education. We welcome contact with like-minded groups world-wide and have appointed an International Liaison Officer to maintain this area of work.

Building an international network

The ANL ventures abroad

We reproduce here a letter sent to the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) by Reflex, the French anti-fascist group in response to a leaflet recently distributed by the ANL in France (see opposite). We also print our translation of the ANL leaflet below. The Reflex letter points out that the struggle against the fascists should be run by those on the ground who have the knowledge, ability, and expertise to thwart the rise of fascism. With Le Pen gaining credibility and influence at the expense of the French working class the last thing that is required is for his opponents to be diverted by opportunists and adventurers such as the SWP.

AFA recognises the value of working in co-operation with other groups both at home and abroad and pursues this despite political and tactical differences between us and the other anti-fascist/anti-racist groups. In Britain we have consistently invited the other major forces (Searchlight magazine, the Anti-Nazi League, the Anti-Racist Alliance) to our public meetings and onto our events. Both the ANL and ARA consistently ignore our invitations.

In fact the ANL criticises and condemns AFA's approach to anti-fascism though it has never sug-

gested a coherent alternative strategy. AFA pursues a twin track strategy of physical and ideological confrontation of fascism from a working class base. This strategy has had concrete results, and has

impeded the growth of fascism here.

It is no secret that the ANL is run by the SWP, an organisation that right up until the week before its relaunch of the ANL denied the existence of a fascist threat. Cynical

COMMENT ARRETER LE PEN

Une fois de plus, Le Pen et ses acolytes ont osé manifester le premier mai, jour où nous fêtons l'internationalisme et la solidarité.

Le fait qu'ils ont pu défilier impunément, sans qu'il n'y ait d'appel à une confrontation de masses contre ces fascistes, est une honte.

Malgré leurs succès aux élections régionales et cantonales en mars, Le Pen et ses supporters peuvent être stoppés.

En Grande Bretagne, La Ligue Anti Nazie (ANL), qui vient d'être relancée, a lutté avec grand succès contre les nazis britanniques à la fin des années soixante-dix. Par une campagne politique visant à démasquer les nazis et par des confrontations physiques de masse, nous nous sommes assurés de leur défaite, défaite de laquelle ils ont pris plus de dix ans à se remettre.

S'inspirant de l'exemple de Le Pen, ils ont espéré profiter des récentes élections législatives en Grande-Bretagne pour se donner du poil de la bête. Grâce aux efforts de l'ANL ils ont obtenu un score dérisoire. Alors qu'aux élections législatives ils recrutaient 100.000 voix à Londres et 30.000 à Leicester, leur vote moyen cette fois-ci n'a pas dépassé 455.

La victoire de l'ANL a été rendue possible en réalisant l'unité la plus large possible de tous ceux qui s'opposaient aux nazis, en distribuant des millions de tracts arrachant leur masque respectable et en les confrontant physiquement et en nombre partout où ils se montraient.

Aujourd'hui, l'ANL a des groupes dans chaque ville importante en Grande-Bretagne. Les groupes réunissent jeunes, moins jeunes, blancs, noirs, juifs, musulmans, chrétiens... bref, tous ceux qui veulent lutter ensemble pour briser les nazis et s'assurer que leurs idées n'auront jamais plus de place dans notre pays.

Nous avons osé les fascistes dans les années soixante-dix et nous le ferons dans les années quatre-vingt-dix. En France comme en Grande-Bretagne cette victoire est possible mais elle ne peut se faire que par une combinaison de campagnes politiques et de confrontations physiques de masse. Rien d'autre ne les arrêtera.

SI TU VEUX SAVOIR PLUS AU SUJET DE LA LIGUE ANTI NAZIE, ECRIS A: PO BOX 2566, LONDRES N4 2HG GRANDE BRETAGNE

La Ligue Anti Nazie
PO Box 2566 Londres N4 2HG

Printed and Published by the Anti-Nazi League

How do we stop Le Pen?

Once again Le Pen and his acolytes have dared to demonstrate on May Day, the day when we celebrate internationalism and solidarity.

The fact that they have been able to march with impunity, without there being a call for a mass confrontation against the fascists, is a disgrace.

Despite their successes in March's regional and local elections, Le Pen and his supporters can be stopped.

In Britain, the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), which has just been relaunched, struggled against the Nazis with great success at the end of the seventies.

Through a campaign aimed at unmasking the Nazis and through mass physical confrontations, we ensured their

ANTI NAZI LEAGUE

defeat, a defeat from which they have taken more than ten years to recover.

Inspired by Le Pen's example, they hoped to take advantage of the recent general election in Britain to stage a comeback. Thanks to the efforts of the ANL, they got a derisory score. While in the 1970s they polled 100,000 votes in London and 30,000 in Leicester, their average vote this time was just 455.

The ANL's victory was made possible by bringing about the widest possible unity of all those opposed to the

fascists, by distributing millions of leaflets tearing away their respectable mask and by confronting them physically in force of numbers wherever they showed themselves.

Today the ANL has groups in every important town in Britain. The groups bring together young people, not so young people, whites, blacks, Jews, Muslims, Christians... in short, all those who want to struggle together in order to smash the Nazis and ensure that there will never again be room for their ideas in our country.

We crushed the fascists in the 1970s and we will do it again in the 1990s. In France as in Britain, this victory is possible, but it will only come about through a combination of political campaigns and mass physical confrontations. Nothing else will stop them.

*To the Executive Committee of the
Anti Nazi League*

We are writing to you from Reflex, the French anti-fascist group based in Paris, because we attended the annual 1 May demonstration in Paris and were shocked to see your organisation there distributing thousands of leaflets containing advice on how to beat the French fascists, and giving a British address as a contact for an anti-fascist campaign.

We do not need or want your organisation coming to our country to patronise the French anti-fascist movement and tell us how to conduct our struggles. We note that the ANL did not, as a courtesy, bother to contact us or other groups engaged in the struggle in order to discuss how you might possibly support our work and to discover the true situation in France.

Our group has been working for six years, with a defined and tested strategy, to combat French fascism. Other groups here have also been established for long periods of time to work as part of a united anti-fascist front. We find it insulting that you think you can send your lackeys over

REFLEX

here to launch a campaign against Le Pen without making any attempt to consult French anti-fascist groups. It is not the first time that British anti-fascist groups have attempted to undermine our work here, but we sincerely hope it will be the last.

We fully know the reputation and record of the Anti-Nazi League in Britain, and we are not impressed with it. We know that groups we have links with and trust, such as AFA and *Searchlight*, do not have a high opinion of you and find you difficult to work with. We have to ask ourselves why it is that the ANL thinks it can build a campaign in a foreign country when it can't even build a successful campaign in its own country.

Your leaflet "How do we stop Le Pen?" contained several inaccuracies about the ANL record in England, notably your claim to have decreased the fascist vote in Britain in the April general election, which is a blatant distortion of the truth. We also note in the last paragraph your claim that successful campaigns against fascism

must contain a combination of political campaigns and mass physical confrontation. While this is true, we have not seen the ANL carry this out successfully in Britain since 1978. Since that time the major successful anti-fascist work in the UK has been achieved by AFA and *Searchlight* and not by yourselves. For the record, groups in France such as Reflex and SCALP have had the twin tactics policy for at least eight years, so we do not appreciate being told how to do what we are already doing.

We hope that we will not have to write to you again about this – you are not welcome here except in a support capacity where your organisation respects the lead of our organisations. We appreciate the support of foreign groups for our campaign here but the French anti-fascist movement is not prepared to have its work undermined and destroyed by thoughtless patronising attempts of the ANL to take on our struggle without even being polite enough to contact the groups already working here.

Yours in struggle
Reflex

14 Rue de Nateuil, 75015 Paris

readers will question the SWP's motives in regenerating the ANL. However, the blatant sectarianism and dishonesty with which the ANL leadership has conducted itself has brought criticism from all quarters.

It prefers jockeying over "prime" positions on marches and chanting radical-sounding slogans to a principled opposition to fascism. Not for them an attempt to work with others who have some practical experience in confronting the fascist street presence. A high media profile is far more important. Now, with some six months experience of failure under its belt, the ANL feels it is ready to launch a take-over bid for the anti-fascist movement in Europe.

We fully endorse the call by Reflex, which demands that the ANL consult with those at the sharp end of the fight, rather than simply indulge themselves in a European tour of guest interventions designed to attract media attention, often to the detriment of the real anti-fascist struggle.

ARA's strategy for failure

At a fringe meeting at this year's annual conference of the civil servants' union, CPSA, an ARA spokesperson summed up their perspectives. He argued: "It is not enough to call for black and white to unite [against racism and fascism]. They must do so under black leadership."

Anti-Fascist Action profoundly disagrees with this statement. In contrast to ARA, we stand for a militant class based anti-fascist organisation, which makes no distinction between race, creed, and colour, and which fights the fascist threat both ideologically and physically. Our role must be to organise *all* sections of the working class, not one particular part of it.

There is a danger that ARA's position will force black and white apart rather than bring them together. How can ARA expect people to play a full part against racism and fascism if members who are

white, Jewish, Irish etc, are excluded from a full role in the organisation? This is a recipe for disaster for two reasons. Firstly, good militant anti-racists and anti-fascists will be neglected and secondly, the ability to build a mass organisation will be curtailed if non-white activists rightly refuse to accept second-class membership status.

A second position flowing from this approach was that "only the victims of racism and fascism can define the struggle". In a sense this is true, but not in the way that ARA mean it. Leaving aside the patronising language, the "victims" of racism and fascism here clearly means the people who are the target of racist attacks.

Of course, black self-defence is a big part of the anti-fascist struggle, but to see racism and fascism as essentially the same thing is to fundamentally misunder-

Continued over

stand the real nature of the fascist threat.

Fascism does not only pose a threat to black, Irish or Jewish people. Fascist groups by no means only attack non-whites. Their real aim behind all their activities is to divide, weaken and destroy the organised and progressive working class movement. Racism is a *tactic* they use to this end – and in Britain today it is an extremely important one. But, as we have argued repeatedly, it is not their only tactic. Unless the problem of fascism is seen in class terms and dealt with on a class basis, then we are playing into the hands of our enemies.

All sections of the working class are potential victims of fascism. All of us, black or white, have a vested interest in fighting racism and fascism.

The speaker at the CPSA fringe meeting claimed that the real significance of ARA was that, "for the first time – under the banner of ARA – the labour movement and black organisations had joined together under black leadership... with 27 unions having already affiliated".

Quite impressive? Well, not really. It may well be true that 27 unions with hundreds of thousands of members have affiliated. Maybe some Labour MPs have also come out in favour of ARA.

But unless official backing is accompanied by real class this is nothing but a token gesture. There are no more people on the streets, demos are no bigger, not one extra leaflet is handed out. It doesn't result in less British National Party or National Front paper sales or activity; or fewer racist attacks. It does not curtail the ability of these people to organise and it

does not result in one new member for your own organisation. The activity indulged in by ARA is tokenism and pretence. Tokenism for trades unions and Labour MPs who can ease their consciences by affiliating, and pretence for ARA when they think that this represents a mass movement.

But what about the second part of the equation – black organisation. This is again more form than substance. Organisations, such as the Society Of Black Lawyers and the National Black Caucus often have a very limited base of support within the local black communities. Their membership is small, self-selected and generally composed of middle class careerists. The whole policy of paper affiliations and paper organisations is fooling nobody except, perhaps, themselves.

ARA attempts to make anti-racist/anti-fascist struggle a moral question, *good* versus *bad*. This is the path to defeat. The middle class and careerist elements of these organisations will soon desert, and the only agency who could deal with the problem – the working class – are either ignored or are seen as inherently racist and left to be the right's recruiting ground. Unless ARA addresses its politics to the white working class as well as rallying the immediate victims of racist attacks ARA will ignore the majority of the working class in Britain today. This will allow organisations such as the BNP a free run and grant them an opportunity they will grasp with both hands.

Criticism of ARA would have less force and pertinence if, in their political activ-

ity, they could show some concrete success. The sad fact is that ARA has made no tangible difference in the battle against racism and fascism. The few targets it set itself have been a resounding failure. They set out to close the BNP bookshop in Welling, Kent and to change the balance of forces in the area. After one demonstration and 14 pickets of the Tory local council the bookshop is still open and looks as if it will remain so. Down the road at Thamesmead, the scene of Rolan Adams' racist killing, the only pub on the estate The Wildfowler still does not serve black people.

In North Kensington a working men's club operates a colour bar. ARA called a demonstration, no work to build for the demonstration was done, no posters, no leaflets, no attempt to contact other like minded people. What happened? Forty-six people turned up to find themselves outnumbered by PC Plod. The manager of this particular club must have been quaking in his boots when the intrepid 46 marched around the corner. These sort of events only serve to demoralise your own support and give heart to your opponents.

But then ARA and the people who lead it are no strangers to this kind of self-defeating, impotent exercise. They have pursued these tactics on a bigger scale – with worse results – elsewhere (see our report on the Bermondsey march in FT2). Their approach cannot defeat the fascists, cannot strengthen the anti-fascist movement, and cannot provide the basis for a progressive working class alternative to grow.

The Revolutionary Internationalist League

The following statement was prepared to explain the decision to expel a disruptive group from AFA last year. However, at the time no-one approached us for such an explanation.

In the interests of non-sectarianism AFA branches subsequently allowed members of the RIL to re-join on an individual basis. This turned out to be a mistake. After a period of intermittent attendance at branch meetings and non-attendance at AFA activities they attempted to disrupt our national conference with the same agenda as they had prior to their expulsion, though they received no support at the meeting. They then attempted to continue their programme of disruption within the AFA branches by re-entering as a group.

In addition the RIL produced a leaflet, containing a diatribe condemning AFA both as a group and as individual members, which was given out on a demonstration called by the Drummond Street Youth Association in London on Sunday

17 May. We cannot ignore their assertions that AFA is a racist organisation made up of racist individuals, prone to senseless violence. These baseless accusations clearly indicate the dishonesty of their claim to want to build AFA.

Their actions have been energetically and unambiguously opposed and two RIL members have been expelled from AFA. For this reason we have decided to publish our original statement below.

The expulsion of the RIL

The activities of the Revolutionary Internationalist League (RIL) within Anti-Fascist Action led to their expulsion in October 1991. This action was taken as a last resort in order to enable AFA to continue effective anti-fascist work.

On their own admission the RIL do not share the orientation that AFA have taken in the fight against fascism. We recognise that fascism is inherent in capitalist society, but have no illusions that

AFA is the vehicle to topple the state. Rather it is our purpose to create the climate whereby progressive left and anarchist groups can bring their ideas and programs to those targeted by the fascist gangs both as victims of their abuse and as victims of their recruitment.

The RIL insist that AFA must have a complete political program before it can combat fascism. Clearly, an organisation consisting of such a wide range of political groups and individuals cannot develop such a program. Indeed if AFA were to do so then it would no longer be a broad based campaign but a political party itself. It is apparent that the RIL wanted to substitute AFA for a political party and that the result would mirror the politics of the RIL. Here lies their true motive – the cynical manipulation of a principled and effective group in order to build their own party.

Anti-Fascist Action will not be deflected from the primary task of confronting the fascists and race attackers by either the fascist gangs, the state, or inconsequential manipulative groups and individuals.

With the Tories back in power state racism is firmly back on the agenda. The Asylum Bill is being revamped ready for the autumn. Sam Lowry looks at what it proposes

Smash the Asylum Bill!

Being tortured is many people's worst nightmare. Imagine you are one of the hundreds of thousands through the world for whom this nightmare is reality. Or think what would happen to you if your town was destroyed by war, your family subject to arbitrary arrest or execution. What would you do?

If you tried to find a safer place to live you would become one of the world's twenty million refugees.

These are the people who have become the latest target of Tory racism and the gutter press.

The Tory Asylum Bill, introduced late last year, was designed to make sure that any refugee who tries to flee to Britain will have to face a new nightmare of poverty, detention and, for the vast majority, swift deportation back to the hell-holes they have escaped from.

Now, with John Major firmly reinstalled in Downing Street, the racist Asylum Bill is back on the agenda. The April general election had forced the government to abandon the bill. It is once more under government review, with the results expected some time around September.

It's anyone's guess what "improvements" to the bill the Tories will try to get away with in their fourth consecutive term. Its relaunch will almost certainly be surrounded by a media-fog of scaremongering, lies and blatant racism, just as it was first time around.

Under the old bill asylum seekers who arrived in Britain via a "safe" third country would have



PART OF THE TORRENT OF RACISM FROM THE TORY PRESS AT THE TIME THE ASYLUM BILL WAS FIRST PROPOSED

been deported back to it, irrespective of the treatment they might receive there. All asylum seekers would be finger-printed – treatment reserved for criminals in Britain. They would have no right to local authority housing and would probably be unable to claim any benefits for weeks or months due to Home Office requirements concerning proof of identity.

An asylum seeker would have only 48 hours to appeal against a deportation order and some would have no right of appeal at all. The right to legal aid for asylum seekers would also be abolished. If you arrived with no documents, did not apply immediately for asylum, did not try to move to a "safe" part of your own country, refused to be fingerprinted or even just attempted to speak out in Britain against your country's regime you could then be deported straight away!

Many would-be asylum seekers will never get as far as Immigration Control. European countries such as France, Germany, Belgium and Italy now fine airlines around £1,000 for carrying passengers without correct documents. Britain has just increased its fine to £2,000.

To justify this move the Tories tried to whip up scare stories about "bogus refugees" who are really "economic migrants". Bernard Ingham, Margaret Thatcher's old press secretary declared:

"Britain – and to a degree Westminster, as the traditional home of the lost dogs of this world – cannot continue to allow itself to be exploited in this way."

Tory MP, David Evans spluttered:

"Why should this country be the world's dumping ground for asylum seekers?"

The reality for those seeking a

haven from persecution and repression is very different.

Britain receives the smallest number of asylum seekers of all the major European countries – approximately 200 per week and the Tories are forcing down the numbers without any new legislation. In addition, most white European refugees get admittance without too many problems, while only a tiny minority of non-Europeans qualify.

The plain fact is that the Tories simply decided to play the race card, partly to tighten up the borders of "Fortress Europe" and partly as a vote-winning exercise

akin to Thatcher's 1978 attempts to undercut the National Front vote before the 1979 election. At that time she remarked:

"The British character has done much for democracy, for law, and done so much throughout the world that if there is any fear that it might be swamped, people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in."

Despite the pitifully inept lies of the BNP and NF, the 1971 Immigration Act coupled with various amendments to immigration rules in the late-1970s ensured that primary immigration into Britain was effec-

tively stopped completely. That only left refugee status as a way of getting into the country. For many refugees escape from their home country is often a matter of life or death. But for the Tories this is a complete irrelevance. The "lost dogs", living in countries exploited and devastated for years by Britain and other imperialist powers, will have to fend for themselves and die in the process if they can find no other haven.

Meanwhile every year billions of pounds are transferred from the economies of the third world to the banks of London, Tokyo and New York. This vastly outweighs the pitiful sums donated in the form of aid to countries suffering from poverty and economic collapse as a result of western exploitation.

Economic migration is welcome when it is the migration of profits from one part of the globe to another. The "free market" is what the Thatcher years were all about. And if you are a profit maker with £150,000 or more in the bank and plan to employ two or more people you can buy your way into Britain, no problem.

That is the other side of the coin. The only people with an interest in seeing a new Asylum Bill enforced are the bosses. Their divide and rule tactics are designed to keep us all in our places. Worse, the racism of the state and its tame media help to lend credibility to the filthy lies of the likes of the BNP and NF.

But the numbers are irrelevant. Citing the figures exposes the Tories' hypocrisy but it must not lead to the conclusion that fewer is better. This is the logic of the Asylum Bill with its built in endorsement of all the existing racist immigration legislation.

The argument that increased immigration or settlement by refugees would lead to more racism in society is utter rubbish. Perpetuating the myth of the "bogus refugee" will breed more, not less racism, creating a climate in which racism is increasingly respectable. And the fascists will take full advantage of this. We have to begin organising right now to smash the new Asylum Bill off the Tories' agenda for their new term. There is no time to lose.

REVIEW

AFA on the box

In May BBC2's *Open Space* ran a documentary with a difference. Instead of the usual liberal treatment of the question of fascism and racism, a whole half hour was given over to AFA. The programme, *Fighting Talk* [11 – Ed], was an incisive exposure of the fascists' activities and a militant call for direct action, including physical confrontation, to stop them.

This clearly got right up the nose of some worthy figures viewing it. We print here Peter Paterson's outraged splutterings in the *Daily Mail* – the paper that said "Hurrah for the Blackshirts!" in the thirties.

Incidentally, Paterson claims we equivocated about political force. This is a lie. The narrator said "physical force" loud and clear.

Interested in seeing our video nasty? Contact the box number.

A most serious error of judgment appears to have been made last night by the BBC, in offering air time to a group which quite unashamedly advocates the use of political violence.

The *Open Space* slot, allowing groups or individuals access to television, together with the facilities to make their own programme, normally conforms to the understanding which motivates a liberal society like our own: that everyone is entitled to express their views or opinions, provided that they do not seek to impose their aims by violent or illegal means.

The people who spoke last night for a group called Anti-Fascist Action, astonishingly, were allowed to put the case for physically opposing their right wing opponents, and to boast of the street battles they have already fought.

Their main spokesman, a burly rufian with a thick Geordie accent, a leather jacket and a woolly hat of the type worn by football supporters, sneered at "good, old-fashioned liberals and trendy lefties" who would be uneasy about his message of violence, and who might argue that there were other ways to oppose fascist groups. "We're not either/or", he said, "we're for both".

There could be marches and events and exhibitions against fascism, but "if you're not prepared to meet force with political force" – and the weaselly word "political" had clearly been inserted here against the general tenor of the argument – "then you must retire from the political arena", he said.

Various supporters of Anti-Fascist Action were shown in silhouette as they talked with relish of the violent confrontations with British National Party supporters, and of the alleged links between the BNP and protestant Orange elements in Scotland. More openly, an Anti-Fascist Action sympathiser, former boxer Terry Marsh, tried to explain the attraction of fascism for white youths, and an old couple remembered the activities in the East End of Sir Oswald Moseley – only for woolly-hat to assert that Jews there in the 1930s had not been so badly attacked as Asians today.

But the overall message of the programme was that to evade confrontation with fascism was "abject political cowardice". In presenting a national platform to a group which looks suspiciously like left wing fascists eager for a street war with right wing fascists, the BBC was plainly not serving the interests of democracy.

How can it now with equity resist any demand by the BNP for the right to reply?

Peter Paterson
Daily Mail 19.5.92

Support AFA prisoners

Dear *Fighting Talk*,

I am now coming close to serving two years of a four year sentence for activities involving an attack upon a leading organiser of fascist groups. I have found the time has gone quickly due totally to the fact that I have had tremendous support from the AFA welfare fund.

It has always been easy to support people at the beginning of their sentence and then forget about them. But I have received nothing but 100 per cent support from the welfare fund.

Recently there has been a high rate of arrests amongst anti-fascists and these people have to be supported financially if they are fined. Also if they are unfortunate enough to be given a jail sentence they have to be given the moral and political support of letters and the financial support of donations to the welfare fund.

Tony, AFA prisoner

Donations: send cheques
made payable to
AFA Welfare Fund

Soft on the ANL?

Dear *Fighting Talk*,

The article in the last issue on the ANL "Then and Now" rightly pointed to the problems with the politics of the "relaunched" (and soon to be re-wound up by the looks of things) Anti-Nazi League (ANL). But I think the article painted too rosy a picture of the ANL in the 1970s.

The ANL Mark 1 did a lot of work in mobilising against the fascists, in particular in getting working class youth involved in the struggle. Only a dyed-in-the-wool sectarian would say otherwise. But that struggle wasn't always of the militant variety AFA stands for.

Sure, the ANL in some areas created "squads" to take on the fascists on the streets. But that wasn't the general picture. After the Battle of Lewisham the SWP were often the keenest to direct people away from militant confrontation.

The ANL's "broad" nature - including celebrities, respectable politicians who would run a mile from violent confrontation, and the odd church leader or lord - gave the SWP the excuse to downplay confrontation very early on.

The fascists marched unopposed in Hoxton the day after the ANL's first big carnival in London. Worse, when the fascists marched on Brick Lane on the same day as the second big London carnival in September 1978, the

SWP refused to mobilise against them. They took thousands of people away from the fascists and sent about twenty over to help the handful of anti-fascists who did try to confront the NF.

I was at Brick Lane that day and I was sickened by the idea that we were outnumbered by the fascists at the very same time as thousands of anti-fascists were at a carnival on the other side of London.

This was a betrayal of militant anti-fascism and it happened in the "healthy" period of the ANL according to your article. And this is not the only example. In Sheffield, at the same time, the ANL condemned me and others in the Sheffield Anti-Fascist Committee, because we took militant action against fascist paper sellers in the area. They said then what they are saying now - our action was "squadrist".

None of this is to downplay the positive role that militant anti-fascists within the ANL did play on countless occasions in the 1970s. But often this role was played despite the plans of the ANL's SWP leaders rather than because of them. And we shouldn't forget that as well as the ANL the battles against the fascists in the 1970s were also fought by militants in numerous local anti-fascist and anti-racist committees outside the ANL.

Yours in struggle
Arthur Merton, South London

**Anti
FASCIST
ACTION**

If your group is not listed below and you would like to get involved in the national Anti-Fascist Action network or be kept in touch with other groups throughout the country please contact London AFA as soon as possible.

London AFA

BM 1734, London
WC1N 3XX

Birmingham AFA

PO Box 2414,
Handsworth,
Birmingham B21 0TZ

Brighton AFA

c/o Brighton
Unemployed Centre,
6 Tilbury Place,
Brighton, Sussex

Bristol AFA

c/o London AFA

Cardiff AFA

PO Box 368, Cardiff,
Wales CF2 1SQ

Chesterfield ANL

PO Box 178,
Chesterfield

Cleveland AFA

Box 13, c/o St Mary's
Centre, Corporation
Road, Middlesbrough,
Cleveland

Derby CARF

PO Box 70,
Derby DE1 9JW

Edinburgh AFA

c/o Glasgow AFA

Exeter AFA

c/o The Flying Post,
PO Box 185,
Exeter EX4 4EW

Glasgow AFA

PO Box 266, Glasgow,
Scotland G1 5RX

Herts AFA

PO Box 245,
St Albans,
Hertfordshire

Kent AFA

PO Box 88, Rochester,
Kent ME1 1AU

Leeds AFA

Box 151, 52 Call Lane,
Leeds LS2 6DT

Leicester AFAR

c/o Leicester TC,
Secular Hall,
Humberstone Gate,
Leicester

Liverpool AFA

PO Box 110,
Liverpool L69 8DP

Manchester AFA

PO Box 83, South
West PDO,
Manchester M15 5NJ

Norwich AFA

PO Box 73,
Norwich NR1 2EB

St Albans AFA

c/o Herts AFA

Tyne and Wear Anti-Fascist Association

c/o 4 The Cloth
Market, Newcastle-
upon-Tyne NE1 1EA

York AFA

c/o York University
Students Union,
Goodrich College, York

Anti FASCIST ACTION

Merchandise

All cheques/postal orders payable to Anti-Fascist Action, please include a contribution towards post and packing.

Stickers

AFA Stickers £1 for 50
Cable Street Beat stickers sold out

T-Shirts

Unity Carnival T-shirts £1 each
Cable Street Beat T-shirts sold out

Video

Anniversary of Cable Street Video featuring: The Men They Couldn't Hang Atilla The Stockbroker Neurotics Cable Street veteran £10 each

Badges

Anti-Fascist Action 30p each
Cable Street Beat 30p each

Magazines

Cable Street Beat Review Issue 1 sold out
Issue 2 80p each
Issue 3 sold out
Issue 4 80p each
Issue 5 sold out

An Introduction to London

Anti-Fascist Action £1 each
Fighting Talk Issue 1 £1 each
Fighting Talk Issue 2 £1 each

Books

Out of The Ghetto by Joe Jacobs £9

UNITY CARNIVAL '92

Last year AFA organised a 10,000 strong anti-fascist carnival on Hackney Downs in East London. This year we'll be repeating the exercise, but on a larger scale. Bands already booked to appear include New Model Army, 25th of May and Capital Radio DJ Tim Westwood. The Unity Carnival is a free festival, and to pull it off we need your support.

Make sure your trade union branch, political party, solidarity organisation or community group is on the list of sponsors this year. The minimum donation for sponsoring organisations is just £50 – but feel free to give as much as you like.

If you'd like an AFA speaker to talk about the carnival, or would like to send in a donation to sponsor the event, write to:

**AFA, BM Box 1734,
London WC1N 3XX**

Trade union, trades council and student union affiliations to London Anti-Fascist Action:

Camden Trades Council
Lambeth Trades Union Council
Southwark Trades Council
Tower Hamlets Trades Council

Cardiff MSF 351
TGWU Region 1 (London & South East)
Central London ACTS 1/524
Hackney ACTS/TGWU 1/477
ACTS/TGWU 1/1148
Hackney Teachers Association
Middlesex Hospital COHSE
Newham NALGO
Newington TGWU 1/1255
Redbridge NALGO
Senate House NALGO
Tower Hamlets CPSA
Cardiff MSF 351
Sheffield General COHSE 1254

Brighton Polytechnic
London School of Economics
Liverpool Polytechnic
Manchester Polytechnic
Polytechnic South West (Plymouth)
Queen Mary & Westfield College
York University Labour Students

Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) has always said that fascism can only be fought effectively from a working class perspective. To understand fascism, it is necessary to see the class nature of these movements, and the class interests that underlie their message of race hate, male domination, gay bashing and red-baiting. Fascism poses a threat to the entire working class, black and white, women and men, straight and gay.

Whenever fascism gets into power, the first target for its sharpened knives has been the organised working class – the trade unions and the working class parties. Any anti-capitalist rhetoric is dropped as the leaders get on with their real task – rescuing capitalism.

Fascism aims to divide the working class in order to crush it. But united, the working class has unstoppable strength; so long as it brings that

strength to bear, fascism will be beaten. The working class needs unity in action.

AFA is mindful of this. Thankfully, so are a growing number of trade union activists and branches. AFA speakers have addressed a large number of union meetings in the past few months, and the campaign to increase the role of unions within AFA is gaining momentum.

We welcome affiliations from labour movement organisations and also from individuals committed to taking part in that struggle. If your union branch has already affiliated to AFA, turn that affiliation into active participation. If it hasn't, make sure it does by the time the next issue of *Fighting Talk* appears.

Send cheques, payable to Anti-Fascist Action, to our box number and we will keep you informed of future meetings and activities.

Group rates

Political organisations £50.00 p.a.
Trade union branches £20.00 p.a.
Student unions £20.00 p.a.
Community groups £10.00 p.a.

Individual rates

Supporter rate £10.00 p.a.
Waged member £10.00 p.a.
Unwaged member £5.00 p.a.