



FIGHTING TALK

Issue 22

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NEVER AGAIN?

1999 : 11,221,025 VOTES

**Anti-Fascist
Action**

FRONT COVER: The picture shows Jews rounded up by the Nazis, watching their friends and neighbours being executed and knowing that they are next. As the 20th Century draws to a close with ethnic cleansing sweeping the fringes of Europe and with parties of the Far Right gaining over eleven million votes in the June European elections the statement "Never Again" becomes a question.

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AFA on the Internet

The AFA Web Site is back on line at:
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APPEAL FOR INFORMATION

WE URGE ALL OUR READERS TO SEND ANY INFORMATION ON FASCISTS IN THEIR AREA DIRECT TO AFA. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO GUARANTEE THE MILITANT ANTI-FASCIST MOVEMENT HAS THE NECESSARY INFORMATION TO SUCCESSFULLY BEAT THE FASCISTS.

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IN THE AREA



Welcome to Issue 22 of Fighting Talk. We start with our usual round up of news and views from the front line against fascism.

BNP LEADERSHIP ELECTION

At the time of writing the leadership battle in the BNP has just developed into open warfare. The contest is between Tyndall and Nick Griffin, one of the key 'modernisers' in the party. Tyndall has savaged Griffin in the August issue of Spearhead, accusing him of being a State agent, knowingly or not. His argument is based on (1) Griffin's long record of splitting organisations he has been involved in, especially the post-Tyndall NF, (2) the timing of the challenge during the follow-up work to their Euro-election campaign, and (3) similarities to the FN split between Le Pen and Megret, which he claims was the work of the French State and/or a Jewish plot.

Searchlight, no strangers to intrigue themselves, have suggested the anti-Tyndall move is sponsored by an extreme right-wing group of Tories and ex-BNP activists called the Bloomsbury Forum, and Griffin in fact is only a front man being controlled by Tony Lecomber and Michael Newland (the very busy BNP Press Officer). The idea that the extreme right-wing of the Tory Party should mix with fascists is given credibility by the recent revelations that Tory MPs have held talks with the Italian fascist National Alliance and Conservative Future (the present incarnation of the discredited Federation of Conservative Students) already has formal links with the National Alliance youth wing.

Whatever the truth is about the reasons behind the leadership battle, and despite the internal disruption it appears to be causing, one thing is certain; anti-fascists must not take their eyes off the ball. Like France, this feud will only do short-term damage. The overall political situation remains the same, and where no progressive working class alternative exists, the opportunities for the Far Right will remain. Disillusion with Labour is growing, as shown by their loss of

Liverpool and Sheffield city councils in the May local elections. Any doubts about Labour's abandonment of the working class should be quickly dismissed by remembering the working class's total abandonment of Labour when they lost all their seats in the traditional Welsh stronghold of the Rhondda Valley. In light of this anti-fascists should take advantage of any internal fighting in the BNP by redoubling their efforts to prevent the fascists sinking roots in any working class community. The worst thing we could do is sit back and wait for the fascists to reorganise.

EURO ELECTIONS

In contrast to Searchlight's description of the BNP's 100,000+ votes in June's Euro-election as "derisory", and the 11 and a quarter million votes gained by the Far Right in Europe as a "setback", AFA's analysis is that the threat from the fascists continues to grow.

In Britain the BNP managed to overcome all the obstacles put in their way to prevent them getting a TV broadcast, standing 79 candidates and raising over £80,000. The BNP's verdict on their 102,000 votes was "Euro Mission Accomplished", partly because they were able to finance and run a national campaign, but also by beating their main electoral challenge from the left of Labour, the Socialist Labour Party, in 7 out of the 10 regions where they were in competition. Curiously Searchlight compared the BNP's Euro-election votes unfavourably to their performance in the 1997 general election; in fact in many areas the BNP doubled their percentage of the vote.

In the May local elections the BNP only stood a handful of candidates, but Steve Edwards' 17.2% in Tipton showed the

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NIGHT AND FOG

(1955) the Death camps revisited

UP TO THEIR KNEES IN FENIAN BLOOD

(1999) an investigation into sectarian violence in Scotland

ROUTES OF RACISM

(1998) Roger Hewitt's film challenges the effectiveness of current anti-racist policies

followed by discussion

is anti-racism working?

with...

Stephen Lawrence

Gary Younge
feature writer for The Guardian and author of the forthcoming book, *No Place Like Home*

Dr Roger Hewitt
Author of *Routes of Racism*

Kumar Murshid
National Assembly Against Racism

Gary O'Shea
Anti-Fascist Action

Lee Jasper
1990 Trust

Theresa Bennet
Anti-Rape League

4th Annual weekend of events on anti-racism in the Battle of Cable St

gains the fascists are making with their Euro-Nationalist strategy.

The BNP have pointed out the similarity between the Tipton result and the vote they got in the election before Beackon's victory on the Isle of Dogs in 1993; they see their next breakthrough could be in the West Midlands.

Another feature of recent BNP election work has been on the media front. The Euro-election campaign was launched on the Internet, making it easy for journalists who are notoriously lazy, and avoiding the possibility of disruption.

There is evidence to suggest that the media as a whole are starting to take the BNP seriously, and it is undoubtedly true that the BNP take the media seriously. They claim to have faxed election material to 90% of local papers, and have challenged inaccurate stories promptly, forcing editors to make changes or carry BNP statements. Anti-fascists must respond with equal vigour.

TASK FORCE

In the course of the extensive media coverage of the nail bombs, it was announced that Searchlight supremo Gerry Gable was a member of the Metropolitan Police's Violent and Racial Crime Task Force. The differences between AFA and Searchlight are not personal or sectarian - but political. It is impossible to develop an argument that the police have ever played a constructive role in fighting fascism, and now Searchlight are in a formal alliance with the very people who harrass, intimidate, arrest and imprison militant anti-fascists. A contradiction too far.

improved as a result of the arrival of refugees it is hard to imagine that the racists and fascists who try to exploit the situation would have so much success. When the Left play the refugees off against the locals it makes a bad situation worse.

A few days after the Dover attack an event in Oxford was reported in the national press involving "masked men with axes" attacking a refugees house. Socialist Worker enthusiastically took up the story, referring to a "racist gang" using "iron bars, axes and bottles". Local enquiries revealed that indeed there had been an incident when, during a game of football between locals and refugees, "a bad tackle provoked one of the refugees, and he hit one of the local boys who has a bit of a reputation." (Oxford Mail, 17/8/99). As a result of that the refugees windows were put in that night. Was this a premeditated racist attack in the wake of events in Dover or was it a dispute over football? Only if you support the refugees against the working class is there any benefit in distorting or exaggerating incidents like these.

meeting went ahead then it would be effectively a declaration of war and should be responded to accordingly.

Then the nail bombs went off. Almost immediately the police refused to provide security for the meeting, saying they couldn't guarantee public order because of the climate created by the bombs and saying that there was a real prospect of serious violence on the streets of Oxford.

Not surprisingly, with the police unprepared to defend its insolence, the Union withdrew the invitation a few days before, then went on to whine in the local press about freedom of speech being denied by the threat of violence from extremists.

The Ivory towers of Oxford are known for being completely insulated from the real world everyone else has to live in. The Union may venture to renew the invitation to Tyndall (or maybe Griffin) in the coming academic year. If they want to inaugurate a new and unpleasant chapter in the centuries old tension between "town" and "gown" they could hardly do better.

REFUGEE RAZOR GANG SLASHED US TO PIECES



RACE ATTACKS AND REFUGEES

When refugees attacked some local youngsters at a Dover fairground in August, the right-wing media went into a predictable frenzy. More significant was how the Left and liberal press presented the incident. Unless you deliberately want to pick a fight with the white working class at every opportunity, there is no point in trying to defend the indefensible. Stabbing children is wrong. The Guardian summed up the liberal dilemma when one of its columnists decided it would sound better if they altered reality and said in fact it was locals stabbing refugees. It is easy for liberal commentators to say 'refugees welcome here' when they have no impact on their lives, either real or perceived. As working class communities lose more and more essential services through local and national government cuts, it is easy to see why people are concerned. It is right that Britain should accept refugees, but if they are to be housed in already hard-pressed working class communities then their arrival should coincide with an increase in local resources to cater for the extra demands. If local services

Refugees aren't housed in wealthy areas like Mayfair or the 'stockbroker belt' where money is no problem, but put in working class areas where people are already under pressure. Is it possible that the decision makers know the arrival of refugees will serve to divide communities and deflect attention away from their inability to provide decent services in the first place?

OXFORD

Just before the nail bombings in London the Oxford Union (a student debating society patronised by the great and the good) invited BNP leader John Tyndall to take part in a debate on racism. The invitation led to predictable outrage from liberals and assorted left-wingers, with calls on the police to ban the meeting.

In the context of the divided city that is Oxford, the combination of Tyndall and the Oxford Union was definitely a two fingered salute to the local population. The university and its students are not liked and the Oxford Union is a pre-eminent symbol of wealth and establishment privilege. By inviting Tyndall the Union basically showed its contempt for the large working class, Asian and African-Caribbean population of East Oxford. As word of the visit spread a lot of locals were of the view that if the

SOUTH WEST

2000 AFA leaflets were produced and distributed at Post Office Delivery Offices by Bristol and S.W. AFA and supporters (including our friends working for the PO) urging postal workers to refuse to deliver fascist election material. The national CWU leadership attempted to obstruct this action by pressurising local officials of the union. Needless to say their efforts came to nought. With hardly an exception we met with an approving response, the most encouraging coming at an office in Bristol where a known BNP member works. We were approached and told that our presence and purpose had "made their day" and that "this is one in the eye for those arseholes inside there" (ie. the BNP member and a lonely supporter).

The result was the non-delivery of BNP election material over large areas of Bristol and the South West and gaining coverage in the Bristol Evening Post.

One of the PO management's strategies was to try to weaken the response by preventing collective discussion and decisions on the question of 'the conscience clause' agreed with the CWU. AFA's activity went a long way to ensuring that individuals were not left isolated and that the issue had a thorough airing in the offices. In addition our activity has increased the isolation of BNP members working in the PO locally. There are now moves by anti-fascists working at the PO to expel the



BNP organiser (Coward) from the union, AFA activists and supporters have ensured a growing mood amongst PO workers in support of such a move. This activity is not without its risks to our people, and the PO is attempting to victimise one of ours for their role in the campaign.

WORCESTER - NF

In the run-up to St. George's day the Midlands press launched into a wave of hysteria on hearing that the National Front had applied to commemorate St. George's day with a march through Worcester on April 24th. The NF, once dominant in Midlands fascist circles, are now on the brink of extinction, with only the resonance of their name and past notoriety to save them from total collapse. The media and ANL opportunists weren't willing to let the truth get in the way of a good story though, despite protestations from AFA.

The media predictably ignored AFA's plea for objectivity, instead the circus gained momentum as the day drew nearer. Rumours ranged from bans, restrictions and cancellations, through to predictions of ugly street violence as hoards of hostile left-wing elements were planning to encroach on the town.

West Midlands AFA viewed the situation with caution from the outset, in light of the fact that NF demonstrations had been used by the police in London and Dover as massive surveillance operations against AFA. Any

speculative notions of the NF being used as 'stooges', unwittingly or otherwise, were made more plausible when two individuals from near Worcester were visited by Special Branch on the 19th April. Neither were AFA members, but both had contacted AFA some months before after being on the receiving end of threats and intimidation from local National Front members. Special Branch clearly saw the outermost periphery as the most likely weak link in the AFA chain, and were keen to find out AFA's actual plans for the day of the NF march, as well as requesting names and other details of who was running, and running *with*, AFA. An understandable concern that AFA may end up falling foul of someone else's agenda on the St. George's march led to a decision to stand down the stewards group and deploy intelligence gatherers to assess the situation instead. Recklessness is not prerequisite to AFA's reputation for madness!

AFA's suspicions were confirmed on the day, when the sheer scale of the police operation became clear. Under POA restrictions the march had supposedly been brought forward to 8.30am. A large ANL counter demonstration was allowed to gather behind police lines nearby, though the large contingent of Asian youth reported in Searchlight was entirely fictitious. Nothing happened until 11am, when police told the ANL to disperse as there would be 'no NF march'. Most of them left compliantly. This was the ANL 'rout' of the NF that Searchlight described in their June issue.

Searchlight also proclaimed, incidentally without a shred of evidence, that the taxi drivers of Worcester had pledged to strike if the march went ahead. Another phoney victory in the phoney war.

AFA were meanwhile aware of 10 - 15 NF in a pub half a mile away, but what was most notable about the pub itself was the 20 or so police videos and cameramen in the vicinity, as well as a gang of young 'casuals' that were deployed by the police to rub shoulders with the ANL, in order to glean information and identify ringleaders - a public order tactic that has led to several imprisonments in Worcestershire over the last twelve months, using buttonhole cameras and 'on the spot' ID parades. When approached by AFA regarding the identities of these 'friendly' casuals one of the remaining ANL organisers nonchalantly remarked; 'Oh, they're with us...' Two hours later the same 'casuals' were spotted elsewhere by an AFA photographer, laughing and joking as they boarded a police carrier. None are so blind as those who want to be. Still a recruit's a recruit, *isn't it?*

It's arguable that with many of the ANL deliberately put off by the police these handful of NF could conceivably have been the honey-trap for the expected AFA mobilisation. Whether this operation was bait for AFA or a decoy on behalf of the NF is debatable. Thanks to AFA's initial caution we'll never know.

But while all this was going on the main NF contingent were reportedly stopped by the police and preparing to march in Kidderminster, some 15 miles away. Searchlight reported in June that 20 NF took part, and then in July decided to double the figure. AFA intelligence, unlike the ANL, were there in Kidderminster too, and it's fair to say that 40 or so NF took part.

However, the point is not the march itself, but the scale of the police mobilisation and their complicity with the NF. The march was overseen by a huge police operation comprising a phenomenal 20+ police personnel vans, 4 dog vans, a large number of marked cars, several bikes and in the region of fifteen unmarked vehicles. This was a conservative estimate for Kidderminster alone.

Searchlight's repeated calls for the State to get involved with 'anti-fascism' certainly came to fruition across Worcestershire on the 24th April - rendering any sort of effective physical operation virtually impossible. Those anti-fascists determined that physical opposition is still the only way to operate should consider their options nil if such a zero

AFA ROUND-UP

tolerance attitude is to be applied by the State to such a proxy fascist mobilisation. What will be the police position when the BNP return to the streets, as they increasingly will, only with a bigger mandate and much higher profile? The 'insurance policy' of a twofold strategy thus becomes paramount.

WORCESTER - BNP

In July Searchlight released details, at 36 hours notice, of a BNP meeting to be held in a Worcester leisure centre on Sunday 18th July. The meeting was to incorporate a NF guest speaker - possibly heralding the predicted Midlands NF transition into the ranks of the BNP, which would effectively give the BNP a fascist 'monopoly' in the region.

However, as soon as word spread the venue management pulled the plug, leaving the Anti Nazi League safe to call for a silent demonstration 'in solidarity with the local community'. On the day an hour into the demonstration and still less than ten combined ANL and Trades Union Council had turned out to vent their muted solidarity with Worcester's working class, many of whom swam, worked out and played football in the centre, oblivious to this pitiful gesture.

The ANL were clearly not feeling sufficiently brave to unveil their placards, so feeling sociable an AFA observation team amiably approached the picket to discuss the Searchlight issue. Unfortunately the AFA scouts must have appeared uncomfortably working class as most of the 'demonstrators' dispersed like a shot to the safety of their cars and the inside of the leisure centre. The two or three that remained can only be compared to rabbits frozen in the glare of headlights. Despite the scouts reiteration that they

were in fact AFA, and a lengthy and articulate critique of dubious Searchlight policy, the ANL organiser nervously mumbled something about paranoia and he too hastily made for cover. Feeling somewhat ostracised and unloved the AFA scouts left - consoling themselves that what had been a chatty affair for the ANL had truly been transformed into an eerily silent vigil by the scouts' presence. The ANL, by their behaviour, were as shocking as they were shocked.

The following day the Worcester press claimed 'Celebrations as BNP foiled' - a claim made by the ANL and representatives of the 'gay community'. They went on to boast; 'Seven ANL supporters turned up with placards...despite (or because of) the management's decision to cancel the extremists' lunchtime rally. We did expect the BNP to turn up, so we brought placards to stage a peaceful demonstration. Fortunately none of them have turned up. There was a lot of publicity saying it was cancelled, so that's why the huge numbers of Worcester ANL we were expecting haven't turned up'.

Walter Carr, local BNP organiser, was at home, content that the political vacuum was safe for another day. Carr was cooler with the press, stating; 'We are law abiding citizens and propose to carry on within the law'. Only next time, thanks to Searchlight's inopportune press releases AFA intelligence will have to go through the time consuming and costly business of relocating the BNP branch again from scratch.

There's an old saying that you have to step back in order to leap better, which is a component part of AFA's longevity. However, Searchlight and the ANL leadership will proclaim another

momentous victory, despite the facts. Searchlight's negligent disclosure of the BNP's monthly venue now, when they have clearly known for some time, is more proof that Searchlight covet the value of information, be it for financial or politically ambiguous reasons, far more than the cause of genuine anti-fascism itself.

SOLIDARITY FEDERATION

In May AFA was invited to speak at a benefit for a jailed Czech anti-fascist, organised by the Solidarity Federation. To AFA's surprise, an individual who had recently been expelled from North London AFA was also invited. This character was thrown out for grassing up a friend of several long standing members, and despite attempts to persuade him of the error of his ways, he insisted on going through with the court case. After a three day trial the defendant got a 'not guilty'.

In light of this known grass being invited, AFA decided not to speak and told him to leave. On the way out he got a couple of slaps, which in the circumstances was light punishment. Most people have nothing but contempt for grasses, but despite the Solidarity Federation not sharing this view, they decided to spread a very inaccurate version of events around the anarchist scene. On being challenged by AFA, a letter finally arrived demanding that AFA condemn the actions taken by its members. Not only does AFA stand firmly behind the people who removed a self-confessed, lying grass from a political event, but asks the Solidarity Federation - WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE PLAYING AT?

FINANCIAL APPEAL

£ *"For me what was extremely worrying, even frightening, was that the percentage of votes for the fascist British National Party was up from 1997."* (Arthur Scargill on the Euro-election results, August 1999.)

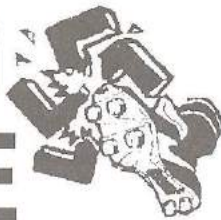
£ With the BNP polling over 100,000 votes in the Euro-election, and the Far Right picking up 11 and a quarter million votes across Europe, it is easy to understand Scargill's concern, even if it is somewhat belated. With the ANL dead in the water and Searchlight putting their faith in the police to deal with the fascists, the same police who enthusiastically attack anti-fascists at every opportunity, it is becoming increasingly clear that we need an anti-fascist organisation with a strategy to deal with the fascists' move away from street confrontation and into the arena of community politics. Not only is AFA unique in having that strategy, but also the ambition and commitment to implement it.

£ **What we urgently need is the money to finance it. We appeal to our readers and supporters to take this issue seriously, because it would be criminal if our success is limited by a lack of funds.**

£ **As part of our effort to improve the efficiency of the organisation we have recently reorganised the national office. We need to raise £1,000 to cover the cost of essential equipment, including a computer, fax machine, photocopier and telephone.**

£ Cheques/POs should be made out to 'AFA' and sent to BM 1734, London, WC1N 3XX. Please notify the office on 07000 - 569 569 of any donations sent through the post because mail does go missing!

LEVELLING THE SCORE



One Dead, One Shot And Still Counting...

The press across Britain was full of stories about Old Firm hatred after the last league match between Celtic and Rangers was marred by a "pitch invasion" (by four fans!), and the injury to the referee Hugh Dallas after a coin thrown from the Celtic end struck him on the head. This followed some dubious refereeing decisions during the game and was compounded by Dallas awarding a soft penalty to Rangers immediately after the coin-throwing incident. That was the cue for the "invading" fans to attempt to get to referee Dallas. After the game, there were street clashes between groups of rival fans.

The next game between the two teams - a few weeks later they met again in the Scottish Cup Final - featured the heaviest

police presence around a Scottish football match for decades. Despite this police crackdown, however, "celebrating" Rangers fans were able to go on the rampage throughout Glasgow after the match. A number of Irish pubs in the south of the city came under attack from Rangers' hooligan gang, the ICF (Inter City Firm). However, the most disturbing aspect of the after-match violence was the high number of random sectarian attacks made upon Celtic supporters by large groups of Rangers fans.

One attack led to the stabbing to death of 16 year old Celtic fan Thomas McFadden. Ironically, Thomas had not actually attended the Cup Final and instead elected to watch it on TV in a local Irish club near to his home. On his way back

home after the match Thomas was attacked by Rangers fans and killed. There appears to be no other reason for the assault made on Thomas other than that he was wearing a Celtic shirt.

The murder of Thomas McFadden bears an uncanny resemblance to the murder three years ago of another 16 year old Celtic fan, Mark Scott. Mark was on his way home from a match between Celtic and Partick Thistle when he was attacked by the Loyalist, Jason Campbell. Campbell cut Mark's throat from ear to ear and the teenager bled to death in the street within minutes. Jason Campbell is now serving a life sentence in a Scottish prison.

In the intervening period between the two murders there have been scores of attacks made upon Celtic supporters by Loyalists and Rangers fans. One young man from Knightswood, passing by the Loyalist Rosevale Bar in Partick was set upon by Loyalists and received 40 stitches to face and head wounds. The Rosevale Bar is a favourite drinking den of the Loyalist sympathisers who produce the "Follow Follow" Rangers fanzine. Another attack in the Yoker area left three Celtic fans (one of them a woman) hospitalised and traumatised. They were kicked unconscious by a gang of Rangers fans. One of them suffered a broken jaw and the others facial injuries which will mean that they are scarred for life. When the victims contacted the police they were treated with some derision and disinterest. After several

Orange in the sun



Loyalism & Fascism - a Blood and Honour tattoo on prominent display in Ormeau Park in July

attempts to get the police to act on their complaint, they were informed by a detective that if they could find out themselves who carried out the attack then maybe the police would take some action against their assailants. Obviously this is a new approach to detective work on the part of the Strathclyde police - ask the victims to investigate the crimes against them!?!

On the same day as Thomas McFadden was murdered, another teenager, Liam Sweeney, was stabbed by Rangers fans. This incident took place within a stone's throw of the McFadden murder as Liam waited for an order in his local Chinese Takeaway. Liam was not wearing any colours but might have been identified as a Catholic as a result of giving his name for the food order. He lost four and a half pints of blood - more than half his blood count - and almost bled to death. His attackers were not caught. Not more than a mile and a half away, in the Torglen district, another Celtic fan was shot in the chest by a crossbow bolt as he left a pub in the Gorbals district, only a half mile down the road from the area of Thomas McFadden's murder and the attempted murder of Liam Sweeney. The Brazen Head pub came under attack from a gang of Rangers hooligans who arrived and left with a police escort. Albeit a larger police escort when they left than they had arrived with. Amazingly, a Celtic supporter who had defended the pub from the attack was arrested together with two Rangers hooligans who had been part of the pre-meditated assault on the premises. No doubt the police in Glasgow believe that these kind of arrests manage to keep the figures fairly 'even' between the two sets of Old Firm supporters.

However, the naked sectarianism of the Rangers Football Club and those Loyalists who follow them was demonstrated later that night when the club's Vice-Chairman, Donald Findlay QC, was captured on video singing the Loyalist favourites of "The Sash", "No Surrender", and "The Billy Boys" which is an anthem that pays tribute to the Bridgeton-based fascist gang of the '20s and '30s led by William "Billy Boy" Fullerton. The song contains the words "We're up to our knees in Fenian blood, surrender or you'll die...". That night in Glasgow, with the murder of Thomas McFadden and the many other attacks upon Celtic fans, it would seem that Mr. Findlay's, and indeed the wishes of many of Rangers Loyalist fans, came true. The press were outraged that Findlay could have displayed such insensitivity. Findlay was outraged that the press, through the collaboration of a video film supplied to

them by a Rangers fan who privately taped the sing-song, should have the temerity to publicly expose him for being a sectarian bigot. Indeed, the Rangers fan who sold the Daily Record the tape of Findlay's sectarian rant has himself been the victim of violent threats and has taken to sleeping in his car away from his home after the "Follow Follow" fanzine printed his name and address in their first issue of the new season.

Since the Cup Final the Scottish press have been whipped back into line by the outpouring of thinly veiled anti-Catholic sectarianism which followed the speech at the Edinburgh International Festival by Scottish composer, James MacMillan. MacMillan's comments concerning institutionalised sectarianism at the top of Scottish society and in press circles in particular provoked a greater outrage and elicited more newspaper column space than either the murder of Thomas McFadden or the bigotry of Donald Findlay.

The generalised outrage of the Scottish press against MacMillan merely confirmed much of what he had been saying, that sectarianism is institutionalised in Scotland. Labour's First Minister of the new Scottish Parliament stated that he "hoped" that the type of sectarianism referred to by James Macmillan was a thing of the past. Hoped? The Church of Scotland's spokesperson said on BBC Radio 5 Live, "I think that the type of sectarianism that he is talking about is no longer prevalent in Scotland." Think? In three separate articles for different newspapers, the Scottish Socialist Party leader and Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) attempted to even up the score by first referring to sectarianism as essentially a "middle class" phenomenon (?) and then by attacking Celtic fans for being as bad as Rangers fans because whilst Rangers fans sing "We're up to our knees in Fenian blood...", some Celtic fans also sing a bastardised version of the Irish national anthem containing the words "Soon there'll be no Protestants at all...". Not surprisingly, Sheridan made no reference to the sectarian attacks and murders of Celtic fans or to the fact that the most progressive elements at Celtic Park, as represented by the TAL fanzine, Celtic Fans Against Fascism and the Campaign Against Sectarian Attacks, have consistently attacked the minority sectarian element among the Celtic support. There exists no such element at Rangers, whose fanzines and fan spokespersons actually perpetuate sectarianism and bigotry. The SSP's

own newspaper printed two articles recently which whilst acknowledging the existence (in the past) of institutionalised sectarianism, dismissed MacMillan's allegations, denied the existence of an Irish Community ("...the Irish are now Scots Catholics") and went on to conclude that the energy of their readers should be channelled into fighting the greater evil of "racism". That being anti-black and anti-Asian racism. There can't be anti-Irish racism (only anti-Scots Catholic sectarianism, which in their view is overestimated) if you deny the very existence of an Irish community.

The fact is that many Celtic fans would disagree with much of what James MacMillan said but nonetheless they would defend his right to say it. There is, however, much to what he says about the institutionalised nature of sectarianism in Scotland. Sectarian attacks remain unmonitored and unacknowledged by the police and local authorities. Many, as demonstrated by some of the earlier examples are not even considered worthy of investigation by the police. Scotland's top defence lawyer can sing sectarian songs and defend in court sectarian murderers and still the press and the Left see nothing rotten at the core of Scottish society. Just the bigoted views of both sets of supporters. Their rush to continually even up the score on this count is suspicious in itself. As long as this situation remains and the Left stick their heads in the sand in regard to sectarian attacks, our campaign will continue.



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“FLABBY PACIFISM”

FASCISM - THEORY AND PRACTICE.

by DAVE RENTON.

Published by Pluto Press.

At a time when the Far Right have just polled over 11 million votes in the European elections in June, and the BNP more than doubled their vote in a number of parts of Britain, this book clearly shows the failure of the SWP/ANL to come to terms with modern day fascism.

Much of the book is an academic analysis of what other writers and historians have said on the subject since the 1920s, and is written in such a way as to be of little use to active anti-fascists, but when the author (a member of the SWP/ANL) deals with the current period the weakness of the ANL strategy is fully exposed.

It goes without saying that AFA is written out of history, and gross exaggeration is commonplace, but his comments on the BNP's election victory on the Isle of Dogs (1993) draws attention to the flawed analysis. He scoffs at the BNP's anticipation of further electoral success, based on the fact that Beackon lost his seat 8 months later, without saying anything on the significance of this episode. Firstly, despite considerable anti-fascist propaganda, Beackon's election showed the limitations of just being 'anti' and the need to put forward a positive alternative; this led to AFA developing the Filling The Vacuum (FTV) strategy. Secondly, there is no mention of the Left's support for Labour (who won the seat from the BNP) when it was local disillusion with the Labour Council that caused the problem in the first place. This put the SWP/ANL in the position of defending the status quo, of anti-fascists being hostile to the working class desire for change.

Renton writes that "the revival of the Labour Party as an electoral force undermined the BNP and made it harder for (them) to pose as a viable alternative." In fact it is precisely because of the election of Labour, both locally and nationally, armed with its anti-working class agenda that, in the absence of a genuine working class alternative,

allows the BNP to pose as a very "viable alternative". As he states later on, "if anti-fascists fail to use the language of class against capital, then they will not persuade working class or lower middle class people who are genuinely angry about the world they live in." So quite how the SWP/ANL manage to resolve the contradiction between their support for Labour and their role as a 'revolutionary socialist party fighting for the interests of the working class' remains a puzzle; and by all accounts is starting to split the party.

forces on the Left". The evidence in Britain is that the Left is in terminal decline. While it is obviously true "that it would be wrong to see the continuing success of fascism as inevitable" the situation clearly won't improve if the Left continues to follow strategies that have failed so spectacularly for the last 30 years. The SLP, the main 'left of Labour' rival to the fascists in the Euro-elections were beaten in 7 out of 10 regions where they competed. Despite the BNP's recent attempts to attract middle class support, their main base of support is in



Anti-Nazi League march - confronting Fascism with leaflets, badges and carnivals

According to Renton "Beackon lost his seat in May 1994 and since then the BNP have gone into decline." This is absurd. Not only do the SWP/ANL ignore the writing on the wall after the Isle of Dogs election with regards to anti-fascist strategy, but basic reality is denied. Since 1994 the BNP have adopted the Euro-Nationalist strategy, so successful elsewhere, and have steadily built the necessary infrastructure to sustain it. Even the most basic knowledge of fascism in Britain would reveal that the BNP have grown in numbers, equipment, technical expertise, and the ability to exploit the media. On what basis can you claim the BNP has "gone into decline"?

Further evidence that the SWP/ANL strategy is built on sand is Renton's assertion that despite the growth of the Far Right, there is also a "rebirth of radical

white working class areas. Until the Left start to represent the needs of these communities the fascists will continue to grow.

The reason FT is reviewing this book in some detail is because the "final section proposes a strategy by which it may be possible to drive fascism, once again, beyond the pale". So what is this strategy?

Renton starts off by arguing that the best way to defeat fascism is through the United Front - a "strategy of working class unity". When Trotsky developed the theory in the 1930s he argued that the Socialist and Communist parties should unite to beat the fascists; in those days both parties were mass working class parties. Nowadays Labour (the equivalent of European Socialist or

Social Democratic parties) is not a mass party but a middle class electoral machine, and their standing in working class communities is well illustrated by the fact that they lost all their council seats in the former Labour stronghold of the Rhondda Valley in May's council

perhaps better described as an Unpopular Front!

Renton then goes on to say that "where fascism is already seeking to control the streets, the most important thing to do is to confront the fascists". But when SWP

1980 the SWP have often tried to reduce militant anti-fascism to some form of gang warfare, having expelled their own squads, and while they deflected criticism of their abandonment of anti-fascism during the 80s by using this sort of smear, it takes on a new meaning in the present situation where the Far Right are growing, but largely 'invisible'. Just because Searchlight have told them the BNP are in decline doesn't mean its true. And in yet another contradictory move, it is in fact the ANL who insist on mobilising against the "few remaining fascists" of the dead-in-the-water NF while failing to develop a strategy against the real threat posed by the BNP.

This failure to address the political problems facing anti-fascists is matched by their inability to deal with the physical side of the struggle. Masters of the militant slogan ('Smash the BNP!', 'By Any Means Necessary!' etc.) their confusion is complete when contemplating anything more demanding than lollipop-waving. Renton advocates a militant No Platform position and urges "anti-fascists to go into areas where fascists seem strongest" but then argues that any "physical confrontation ... must be primarily non-violent". The contradiction is glaringly obvious, and any of the



Historical Revisionism - in Renton's account of the 70's, violence as an effective means to combat fascism has been written out.

elections. Unity with Labour only serves to discredit anti-fascists and helps the BNP appear as a radical alternative. Similarly the Communist Party has all but disappeared and certainly the SWP are in no position to present themselves as a mass working class party. So the two central components of the United Front strategy, mass working class reformist and revolutionary parties, are missing. Hardly an auspicious start! And its worth pointing out that as far back as April 1990, when the BNP's Rights For Whites campaign was launched, AFA wrote to the SWP inviting them to "join with us to fight fascism". Not only did they not reply, but two years later, having made no effort to fill the political vacuum created by AFA, they relaunched the ANL to try (unsuccessfully) to duplicate the work AFA was already doing. So much for unity. As for his claim that "the ANL was established as an orthodox United Front", not only have we shown that the necessary components are missing, but the ANL's cooperation with Searchlight and the Labour Party, who work closely with the police and intelligence agencies, in fact makes it a Popular Front in Marxist definition (ie. an alliance with 'anti-fascist' sections of the establishment) - or

paper sales were being targetted and beaten off the streets all across the country in the early 1990s, the official response was to deny the attacks were taking place. At a time when the BNP leadership was seriously concerned about the damage that AFA was doing to them, these attacks on the SWP were vital morale boosters for a disillusioned membership. Due to AFA implementing a strategy that the SWP/ANL promote but refuse to act on, the BNP have withdrawn from street activities which is why AFA has developed new strategies to keep the pressure on the fascists. The lack of discussion about this important change of strategy, evident since 1994, is another weakness.

Presumably the absence of any BNP marches and rallies allows the ill-informed or superficial anti-fascist to believe they have gone away, which coupled with a lack of involvement with working class communities leads to complacency. He tells us that "where fascist groups are small, isolated and squabbling, it would be a mistake for Marxists, democrats, or socialists, to devote their entire energy to hounding down the few remaining fascists". Since

young students sent into the BNP ambush on the ANL's first ever mobilisation (east London 1992) could testify to the serious injuries that are inflicted when security is ignored. It is no consolation for him to add "where fascism poses a significant threat, anti-fascists may have to defend themselves", because if this isn't organised it won't happen.

Significantly, when he describes the success of the original ANL in the 1970s he mentions the leaflets, the badges and the carnivals ... but not the squads. The success of the ANL was the combination of physical and political opposition, one could not have succeeded without the other. Not only were the squads used to disrupt fascist marches and meetings, sometimes with devastating effect, but when left-wing paper sales got attacked, fascist sales were targetted in retaliation to dissuade the NF from this course of action. And it worked.

In a bad attack of liberalism Renton says "for anti-fascists, violence is not part of their world view" and dismisses militants as "professional anti-fascists". The whole history of anti-fascism, in this



In different times - a 1930's British Labour Party delegation applauds the German Social Democratic Party's paramilitary wing - the Iron Front.

country and everywhere else, has involved the use of force - so why should 'revolutionaries' be so keen to distance themselves from it? Should we be ashamed of the Italian Arditi Del Popolo, the German Red Front Fighters League or even the International Brigades? Is it because the middle classes see violence as 'right-wing', are they scared of upsetting their friends in the Labour Party (Peter Hain MP is the Chair), or do they simply not have the members with the stomach for the fight?

Whatever the answer, it has always been a dishonest position, posing 'mass action' against organised physical opposition, when in fact they are complimentary tactics. A similar argument was put forward by the leadership of the German Communist Party in the struggle for power with Hitler's Nazis, leading to a militant from the Communist Youth to comment, "we don't care for the idea that if we are murdered by SA (Brownshirt) men, a small part of the working class will carry out a half hour protest, which only makes the Nazis laugh for having got off so lightly". And even Trotsky, the theoretical godfather of the SWP's anti-fascism, insisted that "fighting squads must be created". He stressed that "nothing increases the insolence of the fascists so much as 'flabby pacifism' on the part

of the workers organisations" and denounced the "political cowardice" of those who argue "we need mass self-defence and not the militia. But without organised combat detachments, the most heroic masses will be smashed bit by bit by the fascist gangs".

Apart from the obvious necessity of being able to defend your own activities, at present the need for the use of physical force against fascists is minimal. While this may only be temporary, it does call into question the No Platform strategy. Again Renton is found lacking in terms of understanding the current situation.

In the 1970s No Platform was an achievable objective, but in the late 90s, with the BNP withdrawing from public activities, it becomes less relevant. Even when the NF have held an occasional march, never numbering more than 50, the size of the police operation against anti-fascists has prevented any effective confrontation. And despite tampering with the numbers of candidates required to get TV broadcasts and the increase in the cost of standing those candidates, designed to exclude the BNP, the fascists have succeeded in meeting the new targets and gaining a platform. The media are prepared to discuss Euro-Nationalism quite favourably at times, but even so the BNP are developing their use

of the Internet and video to ensure their propaganda can't be banned.

His coverage of European events shows the same gap between theory and reality, suggesting mass protests have stopped the growth of fascism. Activists on the ground have a very different view, leading an experienced militant from Hanover to comment, "it is bullshit and this Dave Renton knows nothing about fascists and anti-fascists in Germany". He claims that the Far Right are very weak, an absurd assessment, particularly in light of the DVU entering regional government in Saxony-Anhalt earlier this year, and now Brandenburg as well.

Even if Renton's motive for writing this book was to challenge the views of right-wing historians, it doesn't alter the fact that it proposes a strategy that doesn't work. The SWP/ANL have made no analysis of the changes in British fascist strategy and are sticking to a blueprint drawn up by Trotsky in the 1930s (but never implemented), which largely worked in the 1970s, but is redundant today. His closing comment is that fascism will only be finally defeated when capitalism is overthrown, but with an anti-fascist strategy that makes no impact on the fascists, what chance have they got of overthrowing the capitalist State?

AFA verdict: This is not anti-fascism.

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

with Vern Ethered



In this issue we look at BNP analysis of the Euro-elections in relation to their new strategy.

Generally speaking the BNP pronounced themselves satisfied with the results of the Euro elections (Nick Griffin in July's Spearhead). More than 100,000 people voted for the BNP despite the adverse effect of the London nail bombs and the UKIP taking a lot of the anti-European vote. The BNP attributed the drop in its vote in London seats to the bombings but in many seats outside London the party doubled or even trebled its vote compared to the general election. Uxbridge, Bournemouth West and Gillingham all saw an increase of 300% or more. Whilst many might claim that 100,000 votes nationally is still small potatoes, the fact is the numbers are growing and are well in advance of those voting for parties of the conservative Left (e.g. S.L.P., see the quote from Arthur Scargill in "In the Area").

Griffin provides a very upbeat assessment in July's Spearhead. He sees two significant implications of the collapse in voter turn out, a factor which the media wrung its hands over for a few days and then quickly forgot about. Firstly Griffin states: "Growing popular refusal to participate in elections does not mark a permanent loss of interest in politics ... it is simply the calm before the storm" (emphasis added). When turn-out of those registered to vote is down to 13% on some estates in this country, it is clear that none of the establishment parties have a mandate to govern any longer in those areas. Griffin recognises this not as a symptom of popular apathy but of popular disillusionment. This disillusionment represents a clear political opportunity (and an implicit rejection of the relevance of Europe to the majority of the British electorate), for anyone willing to put in the work.

Griffin's ambition is to seize this opportunity, through the expanding grass roots and locally relevant activities of BNP branches. And this is more than about campaigning on "political" issues. Patriot and August's Spearhead report on a "Family Day" organised in the West Midlands in July, with over 150 people

attending, half of them children, with games, food stalls and a magician. People may laugh at the idea that this represents anything at all, but the truth is that this kind of activity can reap significant rewards (see below). And how do you tackle this? Militant disruption of such an



Family friendly - BNP Euro election leaflet featuring Steve and Sharron Edwards and family

event is going to look really good in the local press and you can bet the BNP would ring every ounce of publicity out of it.

The second lesson contrasts with the first. The collapse in voter turn out, combined with the introduction of proportional representation and the likely establishment of elected regional assemblies means that any party standing for election which can turn out its supporters on polling day has a greater impact than the actual size of the vote cast warrants. To achieve 5% of the vote is easier when only 13% of the electorate is voting. Even in local elections we now regularly see councillors elected on 800 votes in a ward with 20,000 inhabitants. This "democratic deception" can favour smaller parties which are prepared to put in a lot of ground work in the area and which have a committed supporter base. We only have to look at Oxford where the

Greens now control seven council seats including two whole wards, much to the discomfiture of Labour. In the West Midlands one of the BNP's rising stars, Steve Edwards, got 17% of the vote and his wife got 13% in a neighbouring ward. This is the couple who organised the Family Day referred to above. So for the moment they have every reason to be encouraged with their current twin track strategy.

But electoral success is the BNP's long term aim. Their mid-term aim is to achieve respectability and they are well on the way with their new pro-active approach. The BNP Press Officer Michael Newland provides a diary of his dealings with the media during the campaign (June & July's Spearhead), which shows how committed they are to seizing every opportunity to push the message that they are a serious party with a serious agenda. The nail bombings in London may have represented a set-back but gradually, before our eyes, the old tactic of continually referring to BNP extremism and the criminal record of candidates becomes a hollow exercise. Even telling people that the friendly family faces and the comfortable slogan of "Freedom, Security, Identity and Democracy" conceal a fully fledged fascist ideology has little relevance when they see nothing to reveal what that actually means. As in Germany in the 30's or more recently in the South of France by the time fascists are in power and the reality of their politics is plain, it can already be too late.

Whilst awaiting the result of the BNP leadership contest, the campaigns being mounted by Tyndall and Griffin confirm one thing we already suspected. The latest and most sophisticated magazine from BNP circles, Patriot, has provided a forum for many of the rising stars of the Euro-nationalist camp to air their strategic and policy ideas. Now we learn that the first John Tyndall knew of this new publication was when a copy of the first issue came through his door in a brown envelope. This confirms that the appearance of Patriot in itself signalled the beginning of a leadership challenge from a group discontented with Tyndall's leadership and with Griffin as their front man as anticipated. It is this group including Lecomber, Griffin and Newland and probably new recruits like Steve Edwards which represents the real engine behind the new look BNP. Newland even informs us that in 1995 Tyndall was advocating a return to the marching strategy!

Between the Sheets



with Elvis Mondallant

During April, three nail bomb attacks targeting the black, Asian and gay communities led to a large scale police investigation. The intense media coverage was far from thorough and certainly not investigative in nature. Many stones remained unturned and in our regular review of the media we examine coverage of events in April, especially with regard to the strategies employed by *Searchlight* and the State.

David Copeland was arrested at the beginning of May, early reports in the media indicating that he had no link with organised fascism. However on May 25 *The Mirror* ran an exclusive story showing Copeland at a BNP activity in Stratford, East London during 1997. Photographs, supplied by *Searchlight*, featured in *The Mirror* show Copeland, Tyndall and other BNP members in the aftermath of brief clash with the ANL. According to Nick Griffin writing in the June edition of *Spearhead* Copeland was also signed up to the (ex-C18) National Socialist Movement. Events in April pose a number of questions worthy of investigation.

Question one, why did the police, *Searchlight* and the media dismiss C18 claims of responsibility so quickly?

The well publicised rifts in C18 have provided much material to chew over, particularly in the aftermath of the murder trial of Charlie Sargent and Martin Cross. Publications produced by both the Sargent and Browning camps are laced with accusations of treachery in general and collaboration with the security services and *Searchlight* in particular.

As the *Searchlight* editorial in April 1995 said: "The reasons for MI5 wanting to establish another "honey trap" on the Far Right are understandable and possibly justifiable at the time C18 was created. Stella Rimington had just taken over as director of MI5. With the job came the responsibility for watching Ulster Loyalist paramilitaries in mainland Britain, whom Special Branch had neglected in recent years. It was in these years that sections of the Loyalist UDA and UVF, and their respective killer squads, had started to cooperate with fascists in Britain. Clearly MI5 needed to know the extent of such joint

operations. So Combat 18 came into existence."

In *Drowning Browning*, a document produced by the Sargent camp, a Machiavellian plot unfolds, a story of double-cross and double double-cross. The story goes that Browning made contact with *Searchlight* in order to feed them disinformation, in a sanctioned operation. However it seems that he may have been working to his own agenda, using his contact with Gerry Gable to undermine Charlie's gaffership and enhance his own political profile.

Detail is given with regard to Browning's code names, money changing hands, meetings with Gerry Gable and so on. As we all know, the Devil mixes lies with truth and to separate the two out when reading through this material would be an impossible task. However one detail in the story rang a few bells in AFA's collective memory. We are told that the venue for meetings between Wilf and Gerry was a hotel behind Euston station. This provides some credibility for the story. Once upon a time a long time ago, AFA personnel would meet with *Searchlight* in order to exchange information. The venue: a quiet little hotel behind Euston station. Needless to say, those arrangements have not been in place for some time.

In *Combat 18 Information Bulletin #4* the Browning camp let loose on Charlie Sargent. Much of the document details events at Harlow police station after the murder of Chris Castle. We are told of Charlie's treachery and of efforts made by Special Branch to secure his release and stick Browning in the frame. The Special Branch strategy backfired and the bulletin goes on to reproduce some of Charlie's statements and describe events at the subsequent trial. An interesting detail emerges here: "Detective Inspector Tony Parr told the jury that Sargent's court statements amounted to 200 pages! We only have access to his first 16 page statement and his second 7 page statement. Parr then went on to say that only 60 out of the 200 pages were relevant to this case and the rest were about 'other matters'. The Fat Grass! What's in them?"

Good question. As stated previously by AFA, it is a fairly safe bet to assume that

QUOTES

"By the end of the day, as crowds of drunken spectators started belting out renditions of 'No surrender to the IRA', I decided to leave....The small but vociferous independent Liverpool and Manchester Orange Lodge had chanted 'UVF! UVF!' throughout their parade...The appearance of the BNP selling the British Nationalist was the low point....It was little different from, say, London's Notting Hill Carnival, and I would recommend this parade to any tourist." (Patrick West. *The Times*, 15/7/99)

Comment: I wonder what other cultural delights would feature in Mr. West's Tourist Guide, a good old boot-stomping Blood & Honour gig or perhaps a KKK cross burning ceremony?

"It is now becoming possible to believe that Auschwitz was socialist inspired." (George Watson. *The Independent on Sunday*, 22/11/98)

Comment: An example of the new historical revisionism that separates fascism (good) from National Socialism (bad), and claims that Hitler was a dissident socialist.

"Many people say that the whole issue of marching in Portadown is merely an issue of competing rights. I have challenged them and said: how do you make it to be an issue of competing rights on these marches, because if we were talking about a fascist march through a Jewish or Muslim community, then we wouldn't be discussing competing rights. If we were in Alabama or Mississippi in the 1960s, nobody would be talking competing rights. They would be talking about the denial of rights."

"That is the crux of the matter in Portadown, not just at the present time, but over the last number of years when the Orange Order had tried time and time again to exercise its supremacy over my community. Those people at Drumcree and their supporters have exactly the same mindset as those people who opposed the civil rights reforms 30 years ago." (Breandán Mac Cionnaith, *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, 13/5/99)

BRIXTON BOMB

He is described as white, aged in his late teens/early twenties, approximately 5' 6" - 5' 9" with a slim build.

On Saturday, 17th April, 1999, he was wearing a white baseball cap and a dark zip up jacket and was seen in the Brixton area.

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repressive State activity and the legislation to support it.

In the aftermath of the bombings, there have been many calls for fascist parties to be banned. However we can be fairly sure that any legislation introduced, supposedly to tackle the activities of the Far Right, would have much wider implications.

Larry O'Hara, writing in *An Phoblacht/Republican News* (29/4/99), says: "I hardly find it coincidental that the government has on the table, and has had since December, a consultation paper by Lord Justice Lloyd aimed at the permanent extension of "anti-terrorist" legislation to cover domestic (English/Scottish/Welsh) groups

unrelated to Irish matters. The most prominent group featured in the paper are animal rights activists, and "terrorism" has a far wider definition than previously."

Question three: Whose hand was strengthened most by the bombing campaign?

There is a murky world inhabited by *Searchlight* and the security services. Activity that appears superficially to be aimed at curbing extreme right-wing activity shrouds another agenda, not for public consumption. The second agenda is to destabilise, harass and undermine progressive working class elements who have adopted a militant anti-fascist strategy, those who prefer to rely on the resources available in working class communities to tackle fascism rather than the British State's dirty tricks department and their friends.

A widespread, media led backlash against the Far Right certainly will not improve the prospects of those fascist elements attempting to swim in the mainstream, although the BNP still got over 100,000 votes in the Euro-election. However, the security services will now be justified in applying more resources to the various projects under their supervision and those who seek to advance reactionary legislation through the liberal smokescreen will find an easier path.



Charlie boy, amongst others, was a very low budget 007.

With regard to the media, coverage of events in April left much unanswered. Not once, even though many articles in the mainstream press were clearly *Searchlight* inspired, did journalists refer back to the *Searchlight* editorial of 1995. Not once was the connection made between the security services and C18.

We have shown the high level of State involvement in C18 and we know that Copeland was a member of the BNP and the National Socialist Movement, a wing of the C18 organisation which according to *Searchlight* is an MI5 project. If C18 is a State run organisation then why did the strategy fail? Why were C18 dismissed as candidates for the bombings only for Griffin to announce later that Copeland was on the books?

Question two: What are the strategies employed by both the State and *Searchlight*?

Evidence suggests that State and *Searchlight* strategies may not only have produced a detailed profile of Far Right activity, but also that both the State and *Searchlight* have made calculated intervention in the arena of fascist and anti-fascist political activity in order to influence events.

If the C18 organisation was a State sponsored honey trap primarily designed to pick up on contact between Ulster Loyalists and mainland fascism, how much collaboration was allowed?

What exactly was the bait? If intelligence on those fascist/Loyalist contacts was made, to what extent were they allowed to develop?

The *News of The World* (2/5/99) reports: "A former member of Combat 18 says the neo-Nazi thugs were taught how to make nail bombs by evil Ulster Loyalist terrorists. Matthew Collins, who turned informant against C18, told the *News of the World* that members acted as gun-runners for the U.D.A. in return for instructions for making bombs like the ones that ripped through Brixton, Brick Lane and Old Compton Street."

If one of the main objectives of the security services and *Searchlight* with regard to their anti-fascist activity is to prevent people like Copeland from acting on the bomb making instructions, hit lists and 'race war' propaganda that circulates throughout the Far Right, then their strategy has failed. Despite all the resources at their disposal, three bombs were placed before Copeland was arrested.

Exactly how does the honey-trap work? Is the State responsible for propagating race-hate material, and perhaps even bomb-making instructions and hit lists? The north of Ireland has demonstrated that the British establishment's 'dirty tricks' department are adept at political intrigue, in providing justification for

Seen any interesting quotes or media comments? Send a copy to Elvis c/o London AFA

Racism against time

It may be comfortable for *Time Out* (Londonbeat, 701506) to reinforce a belief among its readers that race attacks are essentially the work of the far right, or in certain environments part of a problematic transition to adulthood.

According to the Government-sponsored Runnymede Trust, race attacks are running at around 250,000 annually. Many, as much as half, are committed by children under 16.

But if the problem is attributed largely to adolescence, who then is responsible for the other 145,000 attacks? And if it is being handed down from father to son, why are the offspring more extreme than their parents?

Evidence suggests that despite good intentions, equal opportunities practice in many cases contributes to a deepening racist climate. A failure at anti-racist training fails all in society.

The vigorous application of orthodox equal opportunities through the town halls should have loosened the grip of racism with each successive generation. On the contrary, studies and statistics suggest the opposite is happening.

Already Britain sustains a race attack level on a par with Germany, where last year the far right entered regional government. So we accept the political risks of addressing it now or risk the far right capitalising at their leisure later.

J. REILLY,

LONDON ANTI-FASCIST ACTION, WC1

AFA AND THE MEDIA

A new front has been opened up in the fight against fascism, and it is being fought in the media. Through consistent work over the last few years the BNP have now reached the stage where many journalists now take them as a serious political party - part of the Euro-Nationalist strategy of trying to enter the mainstream. It is a matter of priority that militant anti-fascists take up the challenge and ensure their views are opposed from informed working class points of view. Equally AFA must show there is an alternative to the failed policies of liberal anti-racism and the conservative Left.

On this page we reprint some recent letters and articles that have appeared in the press as an encouragement to others. After all, a letter or article in a local paper with a circulation of 30,000 saves a lot of leaflets and shoe leather. Any stories you think may be of interest to AFA, please contact the National Office on: 07000 569 569

TOP LEFT & BOTTOM RIGHT: AFA letters in Time Out magazine and the Camden New Journal. BOTTOM LEFT: a half page review of FT in "Weekly Worker" which describes the magazine as "thought provoking, intelligent and well worth reading..."

BY CHILDREN SHOWS NEED FOR RACE EDUCATION

Learning from the fascists

By Peter Hill, Anti-Fascist Action, 20th July 1988

The article discusses the impact of fascist ideology on modern society, particularly in the context of race relations and political movements. It highlights the resurgence of fascist ideas and the need for a strong anti-fascist response.



The article continues to analyze the social and political conditions that allow fascist ideas to flourish, emphasizing the role of education and community action in combating them.

Racist attacks are not just work of the far right

While it may be preferable to think of racism as the work of the far right, it is not always so. In the case of the racist attacks on the bus in London last July, it is not clear that the work of the far right was the only factor. The article suggests that racism is a complex phenomenon that can be perpetuated by various groups and individuals, not just the far right.

The article further explores the role of the media and the political establishment in shaping public perception of racism. It argues that a more nuanced and informed approach is needed to address the root causes of racial hatred and violence.

FIGHTING TALK

BACK

SLAP IN THE FACE

Dear Fighting Talk,

As a regular reader of FT the first column I read is Levelling the Score. As a Cardiff fan I would like to mention the recent arrest of Millwall goalkeeper Tony Warner, for public order offences. The opening game of the season for Cardiff was Millwall. There has been a long history of violence between the two clubs dating back to the early seventies, and this is the first time we had played in the league since 1984. On the day there were large scale disturbances, mainly involving Cardiff fans and the police.

Millwall chairman Theo Paphitis accused the police of inflaming the violence in the build up to the game and on the day itself. Paphitis also comments that "Tony had to endure 90 minutes of racial abuse and was showered with cans and coins". The statement that Warner was subjected with racial abuse throughout the game is outrageous. There was violence before, during and after the game which included players from both teams being hit by missiles thrown by both sets of fans, which I don't condone.

At one point Warner picked up a plastic bottle and threw it back into the crowd, which is the basis for his arrest. I sat behind Warner's goal for the second half and I can assure people that there was no barrage of racial abuse that the Cardiff fans were accused of. Warner and the rest of the Millwall team were given loads of stick, none of it racist, as is customary at football grounds up and down the country week, in, week out, despite it upsetting the sporting spirit of the game being

forced upon us by the new middle class ethics of media dominated football.

Cardiff has been accused of racism and fascism in the past by the Searchlight magazine, on one occasion in particular when Cardiff fans attacked the police at Fulham they were accused of racism, when in fact the main chant that day was "There is only one Colin Jackson", the black athlete from Cardiff who had won a gold medal the day before.

It is the usual case of liberal/conservative thought that equates all violence to fascism. The game was nothing more than a straight up row between Cardiff and Millwall, with no political involvement, facilitated by the football league pairing the two teams together on the first game of the season, plus the build up by the media in the days before. Cardiff does have a large hooligan following known as the Soul Crew, but there is no dominance or influence by Far Right groups which is the case at some other clubs.

I am not trying to claim there are no racists or bigots at Cardiff, there are, but thankfully these people are isolated and are rejected by the vast majority of Cardiff supporters.

Yours

Richard Lewis

**If you have any thoughts you wish to voice, please send your letters to:
Fighting Talk, BM 1734, London,
WC1N 3XX**

HARDCORE

Dear Fighting Talk

"Black Metal Unmasked" in the June issue of Searchlight continues their recent series 'exposing' Nazis who aren't 'just' fascists but Satanists as well. On the surface their motives are fairly clear. For an audience perhaps desensitised by reports of Nazi activity, a new dimension is needed to keep the punters horrified and keep the donations pouring into Searchlight's coffers. And what better way to do this than the good old tabloid standby of 'Satanism'.

Of more concern is Searchlight's use of insinuation to associate all sorts of people with the so-called 'National Socialist Black Metal Underground'. Like a paranoid parent it claims that kids who listen to Marilyn Manson or Cradle of Filth risk being dragged into some kind of Nazi Satanist underworld. Indeed the whole article loosely targets the whole spectrum of 'Hardcore rock music' describing it as 'musically identified by its minimalist form, fast guitar riffs, hammering drums and unintelligible vocals, which are screamed or growled rather than sung'. Such witch-hunts belong to the repertoire of the American religious right - a far more real and tangible movement with fascist elements and potential than a tiny and insignificant subculture of a subculture with no physical or political presence.

Yours

BL, Manchester

OUR PLEASURE

Dear AFA,

Congratulations on your comment concerning Hillsborough families in FT 21 - our campaign also includes survivors, and we hope the AFA presence on the National Civil Rights Movement steering committee argues for our inclusion in such a group. Your observations are spot on, and hopefully we will be able to discuss this further.

Yours for Justice

Mick,

On behalf of the:
Hillsborough Justice Campaign
134 Oakfield Road
Anfield
Liverpool
L4 0UG

All this means, for us, that it is impossible to fight fascism as a means of defending the present "democratic" system. The choice that presents itself is not between an increasingly intolerable "normal" state of affairs and fascism, but that of "socialism or barbarity".

A chance for revolutionaries, or a chance for the Nazis?!

The increasing repression and exploitation mean that the Germans are no longer well fed, sunburnt and content. The former East Germans in particular are losing their new-found loyalty to the middle class system that gave them their 'freedom', and there is a general feeling of indifferent, unchannelled anti-capitalism in the air. This is hardly surprising, given the 20-25% unemployment and ever-worsening social situation in eastern Germany. And this seething dissatisfaction is searching for a form of political expression. But who benefits from all the frustration and aggression? Certainly not the Left! Right-wing and openly fascist parties like the NPD and DVU appear to embody a real opposition to the capitalist system, with slogans like 'revolution is possible' and 'the real alternative'. Recently, a former RAF defence lawyer, Horst Mahler, formed his own new-right organisation, the 'National Movement', once a symbol of radical rebellion in 1968, he has gathered many influential people under his banner.

And the radical Left continues to form alliances with the very groups that are discredited in the eyes of the working class – trade unions, Greens, PDS...it is no wonder that the Nazis come across as the only real alternative.

Out of the political ghetto...

One of our 'reasons for existing' as a revolutionary organisation has always been to move anti-fascist politics in Germany out of the so-called political 'scene' where we could only preach to the more or less converted, and into the real working class world. Perhaps due to the misguided belief that the German working class has been eradicated by post-war prosperity, many 'ghettos' of squats, demonstrations and vegan cookery, or working in alliance with middle class representatives such as the Greens, the SPD or the East German PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism).

There are two dangers in this kind of alliance. Firstly, working with non-revolutionary groups, we can only achieve half-measures - that is the destruction of openly fascist parties and organisations, the defence of the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers, etc. But



OUT OF THE GHETTO



Young Nazis: time to challenge the dominance of right-wing ideas

This article has been produced by Red Antifa Berlin, part of the international militant anti-fascist network. In a ground-breaking move they have started to implement a pro-working class, anti-fascist strategy in an area previously dominated by the fascists.

In the current period of economic crisis, the working class is, as ever, the victim, and it doesn't look like much is going to change. While until recently new branches of production were continually developed which made up for rationalisation in the established industries, this practice no longer makes a serious dent in the crisis. New industries such as the much-praised telecommunications branch are starting off so thoroughly rationalised that there is no room for 'improvement' – sinking profits and the decreasing number of workers required mean that mass unemployment is now 'basic unemployment' which is not going to go away, even allowing for the usual fiddling of the statistics. The middle class is tightening its collective belt, and there's nothing left over to keep the working class quiet. The rights we fought for during the

period of prosperity are being slowly but surely eradicated, the 'carrot and stick' method of previous days has been altered, now only the stick is left. While the German trade unions and employers make plans to put an end to overtime pay, the SPD government has introduced plans to get young people back to work: practising application form filling and raking leaves in the park, otherwise your benefits are cut.

And it's not getting any better. Our prediction is that the only way the German State will be able to keep the working class from rebelling against the continuing attacks on our standard of living will be through the use of massive repression. Since the early 1970's every monetary gain for the working class has been cancelled out by the rationalisations and poorer working conditions. The German State has increased its repressive tactics, from the murders in Stammheim, the state-of-emergency laws in the late 1960s and their use against the anti-nuclear movement in the 70s and 80s, bans on Kurdish organisations, to their terrorist-style deportation practices and most recently the war in Yugoslavia.

there is obviously no way to fight the roots of fascism and exploitation side by side with the SPD or the Greens, who are now fully integrated into the system. The motivation behind such alliances can only ever be a more or less radical humanism and the defence of the status quo. The second danger is that anti-fascism itself is then associated with the moralising brand of politics practised by

We must understand anti-fascism as a part of the class struggle, a part which can only be effective in connection with other class issues: - unemployment protests, the fight for decent pay and housing, against deportations of refugees, and so on. And we must get to these issues before the fascists succeed in taking them away from us.



"... openly fascist parties like the NPD and DVU appear to embody a real opposition to the capitalist system, with slogans like 'revolution is possible' and 'the real alternative'..."

such alliances and no longer taken seriously by the people it ought to be reaching: the working class. Anti-fascist alliances such as in Rostock last year, where the Church and local do-gooders distributed butterfly stickers bearing the message 'bunt statt braun' (multi-coloured not brown), or in Hamburg more recently where a fascist march was forced to change its location, prompting the comment, 'Today is a good day for Hamburg, but a bad day for Bergedorf' do nothing to get those involved taken seriously by potential recruits of the Nazis. In fact they can do more harm than good.

Our only chance

It is our job to be part of the everyday class struggle, to get involved wherever people start to fight the system, as a catalyst trying to lend a revolutionary perspective; and get people fighting in the first place. This means connecting the various issues; clearly naming the class nature of fascism and its role in maintaining the balance of power; making it clear that there is another alternative apart from fascism. We cannot continue, as anti-fascists, to concentrate purely on classical anti-fascist issues.

Practice

Any theory will inevitably fall on deaf ears until it is put into practice. Despite the fact that several German anti-fascist groups had expressed interest in AFA's militant anti-fascist manifesto, there has been no sign that it has been put to the test in a practical sense. Someone has to get the ball rolling, and 'if not us then who?'. The basic co-ordinates of our campaign are clear: no co-operation with discredited middle class organisations, a radical, working class community orientation, whilst making it clear that there is no way out of the capitalist system but revolution.

We have started off in the East Berlin area of Treptow. An industrial area since the turn of the century, the fall of the Berlin Wall brought rationalisation, shutdowns, unemployment, misery and racism. Nazis from the West moved in, forming the 'Kameradschaft Treptow' with locals, a non-party organisation of hard men who have planted bombs in the flats of local politicians and have good contacts with the NPD (their most notorious member is Kay Diesner, who in 1996 shot the leg off a local left-wing bookshop owner and then went on the run, killing

one policeman and injuring another, before being brought to bay by the German version of Special Branch, who showed remarkable self-control in dealing with a 'cop killer', only knee-capping him. But then the German justice system has always been notoriously blind in the right eye). The Kameradschaft's aim of converting the borough to a 'national befreite Zone' (national liberated zone) has been partly achieved - racist violence in the form of arson attacks and throwing people out of moving trains has led all tourist guides to issue a strict warning: Stay away if you stand out.

Working with other local left-wing groups we formed the campaign 'So oder os', meaning roughly 'either one or the other'. Our aim is to break the increasingly right-wing hegemony, not by moralising about how bad the nazis are, but by highlighting the everyday problems and getting people active! Our first step was a series of posters to remind people of the alternatives; 'poverty and unemployment or fighting exploitation', 'racist division or fighting together' and 'nazi terror or anti-fascist resistance', hence the motto 'either/or'. We have since brought out a newspaper highlighting local issues, which so far has brought only positive reactions, and staged the first ever anti-fascist gig in Treptow, which was a modest success among the local punks and skinheads. Despite the provocative motto 'No go area for Nazis', we were not bothered by anyone but a few carloads of Nazis, who drove past, saw our security and obviously thought better of their plans for the evening! A public meeting on the latest SPD attack on the unemployed was unfortunately less well attended. We plan further open meetings and attention-grabbing actions, as well as a demonstration in the autumn under the slogan, 'Against fatcats and fascists - build resistance from below'.

All in all we have got off to a good start, but there is much more to be done. We need more contact with the man and woman on the street, to the kids in the youth clubs. We need to continue making our presence felt and talking to local people. We need to offer a real alternative to the Nazis, and alternative solutions. And hopefully other anti-fascists in Germany and Europe will sit up and take notice, instead of constantly losing political ground and credibility to the fascists. We certainly don't claim to offer any patent solutions - every situation is slightly different but the problems of the working class are similar everywhere. It is our job to work on real alternatives.

TACKLING THE BEAST IN BRUM

Fascism and anti-fascism in the West Midlands

The West Midlands, heavily populated and industrialised, has long been an important target of the Far Right. In the pre-war years the British Union of Fascists (BUF) attempted to establish themselves in Birmingham. After the war immigration from Asia and the Caribbean became the primary focal point for fascist groups, especially as the boom turned into decline and working class areas took the brunt of the State's divisive social and economic policies. The effects felt in the communities of Birmingham and the Black Country were acute, and were inherited by AFA from its inception years later. It's against this backdrop that we investigate a few examples of the opposition to fascism that came from within the same class the Far Right sought to dominate - a tradition that continues to this day.

The BUF was launched by ex-Birmingham Labour MP Oswald Mosley in 1932, and soon after opened up its first offices in Stratford Rd, south Birmingham. The BUF quickly gained much interest and support from sections of the media and the establishment. Hitler and Mussolini were being keenly observed and admired by influential figures in the British status quo, hence the growth of the BUF to a viable organisation of government was not inconceivable.

Mosley made an attempt at a breakthrough in Birmingham a year or so later, when the BUF organised a rally in the Rag Market. The meeting was plagued by scenes of disorder, as anti-fascists fought with BUF stewards. Mosley returned to the Birmingham area the following January, when the BUF hosted a large rally at Bingley Hall. Clearly conscious of the Rag Market rout Mosley elected to place no less than 2,000 Blackshirt stewards on duty for the event, drafted in from across the Midlands, Liverpool, Manchester and London. 5,000 people attended in all, but the heavy security presence prevented any serious disorder within the meeting. Outside though there were a number of clashes between anti-fascists and Blackshirts as Mosley left, quelled only by large numbers of police.

The right-wing press reported on Mosley's keynote Bingley speech in



Mosley casts a shadow over the West Midlands

favourable detail. Birmingham papers the Mail and Gazette endorsed Mosley, printing what amounted to lengthy policy statements on behalf of the BUF, praising the general organisation of the rally, and presenting overt endorsement of much of what was said from the platform.

Despite considerable press sympathy, including the newspaper baron Lord Rothermere, Mosley's movement was still struggling to strike a chord with the Midlands working class. Hence in the summer of 1934 GK Chesterton was drafted to Birmingham as officer-in-charge of Warwickshire and Staffordshire BUF, in an attempt to shape up and reorganise the local movement.

In May 1935 there was another large Mosley rally at Birmingham town hall. Proceedings were disrupted throughout by crowds of anti-fascists involved in hand to hand clashes with Blackshirt stewards all around the hall. Arthur Mills, BUF organiser for Birmingham, was amongst the injured. Mosley told the press that the disturbance was the most serious he had seen for two years,

except that at Olympia. 'Members of our movement were violently assaulted by reds in the audience', he said, and that anti-fascists had come organised for violence. At ten o'clock the meeting was closed down and Mosley made off, flanked by his Blackshirt minders.

Attentions turned to Spain in 1936, and anti-fascists rallied in Birmingham's Bull Ring. 71 volunteers from the industrial Midlands joined up to the International Brigades to fight Franco. Some never came back and many more were injured. Colin Bradsworth was a doctor from Birmingham who became battalion medical officer. His bravery during some of the worst fighting at Jarama was exemplary - ferrying the injured and dying under heavy gunfire until he was shot himself. He still continued dressing and treating the injured, despite his own wounds.

As concern about fascism in Europe grew, there were a number of demonstrations at the town hall, and also in Neville Chamberlain's Edgbaston constituency, against what were seen as the Liberal government's pro-fascist policies. In February 1937 a socialist 'United Front' was set up in Birmingham to promote the defence of working class interests against fascism at home and abroad. The following year Chamberlain, in an unconvincing appeasement speech at Birmingham town hall, vowed to 'eat his hat' if war broke out!

During 1940 the BUF tried to set up a new headquarters and bookshop in Grove Lane, Handsworth. In less than a week local women forced its closure - threatening that the shop would be smashed, as would the local organiser. The BUF in Birmingham had become a spent force.

After the war there began a huge influx of immigrant labour to Birmingham and the Black Country. Hence during the 50's and 60's racial conflict became the catalyst for resurgent fascist activity. Successive governments manipulated the economy, declared war on the unions and gradually wound much of the traditional industry down. The result of this overall labour and social policy brought hardship,



'Our organisation is not here to protect coloured people but to protect whites from competition for housing and jobs'. The NF also used the IRA pub bombings of the same year to stir up a wave of animosity and attacks against Birmingham's large Irish community, further bolstering their potential support. For the next five or six years the NF would stand candidates in virtually every election contested in the West Midlands, polling some

8,000 votes in the 1977 County elections in Wolverhampton town alone.

In 1976, 3,000 took part in a counter-demonstration against the NF in Stetchford. The march was called by Asian and black organisations and set out to remain in the immediate area where 1000 NF were marching. The Trades Council insisted on calling their own march of 300 for the same day which was to be a 'show of strength', in the city centre, safely out of way of the NF. The Labour Party opposed any counter-demonstration against the Front. The gravity of the situation would only be remedied by more urgent tactics.

The following August, three days after heavy violence was inflicted on the National Front at Lewisham, they had another taste of 'red terror' at a by-election meeting due to be addressed by John Tyndall in Birmingham's Ladywood constituency. 120 fascists were besieged in Boulton Rd. school by a mob of 5-600 anti-fascists, armed with bricks, sticks and bottles, and fierce fighting erupted. The police came under heavy sustained attack as they did their utmost to protect the NF, dozens of police were injured. As the meeting closed a crowd of about 300 anti-fascists smashed a police roadblock, and attacked Thornhill Rd. police station in an attempt to free anti-fascist prisoners. The Times report reflected the new militancy of the protesters; 'A police bus bringing reinforcements from the meeting more than a mile away ran a gauntlet of missiles and had all its windows shattered. Several officers, including a policewoman, were helped out with blood streaming from their faces.' The NF still took third place out of ten, but Ladywood marked a turning point for all sides.

unemployment and urban decay - and the immigrants who were initially shipped in to do much of the menial low paid work were now resented by many of the white working class, spurred on by the institutionalised racists of the middle classes and the establishment. Even the unions played their part - in the late 50's, for example, Birmingham TGWU leadership objected to immigrant bus workers, on the grounds that white women members *would not be safe*.

Racial violence in the Black Country was a feature throughout this period. In Dudley the mid-60's were marred by three consecutive nights of some of the worst anti-immigrant violence the Midlands has ever seen. 'Paki bashing' became a sport amongst many white gangs in Wolverhampton, activities further 'legitimised' when Wolverhampton MP Enoch Powell gave his 'rivers of blood' speech in Walsall. Smethwick too became a national focus during the early 60's, where colour-bars were openly enforced in pubs, clubs and even barbers' shops - leading to the Tories crushing Labour in the 1964 council elections under the slogan 'If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour'. Birmingham Immigration Control Association and the Racial Preservation Society threw all their resources at the areas of Handsworth, Smethwick and West Bromwich, with fascists coming from far afield to whip up racial conflict. Race was rapidly overtaking class as a primary grassroots' political focus. The stage was being set for the National Front's forthcoming campaigns right across the West Midlands.

By the mid-70's the National Front were successfully raising their electoral profile. One union had responded to a 1974 appeal to oppose the NF stating,

During the election campaign three Labour Party headquarters had their windows broken, owing to their election agent, Peter Marriner, being forced to resign over allegations that he had previously had extreme right-wing associations (*Marriner resurfaced three years later attacking a Bloody Sunday commemoration in Birmingham, as regional organiser for the British Movement!*). The National Front's by-election headquarters in Broad St. were also attacked and ransacked by anti-fascists a few days before the election. At the count there was further trouble, culminating in Anthony Reed Herbert, the NF candidate, getting punched square in the face and having his glasses broken by Raghieb Ahsan, the Socialist Unity candidate. Ahsan and other anti-fascists were ejected by police, but he later told the press; 'I did it and I am proud that I did it. I would do it again if I saw him.'

Reed Herbert announced his resignation from politics less than a week later, unnerved by increasing violence and a glut of telephone and written threats. The jewel in the crown that week though was a shotgun attack on the family antique shop in the East Midlands, in which his brother escaped a bullet in the head by no more than an inch or two. Reed Herbert, like many other Front officials across the country at that time, could not cope with being both outmanoeuvred and out-terrorised by the new strain of uncompromising opposition.

In February 1978 the Young National Front returned to march through the Digbeth area of the city, amidst more scenes of militancy from anti-fascists. Some 400 NF gathered at Digbeth Civic Hall, countered by around 7,000 anti-fascists.

The Birmingham Post described the initial outbreaks of violence; 'The main body moved right, but a group of about 50 realised there was no police force preventing them from moving towards Digbeth. Youths aged between 13 and 18, black and white, many wearing football scarves, ran to a demolition site in Floodgate St. to collect bricks and stones. Bricks, bottles, spark plugs, sticks and broken paving slabs rained down on the police...'

Riots broke out that cost the city in the region of £1,000,000, and although the NF meeting went ahead the siege of



Self-defence march through Small Heath, Birmingham, June 1980

Digbeth was another bitter blow to the NF. The Lord Mayor of Birmingham called for the reintroduction of the birch in the aftermath of the rioting. The Trades Council, who had helped organise the counter-demonstration, attempted to distance themselves from the more militant elements, as they did at Stetchford nearly two years earlier. Ironically they again distanced themselves along racial lines, telling the Birmingham Post; 'There were several hundred people, including black and Asian youths, who broke away and became involved in a confrontation situation with the police.' The inference was that violence was 'beneath' the Left, and the presence of black youth had inflamed the situation. Not surprising then that 18 months previously Bill Jarvis, then head of Birmingham Trades Council, had capitulated to the 'race not class' lobby by calling for a temporary halt to immigration.

At the end of April 1979 the NF held another pre-election rally at Cronehills School, West Bromwich, an area where they'd enjoyed good electoral support in the early seventies. There was fighting inside the venue, between the NF and 150 or so opponents, broken up by a hundred police forcibly entering the hall. Outside youths split away from the ANL march and clashed with some of the 2,000 police present on West Bromwich ringway. Searchlight man Dave Roberts, in the guise of ANL assistant secretary, was on hand to blame the violence on the NF and rogue elements. He commended the police on doing 'a very good job'.

The Tories stole the NF's anti-immigration thunder at the '79 election - but fascism didn't entirely disappear. Irish events were systematically attacked

and ska gigs, as well as between street gangs. The growing influence and strength of black and Asian youth on the streets played a vital role in helping to stem the tide, outlined in this recollection:

'Around the Black Country there were a number of clashes between skinhead NF supporters and the opposing Rude Boy gangs, which were racially mixed.... The NF came a couple of times to the school distributing 'Bulldog', their youth magazine, to kids on their way home. The NF made out they were for the whites but what I ask myself now is who was for the working class? My elder brother became infatuated with the Front. Only a year later he'd buy Socialist Worker and other left-wing papers outside work - like everyone he was looking for a voice, an outlet, not that he would've found much joy there either but, I can see how he thought now in hindsight. A sister of mine also fancied herself as a skinhead girl, though not in the slightest bit racist, more to do with the kudos of being associated with lads who were seen to be something. It was almost like a Robin Hood scenario, being seen to stand up and reject the establishment - a sense of identity, even if it manifested itself in a reactionary way, such as supporting the NF. But circumstances gelled to provide the NF with support from the worst off.

National Front 'suits' apparently came to the pub at the top of our road to address a NF meeting, comprised mainly of the teenage 'Oakham Skins', who had by now adopted a reputation for violence, irrespective of the fact that many of the black kids and the Rude Boy elements, including the Asian contingent, were fast becoming the hardest and most feared 'firms' in the area. Further afield, a mile or so away in Tipton, I was told how the NF had suffered heavy casualties when

throughout the 80's, which in part led to the formation of Midlands AFA as the decade drew to a close.

Not so well documented is the significant role of youth culture - both in aiding the growth of fascism and combating it. There were many clashes at punk

a gang of Brummie punks had teamed up with Tipton residents to smash an NF meeting. Yet the NF's ability to maintain a fearsome reputation was unabated. From the Oakham meeting a group of skinheads left, equipped themselves and burnt down an Asian shop in nearby Netherton, killing one family member. Some of the perpetrators would've been off our estate. A family friend at the bottom end of our road went out with a black bloke, and woke up one morning to find her dad's house daubed from top to bottom with painted swastikas and NF graffiti. The Indian shop at the top of a relative's street in south Birmingham was attacked. Racist street attacks, particularly towards the more vulnerable, seemed commonplace. Retaliation did take place though, with a fair degree of organisation. Ultimately I suppose it came down to who could instil the most fear and get the situation under their control. Looking back now the fascist skins lost it physically, the climate was such that they couldn't operate.'



West Brom 1978: United Against Racism

The NF never really recovered, and on occasions since when they've tried AFA have often been on hand to ensure it stayed that way. Part of a proud tradition of working class militant anti-fascism that continues to the present day. To those who sneer about AFA 'thuggery' and 'squadism' - take a look at those you revere in history, and tell us why it's suddenly different now. 'At which point in this continuous tradition of confrontation do you draw the line and say physical opposition is no longer acceptable?'

A BOOKLET 'A HISTORY OF FASCISM AND ANTI-FASCISM IN BIRMINGHAM AND THE BLACK COUNTRY' WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM THE WM AFA PO BOX IN SEPTEMBER, PRICE £2.00.



THE BEAT GOES ON...

HELLO NAZI, GOODBYE NAZI

In May an article appeared in the NME which attempted to chart the "dubious history of fascistic style and politics in rock". "Hello Nazi" by Tommy Udo sought to examine this history by charting pop stars and their exploits with Nazi imagery as examples. At the time Cable Street Beat sent in a response to the article, which sadly was not published. Therefore in this issue of *Fighting Talk* we have decided to incorporate this letter into the following article.

Rather than trying to comment on the rise and fall of pop stars who have used Nazi imagery in pop music we have decided to examine some of the views expressed by Udo as arguments and excuses for these actions. Journalism of this type cannot go unchecked or free from comment, especially when you consider the apolitical readership.

Udo begins by stating that "everyone who dresses as a Nazi isn't necessarily out to instigate the next holocaust". He goes on to explain that pop stars have always tried to shock, tracing it back to the early days of people like Elvis and Cliff Richard. Apparently they have always tried to "con the world that they are evil mothers" and that "part of the music package of teenage rebellion is about striking cold fear in to the hearts of right-thinking citizens". It is certainly true that everyone who has flirted with Nazi imagery isn't necessarily an active fascist but why should we tolerate these idiots and poseurs. The excuse that it is merely teenage rebellion is almost as immature as the people who use this kind of imagery to make themselves seem way out, shocking and radical.

Udo paints these antics as an acceptable way to shock middle class suburbia, a place where he seems comfortable. His belief is that "rock 'n' roll has a proud history of driving parents to drink, tabloid journalists to self righteous lather and jolly C of E vicars into the black pits of despair." He seems to excuse those celebrities by making them into James Dean type figures who set out to shock

their middle-class parents. He remains safely in the realms of the "twitching net curtains of suburbia".

At a time when racist attacks are running at two and a half to three thousand a week (according to British Crime Survey figures), fascist nail bombs exploding without warning across London and the Far Right stronger across Europe than at any other time since the Second World War, this is hardly an image to flirt with. If you play with fire you get burnt, so any band who toy with fascism becomes a legitimate target for anti-fascists. If you want to shock there are plenty of ways to do it without flying a swastika. In our opinion taking an openly militant anti-fascist position would be quite refreshing and it would certainly shock us!

Udo continues in this vein, but moves on to Brian Jones (Rolling Stones), describing how he posed in SS uniform, he excuses this by saying that they were taking an "inevitable step, identifying the Stones with history's all-time bad guys". The only possible explanation being that the band had run out of ways to shock and appearing like this was the only option left open to them. Well if that's the only way to attract attention it would probably be a good idea to quit or suffer the consequences. If you feel the need to associate yourself with the Nazis then it is quite reasonable to assume that your audience will not always be sympathetic. In Udo's world we would stand idly by watching these celebrities goose stepping up and down, it would be acceptable to find their antics distasteful, sure, but we would realise that "it was just dressing up" a bit of immature but harmless fancy dress!

One person left out of the hall of fame is Eric Clapton, the man who made a fortune out of playing the blues, but came out in support of Enoch Powell at a gig in Birmingham in the mid-seventies, a time of growing electoral support for the NF. In fact it was this and Bowie's fascist outburst which led to the launch of Rock Against Racism. Udo does mention

Bowie, explaining that his behaviour was "more sinister" than his Nazi imitating predecessors. Bowie took it a "tad too far" - no shit! Udo sweeps this one under the carpet, after all Bowie put it down to a "cocaine induced psychosis". Admittedly Udo makes a few tutting noises when it comes to Bowie's behaviour but it really wasn't worth him mentioning the stars excuses. It's very easy walking around acting like an idiot and then lamely saying it wasn't my fault, I was too drugged up to notice.

Udo moves on to punk and the NF's exploitation of "punk's youthful gullibility". Or was it a "lack of artistic compromise", a statement made by Siouxsie and the Banshees after they refused to apologise or explain why one of the lines in their songs included "too many Jews for my liking". Allegedly "jew" really meant "businessman". Yet another chance for Udo to comment on the stupidity and extremely questionable politics of the band, surprisingly enough not even a squeak is heard from the journalist - or is it just his lack of artistic compromise?

One area of fascism in music which Udo does try to address is the allegations made by the media when they try to link Marilyn Manson and the Denver massacre carried out by Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris. Although we admit that it is taking the argument too far to directly link their reverence for Hitler with pop stars, equally it is extremely crass to say that they "took the showbiz Nazi stuff far too seriously". To Udo it's just a bit of harmless fun.

Well he doesn't think so when it comes to Skrewdriver. While the poseurs flirting with fascism need a short sharp lesson in reality, the other category - the Nazis using music to spread the Aryan gospel require organised opposition. The article mentions Skrewdriver, leading lights of the nazi 'Blood and Honour' movement, who really were fascists and actively sought to recruit through their music and gigs. They were stopped from being able



to operate openly after the sustained campaign of Cable Street Beat and Anti-Fascist Action culminating in the Battle of Waterloo in September 1992. When concerned with Skrewdriver Udo yet again fails to hit the target.

He moves swiftly on explaining that "rock 'n' roll will continue its flirtation with Nazism because, quite frankly, it's such a comfortable fit". He goes on to compare mass Nazi rallies with pop concerts—"nowadays, light shows using dry ice and lasers attempt the very same thing". This is a very tenuous link, just what is he trying to say, that before the Nazis there were no big rallies which sought to impress those present?

It's very difficult to imagine why Udo wrote this article, it certainly wasn't to put across any political opinion or to question the actions of the various pop stars who have used fascist uniforms and insignia to gain some sort of reaction from people. Equally it was not even written to condemn these people for their pathetic attempts at notoriety and increased fame. This is not an area where you can remain quiet. To sum this article up it was yet another wasted opportunity to say something sensible.

Cable Street Beat would like to thank "The Chineapple Punks", "Combat Shock" and "Dog on a Rope" for their support at a gig in High Wycombe recently. We were able to raise funds at the gig which without their help we would not have been able to do.

STAGE STRUCK

'Metal' band, Pitchshifter recently provoked a bad reaction for being unpatriotic after a performance of their new track 'Un-United Kingdom'. For one patriotic member of the audience this particular track went down like a lead balloon. So incensed by the song, at a gig in Eastbourne, he felt compelled to get on stage, proceeding to hit the lead singer, Jon, in the face. To add insult to injury the assailant's mother then got on stage and began to rant at the band, saying that they had brought it on themselves because of the songs content.

It is not so much the song itself, it's not going to be one of the anti-fascist classics after all, but the ensuing moments which we feel should be commented on. After the incident the assailant was able to walk from the gig unhindered, what exactly does that say for the assembled audience?

No band should be put off expressing their views. Although Anti-Fascist Action cannot possibly 'police' all gigs, if any band are finding that they are having particular grief from the far right then we would be interested in hearing from you. Please either write to your local branch, or ring the office number.



GIG REVIEW

In May, AFA held two successful hardcore benefit gigs in Manchester and Bradford. The Manchester gig was a resounding success. Regular flyposting and leafletting of gigs ensured that it was well publicised. Spy Vs Spy, Withdrawn, Solanki and Grover (some of the best bands in the British hardcore scene) played in front of a packed house at this highly politicised gig. Despite a lack of local publicity, and clashing with the European Cup Final, the Bradford gig was also a success. AFA raised a decent amount of cash, and more importantly raised our profile in relatively new musical territory. We plan on holding future events to establish a significant base of support within the scene and are looking into putting out a benefit CD.

If you have anything that you can contribute please contact Manchester AFA.

Below: Grover on stage in Manchester.





AFA MERCHANDISE



HEROES OR VILLAINS?

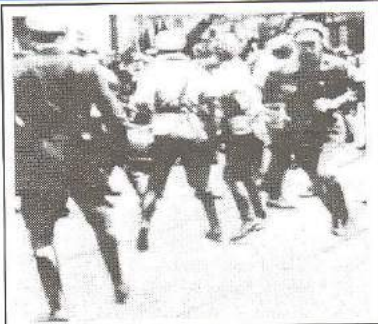


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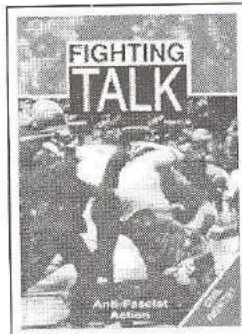
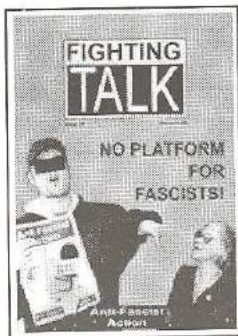
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