

FIGHTING FASCISM

A STATEMENT FROM LIVERPOOL ANTI-FASCIST-ACTION

So far in England this summer we have seen major mobilisations by the British National Party and the National front in many towns throughout the north. Many of these occasions have resulted in clashes with fascists and local white youth on one side and black and white anti-fascists on the other. In London a Nazi gig was organised by the Nazi skinhead group of bands "Blood and Honour". With 1200 tickets sold weeks before the event, the biggest fascist gathering for years was expected. Luckily anti-fascists mobilised in large numbers. The main fascist gig was cancelled to be replaced by a smaller gig with smaller capacity. Many fascists were left in London, not knowing where to go and at the mercy of unsympathetic anti-fascists. The day can be said to be a success, with many fascists going home bruised, miserable, and never having seen a single band.

Yet despite that expected large gathering and despite a "reported" 70,000 racist attacks in England last year, the anti-fascist movement is still very small. In America, Israel, Germany, France, Austria and South Africa, recent elections have demonstrated to many that fascism as a political phenomenon is neither solely German nor dead

- Given the right social and economic conditions its influence can never be underestimated -

Anti-Fascist-Action was formed in 1985 to combat the then recent upsurge in fascist activity but somewhere along the way it got lost with many of its campaigns taking the role of appealing to the middle-classes, Bishops and the likes. We feel its time for black and white working class anti-fascists to come together and concentrate on building a working-class anti fascist movement

Since its formation in 1985 AFA has been continually faced with two fundamental problems. Whether it was, or should become a pressure group chiefly concerned with state racism, or a confrontational anti-fascist organisation. The second problem which proved equally difficult to surmount was to create a structure to accomodate in both a democratic and a representative way both political organisations and non aligned individuals.

On the one hand there was fear that an unscrupulous group (such as the SWP) might affiliate with the intention of using AFA as a vehicle for recruitment, on the other, was the resentment that delegates of organisations felt due to the fact that proposals from them could be out voted or ignored by individuals who at the end of the day represented nobody but themselves. The tensions and suspicions bred antagonisms that within a relatively short time brought AFA to its knees.

At the conference in Manchester in 1986, the suspension of "anarchist" group Class War led to a walk out by a number of groups, including Red Action (they returned Class War did not) The Bradford confrence in 1987 was a fiasco and near total disaster with the establishment of the split away group Anti Racist, Anti Fascist Action, and then later by sympathisers to suspend Red Action for racism. A low ebb indeed.

Since then, in recognition of reality AFA has become a federal organisation which has eased a lot of the problems bureaucratic and otherwise, and of course allows for the implementation of policies, tactics etc in response to regional requirements.

So despite AFA existing only in a skeletal form, it has enjoyed unprecedented success, publicity and prestige, simply because of Blood and Honour and football to a lesser extent, have been confronted and tackled, though not crudely head on. This is a very valuable lesson. Throughout AFAs existence (despite the problems) there have been other registered successes, the smashing up of an NF march in Stockport, in Bury st. Edmonds in 1986 that deepened the split in the NF, the tactics adopted around Remembrance Day though sometimes contradictory have actually caused Harringtons lot to abandon the event complaining bitterly about "violent communists". The Albert Mariner march no longer takes place. In London Blood and Honour have been successfully harassed, losing pubs (Prince Albert, Wellington store, Green Man), also having their gigs cancelled or disrupted plus of course losing their shop in Carnaby st. (as well as Liverpool and London, AFA has also been organised in other areas, notably Newcastle, Leeds, Manchester, Exeter, often with considerable success)

While congratulations are due, organised fascist gangs represent only a symptom of the problem, what is now required is that anti-fascists throughout the country address themselves to the source of the problem, racism, reflected in the huge increase in racist attacks. This is an area of work that we believe anti-fascists must tackle as it can no longer be ignored. Indeed it should be our priority. First of all a strategy must be worked out and organisations and individuals must be able to implement it.

With race attacks at a reported 70,000 annually and apart from £400,000 allocated by the police in recognition of the problem, in relation to both a mass movement and the left the issue is swept under the carpet, under reported or ignored. Our first job is to highlight this epidemic.

In recognition that it is the white working class youth, who provide the fascists "natural" recruits, it is with them in mind that AFA must aim its propaganda. Appealing to good reason or conscience will never defeat racist attitudes especially in areas of grinding poverty, it is only by demonstrating through activity and propaganda that blacks and Asians are being made scapegoats for the problems of the system and that racism/fascism is not in the short or long term interest of the working class, will significant progress be made.

It is essential therefore that when appropriate, anti-fascist propaganda "must" contain a class message. One to provide an answer to common prejudices, two to avoid presenting all white people as the enemy, to neutralise the white community and to isolate the active racists/fascists, and most importantly, to negate the efforts by fascists to present the anti-fascist movement as a bunch of middle class outsiders, part and parcel of the establishment, working in the long term interests of the status quo. Only by building a working class movement can we hope to relate to the working class.

The neo-nazi, music based group Blood and Honour have attracted the attention of the media recently. It is obvious that on their own they do not represent a genuine threat. The real significance of their emergence is that they would not have existed at all in 59,69,79, their emergence today is not a coincidence but an indication of a real shift to the right throughout society.

B&H represents only the outer tentacles of a beast, and unless they are crushed will naturally grow stronger and bolder, strengthening in the process all other component parts of the same animal. Some people on the left accuse us of making a fetish of fascism when the truth is that they make a fetish of ignoring it.

The rebirth of the far right in Europe is directly related to the abysmal failure of the far left.

Our first job now is not to unite people, but to divide people, not between left and right but between pro-fascist and anti-fascist, racist and anti-racist, between the active and the passive.

We must, through highlighting the issue of race attacks, force people to take sides, for history has demonstrated on the issue of fascism there can be no neutrality.

Equally important it must be declared that there can be no place in the anti-fascist movement for careerists, the phoney, the self-seekers or the self-promoters.

Since 1985 AFA has faced the sectarianism inherent in the left, the hostility of the media and by and large the indifference of the labour and trade union movements.

Unlike Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Austria we in Britain have no direct knowledge of fascism, and so we are led to believe that it could never happen here.

The complacency is misplaced for it is this very climate of indifference to the plight of others that actually creates a tolerance towards fascism/racism that allows it to develop.

The Ulster Defence Association are regarded by some misguided English groups benignly as a sort of "worker's militia", are now operating and recruiting in Britain. They have established close links with the NF, BNP and B&H. The recent disclosure that they are being armed by the South African regime comes to us as no surprise. They are fascists and their direct involvement over here adds a whole new and dangerous dimension to the problem.

It may come as a shock to many on the left that not all fascists have cropped hair and flight jackets; if fascism reappears on the doorstep again, it almost certainly will not be identified by a swastika and a toothbrush mustache, it will be a sophisticated package and may creep up insidiously.

It must be remembered that National Socialism in Germany did not begin with concentration camps, that was just how it ended.

Happily the people reading this article have a choice, and that choice is simple and straight-forward: we can decide to stick together now or face the possibility that we may all hang separately later.

Adapted from "Red Action" but rewritten by Liverpool Anti Fascist Action.

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