

# **BEATING FASCISM ANARCHIST ANTI-FASCISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE EDITED BY ANNA KEY**



Anarchists have never hung back in the fight against fascism. This pamphlet covers the physical and ideological battles that anarchists have waged against fascism and its authoritarian dream. It starts with the Arditi del Popolo (Peoples Commandos) against Mussolini's Blackshirts, goes via German anarcho-syndicalists to the Spanish Revolution of 1936. This much can be found (usually well buried!) in the history books. But this pamphlet also uncovers the history of anarchist anti-fascism in fighting against the National Front in Britain in the seventies and the 'No Platform' activities of Anti-Facist Action & Anti-Racist Action in the eighties, nineties and beyond. Documents from Russia and Australia and an interview with current activists from Britain and North America fill out a comprehensive look at the ideas and practice of anarchist anti-fascism.

Read it and you'll know we don't fight fascism out of loyalty to the current set-up: we want a world without bosses! This reader will give you an insight into the anarchist critique of fascist ideas – and our history of practical opposition to them.

*Know the sort of world you want. Know your enemy and remember this – we have to beat the fascists every time, they only have to beat us once. If they come into power, we are dead and buried. Literally.*

– from the 'Anti-fascism now' interview.

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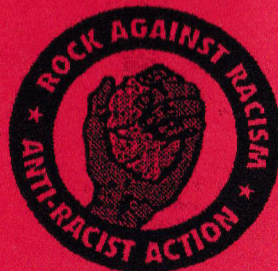
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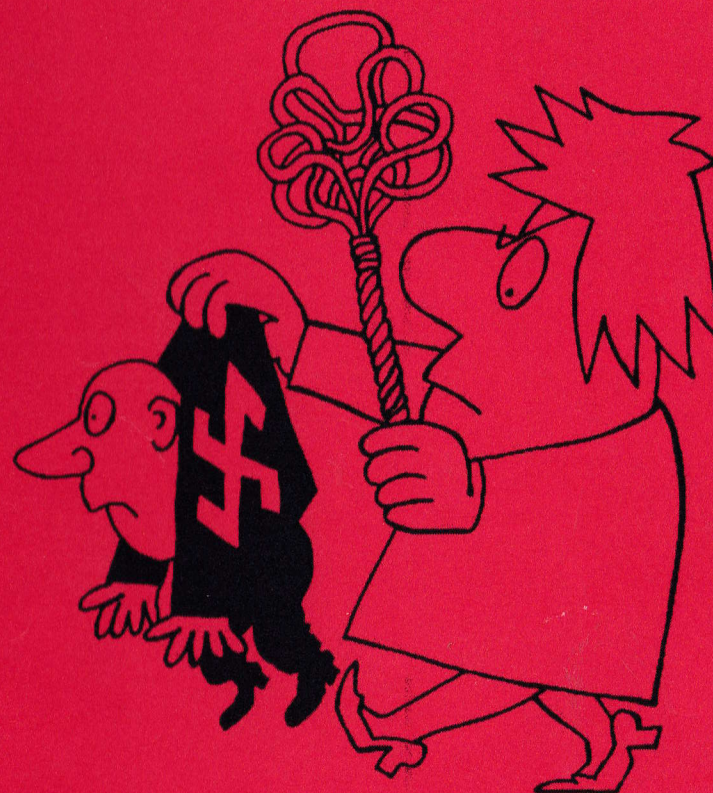
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# **BEATING FASCISM ANARCHIST ANTI-FASCISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE**



**EDITED BY ANNA KEY**



Beating Fascism: Anarchist anti-fascism in theory and practice

Edited by Anna Key

Translations by Paul Sharkey (Romance languages); Isy Morgenmuffel (Gerhard); Ray E. Chase (Rocker). Thanks to the reading group and all the other comrades who helped put it together or provided texts.

Cover image taken from an Italian anti-fascist sticker

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What is Anarchism?

Anarchism is a political theory which opposes the State and capitalism. It says that people with economic power (capitalists) and those with political power (politicians of all stripes left, right or centre) use that power for their own benefit, and not (like they claim) for the benefit of society. Anarchism says that neither exploitation nor government is natural or necessary, and that a society based on freedom, mutual aid and equal share of the good things in life would work better than this one.

Anarchism is also a political movement. Anarchists take part in day-to-day struggles (against poverty, oppression of any kind, war etc) and also promote the idea of comprehensive social change. Based on bitter experience, they warn that new 'revolutionary' bosses are no improvement: 'ends' and 'means' (what you want and how you get it) are closely connected.

## Introduction

*This pamphlet gives a selection of anarchist accounts of fascism and how it can be beaten. It doesn't focus on events in the long history of anarchist anti-fascism but ideas: the how and why, more than the who and when, of anarchist resistance to fascism. We hope it'll be interesting and useful both to anarchist activists, and anyone interested in opposing fascist ideas and actions.*

*The 'working definition' for this pamphlet is that fascism is the violent repression of the working class and all its organisations, and the takeover of the state and society by a party who want to sacrifice everything to their idea of the nation. Often this 'nation' is defined by race, and racism is a common tool of fascist organising. But at its heart is a cult of the state, and violent action to 'renew' it. Fascism differs from other dictatorships in not just relying on the violence of the police and army but in creating its own force to permeate and terrorise society. Fascists are used by the ruling classes, or enter in alliances with them, but they are not always controlled by them: fascist movements have their own agenda.*

*Anarchists are inevitably anti-fascists, but our anti-fascism does not see fascism as 'bad government' and ask 'good government' to save us. Fascism is just the worst government and to it we oppose class struggle, human liberation, and physical opposition. As the anarchists of Mujeres Libres (Free Women) put in in 1936:*

*To be an antifascist is too little; one is an antifascist because one is already something else. We have an affirmation to set up against this negation ... the rational organisation of life on the basis of work, equality and social justice. If it weren't for this, anti-fascism would be, for us, a meaningless word.*

*Fascism is adaptable – anything which will bring it closer to power can be rationalised. While some still try to be stormtroopers and carry on with birthday parties for Hitler, others have tried to pass themselves off as simple 'nationalists' and 'democrats'. These try to turn the anger of one section of the dispossessed against another with 'race problems' and 'immigration problems'. In this they are aided by the media and other political parties: whether they try to exploit it or 'defuse' it, none of them can point out the real problem – the boss problem.*

*Anarchists don't assume people should surrender control of their lives to leaders. We don't need employers. We want to live in a free world, not be imprisoned in one carved up into states, races, or markets. Beating fascism is a vital part of this fight for freedom. Read on to see how it can be done...*

## Survival rules

- (i) Never leave anyone behind.
- (ii) Never talk to the police. If arrested don't make a statement. You can almost guarantee they will say 'your friends have told us x,y,z so you might as well admit your part'. Say nothing. Nobody talks: everybody walks!



- (iii) It is better to do one serious thing then get right away from the area and live to fight another day.
  - (iv) Empty your pockets in the morning. If arrested while carrying a bit of dope, a small penknife or an address book your life can get much more complicated. Carry enough cash to get taxis in an emergency.
  - (v) Keep yourself fit, and sober.
  - (vi) Four people who know what they are doing can be much more effective than four hundred useless paper-sellers. So, try to find a small group of people you can trust not to run away or blab when things get heavy, and stick with them.
  - (vii) Try to prepare in advance – tactics, local geography, emergency phone numbers, etc. As Joe Thomas used to say ‘...the best spontaneous revolutionary actions are always in fact well planned beforehand’!
- From *Bash the Fash*

### Fascism

Fascism is a populist, collectivist and statist movement opposed to ‘monopoly’ capitalism and communism. Although fascism recruits from all social classes it attracts mainly the middle classes since it appears to offer an ‘alternative to bolshevism’ while permitting them to maintain their interests by establishing themselves as the Third Force between multinational and state capitalism.

Fascism feeds on dissatisfaction, rancour, exaggerated nationalism, anti-communism and racial prejudice: all traits which flourish in times of political and social insecurity.

Fascism has produced no rational system of ideas and has special appeal to those who lack the critical ability to bring together all the relevant facts and factors when assessing a situation and their own emotions; people who either through habit or inertia have become totally dependent on others for their opinions and who find uncritical obedience to authority both comfortable and advantageous.

From Stuart Christie, *Stefano Delle Chiaie: Portrait of a ‘Black’ Terrorist*

### Spontaneous anti-fascism

A substantial group of rebellious and anti-authoritarian young people is attracted to militant anti-fascism. The essence of this spontaneous anti-fascism certainly isn’t an elaborated critique of fascist theories or a detailed understanding of the actual history of the fascist movement. It’s more of a gut level rejection of the traditional fascist notions: who’s superior and who’s inferior; what constitutes a good life and what’s corrupt. Fascists want a society and culture restricted to those they define as superior people. We don’t. They want discipline and order. We want autonomy and creativity. Their goal is an idealized, basically mythical past, we want a totally different future. They line up behind maximum leaders; we want a critical and conscious rank and file.

Don Hamerquist in *Confronting Fascism: Discussion Documents for a Militant Movement*

*Italy was the birthplace of fascism with its theory of ‘national rebirth’ and its practice of destroying working class organisations, while relying on the state to protect it from any backlash. Eventually the Italian ruling class handed Mussolini power after the so-called ‘March on Rome’, 28 October 1922. Even before this, Anarchists were in the forefront of the antifascist resistance, as shown here.*

### The Anarchists against Italian Fascism

In the wake of the First World War (in which Italy was a participant from 1915, and in which she lost hundreds of thousands of men) Italy was ushered into a period of acute social tension and struggle... strikes, agitation, campaigns against the cost of living, endless popular demonstrations were the keynote to the years 1919-20, culminating in the seizure of very many factories in September 1920. The strongest organisation on the left was the Socialist Party; it also controlled the largest trade union confederation (The CGIL) and, in *Avanti!* had the most widely read opposition newspaper. But the Socialist movement was rent by a deep internal division between reformists (the moderate wing) and the maximalists (the more belligerent one). Occupying second position on the left was the Anarchist movement, then largely organised within the *Unione Anarchica Italiana*, which, from 1920 to 1922, had its own daily paper in *Umanita Nuova*, with sales of 50,000. Anarchist groups, the bulk of their members drawn from among proletarians were to be found in one degree or another throughout Italy. In considerable areas the anarchists’ influence was equal to or greater than that of the socialists. At any rate, thanks to the overwhelmingly anarchist influences in the revolutionary syndicates of the *Unione Sindacale Italiana* (which, in 1920, had almost half a million members and, in Armando Borghi, an anarchist for its secretary), the anarchists were the pacesetters in class struggles, union disputes, the campaign of solidarity with revolutionary Russia... agitating specifically for revolutionary remedies.

It was, consequently, obvious that when (because of the timidity of the Socialists) the factory occupations failed and the movement entered its great crisis, the anarchists would be the first to be hit by the repression of the state and the employers.

By October 1920 Errico Malatesta, Armando Borghi and many other comrades had been arrested and flung into prison for months on end, only to be discharged: meanwhile the state had had them out of its hair for a considerable period.

It was against this background of anti-proletarian, counter-revolutionary reaction that fascism evolved. It was constituted as a movement in 1919 on the basis of an ambiguous programme embracing conservative aims with vaguely socialistic ones (it should not be forgotten that only 5 years before, Benito Mussolini had been a national leader of the Socialist Party and director of its newspaper, *Avanti!*) In a short time, however, the fascists provided clear evidence of their true leanings. They aligned themselves with the factory owners and agrarian magnates against the workers, their organisations, aspirations and struggles. Fascist gangs stormed the premises of socialists and anarchists, ransacking union locals, wounding and murdering the more combative militants. Fascist activity became more and more widespread. They were ferried to their orgies of destruction and death aboard



trucks belonging to the Carabinieri, sometimes there were even Carabinieri along with them... the same Carabinieri whose official duty it was to 'maintain order' and 'uphold the law'. Lined up behind them was a large part of the employer class, resolved to take their revenge for the 'great fear' struck into them by the revolutionary proletarian upheavals of the struggles of the years 1919 to 1920.

In reply to fascist violence, the anarchists issued a summons to direct action, to prompt retaliatory violence. Malatesta and other militants were clear on the vital necessity of not allowing to pass unanswered the attacks of fascists backed or at least tolerated by the state; they also discerned the class meaning and authoritarian import of the rising wave of fascist violence and the perils implicit in the socialists' attitude. For different reasons, both the Socialists and the Communists (a Communist Party came into being in January 1921 as a minority breakaway from the Socialist Party) rejected the anarchists' line and (this is especially true of the Socialists) opted instead to work towards a 'non-aggression pact' with the fascists; such a pact was indeed signed in the summer of 1921. Together, the signatories undertook to eschew the use of violence, etc., etc. What followed was clearly foreseeable. The Socialists honoured the pacts while the fascists continued, and, indeed, escalated their violence. However, whereas the Socialists' leadership clung to activities within the law, many rank and file Socialist militants, Communists, and militants of the Left broadly speaking enlisted in the *Arditi del Popolo* movement to offer proletarian violence by way of reply to the violence of the fascists. The *Arditi del Popolo* represented what was almost a spontaneous movement; in many areas, the movement was promoted by the anarchists who looked forward to all the forces of the Left cooperating as one in the struggle. In many places (Sarzana and Parma are merely the most celebrated) fascist attacks were repulsed successfully and the fascists' accession to power rendered more difficult. However, at the end of 1922 Mussolini was called by the King to head the government and within 4 years all opposition to him had been proscribed, parliament dissolved and the entire press subjected to prior censorship of its copy. This signalled the triumph of the dictatorship, clandestine resistance to which had never been lacking: that resistance, initiated in 1919 and which ended in 1945 with the expulsion of Nazi troops (Mussolini's regime having collapsed in July 1943) had seen anarchists play an important role, not least numerically.

All of the forces and parties which had more or less fought against fascism have shared power from 1945 to the present day [1981], capitalising on their 'antifascist' credentials as a weapon in their political campaigns. This is particularly true of the Communists, who, in organisational terms, were the largest of the antifascist groupings. By contrast, the anarchists have of course stood outside of, and opposed to these campaigns: furthermore they have, in other forms, persisted with their struggles against exploitation, injustice, capitalism, the Church, etc. At endless antifascist commemorations, everyone has received a mention (even the maverick Christian democrat or Carabiniere who resisted fascism)... everyone, that is, except the anarchists. Our contribution to the struggle against fascism – a contribution paid in terms of ideas, human lives, campaigning, suffering and imprisonment – has (logically enough) been ignored. [...]

The reader (even the English reader) will have small difficulty in grasping the intimate correspondence between individual behaviour and the social aims of the anarchists immersed in the antifascist struggle. There are two points which I must make: first, that, in participating in countless armed actions against the fascist gangs first and later against the repressive apparatus of the fascist state, and, later still, against Nazi troops, the Italian anarchists (illuminated after 1936 by the tragic experience of Spain where several hundred Italian activists had been involved) always shunned the mentality of militarism and hierarchy and continually emphasised even by their deportment their unstinting libertarian, anti-authoritarian methodology. Secondly, in their use and propagandisation of the use of violence, whether in its collective guise of armed revolt or in its individual guise of tyrannicide, the anarchists were, on the whole, as vehement in their denunciations of Reformist hesitancy and in their encouragement to workers to employ retaliatory violence as they were careful not to let themselves go further than necessary, and restricted their own role to that of 'avengers' and let it go at that. Indeed, for the anarchists, the struggle against fascism was (albeit a struggle with characteristics peculiar to itself) pursued from the outset as part of a broader revolutionary undertaking, aimed at realising libertarian socialism and the maximum liberty possible. Thus it was a struggle that could not be called off – and it has not been called off.

Paolo Finzi

Milan, June 1981

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*The veteran Italian Anarchist militant Malatesta had harsh words for the politicians who encouraged fascism, and harsher ones for those who had dissuaded the Italian workers from defending themselves, the only thing that might have prevented their defeat. This defeat was huge, despite Malatesta's mistake in thinking 'deep down, nothing will have changed'.*

### **Mussolini in Power**

Fascism has finally acceded to government, the culmination of a protracted series of crimes.

And Mussolini, the *Duce*, so to describe him, has opened by treating parliamentary deputies the way an insolent master would treat stupid, lazy servants.

Parliament, which should have been 'the champion of freedom', has demonstrated what it is worth.

This leaves us utterly unmoved. There is nothing to choose between a braggart spluttering and threatening because he feels safe and an acolyte of cowards who seems to wallow in his abjection. Let us note only – and not without a feeling of shame – what sort of folk is it that lord it over us and from whose yoke we have not managed to free ourselves.

But what are the meaning and the implications, the likely outcome of this new way of achieving power in the king's name and service, violating the constitution that the King had pledged himself to honour and defend?

Aside from the would-be Napoleonic poses which are in fact only comic opera posturing,



if not the acts of bandit-chiefs, it is our belief that, deep down, nothing will have changed, except that for a while there will be increased police crackdown on subversives and workers. A replay of Crispi and Pelloux. The same old story of poacher-turned-gamekeeper!

Threatened by the rising tide of the proletariat and unable to solve the pressing problems of the war, powerless to defend itself by the usual means of law-abiding repression, the bourgeoisie saw that all was lost and would have been delighted to salute some military figure declaring himself dictator and drowning any attempt at rescue in a bloodbath. But just at that point, in the period right after the war, things were too dangerous and he might have triggered revolution instead of exorcising it. Anyway, no redeemer-general was forthcoming, or at least only parodies of one stepped forward. Instead, up popped the adventurers who, having been unable to discover enough scope for their ambition and appetites in the ranks of subversives, thought to play upon the fears of the bourgeoisie by offering it, for a fair recompense, the assistance of irregular forces which, confident of impunity, could let loose at the workers without directly compromising the presumed beneficiaries of the violence carried out. And the bourgeoisie welcomed, solicited and paid for such assistance: the government proper, or at least some of the agents of the government, thought to supply them with weapons, to help them when they looked like coming off worst in an attack and guarantee that they would be unpunished and pre-emptively disarm the would-be victims of the assault.

The workers did not know how to answer violence with violence because they have been educated to believe in the law and because, even when every illusion had been banished and the arson attacks and murders were proliferating under the kindly gaze of the authorities, the men in whom they trusted preached to them about patience, calm, and the beauty and wisdom of letting themselves be beaten 'heroically' without fighting back – and so they were beaten and offended in their most prized possessions, persons, dignity and sensibilities.

Maybe, once all the workers' institutions had been destroyed, their organisations scattered, their most outstanding and supposedly dangerous figures killed off or imprisoned or indeed reduced to powerlessness, the bourgeoisie and the government would have liked to apply the brakes to the new praetorians who were now entertaining the ambition of becoming the masters of those who formerly they had served. But by then it was too late. By then the fascists were too strong and bent upon charging an exorbitant price for services rendered. And pay the bourgeoisie will, and will of course try to recoup its losses at the proletariat's expense.

Upshot: increased poverty, increased oppression.

As for us, we can only carry on with our fight, as full of belief and enthusiasm as ever.

We know that our path is strewn with tribulations, but we have knowingly and willingly chosen it and we have no reason to quit it. All who have any sense of dignity and human decency and who wish to devote themselves to the struggle for the good of all know that they have to be ready to face all sorts of disappointments, pain and sacrifice.

Since there has never been any shortage of those who let themselves be dazzled by shows of strength and who always harbour a secret admiration for the winner, there are also

subversives who say that 'the fascists have taught us how one makes a revolution.'

No, the fascists have taught us precisely nothing.

They have made their revolution, if we must describe it as such, with permission from their superiors and in the service of their betters.

Betrayal of one's friends, reneging daily on the ideas one professed just the day before, should that be to one's advantage, placing oneself in the service of the bosses, seeking reassurances as to the acquiescence of the political and judicial authorities, having one's opponents disarmed by the carabinieri in order to have them attacked later by odds of ten to one, military drilling that one need not hide, indeed, taking delivery of arms, transport and military accoutrements from the government, and then to receive the king's summons and place oneself under God's protection... none of this is clothing that we could or would want to steal. And there is nothing here that we had not predicted would come to pass on the day that the bourgeoisie felt that it was seriously threatened.

Instead, the advent of fascism should be a lesson to the constitutional Socialists who used to think – and alas! – think still, that the bourgeoisie can be defeated by the votes of a half of the electorate plus one and who refused to believe us when we told them that if ever they achieved a majority in parliament and sought – to borrow an absurd hypothesis – to realise socialism through parliament, they would be booted off their seats!

Errico Malatesta, *Umanità Nova*, 25 November 1922

### In the Name of Truth

During the period of the factory occupations, I never ceased preaching the need to spread the movement and raced from one plant to another to urge resistance. I told the workers: 'If you quit the factories of which you are today the masters, you'll be back later like slaves, like dogs, your tails between your legs, and you will fall back into the state of wretchedness and abjection from which you have managed to extricate yourselves.'

The dominant theme in all my speeches was this: 'Act immediately or the bourgeoisie will make you pay with tears of blood for what you will have done.'

At the last meeting that it was possible to hold in Rome – when fascism was on the verge of success – in front of a crowd of some 50,000, Enrico Ferri, speaking on the Socialists' behalf, urged them to remain calm and confident, to wait for times to be right, all of it in the name of 'inevitable evolution' of the 'laws of History', etc. Whereas I said: Act, resist, meet violence with violence, or tomorrow... It will be too late.

Errico Malatesta, *Pensiero e Volontà*, 1 October 1926

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*The victory of fascism divided Italian communities abroad. Even among anti-fascist exiles, there was no agreement on the best way to defeat fascism. Anarchists called for direct action, organised working class resistance, and sometimes paid dearly. The historian Cresciani, in The proletarian migrants: fascism and Italian anarchists in Australia, first published in The Australian Quarterly (March 1979) quotes the motivation of one of the anarchist militants:*



### [Direct Action]

This philosophy of direct action, incessantly preached and practised by Italian anarchists, starkly differentiated them from the other Italian political groups [in Australia] who, like the Communists, devoted themselves to organisation or who, like the more respectable Socialists of the *Concentrazione Antifascista dell'Oceania*, concentrated their effort on commemorations of past victories and defeats. Indeed, it was this recourse to action which made the anarchists so popular and attracted to them such a large following. As [Francesco] Carmagnola said in 1930, 'we must remember our martyrs not only with speeches and flowers, but with guns, not like slaves, but like men. We must not celebrate, but avenge. A people that does not fight violence by means of violence, that bends its knees and cowardly tolerates the impositions of infamous mercenaries, is unworthy of such a name'.

*In Germany, Hitler's NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party or Nazis) followed the same path as Mussolini's Blackshirts: trying to beat the left off the streets and calling for national renewal (ie power for them). In an extract from Nationalism and Culture (1938), the German anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker points out their shared technique of making a cult of the state – one which demanded sacrifice to its power. He also examines the features of modern society which promote dependence on 'saviours'.*

### Nationalism and Fascism

The so-called 'state concept of fascism' put in an appearance only after *Il Duce* had attained power. Until then the fascist movement glittered in all the colors of the rainbow as, not so long ago, did National Socialism in Germany. It really had no definite character. Its ideology was a motley mixture of intellectual elements from all sorts of sources. What gave it power was the brutality of its methods. Its reckless violence could have no regard for the opinions of others just because it had none of its own. What the state still lacked of being a perfect prison the fascist dictatorship has given it in abundance. Mussolini's liberal clamor stopped immediately as soon as the dictator had the state power in Italy firmly in his hands. Viewing Mussolini's rapid change of opinion about the meaning of the state one involuntarily remembers the expression of the youthful Marx: 'No man fights against freedom; at the most he fights against the freedom of others. Every kind of freedom has, therefore, always existed; sometimes as special privilege, at other times as general right.'

Mussolini has in fact made of freedom a privilege for himself, and to do this has brought about the most brutal suppression of all others; for freedom which tries to replace man's responsibility towards his fellow men by the senseless dictum of authority is sheer willfulness and a denial of all justice and all humanity. But even despotism needs to justify itself to the people whom it violates. To meet this necessity the state concept of fascism was born.

[...] The purpose of the fascist state-philosopher is quite clear. If for Hegel the state was 'God on earth,' then Gentile would like to raise it to the position of the eternal and *only* God, who will endure no other gods above him, or even beside him, and absolutely

dominates every field of human thought and human activity. This is the last word of a trend of political thought which in its abstract extreme loses sight of everything human and has concern for the individual only in so far as he serves as a sacrifice to be thrown into the glowing arms of the insatiable Moloch. Modern nationalism is only will-toward-the-state-at-any-price and complete absorption of man in the higher ends of power. It is of the utmost significance that modern nationalism does not spring from love towards one's own country or one's own people. On the contrary, it has its roots in the ambitious plans of a minority lusting for dictatorship and determined to impose upon the people a certain form of the state, even though this be entirely contrary to the will of the majority. Blind belief in the magic power of a national dictatorship is to replace for man the love of home and the feeling of the spiritual culture of his time; love of fellow man is to be crushed by 'the greatness of the state,' for which individuals are to serve as fodder. [...]

The influence of the liberal ideas of the last century had at least brought it about that even the conservative elements in society were convinced that the state existed for the citizens. Fascism, however, announces with brutal frankness that the purpose of the individual consists in being useful to the state. 'Everything for the state, nothing outside of the state, nothing against the state!' as Mussolini has expressed it. This is the last word of a nationalist metaphysics which in the fascist movements of the present has assumed a frightfully concrete form. While this has always been the hidden meaning of all nationalist theories, it has now become their clearly expressed aim. That they have so definitely outlined this aim is the only merit of its present representatives, who in Italy, and even more in Germany, are so dearly loved and so freely supported by the owners of the capitalistic economic system – because they have been so subservient to the new monopoly capitalism and have with all their power furthered its plans for the erection of a system of industrial serfdom.

For along with the principles of political liberalism the ideas of economic liberalism are also to be abrogated. Just as the political fascism of today tries to preach to man the new gospel that he can claim a right to live only in so far as he serves as raw material for the state, so also the modern industrial fascism tries to demonstrate to the world that industry does not exist for man, but man for industry, and that he exists merely to be useful to it. If fascism has assumed in Germany its most frightful and inhuman forms, this is largely the result of the barbaric ideas of German economic theoreticians and leading industrialists who have, so to speak, shown that fascism is the road. German captains of industry of world-wide fame, like Hugo Stinnes, Fritz Thyssen, Ernst von Borsig and many others, have by the brutal frankness of their opinions again furnished a proof into what abysses of cold contempt of humanity the human spirit can sink itself when it has abandoned all social feeling and deals with living men as if they were dead ciphers. [...]

We now observe the same [religious] phenomenon in Germany, where nationalism in an astonishingly short time developed into a gigantic movement and imbued millions of men with a blind ecstasy, wherein with faithful ardor they hoped for the coming of the Third Reich, expecting, from a man who was totally unknown a few years ago, and had up to then given not the slightest proof of any creative capacity, that he would end all their distress.



This movement also is in the last analysis but an instrument for the acquisition of political power by a small caste. For retrieving the position they had lost after the war every means was proper to them by which they might hope 'cleverly to hide the final goal,' as the cunning Bonaparte had liked to put it. [...]

One might calmly overlook this blind religious fervor, which in its childish helplessness seems almost harmless; but this apparent harmlessness disappears immediately when the fanaticism of the enthusiasts serves the mighty and the power-seeking as a tool for their secret plans. For this deluded faith of the immature, fed from the hidden sources of religious feeling, is urged into wild frenzy and forged into a weapon of irresistible power, clearing the way for every evil. Do not tell us that it is the frightful material need of our day which is alone responsible for this mass delusion, robbing men weakened by long years of misery of their reasoning power and making them trust anyone who feeds their hungry longing with alluring promises. The war frenzy of 1914, which set the whole world into a crazy whirl and made men inaccessible to all appeals of reason, was released at a time when the people were materially much better off and the spectre of economic insecurity was not haunting them all the time. This proves that these phenomena cannot be explained solely on economic grounds, and that in the subconsciousness of men there are, hidden forces which cannot be grasped logically. It is the religious urge which still lives in men today, although the forms of faith have changed. The Crusaders' cry, 'God wills it!' would hardly raise an echo in Europe today, but there are still millions of men who are ready for anything *if the nation wills it!* Religious feeling has assumed political forms, and the political man today confronts the natural man just as antagonistically as did the man of past centuries who was held in the grip of the church's dogmatism.

By itself the mass delusion of the faithful would be rather unimportant; it always delves among the springs of the miraculous and is little inclined toward practical considerations. But the purposes of those to whom this delusion serves as means to an end are more important, even though in the whirl of mass events their secret motives are not generally recognized. And here lies the danger. The absolute despot of past times might claim to have his power by the grace of God, but the consequences of his acts always reacted on his own person; for before the world his name had to cover everything, both right and wrong, since his will was highest law. But under cover of the nation everything can be hid. The national flag covers every injustice, every inhumanity, every lie, every outrage, every crime. The collective responsibility of the nation kills the sense of justice of the individual and brings man to the point where he overlooks injustice done; where, indeed, it may appear to him a meritorious act if committed in the interest of the nation.

'And the idea of the nation,' says the Indian poet-philosopher, Tagore, 'is one of the most powerful anaesthetics that man has ever invented. Under the influence of its fumes the whole people can carry out its systematic program of the most virulent self-seeking without being the least aware of its moral perversion – in fact, feeling dangerously resentful when it is pointed out.' [Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism*, New York, 1917, p. 57.]

Tagore called the nation 'organized selfishness.' The term is well chosen, but we must not

forget that we are always dealing with the organized selfishness of privileged minorities which hide behind the skirts of the nation, hide behind the credulity of the masses. We speak of national interests, national capital, national spheres of interest, national honor, and national spirit; but we forget that behind all this there are hidden merely the selfish interests of power-loving politicians and money loving business men for whom the nation is a convenient cover to hide their personal greed and their schemes for political power from the eyes of the world.[...]

The growth of technology at the expense of human personality, and especially the fatalistic submission with which the great majority surrender to this condition, is the reason why the desire for freedom is less alive among men today and has with many of them given place completely to a desire for economic security. This phenomenon need not appear so strange, for our whole evolution has reached a stage where nearly every man is either ruler or ruled; sometimes he is both. By this the attitude of dependence has been greatly strengthened, for a truly free man does not like to play the part of either the ruler or the ruled. He is, above all, concerned with making his inner values and personal powers effective in such a way as to permit him to use his own judgment in all affairs and to be independent in action. Constant tutelage of our acting and thinking has made us weak and irresponsible; hence, the continued cry for the strong man who is to put an end to our distress. This call for a dictator is not a sign of strength, but a proof of inner lack of assurance and of weakness, even though those who utter it earnestly try to give the appearance of resolution. What man most lacks he most desires. When one feels himself weak he seeks salvation from another's strength; when one is cowardly or too timid to move one's own hands for the forging of one's fate, one entrusts it to another. How right was Seume when he said: 'The nation which can only be saved by one man and wants to be saved that way deserves a whipping!'[...]

It is necessary to free man from the curse of power, from the cannibalism of exploitation, in order to release in him those creative forces which can continually give his life new meaning. Power degrades man into a dead part of a machine set in motion by a superior will. Culture makes him the master and builder of his own destiny and deepens in him that feeling of communion from which everything great is born. Man's liberation from the organized force of the state and the narrow bondage of the nation is the beginning of a new humanity, which feels its wings grow in freedom and finds its strength in the community.

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*German anarchists did not restrict themselves to writing very big books. Although a smaller section of the working class movement than in Italy, the German anarcho-syndicalists did their share of agitation – and fighting – against the Nazi threat. These extracts come from a 1932 pamphlet called Via Hildburghausen to the Third Reich! National Socialism and the working class, by HW Gerhard (pen name of Dr. Gerhard Wartenberg, 1904-1942 who died in Sachsenhausen concentration camp.) Written just months before the Nazis came to power, the title is an obscure joke about Hitler's efforts to become a German citizen so he could stand for election. What is not obscure is the call for a militant working class response to defeat the Nazis on the streets.*



## Gerhard on National-Socialism

### The Nazis' Political and Economic Goals

The National Socialists' political aims have seen some large changes in some points, but in one matter their programme has remained consistent: approaching society's problems with an *authoritarian attitude* leading to submission, discipline, and blind obedience. Of course the old monarchy seems to them preferable to the Republic, and they are especially fond of the old *army* that they must be modelling themselves on, seeing as they would like to drive us to war again. Those who think the old militarism is something they had gotten over should read Hitler's opinion of the old army:

'The goodness inside the old Germany army was far superior to any other institution's ... there are no armies whose purpose is to keep the peace, only to wage war successfully. This was what was great with the old army, that at least in this organism, regardless of any talk in the Reichstag, the world was seen for what it is and always will be.' (*National Socialist Monthly* 1930, Nr.3)

Militarism, authority as world view – this is what National Socialism is. Even if humanity has been developing away from authority toward greater individual freedom in society, Hitler's slogan is back, back:

'There can never be a system that is based on anything other than authority downwards and responsibility upwards, otherwise all leadership is impossible and we end up with anarchist-bolshevik circumstances.'

This is what the Nazi leader said in his conversation with Otto Strasser. But maybe these anarchist-bolshevik circumstances are still better than the Third Reich? This is a question that does not seem to have occurred to Herr Hitler since he considers himself one of the 'new ruling class' who are meant to rule the workers, who only want 'bread and games'. But Hitler is very wrong in this; the workers will express their opinions on the Third Reich yet. [...]

*The Nazis' enmity of the working class movement is real.* We have further seen that the Nazis have done everything to be considered ready to govern. This means, their striving for power, *their striving for a dictatorship over society is also real.* Finally we have seen that they have sacrificed their supposed socialist and nationalist aims, that they have adapted themselves to *bourgeois* society, i.e. *these aims were only show.*

We can conclude that the Third Reich means nothing more than a dictatorship to suppress the workers. We call such a dictatorship *fascism*, which is the acknowledged ideal of the Nazis. As Frick said:

'Just like Mussolini wiped out the Marxists in Italy, we must obtain this too via dictatorship and terror.'

'Marxism' in the National Socialist sense means of course the general workers' movement, be it unions, associations, parties or whatever, it does not need to involve any Marxist world views, it may be reformist or, like in Spain and Italy, syndicalist – fascism attacks all. [...]

## The National Socialist Terror

Despite all social slogans, the National Socialists might never had been able to grow into a party of six million if they hadn't approached their opponents with the weapons of the worst murderous terror. As it says in the *National Socialist Monthly* 1930 No.1:

'The helplessness of the bourgeois parties in the face of the Marxist advance expressed itself not only in their lack of ideas, but also in their lack of bravery to challenge the Marxist marches with their own, and protect themselves when necessary against attempts at terror.'

This is obviously strongly exaggerated, but there is a kernel of truth: The bourgeoisie was no longer in any position to play 'Master of the House' as they used to, the workers' movement could not be just gotten rid of by now – so a party was called for that used social slogans in their propaganda – and *terror* in the struggle.

It has been estimated that over the last few years in Germany, a few hundred people of the various parties have been victim of the Nazi-terror, the number of injured goes up into the thousands. The *Alarm* concludes that from April to July 1930, 21 people were killed at the hands of Nazi gangs and over 200 were seriously injured. [...]

'Cologne, 22nd January. A serious political crime occurred last night in the Palantzer Street in the suburb of Suelz. A number of Communists that were having a conversation on the street were hit by some passing National Socialists without any provocation. The Communists defended themselves. During the course of the punch up the National Socialists fired many revolver shots. One shot killed the mechanic W. Höschel, who belongs to the Communist Party. He leaves four underage children...'

Of course the terrorised working class also resorts to acts of revenge, which you can't blame it for. Therefore it's tedious to establish guilt in individual cases. The crux is that these incidents did not occur on such a level before 1929, meaning that they are *directly connected with the rise of the NSDAP.* [...]

Calling the police against National Socialist terror misses the mark, because the police force is riddled itself with swastika-bearers, also the police are not deployed as they could be by the State because the State itself is eying up the swastika-bearers. [...] Beyond the two Nazi paradises of Thuringia and Braunschweig there are many Nazis in the police and army. [...] We as revolutionary workers must conclude from this, that the police and army, despite often being portrayed as 'Republican', cannot lead any kind of struggle against fascism. This we must do ourselves. [...]

### Republican Fascism

The democratic parties point out at every opportunity that they reject National Socialism, and want to govern with liberal guidelines. But it can immediately be proven that Brüning's government and the all the politics of the middle parties lead to the fact that they want to wash their furs without making them wet, that they would rather like to get rid of the Nazis but shy away from hurting them in any way, even ending up directly or indirectly giving them an advantage. [...]

*The emergency measures of the 28th March 1931 indicate a large step onto this disastrous course.* It is supposed to be against political rioting and fights. According to it, even



private assemblies have to be registered with the police, demonstrations of course anyway. Like in Wilhelm's times, assemblies are supervised by the police again, and can of course be dispersed by them. Offences carry 3 months prison. Just as tough sentences are threatened for owners of weapons, stickers, flyers etc. Organisations can be dissolved, newspapers banned, published materials confiscated. Nearly all the small 'freedoms' of the Weimar constitution are abolished through this, and not by any decision of the Reichstag, but by a signature from the administrative bodies, after they cleverly waited for the Reichstag to be adjourned.

Of course these measures are not directed at the National Socialists and their friends, but primarily against the revolutionary proletariat. To prove this we may point to the methods of the courts mentioned above, who have to deal with the measures. Already in the first days some workers received very tough sentences just for attempting to demonstrate and post notices.

Beating down, disarming the workers, the only anti-fascist force, cultural reaction of the worst kind, hidden bias toward and toleration of the Nazis in administrative bodies, giving in to their terror, taking on their demands – these are the stages leading to fascism that we are being taken on. Whether the men working from the background will push Hitler and Goebbels to the forefront, or if they continue to leave the governing of a fascist Germany to the so-called democratic parties is not the main issue here. The most important issue is whether the workers succeed in maintaining and expanding their few achievements against the charge of the unified reaction, or whether they will lose all their rights. This is a struggle in which every government will be *against* them, whatever their name. In this struggle, the working class depends always only on its own strength.

### What is National Socialism?

The National Socialists claim that their party is a movement made up of people from all walks of life, aimed at renewing Germany. They may be correct in this statement to a certain degree, that all classes are represented by them. There are also workers amongst them. Disappointed, bitter, unemployed people that hope to find some kind of existence in the storm troops, etc. may fill the ranks of the National Socialist workers. But do not overestimate these numbers! Because it must be low after everything. So far during the elections, the workers' parties have kept their votes. The relationship between the Nazis and workers becomes even more obvious looking at some figures from elections to works councils. Amongst the traffic workers of Hamburg, the Nazis got a whole 200 votes from 6225 workers, in the Hochbahn 187 from 1803 votes. At Brinkmann and Mergell in Hamburg the Nazis received only 50 from over 1000 votes. [...]

While these examples show that the Nazis' influence amongst the workers and working class is minimal, you must further consider that in most workplaces a Nazi faction was not even formed, due to a lack of the necessary forces. Furthermore, we have not heard anything about National Socialist unions so far, even though the National Socialists are creating independent organisations in all areas. This gives us quite an insight. Under these circumstances you can hardly speak of a National Socialist *workers'* movement. In the Hitler

party, there are no more workers than in any other bourgeois party. Even in these there are occasional workers and employees, without any reduction in the reactionary nature of these parties. [...]

A nobleman from Pommern, Major a.D.v. Bredow, even wants to mobilise all aristocratic colleagues to end the 'kaiser-less, terrible times'. He asked with indignation whether during this struggle:

'a part of the aristocracy wants to stand by idly and not acknowledge the Steel Helmets' and National Socialists' efforts for liberation? The men in this movement are our fighting units against the inner enemy...'

After all this, the number of aristocrats standing idly by cannot be so big, they are nearly all already in the NSDAP or a similar organisation. The proletariat is unfortunately not so eager to defend their rights...

Now you could assume that the princes and noblemen are just hanger-ons in the party and not that welcome. But those who know that all these people are treated with much respect and often hold leadership positions, especially in the SA, will not believe this anymore. But the position of the NSDAP toward the high society becomes especially obvious in the attempt by the *Völkische Beobachter* [People's Observer] to portray the Prince August Wilhelm as a 'worker':

'The professor is as good a worker as the smith, the salesman as the railway worker. And so the son of a prince too, who seeks intellectual activity, in politics or elsewhere, can count himself amongst the workers.'

*The NSDAP as the protective guard of the princes and noblemen – this is the reality.* And such activities as cutting coupons, profiting from interest rates, cutting profits, staying in spas etc., these are of course working. Otherwise the Hitler party would not count as many industrialists and capitalists amongst their friends. [...]

We have spoken of the workers, the farmers, the aristocratic reactionaries and the industrialists so far. Seeing as the workers that are with the Nazis are only some disappointed and angry workers or those who have always been reactionary, and the other classes never could form a mass Party like the Nazis are, the success of this Party would not be explained with what has been said so far. Incidentally, the interests and the traditional views of these classes are so divergent that it would be hard to create a unified movement. Something that unites them is missing. This is offered by the *middle class*, especially the independent craftsmen and retailers, but also the employees, civil servants, members of the free trades etc. We do not want to underestimate the social importance of this class. Against 14.4 million workers, we have, according to the census of 1925, 5.5 million self employed people in Germany, of which 90 percent can be considered petty bourgeois or small holders respectively, as well as 5.3 million employees and civil servants. This bourgeois middle class ended up in the movement because they are being crushed between the proletariat and corporate capital.

We should talk first about the urban middle class. There used to be many stages between the simple craftsman and the large manufacturer. Today, there are only small workshops



and one corporation in most fields. You used to be able to buy any product in many different styles and price categories, today there are a few 'brands' whose price is pre-determined. There used to be many stages between the small corner shop and the department store in the City Centre. Now there are department stores and set price shops in all parts of the city and they belong to one corporation. Today, many factories open their own shops and maintain a far reaching sales and credit system. House ownership has been firstly concentrated in the hands of large housing corporations and secondly reduced in profit possibilities through the economy. Communal workshops, consumer co-operatives, book clubs, all forms of collective organisation take away existence potential from the petty bourgeois. The bread factory is slowly destroying the baker, frozen meat and the large slaughterhouses turn the butcher into merely a meat retailer, the milk yards and large milking factories work in the same direction, the landlords become dependent on the breweries. Economic life is more and more organised either by monopolies or collectives, the niche for the small shop owners and craftsmen is disappearing. Such a sinking class tends to adopt radical teachings, to fight with the National Socialists against the banks, the department stores, and even to adopt a muddled 'socialism'.

The situation is similar in rural areas. The agrarian crisis let anti-Semitic ideas and ideas of struggling against the Republican State arise amongst the farmers. They even went as far as to commit bomb attacks, storm the financial institutions, to prevent auctions with force. This tense atmosphere in the German countryside is of course a rich ground for National Socialism. [...]

### Fighting Fascism

If the proletariat does not want to lose all its rights, like during the time of the Socialist Laws, if it does not want to suffer the same fate as our brothers in Italy and other countries, if the workers' movement is to exist at all in future, the proletariat must lead an energetic fight against fascism in its various forms, but especially against National Socialism. As much as we may recognise the class comrade and human in the individual National Socialist worker, employee, farmer or craftsman, we must lead a merciless fight against the movement as a whole, against the Führer, against the organised actions of the Nazis. We have seen in Thuringia and Braunschweig that the working class has been deprived of its rights by the fanatic reactionaries Frick, Franzen and friends, and that even harmless republicans and pacifists were persecuted. This shows us what we are facing when one day the Third Reich crashes in on us in its whole magnificence. Then it will be too late for counter actions, the National Socialists will use the state apparatus for a *ruthless dictatorship against all liberation and socialist endeavours*.

We know that the intellectual leaders of these unfocused, declassed middle classes are the greater industrialists and monarchist reactionaries that also support the propaganda to such an extent. These string pullers are who we need to fight especially, even if they are not so much in the foreground in the daily struggles, like their puppets Hitler, Goebbels, Ley etc.

Unity and energetic struggle in the workplaces, in the employment offices, and everywhere the proletarian masses come together is therefore the first pre-requisite for a victory

over fascism.

But what do we see today? The union bigwigs suffocate all strikes, they let the attack on wages happen without any resistance, the Social Democrats and the central unions still support the half-fascist Brüning government. On the other side the KPD (Communist Party) have a pre fabricated solution for everything, which is: 'Only under leadership of the KPD can the victory be won.' The Party and its satellite groups believe it has the monopoly on proletarian organisation and throws random slogans from Moscow at the working class by the bundle, rather than derive the slogans from the needs and moods of the masses. The RGO drives the workers often into hopeless fights through false reports and deception, without being able to support the strikers. The logical consequence is that in such a difficult time of crisis as now, 90% of all strikes collapse. This is not changed by the untrue reports of success in the communist press either. What else could these misled politics of both parties have as a result, other than discouragement, division and embitterment of the workers?

Us anarcho-syndicalists do not want any reformist politics of toleration, but no adventurist RGO-tactics either. We want unity amongst workers from below, in struggle, in the workplaces, in the employment offices. We want well prepared, concentric led struggles, that are still possible despite crisis and unemployment; struggles that the workers want and lead themselves. But for this, strong, revolutionary, independent unions are necessary that only see the interests of the workers and don't dance to the tunes of some Party bigwigs in the Reichstag or Moscow. These fighting unions are the goal of anarcho-syndicalism. [...]

The unified struggle in the workplace over the economic interests of the workers is of course not enough to beat fascism. Because in the workplace, in the employment offices, in gatherings, the proletariat does not come into contact with the Nazis, especially not with their civil war brigades, the storm troops. The SA works primarily on the streets. These murdering boys' terror is the most dangerous weapon of fascism. We must focus on defeating them especially.

Again, a mass attack on the cowardly SA fellows who usually dare only go for individuals or small groups is called for. And again, we see here the worst divisions. The 'Eisenerne Front' [Iron Front: SPD], called 'the Corrugated Iron Front' or 'Rusty Front' by the people, operates separately from the forces of the KPD and other groups, and vice versa.

Let us remember the Contingent of the Hundred of 1923. Back then, the proletariat stood together in the workplaces generally independent of party orientation, and formed its fighting army, that achieved notable successes in many places, but also sometimes only played military games. Only this unity in the practical defence against fascism can ban this terrible danger for the German proletariat again. Only this unity that must come from below, from the workplaces, employment offices, living areas, can give that fighting power back to the proletariat that it so desperately needs. So away with the special interests of the Parties in the resistance to fascism!

Not empty demonstrations like the Tin Front hold, not desperate actions, individual terror like the Communists carry out in many places, will take the proletariat forward in the



struggle against fascism. Instead, the fight against the SA must take place in a planned, systematic, manner deploying superior masses, without unnecessary soldier games. The principle must be: No provocations, no attacks without reason, but determined persecution of all murdering bandits that have spilt proletarian blood or made themselves unpopular in some other way. No unnecessary armed actions, no unnecessary brushes with the State powers, but legal actions within the framework of self defence. No rash surprise attacks, but thorough observation and surveillance of the enemy. With the systematic use of the proletarian forces it will and it must be possible to push fascism off the streets again and to defeat it.

And if Hitler should attempt another Putsch like in November 1923, what then? What is to be done, if we suddenly find ourselves facing a more or less legal government of Hitlers? Then there can only be one slogan, that also saw success against the Kapp Putsch in 1920: the *General Strike*. A fascist government must be toppled as soon as it takes power, otherwise it anchors itself, conquers the State, and establishes a dictatorship as we have seen in Italy and many other countries. This would mean a time of immeasurable suffering for the revolutionary proletariat. Because of this we need to combat a fascist government as soon as it is created with the strongest weapon of the general strike.

There are many workers that think fascism is unavoidable anyway, so there is no use to fight it, it has to 'run itself into the ground'. Nothing is more wrong or more dangerous. Yes, fascism is a big danger, and no one can say whether a Hitler, Frick or Göring will take over the government in the next few months. But fascism is no undefeatable power. Leon Trotsky has correctly called the fascists 'human dust'. Indeed we have a random mix of farmers, petty bourgeois, former officers, certain small workers' groups and large capitalists facing us, a hopeless and directionless crowd without clear programme or goal, with a meaningless, miserable, slogan ideology, a mess that is only held together by the unprecedented poverty and troubles in foreign affairs. With the first energetic advance by the proletariat, the whole nightmare will fall apart.

The general fascist terror is not a sign of its inner strength, but of its inner weakness; because if National Socialism were strong and creative economically, socially and culturally, it would assert itself without violence. But because it is made up of classes that are falling apart and voiceless, it needs terror to make itself heard at all. Exaggerated terror has always been a sign for inner weakness.

And why should fascism not be defeatable, even before it has 'run itself to the ground'? Just because it is dominant in various countries in Southern and Eastern Europe? But these are mostly agrarian countries with a weak proletariat. Fascism was able to come to power there often after an unsuccessful revolution (Hungary, Italy).

In Germany, we have a strong proletariat experienced in fighting, that has not lost a revolution in the last few years, where the organisations of the proletariat are still strong and unbroken. Fascism was beaten down in Germany already twice since 1918, with much help from the proletariat: the Kapp Putsch in 1920 and the Hitler Putsch in 1923.

Therefore there shouldn't be talk in proletarian circles of the 'inevitability' and 'the running to the ground' of fascism. Let us direct our gaze at Spain, where the heroic fighting

proletariat, led by anarcho-syndicalism, not only toppled Primo de Rivera's fascism in 1930, but also chased away the King and the Jesuits in April 1931. Let us look at Austria, where the proletariat, despite Social Democratic manoeuvres, defeated the Heimwehr fascism in 1930-31, and condemned it to ridiculousness. Why should the German proletariat be incapable of such actions?

Hitler [...] is putting himself forward as a candidate for the Reich presidency. But it would be a dangerous deception to give too much importance to the result of the vote. What is decisive is not the amount of votes for the reactionary Hindenburg or the fascist Hitler, nor the amount of votes for the [Communist] candidate Thaelmann, but the actual fighting power of the proletariat in its daily struggles.

So onwards to a committed and united struggle against the fascist murderous pest! Away with the parties and politicians that sabotage the proletarian unity in fighting from below! This unity from the masses themselves, in action, that is what anarcho-syndicalism is!

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*Four years later the Spanish working class gave a textbook example of how to stop fascism, on the 19th July 1936. Not merely by defeating the rightist-military-fascist coalition on the barricades across half of Spain, but by collectivising land and factories and unleashing the social revolution. Of course, the revolution did not survive the betrayals of the Communist Party and temporising of leading anarchists, but showed what was possible. Buenaventura Durruti, in a famous interview with Pierre Van Paasen of the Toronto Daily Star gives the anarchist view on the limited use that any government would be in the fight against fascism.*

For us it is a question of crushing fascism once and for all. Yes, in spite of government. No government in the world fights fascism to the death. When the bourgeoisie sees power slipping from its grasp it has recourse to fascism to maintain itself. The liberal government in Spain could have rendered the fascist elements powerless long ago. Instead it temporised and compromised and dallied. Even now at this moment, there are men in this government who want to go easy with the rebels. You can never tell, you know – the present government might yet need these rebellious forces to crush the workers' movement...

We know what we want. To us it means nothing that there is a Soviet Union somewhere in the world, for the sake of whose tranquillity the workers of Germany and Spain were sacrificed to fascist barbarism by Stalin. We want the revolution here in Spain, right now, not maybe after the next European war. We are giving Hitler and Mussolini far more worry today with our revolution than the whole Red Army of Russia. We are setting an example to the German and Italian working class how to deal with fascism.

I do not expect any help for a libertarian revolution from any government in the world. Maybe the conflicting interests in the various imperialisms might have some influence on our struggle. That is quite possible. Franco is doing his best to drag Europe into the conflict. He will not hesitate to pitch Germany in against us. But we expect no help, not even from our government in the last analysis.



[Van Paasen interjects: 'You will be sitting on a pile of ruins if you are victorious.']

We have always lived in slums and holes in the wall. We will know how to accommodate ourselves for a time. For you must not forget, we can also build. It is we who built those palaces and cities here in Spain and America and everywhere. We, the workers, can build others to take their place. And better ones. We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth. There is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world, here in our hearts. That world is growing this minute.

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*In the Second World War, official anti-fascism was welded to patriotism as various states proclaimed they were on an 'anti-fascist' crusade. While many of the foot soldiers in the 'people's war' were honestly anti-fascist, no government had any intention of being carried away by any propaganda about freedom. Once the squaddies and partisans had defeated the fascist powers, it was time to ensure a return to business as usual.*

*While ex-fascists were recruited for the cold war, fascism remained insignificant until the rise of new social tensions in the sixties and seventies helped them mobilise again. Here is a piece from Anarchy (second series) 20, in 1976 which examines responses to the National Front, the main fascist group in Britain at the time. In the seventies (as in the thirties) anti-fascists had to contend with the keenness of the police to force through fascist parades: the source of Albert Meltzer's joke about there being no fascist marches, only police ones, because the fascists certainly wouldn't try it on their own. 'Anti-fascism' also drew a motley crowd, both of vanguard parties looking for recruits and 'anyone-but-fascists' types who thought everything would be fine if nobody rocked the boat. Anarchists played their part in both challenging fascists and demanding social change.*

### **Fascism in Britain Today – The Left and the National Front [1976]**

'Only one thing could have stopped our movement – if our adversaries had understood its principle and from the first day had smashed with the utmost brutality the nucleus of our new movement.' – Hitler

#### **Counter-demos, Pickets**

How has the left shaped up to the National Front? The answer is, usually, in the most abject fashion imaginable. For instance ... whenever the NF has held a demonstration or a rally the left opposition consists of, for starters, howls of protest to the appropriate local government authorities, 'Don't let the fascists use the Town Hall!' Then, after their protestations have been rejected, they stage the predictable counter-demonstration picket, which occasionally ends with a bust-up involving the police (who protect the fascists with such determination that, so far, there has been no major clash on the streets between left and right). As a sideline, adventurist elements such as International Socialists might furtively depart from the main march and in a vain attempt to enhance their 'street-fighting' image try to tackle the NF by themselves, which results in a number of arrests and injuries with as always the unfortunate 'breakaways' coming off far worse than the NF. Meanwhile, as

another sideline, tiny cliques of screaming Maoists attack police lines Kamikaze style, and this time they and everyone unlucky enough to be in the immediate vicinity end up getting their heads kicked in by zealous cops. Every shade of leftism is represented during these manifestations, the smaller groups in order to increase their tiny stature adopting violent phraseology which they are incapable of fulfilling with actions.

The platform is always controlled by an ad-hoc committee, with usually the Communist Party in control behind the scenes. The CP doesn't use the platform for advocating the use of violence against the NF: sometimes, in fact, in order to convey the impression that they are just as respectable as the Labour Party, they even go so far as to say that anybody using the platform to propagate the use of violence against the NF will be slung off. (As at Hyde Park, where the left successfully closed Speakers Corner to prevent the NF from marching there.)

#### **Tackling The Front On The Street**

The left, in challenging the NF on the streets, has for the most part fallen flat on its face, although by the images projected in their papers you would think that every time the NF ventured into the streets they were defeated decisively by a mass turnout of the working-class and the left. Unfortunately, or fortunately perhaps, each time the left attempts to reach the NF they are prevented by the police. The truth of the matter is that the left is unable to make a real physical impression on the police or fascists. What happens sometimes is that we have the spectacle of police beating shit out of the lefties, while the NF looks on from a safe distance, sniggering or cheering, depending on how vigorously the cops are laying in. All that's achieved in these struggles is hundreds of arrests and injuries, and at Red Lion Square (an example of what I'm thinking of) an anti-fascist was killed by the police. I think that this is because the left is unable to devise tactics and strategy to suit the situation.

#### **Propaganda**

Propaganda directed against the NF has taken on the appearance of a small industry, with even the most obscure left groups churning out a mass of pamphlets. Despite the tremendous amount, all these pamphlets and articles are of a low calibre. They all, for instance, lay stress on the criminality of the leaders of the NF. We are treated to the same old photograph of Tyndall in his nazi uniform. They never go much further, never attempt to analyse why the working class never turns out en masse to smash the Front, or even why large numbers of working class people subscribe to Front-type ideas. They are at pains to point out that NF leaders strutted in nazi uniforms, embellished with swastikas, but who has any use for that emblem now? Today, British fascists parade around using the Union Jack, and it's 'unpatriotic' to insult the flag, isn't it? (This is the view of the CP more than other left groups.) In a book written by a CP hack, Tony Gilbert, called 'Only One Died', which deals with the government inquiry into the Red Lion Square riots, the author in giving evidence claimed that the NF placing the Union Jack was a 'misuse' of the flag. But this isn't isolated – witness the revolting behaviour, the chauvinism, of most of the groups involved in the latest anti-fascist movement during the EEC referendum. Most of these groups regard the imperialist bloodbath known as World War Two as – anti-fascist! How many times have we been



subjected to speeches containing such gems as 'Free speech for fascists? That was decided on the streets of Stalingrad... or Berlin' ad nauseum at anti-fascist events? Too many times, I think.

With the growth of fascism in this county (and indeed, worldwide), with the struggle against it, a magazine exclusively anti-fascist has emerged, 'Searchlight'. The contents are detailed and informative (and I recommend it for this) but on the other hand its tone is legalistic, 'patriotic', trade-union oriented. For examples, there are open letters to Roy Jenkins [Labour Home Secretary] requesting him to ban the NF, and articles urging the government to create stronger laws against racism – laws which, as we know, end up being used against anti-fascists like the 1936 Public Order Act. Writers for 'Searchlight' range from IS hacks to right-wing Labour MPs.

### **The left and anti-fascist tactics**

One of the many weaknesses of the left has been shown by their misunderstanding of the use of force. It's all right for the trots to don their bovver boots and chase a few fascists around the back streets (a task which they find heavy going at times). But what happens when the agro reaches proportions of another dimension? They are, I'm afraid, left high and dry. In London's Camden High Street the lefties held a meeting to discuss tactics for opposing a Front march. As the delegates arrived they were menaced by NF heavies who told them that they 'would be back later'. They were, firing a shotgun Chicago style from a car and shattering the window of the building; The reaction of the lefties inside? They called the police! And then? Why, they are surprised by the lack of interest shown by the police! All these left groups knew where the NF headquarters were at that time (50 Pawsons Rd, Croydon), but they remained un-attacked. Such is the respect the left has for conventional methods. A couple of weeks after this event, the IMG instruct their members to turn up at the Hyde Park rally wearing crash helmets, but even this minimal effort is rendered useless when a police snatch squad pluck an unfortunate from the centre of the IMG defensive circle and arrest him. After the rally has finished the IMGers put their helmets into plastic bags and sneak away in the most nervous fashion. Worse still, when the NF held their vile 'march against (black) muggers' in London's East End last summer, the opposing anti-fascist march, outnumbering the NF by more than 4 to 1, formed up only five minutes from the fascists' departure point. Yet when anti-fascists marched off in the *opposite direction!* even Searchlight commented, 'The counter-demonstration was attended by nearly five thousand people... but this rally had failed to grasp the fact that it was in their power to have halted the fascist provocation, by just non-violently standing in its path before it got under way. Whilst we at Searchlight are against violence and see no point in fighting with the police, we must respect the handful of youngsters who stood in the path of the march only to be batoned by the police.'

But more recently, April 24th to be precise, things showed a turn for the better, as at Bradford where counter-demonstrators faced 1000 Front marchers. The NF were protected by large numbers of police (as usual); they provoked the violence by damaging Asian-owned shops while the police stood and did nothing. The anti-fascists, though, showed they

*could* fight with some success: bricks, bottles and beer cans were hurled at the Front. Barricades were dragged across the street in an attempt to halt the fascists, and when the police attacked the anti-fascists, *they too* were showered with stones and bottles, police vans were overturned, and attempts were made to set them on fire, numbers of police were badly injured including numbers of the mounted police. The number arrested was 30. Contrast this with events in London the same day, when 200 marchers mostly from the nazi 'British Movement', were challenged by about 500 anti-fascists. There was a battle in Trafalgar Square between the anti-fascists and the police – mostly member of the Special Patrol Group, who brutally beat up the outnumbered anti-fascists, injuring many while police casualties were virtually nil. Twenty-five arrests. I think we have things to learn from both events on the 24th.

### **Fascist tactics**

Front tactics are more brutal than the left's: anonymous attacks in back streets on militants and immigrants, and even worse, pouring paraffin into immigrant workers' letter boxes and setting light to it; the list is endless. Then, on another level, attacking the small bookshops and headquarters of sectarian left-wing groups (like Maoists); owing to the distance and size of these groups few, if any, reprisals need be expected. Pacifists and liberals make excellent targets – they don't hit back. When all these attacks are combined, the fascists gain a formidable reputation. The Nat-Front are also becoming more daring in that they attack left-wing demonstrations such as the Troops Out demonstration which was fairly successfully attacked by the Nat-Front on 21st February at Shepherds Bush Green. There is evidence that some ultra-rightists, members of the Nat-Front included, are training in forests with members of the Territorial Army – and that during these manoeuvres they are *armed*. On another level the Front pick up most of their members by running in elections; during the last General Election they picked up 113,000 votes (mostly in working-class areas). The Front claim that next election they will field over 300 candidates.

### **Is It Worth It?**

Is it? Well, for groups like International Socialists it provides a fine chance for recruitment, as a reading of 'Socialist Worker' a couple of years ago would prove. For example, it gave coverage to small local demonstrations against the Front; after the demonstration the IS would hold a small meeting where 'six young workers' or 'five Asians' then joined IS. At Leicester the IS even erected a platform after the large march (with its star speakers) to advertise a meeting that they were holding in the evening – a straightforward recruiting effort. But, as for fighting them? After all the NF are not supported by the capitalist class who prefer the Labour and Conservative parties to run the State and look after their interests. To receive support from even the most reactionary capitalist elements the Nat-Front must prove themselves a competent labour-bashing, strike-breaking militia, and this so far they have failed to do, although some maverick characters, ex-Military, Stirling and Walker, have attempted to form private armies to use against the working class. The Front have been successful in their infiltration of anti-working-class organisations such as the National Federation of the Self-Employed, ratepayers groups, and in some areas are



gaining a dangerous foothold in tenants groups and trade union branches (Searchlight is well aware of this). Liberals and pacifists say 'Leave them alone,' 'Fighting them is a prevention of free speech' or 'If you fight them, you are just as bad as them' – head-in-the-sand attitudes which provide a fine argument to do fuck-all. On the other hand *real* revolutionaries argue that capitalism and the state are the main enemies; true, but the NF are dangerous for the working class in a way that the 'legitimate' representatives of capitalism dare not be. And for reasons I indicated in Part One [not printed here], fascist ideas *are* taking root in *some* sections of the working class and the lumpen, so therefore this represents an immediate threat. It is important to tackle them *without* negating the class struggle; after all the class struggle *is* the best way to tackle the NF. Small groups of revolutionaries who because of lack of resources or pressing commitments elsewhere don't attack them directly should make it clear that if they are 'bothered' by fascists they will pay them back in an unconventional manner.

### Ways To Fight The Fascists

For anti-fascists out on the streets this is a question of tactics. I'm not against fighting the fascists in the streets, as you can guess I'm all for it; the trouble is that it's totally predictable *how* they are challenged. Whenever the fascists have a march or meeting, Hey presto: a counter-demo or picket. What should be done is say to occupy the hall that the fascists are going to use, before they turn up, or if they have a meeting make it difficult for them to get out. When fighting the police the anti-fascists should (if there are enough of them, and if they are angry enough) follow the wonderful example of the people of Bradford. When the Front march, instead of forming up miles away from them, the anti-fascists should assemble at the same point the fascists are due to march from, thereby ensuring that they find it impossible to assemble, let alone march.

When the NF held its 'march against muggers' a small group of anti-fascists (400) broke from the main anti-fascist march and ran off to meet the fascists. As the fascists were well protected by the police, and there were 1000 Fronters anyway, the anti-fascists marched on the sides of the march on the pavements, heckling the fascists and threatening them. Because of this no-one joined the Front's march – because of the constant barrage and because we informed people about what the NF were all about; people did however join the anti-fascists (including lots of kids) and we had a lot of fun and talked to lots of local people. There were about 6 arrests at the end of the march, at Hoxton.

All other things apart, the only thing that will eventually smash the Front is the very thing that will smash capitalism – a mass revolutionary working-class movement. Revolutionaries must work to build this – the most important task of all. An inkling of mass action was shown at Leicester, where the Front held a march in support of the 'white workers at Imperial Typewriters'. Only about 700 morons turned up to march with the Front. Meanwhile in another part of the city more than 5000 people, including many Asian workers & whole families, joined the march. It was a great occasion because the whole immigrant working-class community was involved in the strike that led up to the marches. Eventually the only thing that will sweep the fascists off the street is mass working-class

action. To build a mass revolutionary working-class movement is a *political* task. As anarchists we must become involved in this, as part of building our anarchist movement, but that's another subject, comrades.

### Postscript

Events have moved quickly since I finished this article. First of all the 'story' dredged up by the porno-Sun about the £600 a week Asians which led to an 'immigrant invasion' scare. Secondly the successes of the fascists in the local government elections and [racist Tory MP Enoch] Powell's new speech. And third the imprisonment of the racist Relf and the vile attacks on immigrant workers and students, the worst event so far being the murder of two foreign students by a racist gang in Woodford. The immigrants *have* been fighting back – witness the scenes in Birmingham when they fought with the police in an attempt to reach a pro-Relf demo put on by the NF. In Blackburn where the [ex-NF] National Party won two seats in the local elections (from Labour incidentally) the National Party victory march was greeted by shoppers with claps and cheers while a demonstration of trade unionists and Asian workers was met with insults and jeers: 'Fuck off back to where you come from, you black bastards'. In Hackney an Indian family had their home fire-bombed, while in Greenwich a mosque was vandalised by fascists – and in the East End some mini-cab drivers are using their car radios to coordinate attacks on Asians and so on. But the immigrants are fighting back and we must aid them in their struggles.

I think that if one headline in the porno-'Sun' and one Powell speech can undo all the propaganda of the anti-racists and anti-fascists of the last four years, we must really consider another approach. I think that what is called for sooner or later is a few decisive battles in the streets that can defeat the fascists physically (Bradford and Birmingham show the way forward). We have tried the other way far too long – the results are nil. (The anti-fascist rioters in Bradford got a very good press, incidentally!) It is after all a question of time when this will happen; the sooner we get it over and done with, the better. The only other thing I want to say is, when we beat the fascists on the streets, why should we then all go home to our beds? Let's *keep* the streets, let's have street meetings, sell our papers on the street and prevent the police from driving us back. When we can do this we will be able to make great inroads. We will be able to build up mass movements to smash capitalism and the state for once and for all!

MFV

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*The mass confrontation called for in the previous article came in the 'Battle of Lewisham', 1977, where a mass turnout of the community (both Black and White) ended National Front pretensions to control the streets (and police willingness to be battered for their sake). In 1979 'respectable' fascist support swung instead behind Thatcher's war on the working class. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the NF and British National Party attempted to retake the streets, only to be knocked back (literally) by the 'No Platform' policy of Anti-Fascist Action (AFA).*



## Let's Get Physical...

The implementation of a No Platform policy will invariably involve physical confrontation with the fascists. In this issue Fighting Talk's Sid Martell explores the politics of the pavement...

'AFA is committed to fighting Fascism both physically and ideologically. We are not fighting fascism to maintain the status quo but to defend the interests of the working class' Point 1.4 London AFA constitution.

Many people beside the state are opposed to AFA's policy of physical confrontation, these range from the fascists (they especially don't like it), the liberal 'state ban' wing of the movement (Searchlight etc...), all the way to so called revolutionary organisations like the SWP (see the last issue of FT, they might pay lip service to 'taking on the fascists', in reality they can't implement a No Platform policy and they need the police to function). So, what with all this opposition, is AFA merely being obstinate? Are we just isolated thugs? Or are we principled militant anti-fascists using the best means at our disposal to stop the fascists?

Firstly let's get a few things straight. Anti-Fascist Action is not a terrorist or military organisation, neither are we just a group of thugs who simply enjoy a good row. AFA is a broad based national organisation made up of working class people who are serious about combating fascism. Fighting fascism demands a lot from those who undertake it seriously, the risks are high, the hours are long and mostly spent getting bored – waiting for something to happen, and it doesn't earn you a living. As any committed militant in any struggle will tell you that goes with the territory, nobody asks for thanks or a pat on the back, you just get on with it. What's to a large extent unbelievable, and yet at the same time so predictable, is that as well as this there are characters in the movement, whose courage and integrity are questionable to say the least, who seem to spend more time slagging off the militants than they do making the minimal (and often detrimental) impact that they do on the fascists.

AFA started when everybody else dropped Anti-Fascism, the real problem of course, being the Tories! Now that the rest of them have come back on the scene they find that we've not been away, our rag-tag band of directionless cut-throats and thugs managing to stay the distance while the rest of them chose complacency and denial of their own ineptitude. As well as this they also find that while they run around chasing their tails and getting nowhere, AFA continues to pop up every now and again to remind the fascists that there will always be two sides of the opposition to them.

Throughout this century it seems that anti-fascist militants have had to put up with unwholesome elements at their backs. During Franco's dictatorship after the Spanish Civil War, the words of anarchist anti-fascist guerrillas (who were making 'substantial withdrawals' from various financial institutions on behalf of the resistance movement) have a familiar ring...

'Yet some of our so called comrades attempted to defame our conduct in this matter – calling us robbers, bandits, criminals in exactly the same way as our fascist enemies. They do so to justify themselves to our movement for their own cowardice and inactivity.'

Even within AFA there have been times when certain elements have called for more 'political' campaigning: when pressed, more 'political' campaigning basically means 'non-violent' protest type campaigning a la ANL. AFA has outlined many times that it has a 'twin-track' policy of both ideological and physical confrontation, what this article aims to make clear is that both parts of our strategy are indeed political. Both are of equal importance, and the balance between them constantly and consistently maintained.

A classic cliché used by all manner of characters, from magistrates to 'revolutionaries', is to confront them physically you are 'Just as bad as the fascists.' Anti-fascist militants have had this thrown at them since fascism began, the equation being; if you meet violence with violence, then you become what you hate. This oddly Christian moralisation (odd because easily as many people have been killed in the name of Christ, as Mussolini or Hitler) is not just misguided, it's thoroughly out of order. Fascists employ violence as a means to an end, they are not violence personified; to be violent is not to be a fascist. It is what lies behind that violence; virulent hatred of the working class and it's aspirations, that gives fascism it's character.

The aim of fascism is to amplify the violence already inherent in the state; the violence of the Police, Immigration officials, the Army, etc. being just a tea party to what the fascists would have them do. It is obvious that if working class people are to defend themselves and their interests, they must react in accordance with this threat. Therefore an act of aggression against the fascists must be seen as an act in defence of the working class, and as such be a political act.

The argument that anything other than pure self-defence (for instance defence against attack by an ethnic community) is mindless petty violence with no political motivation holds about as much water as a sieve. The formidable increase in state terror that would arise from a fascist dictatorship is justification enough for the eradication of fascism. The working class is already under attack, the state is already throwing punches, the coming to power of the fascists is the big right-hander, the knock out punch. It's already a question of them or us, the war has already started.

It's interesting here to note just who is saying what as regards this question. The vast majority of anti-fascist militants are working class, not just for the wider abstract reasons outlined above but because they bear the first brunt of the onslaught of fascism, and in the long term they will suffer the worst casualties. If someone in a pub full of local fascists declares themselves an anti-fascist, there won't be much time for formal debate and dissection of analysis. Working class people don't baulk at violence, they are not so conditioned to reject personal political violence while condoning institutionalised violence as the middle classes are. It is obvious then that while the middle class orientated wing of the movement call for the police to deal with the 'criminal fascist element', people on the street are forced to deal with it themselves.

It is the organisation of this militant working-class resistance to fascism that is the task that AFA has set itself. All of the moves made by AFA are dictated by this aim. The direction of the organisation is orientated by discussion of the militants on the ground, there is no



military hierarchy governing the politics of the organisation, rather the politics control all AFA stewarding activities. The stewards are at all times answerable to the rest of the organisation, their role is to carry out the wishes of the membership. It is the people active in AFA who have defined this, it is the militants on the ground who argue for political discipline. We would argue against a purely street outfit, not because we are against 'street activity', but because alone it has no meaning. There are many historical examples to draw from this, from the IPLO in Ireland to renegade Zapatistas in the Mexican Revolutions.

If you carry out acts of an 'illegal' nature then you are bound to attract those who simply wish to get involved in that end of affairs, who are not political. It is up to the movement to either educate or reject those elements, and only the backing and guidance of the wider movement can define where the line is drawn, where acts degenerate to the socially criminal rather than the political. It is only when the politics are let go that things are reduced to pure factionalism and criminality, that has never and will never be the case with AFA. All those who have made claims along these lines are either enemies of militant anti-fascism, or the sort of play-pretend 'leaders' who get their fingers burnt when they play with fire.

The need for discipline and organisation then is paramount to us, one because it makes us accountable to ourselves and the movement, and secondly because it makes us a more effective force on the street and in the political arena. There have been times when elements attracted to AFA seem to feel that these things can be dispensed with, those that espouse the anti-fascism of the cider bottle and the wildebeest. While not denying anybody's right to oppose fascism, there is no place for this within AFA. It must be made clear, AFA wins, there aren't any prizes for second place. Without coordination, without experience and back up, little groups marching off here and there will ultimately come a cropper. This is not a game, the fascists mean it, and what has kept AFA effective is that we mean it too.

It's ironic really, that many who have consistently slagged off the physical element of AFA, have at the same time come begging for protection when there's a possibility that they themselves might be attacked by the fascists. AFA has learnt a lot from this, smiles the one day. vilification the next. It has also learnt that being some sort of token police force for the 'left', has gained us nothing but their subsequent whinging afterwards. Or even during, there have been a few occasions when an AFA stewarding outfit has actually had to 'steward', only to meet shock horror from those who most definitely would have been on the receiving end of it from the fascists if we hadn't been there.

Our job is beating the fascists on our terms, our stewards are only jeopardised by our activities, or the ones we sponsor. What many on the 'left' don't realise is that the physical victories of the fascists are worth more than ours because they are in the ascendancy. they are on the offensive while the 'left' stares up it's own backside wondering what day it is. Any victory that we give them on the street is a body blow for us, if we are to be defeated then we'll go down fighting for something to fight for, not for liberals and cowards who can't hold their hands up.

But again that's not to say that we won't work with anyone else, we have stressed time and again that unity is made around activity, not verbal niceties. If anybody who adopts the

same stance as us, who works in the same arena as us, isn't working alongside us, then could they let us know? The point has to be made, AFA has a job to do, it hasn't the time or the resources to argue the toss about 'United Fronts' and such like. Let's face it, that isn't just fiddling while Rome burns, it's setting up the whole orchestra and giving the audience boxes of matches.

It seems that the calls for Unity tend to be made most vociferously by those who when they had a chance to make some sort of impact, ie; when they were in AFA, chose to abandon that and now wander in the wilderness calling for 'committees' around this and 'Unity' around that because it's the only chance they'll get to prove how 'wactical' they are by talking a load of old nonsense. They now find they're in a position where far from 'making No Platform mean No Platform' they are effectively more unable to deliver that than they ever were! It's not saying it, it's doing it that counts. AFA continues to do it.

Physical confrontation is not only necessary, but from a propaganda point of view it's indispensable: Waterloo was a straight go, and an immediate success. It shows people what can be done, and what has to be done if fascism is to be beaten back. AFA victories in the North, in Scotland, and in the Midlands are a direct result of the commitment to a physical presence put in by AFA militants, the ceaseless work of individuals and groups gaining results that no amount of lollipops and petitions will ever bring. AFA's work against the recent 'Ian Stuart Memorial Gig' made sure that it didn't go ahead, that C18's 'security' was turned on it's head (Charlie Sargeant and 'mad' Phil Edwards both making early bids for the 'shithouse of the year' award), and we still managed not to get battered by the Met (unlike both the ANL and C18, the latter getting a serious seeing to in a pub outside Waterloo, looked bloody nasty from where we were standing...).

AFA, despite all it's enemies, continues to go from strength to strength. We've proved time and again that only by militant action will the fascists be put down, and despite all the efforts of the establishment, the fascists, and the liberals, we're still in the game. Time will tell what happens with the ANL. YRE etc.. We're not asking anything of them, what's important to us is that AFA remains a viable outfit, and that it holds to it's tradition. Remember, though we've said it before, a physical commitment by us doesn't require every individual in the organisation to be a super fit street-fighter. what we do want is people who agree with our policy, and who will work towards its implementation in the capacity best suited for them. Genuine anti-fascist militants should join AFA, and militants from other outfits should work with us on the day. True unity, unity in action, is the only 'unity' AFA calls for. A commitment to that is what earns AFA's respect, and it's the only thing that does.

*Fighting Talk 7 (1994)*

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*Fascism likes to appear radical, the more so when there's no money in red-baiting. Whether you think fascists can be radical (in a bad way), or whether you think it's just window dressing, we must fight against their ideas, as well as defending our space on the streets. This article, from the Bristol anarchist paper Stuff It 4 [1985/6] lays into the 'socialist' pretensions of Strasserism.*



## The Fascist Takeover

It seems the N.F. have changed their tune, Strasserism\*, anti-Bolshevik plus anti-capitalist is their new stance. This is pretty bad news for us, making it hard for us to see whose on our side and who isn't. But we mustn't be fooled, anarchism and fascism are COMPLETE OPPOSITES. Fascism has two forms:

Either a country's ruling class is under a threat it can't beat normally, so it brings in the army and death squads, to create the 'Super State', no argument, no freedom. Or the Fascism of Hitler, an underdog fascism which says that the present ruling class is not fit for its job and that the party will be made up of the best, new blood, the RIGHTFUL ruling class (a bit like the various Trot. groups!) Sometimes they go together: top dogs hoping to use the Nazis to get the Reds; the Nazis allying with the rich until they are strong enough to take over themselves. Either way they believe that some people are fit to rule over others and the rest should just be slaves in their 'Super State'.

Obviously it is quite hard to get a mass movement going with this sort of argument. I mean if you went on a demo and heard some Nazi telling you that he and his mates were the rightful ruling class and that you should support them in getting there, you might think twice. So they've had to cover that bit up, and use some other argument. One is to use Nationalism, the Nazis are the best of the nation, our nation is better than all the rest. This leads to militarism and war usually. The other argument is racism, the N.F. tactic. A race is the enemy, Jews, or Blacks, it's all their fault, they are subhuman, destroying our country. Again it's a tactic to blind people into following them, until they're strong enough to take power.

Anarchism is the belief that all people deserve equal respect as individuals. No one has the right to rule, command obedience etc. We have the right to self rule, to cooperate to meet our needs, and not to be coerced by another group, or class. Racism is completely anti-anarchist too, 'Blacks' are not 'blacks', they are individual people, 'whites' are not 'whites', they are individual people. All equal and all free to lead their own lives. Racism is a con to divide us; the Nazis use it to get more power, Bosses want it so we don't see what is really causing all our problems: their power over the world and its resources; the profit motive and the power motive.

It is important that we should all recognise this. [...] Anarchism must be put clearly – Fascism and Racism are the opposites of it, and can never be part of it.

J. the A.

\*Strasserism is based on a return to a Pre-Capitalist order via a form of 'State Feudalism', in which not only would everyone know their place, but they would also be in it.

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*Anti-fascism is not the preserve of hard men. Or even hard men and women. Obviously anti-fascist propaganda can be done by anyone who can talk to people or put up stickers, but physical confrontation doesn't need superheroes: everyone can play a part. This piece from Sheffield Anarchist v4, n3 Spring 1987 tries to dispel a few myths about what it takes to be an anti-fascist.*

## Myths

We find it sick that in battling against organised fascism, we not only have to take on fascist propaganda, but also the same propaganda re-sold to us by the bleeding-heart liberals of the 'left'. We are talking about the 'master-race'/'political-soldier' syndrome and its left-wing mirror image, the 'martyr'/'victim' syndrome. The fascist press is full of crap about the fascist 'street-fighting man', the 'political soldier' sweeping aside lesser 'racial-enemies' and the 'weak-kneed wimps' of the left – This is nothing more than a wanking fantasy, and as we have seen the reality is rather different. However, the left-wing press has its own masochistic wet-dream, it is full of the same kind of crap, portraying the Fash as 'psyco-paths', 'street thugs' and 'heavies' and anti-fascists as their victims. This is nothing more than fuel for the fascist furnace, and we will have nothing to do with it.

The fact is, we are not a bunch of macho 'ard cases, we don't have to be to take on the fascists, and those who think otherwise are mistaken. The group of us who took on the fascists who came over for the 'Bloody Sunday' demo was not particularly large, and it was composed of women and men. But we have a strength out of all proportion to our numbers or individual size, because we know that we'll back each other up. We can all play our part in combatting fascism, and macho bores can fuck off, so can those who try to parody us, either as thickies just after a punch-up or alternatively, as weak-kneed lefties. Organising effectively, together, we can beat the fascists hands down.

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*Fascists still find racism a useful tool, the more so since our capitalist media are so keen to scapegoat people by colour. In opposition, anarchists put forward ideas of working class unity and class struggle – and fighting the real enemy. This piece from Angry People 6 (1993) was prompted by the 'outrage' created in the media by Mabo Land rights decision, overturning the legal fiction that Australia was 'empty' when Europeans colonised it.*

## Fight The Class War Not The Race War

Some people these days seem to be under the impression that we're in the middle of a 'race war' with this Mabo controversy. The billionaire-owned mass media has done a lot to foster this by spreading confusion and fear with their misinformation. These billionaires are so scared that blacks might get back a tiny proportion of the land they were robbed of that they're trying to con non-Aboriginal Australia into lining up with them against the dispossessed Aborigines. As if the interests of working class Australians are the same as those of filthy rich scum like Kerry Packer and Rupert Murdoch! OK many of us are white skinned and of European descent like them – but so what? When we look beyond this superficial resemblance of race we realise that we've got much more in common with Aboriginal Australians than with Packer, Murdoch, Black and co., because all of us, Aborigines and non-Aborigines, have been ripped off, lied to, bashed, intimidated, oppressed, dispossessed and murdered by the same rich bastards, their governments, their pigs and their armies, for hundreds of years. AND THEY'RE ASKING US TO SIDE WITH THEM JUST



BECAUSE WE HAPPEN TO BE WHITE!!! FUCK THEM!!!

The rich and their lackeys whinge when Aboriginals regain control of THEIR land (and let's face it – it was Aboriginal land for tens of thousands of years before the rest of us arrived on the scene a mere 205 years ago) and restrict access to outsiders. They complain that this land is 'locked up', inaccessible to non-Aboriginals – how unfair! The rich can't get their greedy paws on it for their gold or bauxite mining or to build luxury tourist developments. But what about when non-Aboriginals, some of whom don't even live in Australia, buy up huge chunks of the country for their personal use and profit? How about if some of us wanted access to land owned by rich scum, or to land controlled by the Defence dept or some other govt dept? It would probably be a lot harder than getting onto Aboriginal land, I can tell you. You don't hear the media barons screaming about THAT KIND of restricted access. Funny that. They're pretty cunning, playing the 'Race Card': the old 'divide and rule' trick to keep us down, the old 'mushroom' trick to keep us in the dark so that we don't see our real enemies. Aboriginal control of land is far better than leaving it at the mercy of the capitalist. Aboriginal people have been looking after the land for thousands of years whereas capitalists tend to think of short term profits, chopping down the rainforests to sell the timber to some capo in Japan, ripping minerals out of the ground as quickly as possible and flogging them off. A few working class people will be lucky enough to have highly paid jobs for a while in these projects but in the long run we all lose out. There are tourist resorts where the rich can 'get away from it all': that is from the mess and misery they are causing around the world. The rest of us are stuck with what's left.

If Aboriginal people get their land back and regain some measure of control over their lives it can only be good. Maybe they can provide examples of non-capitalist ways of living for the rest of us to learn from. WORKING CLASS PEOPLE OF ALL RACES UNITE AND FIGHT THE POWER!!

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*Anti-fascism, if it's effective, is not just a problem for fascists, but a problem for the state too. While liberal anti-fascists see no problem in reinforcing the state and aim to marginalise fascism through moral arguments, militant anti-fascism has a different agenda. We don't want things to stay as they are; we want people to fight for a better society. In North America, Anti-Racist Action has been one of the main voices of this militant approach. (There's more on ARA on pages 45-7)*

### **What We Believe**

Anarchists believe in Equality between all people regardless of where their ancestors came from, what color their skin is, or where they were born. We believe in social equality regardless of ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. We believe in an economy and community where everybody cooperates to make sure that we all can live healthy, prosperous, and pleasant lives. Anarchism is the philosophy of personal freedom, personal responsibility and mutual respect between all people. Anti-Racist Action is based on the ideas of Solidarity and Mutual Aid. Solidarity is our natural outrage every time we see an act of injustice or

evil. Mutual Aid is the practice of people banding together to oppose a common enemy or confront a challenge that may seem insurmountable to individuals but, can be overcome when we work together as a group.

From 'How to Fight Racism' Flier [1999?]

### **Anti-Racist Action's 'Points of Unity'**

- 1) WE GO WHERE THEY GO: Whenever fascists are organizing or active in public, we're there. We don't believe in ignoring them. Never let the nazis have the streets!
- 2) WE DON'T RELY ON THE COPS OR THE COURTS TO DO OUR WORK FOR US: This doesn't mean we never go to court. But we must rely on ourselves to protect ourselves and stop the fascists.
- 3) NON-SECTARIAN DEFENSE OF OTHER ANTI-FASCISTS: In ARA, we have lots of different groups and individuals. We don't agree about everything and we have the right to differ openly. But in this movement an attack on one is an attack on us all. We stand behind each other.
- 4) WE SUPPORT ABORTION RIGHTS AND REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM: ARA intends to do the hard work necessary to build a broad, strong movement against racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, discrimination against the disabled, the oldest, the youngest and the most oppressed people. WE INTEND TO WIN!

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*Here's an analysis of ARA in Toronto. While we've left out some of the specific events, it's interesting for showing why ARA was successful, and also pointing out groups that will cause trouble: the police, liberal anti-fascists and 'revolutionary' vanguards.*

### **On The Prowl – Notes On Anti-Racist Action And Developing Anti-Fascist Strategies In Toronto**

Anti-Racist Action (ARA) [Toronto] formed in the Fall of 1992 to organize a street level presence to oppose the growth of the fascist movement in Toronto. The primary impetus came from young people, many of them high school students. Their main objectives were to oppose the neo-nazi presence in both the political and social arenas. The former was to take place in the high schools, where the [fascist] Heritage Front were and are actively recruiting young people. The latter was to confront them in clubs, bars and other social arenas where skinheads and neo-nazi bands were beginning to build a presence and to physically attack people of colour, anti-racists and punks.

While the focus was clearly on youth organizing, ARA also set about to explore new and creative methods of organizing and to expand the boundaries of the traditional forms of protest in Toronto. The young activists saw the need to challenge what they saw as depressing, disempowering, and ultimately ineffective modes of protest which the left has fallen into. ARA aimed to move away from boring pickets in front of faceless buildings and instead build a militant street level movement to fight grassroots fascism which would at the same time work in coalition with other groups around broader issues.



Along with the critique of the mobilization strategies of the left, ARA also incorporates an inherent challenge to traditional political dogmas. Distrust of old-style ideological restrictions led to the creation of a political perspective which, in essence, borrows from the best of many traditions. Elements from anarchism, Marxism, the German Autonomen, First Nations organizing, and popular culture are synthesized within ARA to create a political perspective which speaks to the people involved and allows the group to look beyond the constraints of any one tradition to attempt to create a new way of working politically.

A central element to the overall ARA approach is the cultivation of an anti-racist/anti-fascist counterculture. This has proceeded primarily through the organizing of regular Rock Against Racism concerts and also weekend parties, as well as the creation of an ARA 'style'. The group also actively circulates buttons and T-shirts (the group's motto is 'On The Prowl' and their logo is a tiger leaping on a swastika). ARA has recognized that one of the main attractions which the nazis have for young people is the sense of both rebelliousness and community which such organizations provide. The nazis certainly recognize this dynamic, which is why they have put so much effort into developing neo-nazi bands as recruiting instruments. ARA realizes that if it is to be effective politically, it also has to be 'hip'.

Few young people are attracted to fascist organizations on the basis of ideology alone. Most are attracted to the cultural scene first, through the music, parties, or friends and only later drawn into the movement and its ideas. Rather than ignore this reality, ARA has actively sought to promote a compelling, vibrant, and fun culture of resistance to attract young people and provide an alternative to the nazis. At the same time, the providing of an active social element to a political organization helps not only to keep activists and others interested but also provides a forum for people to build up the friendship and trust necessary for effective political work.

ARA demonstrations have been more militant and confrontational than has traditionally been the case in Toronto. The events have consistently drawn large numbers and their atmosphere of anger and a willingness to meet the fascists face-to-face have both intimidated the neo-nazis while attracting the attention of the police and the press.

For example, a large and determined demonstration in November 1992 outside a 'secret' Heritage Front meeting at the Roma Restaurant caused the police to shut the meeting down. Angry nazis were forced to flee under police protection while at the same time trying to avoid the hail of eggs thrown at them by the demonstrators.

A January 25, 1993 demonstration called outside a Toronto courthouse was to be a pivotal moment in shaping the organization. The Canadian Human Rights Commission has been in the process of hearing a complaint brought by the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto against the Front's telephone hotline. An announced fascist march on the courthouse in support of the Heritage Front was met by an ARA demonstration of over 500 people who blocked the main doors to the building.

Rather than take the small contingent of nazis into the courthouse through the back door, the police instead chose to charge the anti-racists from two sides. Mounted police rode into

the front line of the demonstration, trampling people and whacking them with riding crops, while officers on foot rushed into one side, kicking and punching anti-racists as they did so. The 'reason' for the attack was to move the ARA demonstration to allow the nazis to walk past and into the front doors of the court. Several demonstrators required brief hospitalization.

During the media circus which followed, both Police Chief William McCormack and Metro Police Services Board chair Susan Eng admitted in the press that the reason the nazis were not taken in through one of the four alternative entrances was because [nazi leader] Droege demanded to be taken in the main doors (which raises the question of who is actually giving the order for police to attack anti-racists?) [...]

Despite the police attack and the arrests, most saw the demonstration as a huge success. Not only did anti-racists outnumber the nazis by more than ten to one, but the attack clearly revealed on which side the police stood. The aftermath of the 25th also revealed on which side other anti-racist organizations fall in a crisis.

On January 27th, both the Human Rights League of B'nai Brith and the Canadian Jewish Congress denounced the demonstration in the media. Karen Mock, national spokesperson for B'nai Brith, accused ARA of 'jumping on a bandwagon and using this high profile anti-racist initiative to attempt to create disorder and take the law in their own hands.'

Gerda Frieberg of the CJC stated that 'The Canadian Jewish Congress does not support these kind of actions.' It was clear to some that the self-serving media ploy by B'nai Brith and CJC was intended more to solidify and justify their own close working relationships with police rather than advance the anti-racist movement. Indeed, recent revelations in the U.S. of Anti-Defamation League (B'nai Brith's U.S. counterpart) collaboration with the San Francisco Police Department in spying on progressive and leftist organizations should certainly make committed anti-racists in Toronto wary of that organization's true political goals.

The denunciation by these organizations was also significant in that it played directly to the police and media propaganda line of separating 'legitimate' anti-racist groups from 'illegitimate' ones, thereby hoping to criminalize ARA and justify unprovoked police violence against the demonstration. However, much of that attempt was derailed in the community, if not in the press itself, by the fact that such 'legitimate' groups as the Native Canadian Centre and the Montreal-based Canadian Centre on Racism and Prejudice (as well as representatives from the Black community, women's movement, and labour movement) supported ARA completely and publicly denounced the police's actions. [...]

#### **Policing The Crisis?**

[...] While the problem of police interference in political organizing is not a new one, it must be understood that the police play a particular dynamic within the context of anti-fascist work which is quite different than in other struggles. This is because in other progressive or radical movements, the question of involving the police as a potential 'ally' within the struggle is non-existent. Whether it is organizing around such issues of institutionalized racism, sexism, and homophobia or domestic and foreign policies of the Canadian government, it is



clearly recognized that the police as an institution play no potential positive role in advancing the cause.

This is unfortunately not the case with anti-fascist organizing. The activities of neo-nazi groups are by definition violent, whether through actual physical attacks or by the implied threat which their presence presents to those communities which have historically been targets of fascism. Their organizing also involves illegal activities, from relatively minor incidents of vandalism to more serious acts of violence including assault, arson, paramilitary training and murder. Because of this reality, many anti-racists see the police as an option against neo-nazis.

This double vision with regards to the police is both problematic and dangerous. While most are quick to recognize police violence and direct hostility, as was demonstrated during the demonstration on January 25th (with the exception elements of the 'legitimate' and conservative anti-racist movement), there remains a strong trend which looks towards legal 'remedies' for white supremacy. This trend takes the form not only of desires for stronger laws against hate group activities, but in particular looking towards police for protection.

The willingness to look to police as a strategy usually falls along clear lines of race and class. Certainly those individuals and communities who have not traditionally suffered at the hands of police are more likely to view them as 'protectors' rather than oppressors. [...]

#### **When Opportunism Knocks**

Because of the early successes of ARA, the organization inevitably sparked the interest of various Trotskyist and Marxist-Leninist political parties who began to flock to ARA like moths to a bright light. Unfortunately, it soon became obvious that most were involved not to work honestly against the neo-nazi presence in Toronto but instead to forward the goals of their own organizations. [...]

It is the position of many radicals that anti-fascist work is in itself irrelevant because of the relative lack of power and numbers which the neo-nazi movement commands in Canada at this time. These comrades see state and police racism as the arenas where opposition should be directed, and that 'chasing nazis' is an exercise in irrelevancy. However well intended, and correct as far as its analysis of institutionalized racism, this perspective is at its base short-sighted and self-defeating.

It is argued that without the sea of mainstream racism in which to swim, that fascists and fascist movements cannot survive. Therefore, the conclusion becomes that doing work against neo-nazis is beginning at the wrong end of the problem. Again, this is a compelling argument in isolation, particularly because it is theoretically accurate. However, theoretical accuracy does not always lend itself to practical and effective political action. As was stated by Italian anti-fascist Errico Malatesta in early part of the century, 'The optimum is the enemy of the good' – the never-ending search for the perfect political action all too often serves as an excuse for doing nothing at all. Indeed, if the anti-racist movement in Toronto cannot strategize and mobilize effectively enough to eliminate a couple of hundred nazis, how can we realistically expect to be able to defeat racist immigration laws and police violence and other institutional monoliths? [...]

It has to be understood that broad-based and effective political movements do not appear spontaneously, but are the result of years of struggle. This work, if it is to be realistic and successful, must begin by setting upon manageable goals and taking small victories where they can be won. It is out of the crucible of small victories – which provide experience and inspiration to a movement – that larger victories are possible.

#### **Race And Resistance**

An underlying basis for much of the criticism is the fact that ARA, with notable exceptions, is comprised primarily by white, working class youth. Criticism comes from both radicals of colour, who are sceptical of white radical organizations, and from other white radicals, who essentially believe that white people have no place initiating anti-racist work. [...]

It will be the links with radicals of colour, built upon respect gained from a history of principled political work, which can prove to be the strongest and therefore most reliable in a crisis. [...]

The second criticism is a concern only as much as it is centred in what is essentially a guilt-based politic. For white people to simply defer to people of colour to initiate action around issues of racism is to fundamentally deny both individual and collective historical responsibility for oppression. The effective way to take responsibility for racism is not to sit around and feel guilty and do nothing, but to work against racism in the white community. As former Black Panther Party leader Dhoruba Bin Wahad stated in a lecture in Toronto, 'Racism is not a problem Black people have. It's a problem that white people have.'

In fact, this is why the make-up of ARA should be seen as an advantage rather than a detriment. While older white leftists may not see the relevancy of white youth, the fascists certainly do and have made the high schools a major political battle ground. The fact that youth of all races are alienated and ignored by society is well accepted, yet until recently it was only the nazis who were capitalizing on this disenchantment to recruit among young white people. Many white radicals have chosen to ignore some of the most important lessons on the role of white people in anti-racist work as articulated by some of the most militant and articulate Black leaders, such as Assata Shakur and Angela Davis.

Such a role was articulated by Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton in their book 'Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America:'

'One of the most disturbing things about almost all white supporters has been that they are reluctant to go into their own communities – which is where racism exists – and work to get rid of it... It is hoped that eventually there will be a coalition of poor Blacks and poor whites... creating a poor-white power block dedicated to the goals of a free, open society – not one based on racism and subordination... The main responsibility of this task falls upon whites... Poor white people are becoming more hostile – not less – toward Black people, partly because they see the nation's attention focused on Black poverty and few, if any, people coming to them... Only whites can mobilize and organize those communities along the lines necessary and possible for effective alliances with Black communities... If the job is to be done, there must be new forms created. Thus, the political modernization process must involve the white community as well as the Black.'



The fact that intelligent, articulate and radical young people are working against the recruitment in their schools, and using the nazi presence as an opportunity to get their peers involved and politically educated around broader issues of racism and oppression should be supported rather than criticised. That fact that many bring with them a distrust and disenchantment with 'traditional' forms of protest and modes of political organizing is also instructional to those willing to listen and learn. Unfortunately the distrust of Leninist party organizing, disdain for meaningless picketlines in front of faceless buildings, and desire to incorporate cultural elements of resistance into political work are all challenges to the current leftist hierarchies in the city, and many choose to dismiss ARA based upon the threat which such a perspective poses to their own relative positions of authority. Far too many leftists see young people as cannon fodder, or sheep to be herded in particular directions, rather than as equal partners in political struggle who bring much needed critique, analysis and enthusiasm to the work.

In their argument against doing anti-nazi work, these critics also misunderstand some of the most basic principles of political organizing. It must be recognized that people are not effectively organized out of guilt but out of recognition of their own interest in change. Again to quote Ture and Hamilton, we must move beyond the false 'assumption that political coalitions can be sustained on a moral, friendly, sentimental basis; by appeals to conscience.' Such an approach does nothing to expose and identify structures of privilege, and can all too easily lead to political dissolution. To Ture and Hamilton, viable political coalitions stem from 'the recognition of the parties involved of their respective self-interests... [and] ...the mutual belief that each party stands to benefit in terms of that self-interest from allying with the other or others.'

Young white people are at this time facing recruitment by nazi groups, dealing with nazi gangs in their schools and socializing places, and seeing their friends, white and non-white, being attacked by skinheads. Therefore, anti-nazi organizing speaks directly to their experiences and political needs. Obviously, political education and activism cannot stop with concern over one's own needs, but it has to start there. The birth of ARA provides the opportunity to involve a new generation of activists in anti-racist work and in radical political organizing. It provides the political support for white working class youth to organize themselves around issues of racism and oppression, which presents the opportunity of radicalizing a generation of activists. This is the promise of groups such as ARA, and the long term vision which many of its critics on the left are unwilling to see.

Lola; taken from *Arm the Spirit* 16 (1993)

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*The only good fascist is a dead one, the slogan goes. But as this piece by an ex-Nazi shows, there is life after the far right – and we have to challenge fascism for the people it wants to use. This piece deals from a class perspective with questions raised in a critique of ARA in Arsenal magazine like 'Is anti-fascism just an excuse for a punch-up? and 'Why do we want ex-nazis in our movement?'*

### ARA responds to 'Fighting words' (extracts)

As a former neo-nazi turned anti-fascist I work with ARA because it's one of the few organizations that has a realistic approach to combating fascism on the street level. That is, ARA has the guts to stand and physically fight if that's what it takes. However, to '...question whether people are attracted on the basis of physical fighting ability rather than political agreement.' is downright insulting to ex-nazis such as myself who've since joined the ranks of the militant anti-fascist and anarchist movement.

The fact that I was a working-class recruit into the radical right only shows the failure of liberalism and most 'revolutionary' leftist groups who, unlike the fascists, fail to speak to working class youth about issues effecting them like unemployment, falling wages, skyrocketing rent and the generally bleak future for working class youth in today's society.

If anything I would argue that the 'admitted flow' of ex-nazis into militant anti-fascist groups is a sign that those groups' politics, strategy and tactics are seen as effective by people who've been on the other side.

I personally have more faith in people sticking around anti-fascism for the long haul if they come from a background where they can understand why some working class youth see the radical right as a viable alternative to the status quo rather than middle class people who are 'anti-fascist' for altruistic reasons or because nazis are 'bad'.

Anti-Fascism must not be just about physically stopping the fascists from marching, rallying and organizing, it must also fight for real issues that affect working class youth and present an alternative to the status quo, discredited leftist groups and Fascist organizations. Locally ARA has close working relationships with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, the Black Action Defense Committee and other organizations that are taking on the poverty, racism and police brutality in Toronto.

For myself and many others in ARA that alternative is anarchism. While ARA is a non-sectarian group with a variety of political tendencies you really don't have to look too hard to find people in ARA involved with explicitly anarchist projects, usually those on the cutting edge of militancy. An excellent example would be the Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc in Washington DC last April. Much of the 1000 strong bloc of anarchists consisted of affinity groups from ARA chapters. The decentralized and autonomous structure of the ARA network is another example of strong anarchist participation in ARA. [...]

In anti-fascist and anarchist solidarity,  
Mike Donovan, ARA Toronto.

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*From North America's North Eastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists another explanation of why anarchists can and must challenge fascism. It's important for restating why we fight fascism, but also for looking at the bigger picture: fascism is not the only enemy we face.*



## **For A World Without Fascism**

### **What Is Fascism?**

Fascism is a failed movement that recruits from among the petty bourgeois, who fear the loss of their petty privileges in times of economic uncertainty; among the class traitors of cops and prison guards, and among the desperate unemployed who believe their only salvation will come through violent scapegoating of other members of the working class. Fascism forges a cross-class alliance in order to launch a distorted attack upon the existing capitalist state, not to abolish it, but to seize it. It violently reorganizes society to serve new parasitic state classes of warriors and administrators. It stops not at simply taking control of the state, but attempts to integrate the entirety of culture and capital into a military hierarchy with a racist caste system.

Fascism taps into the anger against the rich and distorts it. It glorifies the iron fist of the military and scorns the velvet glove of corporate executives and politicians. The anger is turned against immigrants and women. It feeds on envy of the rich. For the fascists, power should not be based on stock holdings and votes, it should be based on blood and fire.

Fascism's patriarchy redefines women not as the property of individual men, but as a resource of the state on the margins of a male society. It spurns the ruling class as soft, and raises patriarchal violence and machismo as ideal.

Its economy is driven by imperialism: war, looting and enslavement. It removes its members from the menial drudgery of everyday work or the poverty of unemployment, super-elevating them into a new ruling class of repression, while forcing the labor of women, colonial prisoners and slaves. It is a form of extreme capitalism, which only comes into the mainstream in the context of a crisis of capitalism, and the loss of legitimacy of the ruling elite.

The totalitarian vision of fascists often resonates with the many statists who wish to unbind their hands from the pretense of 'democratic' government and civil liberties. Like the right-wing death squads of Latin America and the night riders of the Klu Klux Klan, militias are a great temptation to those states that have to deal with the crisis of capitalism. Likewise, the local bourgeoisie is often willing to foot the bill, when they find the global new world order unresponsive to their petty problems.

This is why the capitalists turn towards fascists in emergencies, but then must fight to maintain their own control. Fascism is a creation of the irreconcilable contradictions of capitalism, and can not be simply reduced to a lackey of the established order.

The fascism of white racists, is a threat to any 'non-white' people, the movement of the working classes, and genuine social revolution. It is a threat of false dreams, of real bullets and factories of genocide for those who it deems 'inferior' or a threat to 'the nation' or the 'white race'...

### **Why Confront Them?**

Fascist organizations, like the National Alliance, do not persuade people with savvy arguments of racial superiority. They persuade them with demonstrations of strength. Fascist ideology has long gone hand in hand with the might of the fist, the club, and the gun.

The National Alliance uses large demonstrations such as the one they are planning on August 24th [2002, in Washington DC], to give their followers a feeling of power and control, a sense of military-like strength, and to legitimize themselves as a serious organization. Acts of violence against their declared enemies (people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, Jews, queer people, anarchists, etc) often follow these demonstrations. [...] For these reasons, fascists must not be allowed to use demonstrations as a tool for recruitment and empowerment. As revolutionary anarchists, we cannot allow this simplistic, yet effective organizing tool to remain unchallenged. This is why confrontation is necessary.

However, purely reactive strategies only assist the fascists. There are strategic questions that must be answered when we engage against the National Alliance on August 24th. What does this confrontation mean and how do we as anarchists take our message of anti-fascism out of an activist ghetto and into the minds and hearts of the working class? Who are we targeting when we engage in this confrontation? What tactics do we utilize against the National Alliance?

First, we must understand that to defeat fascism means hard work within our communities. As a federation NEFAC has prioritized participation around the issues of housing, poverty, and the workplace. These are the struggles that we are engaged in as class-struggle anarchists. It is our strategy that participation and intervention in these struggles, from an anarchist-communist viewpoint, will help radicalize them as well as many people in our class that we fight alongside in our neighborhoods and workplaces and that it will build a strong multi-racial movement capable of defeating the fascists. Slowly building a base for a truly mass revolutionary anarchist movement capable of defeating not only fascist organizations but also the combined forces of capital and the state. [...]

When we confront the National Alliance, we are also communicating with the white working class. We are showing them that fascism is a path that is far too dangerous to travel down and that there is a strong movement that opposes racist ideology. We do this in several ways. We must engage with members of our class in regards to what the National Alliance means to our communities and work towards politicizing our neighbors, co-workers, friends and family with the anarchist ideal. We must unceasingly work against the white supremacy that underpins our society. We must tactically engage in physical confrontations with the National Alliance and other hate-mongers at every opportunity. Crucially, even though we currently a mostly white organization, we must build principled links with communities and organizations of people of color, and engage in common struggle together against the fascists.

Thus, confrontation means principled support for all members of our class disenfranchised by capitalism and the articulation of anarchist solutions to the systemic imbalances we face. The class war is won or lost on the ability of the disenfranchised to unite against our common enemies. We must refuse to allow white supremacy to continue dividing the working class and carry out a meaningful dialogue within our class as to why racist and fascist beliefs are a dead end for the working class and why an anarchist social revolution is a goal to fight for. Confrontation also means being able to physically engagement with



fascists in the streets. When they feel strong and safe, they become emboldened. When they feel emboldened, violence ensues. When they are physically driven from the streets they lose their sense of power and become disenchanted with their organizations.

Without wide dissemination of anarchist beliefs, strategies and goals, we leave the opportunity wide open for organizations like the National Alliance to spread their message within the general populace. Another vision for the world must be available and argued for.

What is the solution to fascism?

Anarchist social revolution!

North Eastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC) / Fédération des Communistes Libertaires du Nord-Est August 2002

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*Fascism does not only exist in North America and Western Europe. Here the Russian anarchist paper Avtonom talks about the limitations of some of the groups supposedly fighting fascism there.*

### **So Anti-fascism Is Trendy Now**

Beating up fascist scum has become a rather popular entertainment among youth of different nationalities in Russian cities. Kremlin spin-doctors also read *Avtonom*, and concluded that anti-fascism has some perspective for them. So the president's former youth organization 'Idushie Vmeste' ('We walk together') was replaced with a storm trooper organization 'Nashi' ('Ours'), which defines fascism as it is traditionally defined in Russia – any 'traitor', that is, anybody who is not in the interests of the current political power is a fascist. Right now, this means first of all liberals and Bolsheviks. [...]

The liberal public made much noise about the foundation of Nashi, but hysterical liberals do not understand, that Nashi will exist just as long as business is forced to channel them funding. In a year or two, they will be replaced by some new bullshit, in order to distract attention from what is really going on in the country.

But we must admit, that until then Nashi does have some capacity to create an atmosphere of fear and violence in society, as was already proven by a couple of attacks against opposition youth organizations. Representatives of Nashi announce that their organization will solve the problem of fascism 'not by means of confrontation, but by means of re-education...' they plan to 'give children a good time with sports', so that 'they won't have time for pogroms anymore'. Indeed, the nationalist movement is now in such a crisis, that in 3 years they have not been able to organize a single major pogrom in Moscow without the aid of sections of the political elite – as proven by the paid pogrom of Tsaritsyno marketplace in October of 2001 (which got undercover support from Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic party that is a Kremlin puppet). The riot after the Russia-Japan football game in June of 2002 was most likely paid for as well, hundreds of football hooligans, some with Molotov cocktails were invited to the city center guarded by few dozen coppers. Anti-terrorist legislation was passed smoothly after the event – only after the Dubrovka hostage crisis authorities did not need provocations anymore. Finances and training camps provided

by Nashi may well help the nationalist movement to reach out from their current dead-end. And refusing an offer to cooperate with the Kremlin may land you to serious trouble with law enforcement, as more than one football hooligan has learned in Moscow recently.

And it is not only power whom anti-fascism attracts these days. A couple of years ago, one of the founders of anti-fascist and anarchist 'Skinhead revolution' website got a phone call from state energy monopoly RAO EES. 'Hello, we want you to become the youth section of SPS'. That is Union of Right-Wing Forces, ultra neo-liberal party, the unofficial leader of which is main organizer of 90's economic shock therapy Anatoly Chubais, probably most hated man in Russia. 'We're offering you a lot of money'. Proposition was turned down, for reasons this high-ranking functionary could not quite get: 'You do not understand, we're offering you a LOT of money...'

And calls for cooperation often come from opportunists of much lesser ranks as well, such as human rights NGO's, Trotskyites, youth organizations of various political parties... usually this is a sign, that they got a chance to get some grant for 'anti-fascist activity', and they need some hands to do the work for it. But usually this commitment to anti-fascism disappears just as suddenly as it appeared, especially if they are visited by 50 lads from the opposite camp, armed with iron bars.

But fascism is not a counter pole of parliamentary democracy, for which liberals are rallying for – they are two sides of the same coin. Totalitarianism and parliamentary democracy are merely two different ways to administer the state under capitalism. From the point of view of capital, both ways have their good and bad sides. Parliamentary democracy is indeed more able to regulate conflicts between interest groups in society. But usually everyone ends up content only after having their piece of cake, which means increasing wages and public expenses, which requires further economic growth, which in turn requires more intensive exploitation of workers, natural resources, animals and 'less developed' countries. But at times, this intensification reaches its limits, and economic crisis begins.

And in condition of economic crisis, it is sometimes more effective to switch to fascism, since it provides the state with a wider variety of means to suppress protests. But since fascism is in a constant need of internal and external enemies, in a longer run it leads to endless war and is a very unstable system. This is why nowadays the majority of economical and political elites of the world are in favor of parliamentary democracy with some elements of fascism, such as 'anti-terrorist' legislation, storing biometrical information on citizens, video surveillance everywhere, TV broadcasting completely concentrated in the hands of the state or huge corporations loyal to it. But there is no doubt, that these elites are always ready to switch from parliamentary democracy to fascism if necessary – and in the high-tech society of today it will be easier than ever.

Thus fascism will always be an element of capitalism, especially in times of economic crisis, and the destruction of fascism is impossible without the destruction of capitalism. It was those very liberals, who facing the 'communist threat' gave power to Mussolini in 1922 and to Hitler in 1933, without breaking a single law. In Italy, liberals were even in a common government with Mussolini for a while. On the 3rd of May 1937 in Barcelona,



the Republicans failed to crush the workers – while police managed to take over the city center, anarcho-syndicalists from the CNT and internationalist Marxists from the POUM still held working class districts of the city. But what the republican government could not win by means of war, it won by means of politics – under the slogan of ‘anti-fascist unity’, anarcho-syndicalists put down their arms.

And just a few weeks after the de-facto capitulation of anarchists to bourgeois democracy, a hunt after all enemies of Stalinism began. Security services were founded according to the model of the Soviet NKVD, voluntary militias were merged into the regular army, the Stalinist Lister moved to crush communes in Aragon... The Soviet arms of the republic were not worse than the German arms of the falangists, it is impossible to explain defeat of the republic in military terms only. In 1939, the process of foundation of a totalitarian state with Bolshevik methods was finished, and workers just saw no any reason to wage war for a regime, which did not really differ from its enemy. The reason for the defeat of the Bolshevik variant of ‘anti-fascism’ in Germany and Spain of the 30’s is simple – it is too hard to see the difference between it and fascism itself.

Thus, there are plenty of different kinds of anti-fascism. The only thing that anti-fascism may never be is ‘apolitical’, because it is impossible to be against something, without being for something else. And who does not propose any real alternatives to fascism, in the end only rallies to the existing order, to whom switching from parliamentary democracy to fascism and back is always just a pragmatical choice of the right moment.

Our anti-fascism is every torn up fascist sticker, every swastika and Celtic cross painted over, every broken nazi face. It is the opposite of any hierarchies, the opposite of everything that Nazism and capitalism represent, the opposite of any orders. It is love, in a struggle against hate. It is not a vanguard of the toughest fighters, because bravery is not equal with conscience. It does not play by rules, because racist murderers of 6-year-old children have their own rules too. There is no any central command – only solidarity. Our anti-fascism does not need finances from liberals, no help from Bolsheviks or mafia – we ask nothing from them, because we do not live for power, but for freedom.

from Avtonom #25 (2005)

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*Here’s a discussion (late 2005, each in their personal capacity) between somebody from the Kate Sharpley Library, a member of Class War (from the UK) and a North American comrade connected with ‘Three Way Fight’, an anti-fascist web log.*

## **Anti-fascism Now**

### **KSL: What’s your background in anti-fascism?**

**CW:** I got involved with the anti-fascist movement after moving to London in 1992. I saw the ‘Battle of Waterloo’ on TV and thought – I want to be involved in that!

I wrote off to AFA a couple of times, but never got a reply. By that time I had joined Class War, and I just got involved in stuff from there. Usually we would just tag along on events organised by other anti-fascists – usually AFA if it was an action, but we would do

our own thing around East London, or tag along with what used to be quite a big group of non-aligned anti-fascists around East London.

By the time AFA was coming to an end in the UK, I was convinced that a range of tactics was needed against fascism, and that direct action would need to be an option in any strategy. I was briefly involved with the No Platform group, and when that petered out I was one of the people who formed Antifa.

**SWF:** After several years of being active in punk and skinhead circles I came to see that radical anti-authoritarian politics had to be intersecting with a broader layer of people outside of a sub-cultural scene. I started doing Anarchist Black Cross work and got behind the support for an antifascist who was being charged with assault on a Nazi. The Anti Fascist Defense Committee (AFDC) had been created in Minneapolis, Minnesota by various anarchists and anti-racists. Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation was also a key publicizer of the case and defense, with the defendant being a L&R member, as well as having been one of the founders of ARA in the late 1980’s. This defense campaign was around 1993.

With the ABC we were both supporting active militants (like in the case of the AFDC) as well as long time political prisoners (many of whom were Black/New African, Puerto Rican, and Native American/Indigenous). This work was a way to open up dialogue around the whole prison system concept and how ‘law and order’ had, and continues to be, a mechanism for social control, and within the context of the United States, disproportionately affecting poor people and people of color.

The ABC was a positive way of showing radical anarchist politics in motion. By working in united fronts with other groups we would bring our perspectives into the mix and by doing that hopefully contribute to the building of ourselves and our movement by being seen as committed, principled, and serious.

It was around this time that several anarchists and ABC groups started to develop relationships with Lorenzo Komboa Ervin. His book *Anarchism and the Black Revolution* had a real impact on many class struggle anti-racist anarchists. The fact that Ervin had also been involved with community (and personal) self-defense against White fascist attacks further cemented the link between militant anti-racism, class struggle politics, and revolutionary anarchism.

I had moved to Chicago, Illinois by now and through the ABC was working on different anti-police brutality, anti-prison, and anti-gentrification projects. The work was not necessarily antifascist, but we were always trying to come from a politic that had critical perspectives based on race and class (as well as gender and age).

For some of us, our ABC work started closer collaborations with antifascist projects like ARA. Eventually, the ABC group I had been involved in kinda liquidated itself into ARA. I have been involved expressly with ARA or antifascist politics since then.

### **KSL: What are the roots of ARA? What have been its most notable successes?**

**SWF:** ARA formed in 1987 when there was a major rift in the skinhead scene between anti-racists and the White Power skins. ARA was created by the Baldies, a multi-racial skinhead



crew in Minneapolis. Originally ARA was to be a vehicle to build a larger anti-racist presence to take on the Nazis but it really remained a skinhead movement for the first couple years of it's life. The reputation of ARA and the Baldies got around the country and you started having ARA and anti-racist skinhead alliances form. The punk press like *Maximum Rock and Roll* magazine promoted ARA and reported on anti-nazi actions. Actually, *MRR* is where a lot of us in other parts of the country first heard about the Baldies and ARA, sometime around '87 and '88.

By the early 1990's ARA had morphed into a broader youth oriented movement. It was overwhelmingly anarchist, but had a political openness that prevented it from becoming an exclusionary sect. Also, it was a fighting movement and that really set it apart from much of the left who talked the game but failed to put the boot in.

During the 1990's ARA started to develop a more popular presence. Different chapters initiated projects ranging from anti-nazi activity, to attacking more institutionalized racism. This later aspect usually materialized as Cop Watch which was a way to monitor and disrupt police in our cities.

I would say that some of the success of ARA was that it was the largest antifascist movement in the US and Canada. During the 1990's I think it would be fair to say that ARA politicized hundreds of militants and had hundreds more gravitating to it, not necessarily part of a core, but forming the essential periphery. Around 1997 an easy estimate of ARA's numbers would be 1500-2000 people.

ARA had an uncompromising political edge as well as having a cultural aspect that attracted people. People felt like they were part of a real scene. Militants organized, traveled, and built a movement in a period when there was no internet (wow imagine that – ha!) We had a real network that was based on direct contact and relationships. You could travel to all kinds of cities and there would be an ARA crew to hook up with. More importantly, we were a direct challenge to racist and fascist groups who were trying to organize. Point one of ARA's unifying plank is:

'We Go Where They Go. Whenever the fascists are organizing or active in public were there. Never let the fascists have the streets!'

ARA took this seriously. All over the US and Canada from big cities to small towns, if the fascists were active, ARA would organize to shut them down and make it as difficult for them to function as we could. Obviously we had varying success. Sometimes we could smash the fash. Other times we would have to accept a defeat if we were outmanoeuvred and unable to take the ground. Even in those situations ARA tried to make an impact, but sometimes the battle was lost even if the war still went on.

Other instances saw ARA taking on the cops who would be mobilized to defend fascist gatherings. People wanted to get to the fascists and the wall of cops would become one more target of anger. You could have hundreds or thousands of people in some cities come out to protest the fascists. With these numbers you had all kinds of political agendas and perspectives mixing it up. ARA tried to relate to militant and working class anti-racists and ARA'ers would throw themselves into the thick of things. This got ARA recognized by a lot

of people. It kinda built a situation where you either loved ARA or hated it, but could never ignore it.

ARA was definitely a big part in making it impossible for some fascist groups from operating. Organizations like the fascist World Church of the Creator eventually could not operate publicly without massive police protection. Even their cadre became targets in their own neighborhoods. I would say that ARA contributed in a big way to the demise of several fascist operations.

### **KSL: What're you doing now?**

**SWF:** The US antifascist movement is at a low point currently. For good or bad, groups like ARA follow the same patterns as the fascists. When open fascists are active, so is ARA. When there is no fascist organizing, ARA just kinda flounders. This lack of consistency and the inability to articulate a broader program has lead several militants to step back and rethink our agenda.

I think that fascist groups, like left groups, have periods of growth and action, while also having periods where there is uncertainty over political direction and strategy. What I think is constant is Fascism as an ideology with the potential to pop up and take advantage of situations that have become socially and politically polarized, especially around race, economics and culture. Antifascists need to be developing a broad analysis that considers where the fascist trends could and will emerge.

Unfortunately, most antifascist organizing exists to just engage the fascists on a quasi-military basis. The strategic and more ideological considerations are dealt with on such a minimal basis that sometimes it seems that they are not there at all. I think there is a danger of retreating into our heads and getting so caught up in abstract theorizing that we become do nothing, but there is also a real tendency to just act without an accompanying analysis.

**CW:** There is a lot to do at the moment. Simply gathering intelligence and being aware of far-right strategy, groups and activists is an enormous task. Anti-fascists in the UK are re-grouping at the moment, at a time when the fascists have never been stronger in this country. We are playing catch up. On a personal level I have spent a lot of time this year studying far-right websites (both UK and US sites) and a lot of time training at the gym – feeding the brain and the body!

### **KSL: Fascism is shit – Is there anything else to say about it?**

**SWF:** I think many people look at fascism and say, 'What a load of crap. How could anyone really believe that stuff?' Even many antifascists look at the fascist movement as a joke, violent, but a joke. No doubt the fascist movements have their share of the knuckle-draggers, idiots, and the politically inept, but don't all movements have these types? I would actually say that in a real fascist movement, the more inept and foolish would be eliminated from the ranks. Fascism prides itself on ability, commitment, and sacrifice.

Fascist movements of the past were popular because they offered a total ideology with accompanying programs for action. Millions embraced fascism not because these people were stupid but because fascism provided a vision for social transformation amidst a time of international crisis. Fascism was able to mobilize masses of people.



I think this is important. The perspective I hold essentially sees fascism as a real movement of ideas that can draw people in and motivate them. It is a ideology and world view we are gonna have to compete with on more than a physical or military level.

**CW:** Fascism is a dynamic political ideology that seeks to appeal to all classes, to unite those classes within a strong state, under the control of a hierarchical elite. Usually race is a key component of fascism, and it is always staunchly anti-socialist, and opposed to any independent organisation of the working class. Fascism is usually opposed to internationalism, unless that internationalism is based on race.

**KSL:** What's the current state of North American fascism?

**3WF:** When talking about the North American fascist movement I would first say it is in flux and there are several competing political tendencies. To give an answer I would break it down into three basic categories. Admittedly, the categories I lay out are simplified and consequently overestimate some trends and neglect other factions that are smaller, more ideological, and represent a more dissident fascism. These groups are what we might call the 'Third Position'. A fuller elaboration would make a book. But nonetheless, I think the following breakdown gives an idea of what is here.

The first category is what I would call the Euro/White fascist block. This includes the National Alliance, The Creativity Movement (formerly called The World Church of the Creator), Aryan Nations, the various Nazi skinhead groups, the modern Ku Klux Klan, etc. Basically, those who trace their lineage back to White and European fascism and Hitlerian National Socialism.

Currently there are all kinds of rifts in these scenes. Several of the key leaders have died over the last few years and there has been a jockeying for power. I think one could also make the case that there has been a counter insurgency struggle being waged against the fascists by the US government in which there have been mysterious murders of nazi cadre by cops or the imprisonment of fascists on trumped charges. There is activity in the nazi circles but I think many groups are going through a process of regroupment.

The second block are not outright 'fascist' (and because of their Americanism some factions may claim an 'anti-fascism' and have an anti-racist platform based on Christian fundamentalism), but are based around a more popular far-Right, conservative, religious, and US Nationalist politic. There can be crossover with the hard-core fascists, but this block is unique in that it's defined often as an ultra-conservative movement that still seeks to preserve the United States as a nation, albeit a White dominated and Christian nation. Another major political characteristic of this block is that it is isolationist and wants to remove the US from global affairs. I would say that this is a rather significant block in the US. If there is a deepening social crisis it could emerge as the strongest organized political tendency in opposition to the current two party electoral system. Anti-immigration and vigilante groups, rural militias, and sections of the activist anti-Choice movement would be included here. One important difference between this block and the out-and-out fascists is on the issue of revolution. Most neo-Nazis are for social revolution and the destruction of the US, this goes against the sensibilities of the ultra-conservatives. Though under the right

social circumstances the conservatives could see the need for what amounts to a radical authoritarian 'regeneration' of US society. Political ideologues like Pat Buchanan and his journal, *The American Conservative*, could be considered an articulate voice in this block, though not necessarily the dominant one.

The last block is the wild card and has yet to materialize on any mass level, although the potentials for its emergence are present. Before laying this out I want to make clear that in this situation a blanket labeling of fascism has it's problems. Nonetheless, certain characteristics are similar to fascism and any discussion demands serious attention and an analysis of this block's authoritarian nature. I would consider this section to be based in the disorganized and marginalized masses of poor and working people. I would say that what could emerge are ultra authoritarian social movements that are male-centric, militarized, religious based, and insurgent.

These movements are not restricted to White/Euro culture, quite the opposite. Outside of the US, Hamas, the Sadrists in Basra, and the Al-Qaeda network are the most glaring examples of non-socialist, non-liberatory ideologically driven movements. Hamas, which has a strong presence in Gaza, has actual geographic space to define and control. They also have mass support due to their willingness to fight Israel and their development of social aid programs in their controlled areas. Now, the just mentioned groups have developed in their own unique sphere but I think that not so dissimilar situations could develop here. If a revolutionary 'left' opposition does not materialize in the States that is made up of and shaped by the oppressed, then more reactionary forms will emerge in that void. This position is controversial because it denies the view that the oppressed will necessarily form a left opposition to the State.

Here in the States there are vast armed criminal associations operating in the poor and people of color communities. These organizations may have links with elements of the government and cops, but they still have a relative autonomy that I think could provide the basis for an insurgent and authoritarian reaction against the State if there was a social shift in which resources and power were at stake.

Because I define three basic (and simplified blocks) I want to say also that this means there has to be different approaches to each. We can't treat these movements in the same fashion. Fascism, and a more broad authoritarianism, is complex and our interactions with it can't be static.

**KSL:** Can you say a bit more about the 'a three way fight' idea? As I understand it, it's that the fascists are not necessarily an arm of the current ruling class.

**3WF:** In a way I already touched on this. The idea of the 'Three Way Fight' breaks down like this: First, the State and the capitalist ruling classes. Next, you have the insurgent forces from below who are fighting for their own vision and are autonomous from the State. This is where it gets drawn out into the sides. One force are the authoritarians. This would be fascists and the authoritarian socialists. In the other corner, you have us, the revolutionary anti-capitalist and libertarian left.

Now, these lines are not always neat and clear. This perspective doesn't think Marxists



and Leninists are fascists. And it doesn't claim that the libertarian/anti-authoritarian left is free from mistakes and contradictions. What we think is that for our side, we are gonna be competing ideologically and on the ground with more than the State. We don't consider there to be a simple dichotomy of 'Us and Them', it's much more complicated. The authoritarian left suffered much discredit after the demise of the USSR, and with the rise of the 'anti-globalization' movement there has been a new wave of radical and popular anti-authoritarian politics. But all this can shift. There is no reason to think that authoritarian and Stalinized politics can't make a come back, just as there is no reason to assume anti-authoritarian politics will progress and become the dominant political trend within the struggle against the State.

We must be offering perspectives and engaging in practice that is rooted in a radical libertarian and socialist vision. Not that everything we do has to have a big circle A stamped on it, but we have to be critical about strategy and political trends. Like I said before, if a revolutionary anti-authoritarian tendency is not present then more authoritarian politics will develop in that void.

You would think that this perspective is evident in anarchism, but I don't think it is, at least not in North America. Fascism as an opposition is often underestimated or revolutionaries think when times get tough and that there is a radical challenge to the State, then it will ultimately coalesce a left opposition. I don't hold that view, I think history points to something much more heterogeneous.

#### **KSL: What's the current state of British fascism?**

**CW:** The way in which fascism adapts to a changing political climate, and its ability to move with the times, is remarkable when you compare it to the dinosaurs of the last century left (and at times the anarchist movement) Having punched below its weight for 50 years, British fascism has now got its act together.

Look at the way the British National Party have attempted to organise in South Yorkshire. They have spoken about contemporary issues – the rise of Islam, the changes brought about by asylum and the effect on social services, the corruption of long term Labour Councils – and the left is all too often wittering on about Palestine, or the miners defeat of 20 years ago. They are attempting to fill the vacuum.

Secondly, I think the international links that fascist groups in Europe/North America have developed put the links of European & US anti-fascists to shame. We need to up our game.

In the UK the fascists who have adapted to society have prospered politically (look at Nick Griffin) whilst those who are stuck in the old anti-semitic conspiracy theories have either stagnated, or are reliant on the arrival of recruits disillusioned with the populist approach of the 'new' BNP.

Nick Griffin's masterstroke was removing the BNP's commitment to compulsory repatriation of all non-whites. The policy was ridiculous (on many levels!) and removing it meant quite a few of the old nazi nutters left the BNP. With that policy gone, people who may have the odd black friend, get on well with the staff in their local Chinese or fancy the Asian woman in the corner shop, could vote BNP without feeling they are necessarily

sending such people off to the gas chambers.

The second element in the rise of fascism in this country is entirely external, and is something that quite possibly anti-fascists can do next to nothing about. The rise of militant Islam is something outwith this interview, but the reality is that what has happened in many Muslim societies over the past 20-30 years, and what people see in some Muslim communities in Britain, scares the living daylights out of them.

This issue, and the third element, the poor levels of integration between British Muslims and other communities, has not been seriously addressed by the British political establishment. It is being addressed by the fascists. It is now being addressed by the old left, in the shape of the Respect Unity Coalition, who's message is basically 'Don't Criticise the Muslims'. Things may get worse before they get better, especially if there are more suicide bombings by British Muslims.

#### **KSL: Has the 'War on terror' had much effect?**

**3WF:** I think it has put fear into a lot of radicals and made mass work difficult. The state is definitely operating with more repressive tactics. There is also massive propaganda that says: 'You're with America or you're against America.' There are actually media reports around that say that in addition to foreign born terrorists, there are home grown terrorists which included White Supremacists, Anarchists, and radical environmental groups like the ELF/ALF. In some ways, as the war in Iraq gets further drawn out, people are becoming disenchanted with it. There is a growing anti-war movement and this is collapsing the notion of loyalty to the current government. People are feeling more emboldened to speak out. This may open up more space for dialogue and radical voices.

**CW:** It has been a disaster for race relations in the UK. It has driven communities further apart, something that the US/UK political establishment is probably unconcerned about, and something the likes of Bin Laden, and British Muslim extremists would be delighted about.

When polarisation occurs, people take sides. And every time a British Muslim is seen talking about Jihad, or praising those fighting the US/UK troops in Iraq or Afghanistan, it is another stack load of votes and donations for the BNP.

#### **KSL: What does the militant anti-fascist movement need to do to win?**

**3WF:** Big question that I don't have a good answer for.

I think most importantly we have to be engaging in struggles beyond just anti-fascist street battles. I think that we need to have monitoring groups and be keeping tabs on the various fascist fronts, but our challenge to fascism may be in broader arenas. I think we're gonna be in combat with fascist politics (both openly and quasi-fascist) around immigration struggles and when doing anti-U.S. war work.

Also, we can't just see fascism as a White/Euro politic. It goes deeper and is international. We have to be accessing the various opposition movements and be critical of what, how, and who we support. Some may think that those fighting US/British Imperialism in Iraq or Afghanistan are deserving of unconditional support, but what are these groups' politics? Do we want to give support to movements that are anti-woman, anti-queer, authoritarian, and against popular participatory politics? I would say no. But for some these



questions are irrelevant.

I think we have to really maintain an antifascist outlook at all times. Anti-fascism is a total politic, not just one for when were on the streets fighting nazi skins.

**CW:** To win we have to know our enemy, beat our enemy and replace our enemy.

I am not sure if we have a militant anti-fascist movement, and I am not sure we want to style ourselves as 'militant'. I have always said I am a moderate – its the people who want to compromise with the fascists who are extreme!

**KSL:** Finally, what's the best advice you can give someone new to the movement, on how to fight against fascism and for a free society?

**3WF:** Think, be critical, and don't look at debate and analysis as something unrelated to our struggle. However, don't let the complicated questions prevent you and your movement from action. The political situation changes and may call for new strategies; talk it over with those who seem serious and are interested in your ideas. And the last thing, think with security on your mind. Be smart, be cautious, don't jump in without some plans.

**CW:** Know the sort of world you want. Know your enemy and remember this – we have to beat the fascists every time, they only have to beat us once. If they come into power, we are dead and buried. Literally.

#### Further reading: a very short list.

A Revista Anarchica. *Red Years Black Years: Anarchist Resistance to Fascism in Italy* de Agostini, Mauro (etc). *Prisoners & Partisans: Italian Anarchists vs. Fascism* Anarchy Magazine. 'Searchlight and the State' (available at [www.katesharpleylibrary.net](http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net)) Antifa. [www.antifa.org.uk](http://www.antifa.org.uk)

*Antifa Forum* back issues (published by Anti-Fascist Forum, Toronto)

Anti-Racist Action. <http://www.anti-racist-action.org/> and *ARA Research Bulletin* Bullstreet, K. *Bash the Fash: Anti-fascist recollections 1984-1993*

Cresciani, Gianfranco. *The proletarian migrants: fascism and Italian anarchists in Australia* (available at <http://www.takver.com/history/italian.htm>)

Cresciani, Gianfranco. *Fascism, anti-fascism, and Italians in Australia, 1922-1945* *Fighting Talk* back issues. (published by Anti-Fascist Action, UK)

Guerin, Daniel. *Fascism and Big business*

Hamerquist, Don (etc). *Confronting Fascism: Discussion Documents for a Militant Movement* (see also: <http://www.kersplebedeb.com/mystuff/books/fascism.html>)

Hann, Dave and Steve Tilzey. *No Retreat*

Hewetson, John. *Italian Workers Against fascism* (Previously called *Italy after Mussolini*)

McGowan, Rory. 'Claim No Easy Victories: An Anarchist Analysis of ARA and its Contributions to the Building of a Radical Anti-Racist Movement' (*Northeastern Anarchist* and also available at [http://www.anarkismo.net/newswire.php?story\\_id=327](http://www.anarkismo.net/newswire.php?story_id=327))

No Pasaran. <http://www.libcom.org/features/nopasaran/>

Three Way Fight. <http://threewayfight.blogspot.com/>

#### Mauro de Agostini Prisoners & Partisans: Italian Anarchists in the struggle against Fascism

Essays on early anti-fascist combat groups, trying to kill Mussolini, partisan operations in the war and post-war assaults on the fascists. 1-873605-47-1 £3 (£2 subscribers)

#### K. Bullstreet Bash the Fash! Anti-fascist recollections 1984-1993

No-punches pulled account of Anti-Fascist Action's fight against fascism in Britain by a grassroots anarchist member of AFA. 1-873605-87-0 £3 (£2 subscribers)

#### Dawn Collective Under the Yoke of the State: Selected Anarchist Responses to Prison and Crime, v.1.

Personal reflections from the Haymarket frame-up to the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, and essays on crime. 1-873605-48-X £5 (£3 subscribers)

#### Miguel García Looking back after Twenty years of Jail: Q & A on the Spanish Anarchist Resistance

Explanation of how Spanish anarchists fought on against Franco and fascism after 1939. With an appreciation from the Kate Sharpley Library. 1-873605-03-X £3 (£1.50 subscribers)

#### Miguel Garcia Unknown Heroes: biographies of Anarchist resistance fighters

Meet "Burnt Face," "Bread Swallow" and "The Catalan" – just a few of the Anarchist militants of the resistance to Franco. Tributes to fallen comrades from one who very nearly joined them. 1-873605-83-8 £3 (£2 subscribers.)

#### Anna Key (ed.)

#### No War But The Class War: Libertarian anti-militarism Then & Now

110 years of anti-militarist propaganda, from Spain's last imperialist adventure in 1893, through the First World War right up to the 'War on Terror'. 1-873605-13-7 £3 (£2 post free subscribers)

#### Antonio Téllez

#### The Anarchist Resistance to Franco

Biographical portraits & photographs of anarchists who fought in the second wave of resistance against Franco at the end of the Spanish Civil War.

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