

"At which point in this continuous tradition of confrontation do you draw the line and say physical opposition to fascism is no longer acceptable?"

HEROES OR VILLAINS?



£2.00

ANTI-FASCIST ACTION

Front Cover: Attack on N.F. meeting, Charlton, South East London 1987

This pamphlet is dedicated to the memories of:

CHARLIE GOODMAN

MICKEY FENN

**who between them took part in or witnessed
many of the events related herein and who
provided an inspiration to anti-fascists
everywhere.**



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HEROES OR VILLAINS?

INTRODUCTION

When a London Labour Council banned AFA from holding its International Conference in October 1997, one of the points that struck us was the sheer hypocrisy of this action. Camden Council's main argument was that AFA was prepared to use force against the fascists, and yet, prominently displayed in Camden Town Hall is a plaque that "commemorates the volunteers who set off from this Borough to fight in the International Brigade and citizens of this Borough who supported the Spanish Republic in the fight against fascism." What Camden Council had done, supported by sections of the press, was to set itself up as the arbiter of what constitutes 'anti-fascism'.

The use of force against fascism is somehow acceptable when it happens in the past or in another country - it can even be heroic - but in the present day it must be condemned. The dishonest argument is that "things were different then" but at a time when the Far Right are stronger right across Europe than at any time since the end of the Second World War - this 'revisionism' must be exposed for what it is. The proud tradition of anti-fascism is being hijacked by right-wing anti-working class politicians.

The fight against fascism, like any other progressive struggle, always brings people into conflict with the State and its laws. In Britain in the 1930s anti-fascists broke the law and used violence against the Blackshirts. Were they wrong? Many people look back on the events at Cable Street in 1936 through rose-tinted spectacles and salute the courage of the people who stopped Mosley marching through the East End. Most of the fighting was in fact against the police. Many anti-fascists went to fight in Spain against Franco. You can't get more violent than killing people, but to many people the International Brigaders were heroes. What about the 43 Group's very violent and effective campaign against the re-emergence of the fascists immediately after the end of the War? In the 1960s new National Socialist groups emerged and were met head on by the 62 Group. Should they be condemned? In the 1970s the National Front were confronted wherever they organised by local anti-fascist committees and the ANL, the clash at Lewisham being the most famous example. AFA was set up in the 1980s to continue the fight, destroying the NF and preventing Blood & Honour operating openly. In the 1990s the BNP were driven off the streets and forced to change tactics. At which point in this continuous tradition of confrontation do you draw the line and say physical opposition to fascism is no longer acceptable?

The purpose of this pamphlet is to illustrate the fact that the use of physical force against fascism has always been an effective and necessary tactic. There is nothing glamorous about violence, and this pamphlet is not designed to glorify it in any way. We simply show how anti-fascists have always had to physically oppose fascism. The situations are all very familiar to anyone involved in the anti-fascist movement, whether it be a fight in Liverpool in the 30s or a clash in London in the 80s. Bearing in mind we have all witnessed what fascism in power produces it is hardly surprising that anti-fascists reserve the right to take whatever action is necessary in order to prevent it returning. All the examples in this pamphlet took place in the course of the anti-fascist struggle in Britain, from the 1930s up to the end of the 80s, with the exception of three incidents from the Spanish Civil War which involved British volunteers who had been active in the anti-fascist movement at home beforehand. They simply took their anti-fascist politics to a logical conclusion. (The Spanish examples have been included next to the relevant person's activity in Britain - not chronologically like the others.)

Let's be clear what fascism is. It is a violent ultra-conservative doctrine that first came to power in Italy in 1922. It was in 1920, after two years of intense working class struggle had been betrayed by the liberal Left, that the fascist reign of terror began. As the armed fascist militias set about murdering key figures in the working class movement and destroying their printing presses and other facilities, the political equivalent of today's Camden Council undermined the very real (and armed) resistance that existed to fight the fascist onslaught. The leaders of the Socialist Party and the trade unions condemned the violence of the fascists and the anti-fascists, to the extent of signing a (one-sided) peace treaty with the Fascists in 1921, so while the fascists continued to butcher working class militants, including rank-and-file Socialists, organised and effective opposition was actively undermined and denounced as illegal. Predictably the State was called on to deal with the problem, even though the Italian State was directly involved in arming and training the fascist death squads. This cowardice led to the deaths of thousands of anti-fascists and Mussolini taking power.

The fascists first gained power in Italy in 1922 because they physically wiped out their most committed political opponents, so for 'anti-fascists' today to condemn the use of force against the Far Right is, in fact, not anti-fascism at all. It is a recipe for disaster as the Italian experience clearly shows. Elsewhere in Europe a similar political line is taken against militant anti-fascists. In Denmark, around the same time that AFA was being banned from the Irish Centre, a leading Danish paper 'Politiken' argued, "That the anti-nazis oppose a violent ideology with real violence is the political problem." So anti-fascists are the real problem, not the fascists. Their alternative to effective anti-fascism is one that has failed time and time again; "we must always be able - in one and the same breath - to allow the nazis their civil rights and to condemn

them for the callous misanthropists they are." Have these people learnt nothing from history, or is the reality that they are more concerned about the threat to the status quo that a strong independent working class movement poses than that from the ultra-conservatives of the Far Right? What we need to do is define 'anti-fascism' not as a state of mind or a moral issue but a political strategy that can defeat fascism. It is obvious that Camden's Labour Council are not fascists, but by the same token they are not anti-fascists.

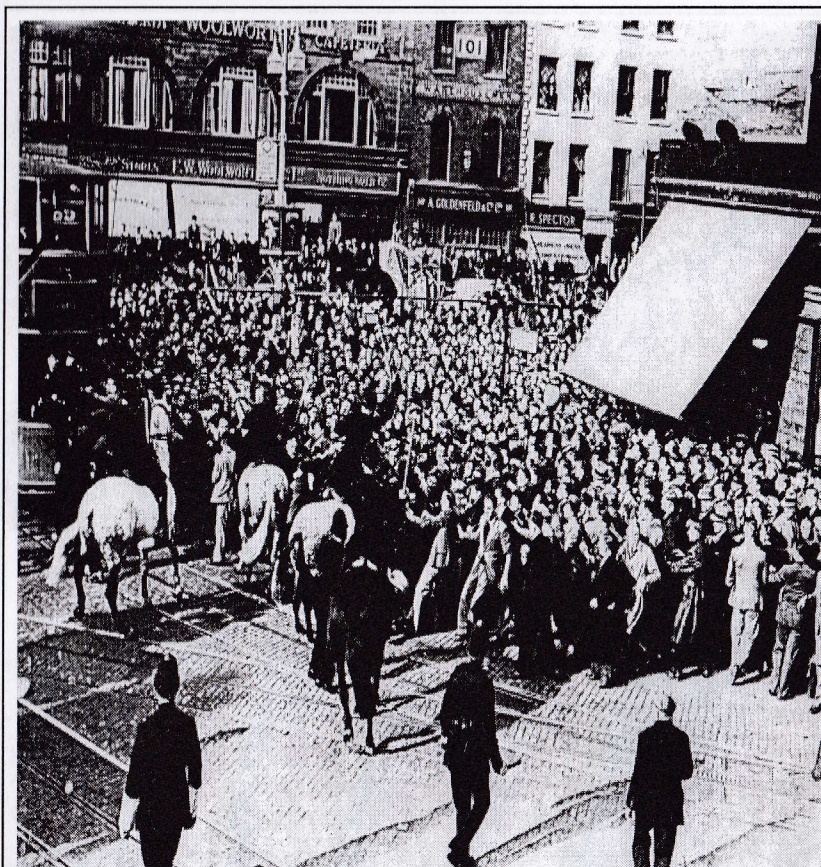
The tradition of anti-fascism is being claimed by the very people who follow in the political footsteps of the Italian liberals and reformists who actually undermined the anti-fascist resistance in 1921; who were part of the British government that abandoned the Spanish anti-fascists in 1936 by refusing to send arms even though Hitler and Mussolini had no such reservations; who have always come down on the wrong side when working class interests are at stake because they have their feet firmly under the Establishment's table. In other words the tradition of anti-fascism is being claimed by those who have betrayed the cause of anti-fascism throughout history.

At a time when fascism is very much back on the agenda the last thing we need is confusion. If people can be persuaded that anti-fascism means calling on the State to deal with the problem and confrontation is not necessary then once again this leaves the field clear for the fascists to grow unopposed. This strategy has failed before so what on earth makes anyone believe it will work now? In Nazi Germany there were many brave liberals and even conservatives who were involved in anti-fascist resistance activities once Hitler had taken power, and there is no doubt that should a similar situation occur the same sort of people would work against fascism. But the point is that we need to prevent the fascists ever getting back into power. In Italy, Spain and Germany the fascists didn't walk into power unopposed. They were fiercely contested by the organised working class militants who the fascists were set up to smash, and while it is not our intention here to examine the details of what went wrong, it certainly is this area that holds the key. In all these instances anti-fascists were prepared to fight and only lost because of betrayals or mistakes. There was nothing inevitable about it and if you study history you can clearly see how they could have won. So the strategy is the key, the difference between winning and losing. And part of the anti-fascist strategy has always been physical.

It is slightly ironic that this pamphlet has come out at a time when the physical struggle against fascism in this country is very quiet due to the fascists withdrawing from the streets. However, as they pursue their electoral strategy on the estates in working class areas it is inevitable that where they meet with some success the level of racial violence will increase. And as anti-fascists follow them into this arena and challenge them politically the potential for violent confrontation is enormous. Unless anti-fascists are prepared once

again to meet the challenge then a Far Right party could achieve in Britain what they have achieved in France, Austria, Germany and the rest. So now is the time to challenge the 'anti-fascist' revisionists who have nothing to offer the anti-fascist movement but failure and show how the proud tradition of physical confrontation against the fascists has been an important part of an effective anti-fascist strategy.

AFA will resist attempts to criminalise the anti-fascist movement at a time when the Far Right are looking to enter the political mainstream. To understand how the anti-fascist movement has succeeded in the past will help us to meet the challenges of the future.



THE THIRTIES





CABLE STREET 1936 - *Previous page*: mounted police charge anti-fascists at Gardiners Corner. **Above**: anti-fascists at the street barricades. **Below**: police charging into the crowd



THE THIRTIES

INTRODUCTION

In the 1930s, across the whole of Europe, the contest between fascism and the Left reached boiling point. Mussolini had come to power in Italy in 1922 and by 1933 Germany had fallen to the Nazis.

In 1936 General Franco led a fascist revolt against the Popular Front government in Spain leading to civil war. German and Italian forces were sent to assist the fascist rebellion, the German armed forces using Spain as a training ground to fine tune techniques that would be employed a few years later across the whole of Europe. Thousands of volunteers enrolled with the International Brigades, including over 2,000 from Britain, travelling to Spain to fight with the republican forces. Many were killed or injured.

Millions were unemployed in Europe. Economic depression and violent political struggle were the backdrop to events in Britain at this time. Prospects for the fascist and left-wing parties were partly dependent on securing a working class constituency.

This period of history did not lend itself to placard waving activities or liberal agendas. The stakes were very high with two possible outcomes, secure power or face political and possibly physical annihilation. No runners up.

Everywhere in Europe the outcome of any engagement between the two camps would depend on ideological struggle on one hand, but also a ruthless and determined physical confrontation. Sometimes at street level as in Germany and Britain. In Spain by all out war.

In Britain the first fascist organisation was the British Fascisti, modelled on Mussolini's Fascists, staffed by right-wing ex-army officers, many of whom had fought with the hated Black and Tans in Ireland. They had collapsed by 1926, their last order being to join the strike-breakers in the General Strike. In 1932 the British Union of Fascists (BUF) was set up by Sir Oswald Mosley, and they were active and building support in working class areas up and down the country as well as amongst elements of the British establishment.

In the 1930s fascism was considered a viable option by many in the British ruling class and the ideological struggle was played out in the national press. Right-wing newspapers offered support to Franco's forces in Spain and the *Daily Mail* carried the now infamous headline 'Hurrah for the Blackshirts'.

The BUF organised street meetings and marches. Inevitably groups such as East London's immigrant Jewish community were on the receiving end of

fascist terror. Working class opposition came from and was led by rank and file militants in the Communist Party and Trade Union organisations, often against the wishes of the leadership.

There were many large-scale anti-fascist mobilisations across the country culminating in the battle of Cable Street on 4th October 1936. Whole sections of the East End working class mobilised in violent confrontation to a planned march by the BUF.

Despite a vicious and determined effort by the police to break through the crowds, the anti-fascists held their ground and were victorious. This was an important moment in the struggle with the fascists. There were further confrontations but after Cable Street the BUF's support slipped away.

With the outbreak of war in 1939 leading British fascists were interned by the government, only to re-surface five years later.

LONDON 1933

"The secretary of the Anti-Fascist League was a gentile named William Joyce, who was married to a Jewish girl. Some of us got together and formed this association, not in a political sense but as sort of vigilantes to look after ourselves because they were attacking Jewish, especially elderly Jewish, people. On one Sunday afternoon a Jewish child of about 3 was thrown through a plate glass window, a horrifying thing, and of course each time they had meetings we went along and sort of smashed them up, and that was the thing - you fought violence with violence."

(East London Communist Party member 1930s.)

GATESHEAD 1934

"The fascists were planning a major rally with Mosley at Newcastle's Town Moor during Race Week and a series of meetings were arranged to promote the rally. In response to the May Day attack, on 13 May several thousand anti-fascists, led by the Anti-Fascist League in 'plainclothes', stopped a fascist meeting in Newcastle, followed them back to their headquarters and laid siege to it - with broken glass and blood everywhere. The next night the BUF meeting was in Gateshead. Thousands turned out to oppose it and it was forced to close down early, and only a large police presence prevented the thousands who followed them back over the Tyne from getting hold of the fascists. Once again the BUF HQ was put under heavy siege. On 1st June the Gateshead BUF office was wrecked (probably by the AFL), and with fierce opposition promised Mosley's Race Week rally was cancelled."

(Fighting Talk, Issue 10)

GILLINGHAM 1934

"On Mosley's re-appearance he was spat upon and missiles were thrown, including bottles: one Blackshirt was hit in the head and a policeman was cut on the hand by flying glass. An attempt was also made to overturn Mosley's sports car. "There was in this crowd", said a Chatham Observer columnist, "an element of sheer blackguardism which had given itself over to the ugly influence of mob fury"."

(Fascism and anti-fascism in the Medway Towns - David Turner)

NOTTINGHAM 1934

"I sustained what could be called my first wound in my fight against Fascism on the occasion of a visit by Oswald Mosley to the Victoria Baths. The Communist Party's tactics at Fascist public meetings were basically simple: get as many members as possible into the meeting and then, once it was in progress, cause such disruption that the meeting could no longer continue or the disturbance would have to be quelled by Fascist stewards. Mosley's

meeting at the Victoria Baths followed that pattern After we had begun to shout him down, fighting broke out all over the Baths. While I was trading punches with a member of the audience, a steward attacked me from behind with a folding chair."

(The Shallow Grave - Walter Gregory)

INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES 1937

"Pouring down from the top of Casa Blanca Hill, shrieking loud enough to awaken the dead, came score upon score of Moorish soldiers from the Army of Africa which had been brought over to the Spanish mainland, in aeroplanes furnished by Germany, at the start of the Insurrection. Now they were coming straight for me, yelling their battle cries to terrify their enemies and to bolster their own courage. They certainly succeeded in terrifying me! In a matter of seconds they seemed to be all around me, but just to my right appeared what I am prepared to swear was the biggest Moor who had ever been born: a huge fellow with a full beard, dressed in a flowing poncho and sporting a fancy line in turbans. He seemed unaware of my presence and was gazing intently towards his left and at whatever was happening beyond my right shoulder where the Battalion was falling back up the valley. He was holding his rifle at arm's length, parallel to the ground, so I brought up my own rifle, lined him up in my sights, and fired. I felt the recoil of the rifle against my shoulder but the Moor remained standing as before. I cursed myself for being such an incompetent fool. The biggest Moor in the Army of Africa was standing within yards of me and I, armed with a rifle and with an unrestricted field of fire, had somehow contrived to shoot wide of the target! Incredulously, and with a mounting feeling of panic, I hastily reloaded and again took aim. Before I could pull the trigger for a second time my enormous Moor sank slowly to the ground as though he was an inflatable model which had suddenly developed a major leak. As he lay there in the dust he looked for all the world like a pile of washing ready to go into the tub on a Monday morning. There was no time in the heat of the moment to feel either triumph or remorse; it was enough that I was still alive and my only thought was to find Bill Briskey."

(The Shallow Grave - Walter Gregory)

SUNDERLAND 1935

"In July 400 miners smashed a BUF meeting in Sunderland."

(Fighting Talk, Issue 10)

SOUTH SHIELDS 1935

"In November Mosley had one more try with a rally in South Shields, next to the Arab quarter, hoping to start a race riot. Fascist stewards were bussed in from all over the country, but the anti-fascists mobilised thousands, and with

fighting inside and outside the hall, and fascist buses bricked on their way out, the meeting wasn't a success."

(Fighting Talk, Issue 10)

OXFORD 1936

"Shortly afterwards BUF stewards turned on a member of the audience. With this, all hell broke loose and the local anti-fascists steamed into the somewhat startled Blackshirts, the favoured weapons being fists and metal chairs. When it was all over the fascists knew what it felt like to be on the end of a good kicking. Four were hospitalised with broken heads while many more went home battered and bruised. Mosley, true to form, took the opportunity afforded by the mayhem and sneaked out the back door, only to find that the cars and coaches that had transported the BUF to Oxford had also been well and truly trashed."

(Fighting Talk, Issue 16)

PONTYPRIDD 1936

"But for the presence of the police the Fascist speakers undoubtedly would have received serious injuries", said Supt. Beirne at Pontypridd, Glamorgan, today when the hearing was resumed of 180 summonses against 31 men and five women for alleged participation in anti-fascist rioting. "The conduct of the crowd, which numbered between five and six thousand, was the worst I have seen in the 25 years I have been in the Rhondda," added the superintendent. Superintendent Beirne identified several of the defendants as those who, he said, were taking part in assailing a loud-speaker van upon which stood two Fascist speakers. He advised Councillor Lewis Jones to get the crowd away as otherwise he would have been compelled to instruct the police to make a baton charge. Councillor Jones mounted the van to carry out the suggestion but the crowd paid no heed, said Superintendent Beirne, who said he then signalled the Fascist speakers to leave and they did so, escorted by the police."

(Yorkshire Evening News, Sept. 1936)

LEEDS 1936

"There were ugly scenes at a Fascist demonstration which was addressed by Sir Oswald Mosley on Holbeck Moor, yesterday afternoon. Fourteen persons received injuries which required treatment at the General Infirmary and at the Dispensary. One of the injured was detained in the Infirmary with serious abdominal injuries. Scores of persons, mainly Fascists, received minor injuries; chiefly caused by stones with which the Fascists were freely pelted both during the meeting, and at the beginning of their return march to the city. Sir Oswald Mosley was struck on the body several times with stones thrown

while he was addressing the meeting from the top of a van. He was also struck by a stone near the right temple as he was marching back with the Fascists from the Moor, receiving a wound which bled freely. A woman Fascist was felled by a stone which struck her on the head, causing a wound requiring nine stitches."

(Yorkshire Post, 28/9/36)

LEEDS 1936

"As the meeting was breaking up about 100 policemen - who had been brought to the Moor by bus - formed a lane through the crowd for the Blackshirts to leave. Despite their efforts much hand-to-hand fighting took place and more stones were thrown. One man evaded two policemen, had a sparring bout with a Blackshirt bigger than himself, in which the Blackshirt got two severe blows on the jaw, and then slipped away into the crowd. Fireworks were thrown over the heads of the police into the marching ranks and one exploded among the Blackshirt standard bearers, causing momentary consternation. A wild rush greeted Sir Oswald as he marched from the platform, surrounded by a strong body of police. The entire group was swept and hustled from side to side. Armed with a chairleg, one of the crowd struggled forward, but could not reach the Blackshirt leader, who was eventually able to join his men on the edge of the Moor. Among the missiles were bottles, sticks and stones. The most serious stone throwing of all occurred in Holbeck Lane, where a number of people had hidden behind some hoardings. When the procession passed this ambush, more large stones and half-bricks were hurled over."

(Yorkshire Evening News, 28/9/36)

LIVERPOOL 1936

"Outside, police hold back those who feel that Mosley's march is an insult to those sections of the population of whom the Fascists disapprove - rather an extensive list. Bloody clashes force back the protestors as Mosley steps out. But, recalls Jack Askins, they overlook one shabby, white-haired figure slumped on a bench - plainly an aged down-and-out. Suddenly the 'down-and-out' - Jack Coward - makes a rush at Mosley, but is hustled away by the police. The police insist that Mosley travel to the Stadium by car rather than lead the 300-strong march. At the Stadium future Spanish volunteers Frank Deegan and Barney Mumford are among many involved in scuffles with Blackshirts."

(Back from the Dead - Jack Coward)

INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES 1938

"My blood ran cold. I froze still where I knelt. Coming from the left-hand side of the pool were two Italians, short tommy-guns in their hands. I had stuck my

revolver into the top of my right-hand jackboot while I was drinking. Slowly, very slowly, I straightened up, only half turning so as to conceal my revolver. The Italians saw my officer's insignia. Their eyes bulged. Here was a prize! An International Brigade officer. But their satisfaction made them careless. I swayed. One of them lowered his gun and put out a hand to grasp me and see if I was wounded. I hit him under the jaw, jerked my pistol from my boot, shot the other man through the shoulder and dived back into the trees."

(Back from the Dead - Jack Coward)

INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES 1938

"Up to the store we crept. We were on the Moor before he knew we were there. Pedro dealt with him, while I ransacked the store. With sacks full of sardines and bread, we stole out of the village and back along the road - right into a patrol. When they stopped us to ask us what was in the bundles, I sank to the ground, apparently in terror. As they lowered their guns and stood over me, Pedro seized two of them and knocked their heads together. I jumped up, plunged my knife into the body of one and hit the other under the jaw. In two seconds we had dived off the road into the darkness of the brush. The whole thing was over in a flash."

(Back from the Dead - Jack Coward)

LONDON 1936

"About three thousand turned out to oppose Mosley at Victoria Park Square when he appeared on top of a loud speaker van, surrounded by four to five hundred fascists in uniform. There was a constant barrage of cat-calls and slogan shouting, interruptions of all kinds. Fights were breaking out all around the meeting wherever Fascists and anti-Fascists made physical contact, despite police efforts to keep us apart. We were becoming used to this sort of thing and learning how to keep the opposition going while not allowing too many of our people to get arrested or beaten up."

(Out Of The Ghetto - Joe Jacobs)

LONDON 1936

"When I arrived, among many others, from other parts of Stepney, I saw a big fellow up the side of the van, being hit by the Fascist on top. He was giving as much as he was getting. His courage was great and his ability was even greater. A second look and I could see it was Ernie Leek, a local docker and some time boxer who could more than take care of himself. Ernie was arrested, but not before he and the rest of the crowd had forced the Fascists to abandon the meeting and the van drove off with a police escort."

(Out of the Ghetto - Joe Jacobs)

CABLE STREET 1936

"According to a pre-arranged plan a lorry was overturned to form a barricade with material from a builders yard. In the ensuing battle police were pelted with fruit, bottles and the contents of chamber pots from the upper windows of houses as they launched repeated baton charges. The barricade was cleared only for the police to encounter further blockades and be forced back by anti-fascist counter-attacks. Injuries and arrests mounted as the police made little headway and eventually the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Philip Game, ordered Mosley to abandon the march. Mosley issued a statement seething at the "surrender" of the British Government to "red terror". In London's East End the anti-fascists' celebrations went on long into the night."

(The Battle of Cable Street 1936 - The Cable Street Group)

CABLE STREET 1936

"We had to board the shop with shutters and stay above it ready to throw things down at them. The non-Jewish people gave us things to throw at them - bricks, knives, lumps of wood, anything."

(Mrs Jones - source as above)

CABLE STREET 1936

"The communists turned over a builders lorry across the road as a barricade because the fascists were marching in from the Leman Street end. The communists at our end had pulled up a lot of paving stones in the street and were using them for throwing. The battle really stopped right outside our shop because they didn't get past this lorry that had been turned over. I can remember the policeman, one with his eye hanging out where they'd thrown these missiles."

(Mr Levitt - source as above)

CABLE STREET 1936

"By and large it was the Communist Party. I won't say the dockers wouldn't have had a go on their own, but when they brought the whole of the London Communist Party with groups of Jewish ex-servicemen coming from Manchester, from Leeds - they came by train specially - you had the hard core of what we called experienced people - veterans. Without the Communist Party there might have been a melee and a riot but it wouldn't have been a disciplined riot which is the difference between a riot and an achievement. If there was a weakness anywhere they could whistle up twenty of the heavy mob. Remember, the streets were very narrow. There was a hard core of toughs who came out of the billiard halls. They were not particularly socially

conscious but they knew what fascism meant. They came out with their cues, you know?"

(Sam Bekowitz - source as above)

CABLE STREET 1936

"After the police came the fascists. They came in coaches from all parts of London and the country. Here and there were scuffles, coach windows were smashed and some early casualties taken away."

(Phil Piratin - source as above)

CABLE STREET 1936

"Then, like a scene from a film someone called out 'the dockers are coming' and they swarmed into the street in their hundreds. Many of them carried pick-axes and they used them to pry up the paving stones - some they broke into pieces to use as missiles and some they used to build a barricade; they also had marbles to roll under the feet of the policemen's horses and fireworks to scare 'em."

(Jim Wolveridge - source as above)

CABLE STREET 1936

"There were already many people walking around with their heads bandaged. Our first-aid units were being kept very busy. Lots of people were coming up with stories about terrible street fighting at the junction of Royal Mint Street, Leman Street and Cable Street. Thousands were turning away from Gardiners corner down Commercial Road into all the side streets towards Cable Street, where we knew that barricades were being built to bar the way."

(Out of the Ghetto - Joe Jacobs)

LONDON 1936

"Meanwhile the Fascists in Stepney did not intend to take their defeat lying down. On October 6th they went on the rampage through Stepney Green, beating up old people. Crowds of people had to leave their beds and come onto the streets to meet these attacks. They chased the Blackshirts for half a mile to their headquarters in Duckett Street. Police reinforcements had to be called in to prevent the crowds from wrecking the premises. It was discovered that in order to prevent police interference with the marauding bands of Fascists, telephone wires had been cut in the district."

(Out of the Ghetto - Joe Jacobs)

LIVERPOOL 1937

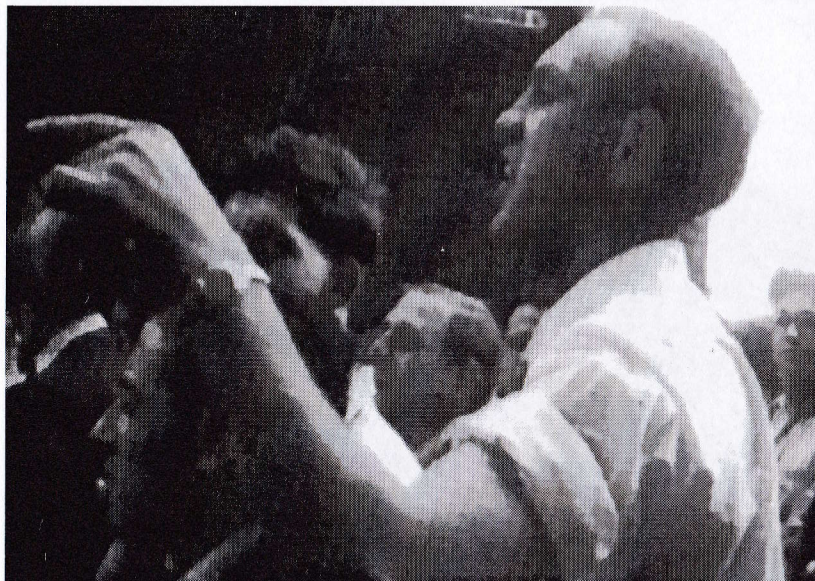
"When an electrician started to erect a microphone on the van roof, cries of 'Down with Mosley' and 'We don't want fascism here' changed to volleys of bricks and stones - smashing the van's windscreen. G.C.Balfour, the district BUF treasurer, got up to speak and was hospitalised after being hit by a stone. Mosley arrived soon after by car and climbed onto the van. After giving the fascist salute, and before he'd spoken, he was also dropped by a stone hitting his left temple. Lying on the van roof he was hit again, on the back of the head, and knocked unconscious."

(Fighting Talk, Issue13)



AFTER THE WAR





Previous page: March 1949 Fascist meeting Ridley Road. **Above:** Gerry Flamberg, 43 Group member. **Below:** anti-fascists about to storm platform at National Socialist Movement of Great Britain rally, Trafalgar Square July 1962



AFTER THE WAR

INTRODUCTION

Britain may have been on the victorious side in the Second World War but by the end of it the country was devastated as well as virtually bankrupt. Thousands of people were homeless, whole areas reduced to rubble, all sorts of items were in short supply and rationing was still in force. It was no surprise then, that in the first post-war election in July 1945 Labour won a massive majority with a mandate to build 'a better world'. For a short time, the euphoria of the end of the war along with the Labour victory led to an optimistic mood within most of the country. This soon dissipated as Labour maintained an austerity regime, housing shortages continued and life was generally hard. This resulted in a general disillusionment with the government which despite the very recent horrors of fascism, allowed Mosley a way back in to politics without even having to mention the war. Mosley's 'new fascism' could be presented simply as the answer to the current crisis.

At first, there was no open fascist or Mosleyite group. Jeffrey Hamm, a member of the BUF before the war, had set up the British League of Ex-Servicemen in 1944 and it was this body that was to become the basis for Mosley's Union Movement in 1948. Prior to that, Hamm and other members of the League, had begun having regular outdoor meetings throughout London but particularly in the East End. The result of this activity was a resumption of attacks on Jewish premises and individuals which the police appeared to have no interest in stopping at all. In response to this, a group of young Jewish ex-servicemen, who after spending 6 years fighting fascism in Europe, were appalled at the re-emergence of Mosley and fascism in their own country, decided to do something about it. The State obviously had no interest in stopping Mosley, so it was left to them to defend themselves. They set up an anti-fascist combat organisation called the 43 Group and for the next 5 years they battered Mosley and the fascists wherever they appeared. They were open about the need to use violence as the only way of stopping the fascists. As Rabbi Leslie Hardman, who had helped bury the bodies of concentration camp victims, said in the recent 43 Group film, "There was no doubt of the justification of using violence."

The success of the 43 Group's use of direct force led to Mosley's Union Movement spluttering to an end in 1951. However, though they understood the need to out-violence the fascists, they never grasped the need to pose a political challenge to them. In other words, they functioned purely as a military force.

The disappearance of Mosley and any other type of organised fascism, did not mean an end to racism or racist attacks. Racism grew with the coming of large scale black and Asian immigration starting with the arrival of the SS Windrush and its 492 passengers in 1948. This was in response to pleas from Tory Ministers, including Enoch Powell, for Commonwealth immigration to overcome the increasing shortage of labour that was beginning to create problems for the economy.

Most of the immigrants were fairly well-educated young people, many with particular skills. They soon discovered that the jobs that were available were unskilled and often in poorly paid work which the white British didn't want. They also discovered that there was a very strong strain of racial prejudice. This included vicious physical attacks, verbal abuse, the refusal to rent accomodation to blacks and just general racism in the street. The rising tide of racism, strongly pushed by the press, culminated in race riots in Nottingham and Notting Hill in London in 1958. There had been race riots in Britain before, most notably in 1948 in Liverpool, but this was now on a bigger scale. Equally worrying in a way was the fact that racist attacks, including murder, on blacks and Asians was a common occurrence.

As the Fifties gave way to the Sixties, black and Asian immigration now became a significant political issue, as the numbers who entered the country grew. Local anti-immigration groups were set up. This gave added impetus to the numerous miniscule fascist groups and, in 1960, resulted in the founding of the British National Party, which had Colin Jordan and John Tyndall as prominent members. However, within a year, the new party split between those who wanted a populist party and those who wanted a more National Socialist orientation. Jordan and Tyndall were in the latter camp. Jordan set up the National Socialist Movement on the 20th April, Hitler's birthday, under the slogan "National Socialism is coming back." During the 1950's there had been very little open fascist activity and correspondingly there had been very little anti-fascist activity. Once the new fascist groups were set up at the start of the 1960's every move the fascists made was shadowed by anti-fascists.

The key group involved was the 62 Group, made up of various left-wingers including people from the Communist Party, black immigrants and Jews. For around 5 years from the early 1960's, the 62 Group set out to physically confront the fascists whenever they showed their faces. The success of the anti-fascists in disrupting the campaigns of the various fascist groups in the early and mid-60s prevented the Far Right from exploiting the growing racism and forced them to rethink their strategy.

LONDON 1946

"Then, with the lightning speed of the trained, he grabbed the heads of his two targets and banged them together. I heard the thud and saw them drop. Gerry toppled the platform and I saw Hamm falling backwards into the grass. A woman shrieked. I kicked my target between the legs and he crumpled in pain. Alec struggled with his opponent who broke away and sped downhill through the trees and bushes in the direction of West Heath Road."

(The 43 Group - Morris Beckman)

LONDON 1946

"On August 31st, the British League held a meeting in Dalston. The fascists shouted 'Down with the Yids! Up with Mosley!'. Police said they saw a party of twenty shouting, 'We'll get rid of the bloody fascists!' cross Kingsland Road and move towards the meeting. The two factions met and fighting broke out. Six members of the 43 Group and one fascist were arrested."

(Hackney and Kingsland Gazette, 17/9/11146)

LONDON 1947

"Nastiest of all was the row of razor blades stitched to protrude beyond the edge of a cap peak - this would open gashes five or six inches long across a face. It was a feared weapon, and at a meeting in Stamford Hill a young fascist was seen slashing at faces. Two commandoes grabbed him and mercilessly beat him unconscious, shoving his cap down a sewer grating."

(The 43 Group - Morris Beckman)

LONDON 1947

"Suddenly, in evidence of their new-found aggressiveness, crowds of fascists and their supporters spilled out onto the street and for some twenty minutes a fierce battle raged with batons and knuckledusters being brought into use. Policemen were rolling on the ground clutching the arrested under the feet of those still fighting."

(The 43 Group - Morris Beckman)

LONDON 1947

"Fighting broke out in Wilmot St., Bethnal Green, last night after a "secret" meeting had been addressed in an LCC school by Sir Oswald Mosley. Several demonstrators prevented from approaching the school said they were members of the 43 Group of Jewish ex-Servicemen, and were demonstrating in a peaceful and orderly manner, not as "organised gangs" as alleged by Sir Oswald Mosley. When the meeting ended Sir Oswald drove away at top speed,

accompanied by members of his bodyguard. Fierce street fighting lasted about 20 minutes."

(Daily Mail, 28/11/47)

BRIGHTON 1948

"Coshes and knuckledusters came out and the hatred between the combatants manifested itself in some of the bloodiest and most brutal fighting many of the commandoes had ever experienced. The halted loudspeaker van was being battered with an abandoned peanut barrow, which did neither vehicle any good. A local fascist named Jones attempted still to speak from the van, standing on its tailboard clutching a microphone. One moment he was there and the next he was gone."

(The 43 Group - Morris Beckman)

LONDON 1948

"On the second landing Martin stopped. The German was waiting for him, crouched in combat position and clutching a length of rubberised lead piping. He stared up at Martin and raised his arm into a striking position. Martin yelled out as loudly as he could, 'You fucking stupid idiot! Why didn't you stop that Jew bastard who ran down the stairs? Now get out of my way and let's get after him!' This outburst so confused the German that he momentarily lowered his cosh. That was enough for Martin. He jumped the last six stairs straight onto the landing and, without breaking stride, bounded straight into the German and caught him with two all-in forearm wrestling blows, the first to his solar plexus and the next to his chin.

(The 43 Group - Morris Beckman)

LONDON 1949

"In the January of that year, tear gas bombs were dropped into a Mosley rally at Kensington Town Hall, which was attended by 700 people."

(The National Front - Martin Walker)

LONDON 1949

"Two hundred fascists planned to march from Dalston to a meeting in Tottenham, a route calculated to take them right through the Orthodox Jewish area of Stamford Hill. Along the route that day, hundreds of Londoners joined Group commandoes, lying in wait. Between Stoke Newington and Stamford Hill, anti-fascists broke through the lines of 500 police protecting the marchers and hand-to-hand fighting ensued."

(The 43 Group - Morris Beckman)

LONDON 1960

"Nine people were arrested and several policemen injured yesterday during the ugliest political clashes seen in London since the war. They began when Mosleyites tried to intervene at a Trafalgar Square demonstration where 10,000 pledged themselves to boycott South African goods as a protest against apartheid. A mile-long running battle, involving thousands of people, surged from Charing Cross, along the Strand, down Whitehall, and into Victoria Street. Union Movement men headed by Sir Oswald Mosley had gathered in the forecourt of Charing Cross station and they and boycott supporters began shouting at each other. Then members of the Young Communist League, who were selling their official journals, moved in to the attack. Within a few moments about 50 people were exchanging blows. I saw a dozen police officers and four men sprawled on the ground. Two other men were knocked down and kicked by the crowd."

(News Chronicle, 29/2/60)

LONDON 1962

"A crowd of Jewish people, some members of the CP, some CND members - none of them acting on behalf of their movements - charged the platform and the meeting ended up in uproar ... the anti-fascists were waiting for the Nazis before they even began an organisation."

(The National Front - Martin Walker)

LONDON 1962

"Despite a TV appeal by the Mayor for Hackney residents to keep away from Ridley road, by 7.30 about 1500 people had gathered at the corner of Ridley Road. Immediately he appeared, the crowd pressed in on Sir Oswald. He was pulled to the ground, punched and kicked. Fierce fighting then broke out, combined with shouts of "Down with Mosley, Down with Germany." Mosley disappeared under a group of struggling, punching men and women, only to reappear and start hitting, fighting his way to a loudspeaker lorry. His words were drowned by the shouts of the crowd and the sudden cry of "Sieg Heil"-the victory cry of Hitler. Coins and tomatoes were thrown at the lorry, and Sir Oswald fought his way to a green car, just as the police stopped the meeting. Abuse was hurled at Mosley, but he forced his way into the back seat with a bodyguard on each side. The lorry of his supporters, surrounded by mounted police, made its way into Kingsland High Street. People on board were shouting "Two-Four-Six-Eight, who do we appreciate?" The ensuing cry of "MOSLEY" incensed the crowd, which chased the lorry. Shop windows in the High Street were broken as men and youths, chasing the lorry, clashed with police."

(Hackney Gazette, 3/8/62)

LONDON 1962

"Sir Oswald's story: "I was approaching a meeting at Ridley Road, Dalston, where I had spoken previously on June 24 to a large audience in conditions of complete order. On this occasion, as I approached the platform, a crowd of men rushed me from my left rear. Several jumped on me and threw me to the ground. There were several of us, it appeared to me, on the ground together." Sir Oswald went on, "While I wrestled with these assailants on the floor, others kicked me on the head and leg." After referring to marks which he said he had on the right side of his chin and by his eye - he also had a swollen shinbone - and someone had stepped on his finger - Sir Oswald declared, "I heard others in the group using terms such as 'Kill him!' and 'Put the boot in!'."

(Hackney Gazette, 3/8/62)

MANCHESTER 1962

"Mosley, with 30 supporters, tried to march through Manchester to Belle Vue. Mosley was knocked down three times, there were 47 arrests, and the meeting was called off after seven minutes before a hostile crowd of 5000 people."

(The National Front - Martin Walker)

LONDON 1962

"Hundreds of angry East Enders gave a stormy reception to Fascist meetings at Hertford Road, Hackney and Victoria Park Square, Bethnal Green. Both meetings were broken up the police, before they got out of hand. Sir Oswald Mosley's Union Movement meeting at Victoria Park Square collapsed under a hail of stones, eggs and fruit, and resulted in over 40 arrests. Mr Jeffrey Hamm started the meeting with a few supporters. When Sir Oswald arrived about an hour later, the crowd had increased and eggs were being thrown. He climbed onto the speaker's 'platform' - a lorry - and spoke for two minutes, but his speech was drowned by shouts of "Six million Jews! Belsen, down with Mosley!" Then the police ordered the meeting to close. As Mosley moved away the crowd advanced towards his car and hammered on the windows with their fists. He was followed by his supporters, mainly teenagers, in the speaker's lorry. Later, Mosley was reported to have said that he intended to hold more meetings. At Hertford Rd, the British National Party meeting, led by Mr John Bean the party's acting secretary, was met with strong opposition by a large crowd of mostly Jewish people, and the twelve supporters were told to stop the meeting. In an address, Mr Bean, who was guarded by mounted policemen, said his speaker system had been 'smashed' and a Land Rover had been wrecked. Most of what he said was inaudible because of the heckling. Two of his supporters stood in front of him with bandaged heads. They had earlier been in a scuffle with anti-fascists in Kingsland Rd. Yellow Star held a marathon fillibuster meeting at Ridley Rd., Dalston, which

lasted all day, forcing the British National Party to hold it's meeting a quarter of a mile away at Hertford Rd."

(Hackney Gazette, 4/9/62)

LONDON 1962

"I should like to congratulate, if I may, the vicar who had the courage (Your columns, September 7) to speak out against the present wave of hooliganism and violence, at present being perpetuated under the guise of being "Anti-Fascist." Conducted by the Yellow Star Movement, this movement is rapidly earning itself a reputation not unlike the pre-war Nazi party of Germany, which it is said to oppose. On Sunday, September 2, a few members of the National Socialist Party who attempted to speak at Dalston's Ridley Rd. were severely beaten up by Yellow Star members, who were said to have outnumbered them by about a hundred to one, whilst over at Victoria Park Square a similar exhibition of organised violence was being instigated, this time against Oswald Mosley. As a spectator at this meeting, I saw the police under severe pressure to hold the people back when Mosley arrived and shortly following this, the meeting was declared abandoned. Later, at the junction of the 'Salmon and Ball', a lorry loaded with Mosley supporters, mostly young boys, came under a bombardment of pennies, the result of which might well have been that several lost their eyes. It is surely time that the courts who deal with these offenders were stricter with their fines and refused to be fobbed off with excuses of provocation when it is obvious that the present outbreaks of violence are so well organised."

(Letter to Hackney Gazette, 11/9/62)

LONDON 1962

"Followers of Sir Oswald Mosley fought a series of running battles with Hackney Young Socialist supporters and others in the Ridley Rd., Dalston, area on Sunday. The scuffles spread along Ridley Rd. into Kingsland Rd. and nearby side streets as 50-60 police moved in and arrested 14 people, among them two juveniles. Sir Oswald's plans to hold a rally were thwarted by Hackney Young Socialists who staged a day long meeting in the weekday market place. Instead, the Union Movement leader addressed followers in Hertford Rd., Dalston, a few hundred yards away. He spoke for some 25 minutes to an audience of his own supporters hemmed in by a tight cordon of police. This meeting passed off without incident. Then about 20 of his audience moved off to Ridley Rd. Shortly afterwards fighting broke out at the previously peaceful Ridley Rd. meeting. Police who were disbanding after the Mosley meeting were quickly called to Ridley Rd., as anti-fascists began actively protesting against the heckling Union Movement men, among them Mosley's 22 year old son, Max. One young man wearing the Union Movement badge was chased along Kingsland High Street by other men, then trapped in a doorway

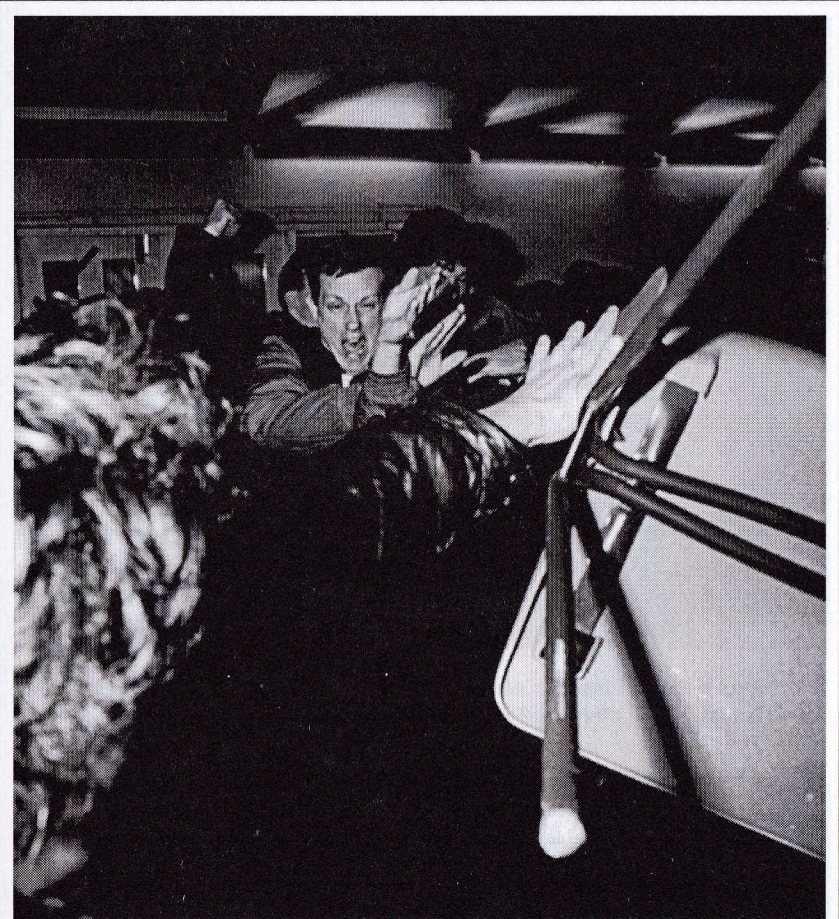
and pulled to the ground and pummelled before being rescued by police. Other clashes broke out in sidestreets as the Fascist supporters left the area. As the main party of hecklers tried to drive off in their car, other cars attempted to hem them in. More scuffles followed all over the road."

(Hackney Gazette, 18/9/62)

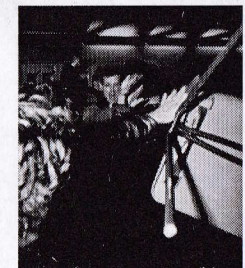
LONDON 1963

"The editor of 'Action' - the organ of Sir Oswald Mosley's Union Movement - was made to kneel on the floor and tear up copies of the publication when members of an anti-fascist organisation raided the Movement's Vauxhall Bridge Road headquarters."

(The Times - 5/6/63)



RECENT TIMES





Previous page: NF meeting attacked, Charlton, S.E. London 1987; This page - Lewisham 1977, above: anti-fascist gets stuck in to NF member; below: NF march broken at New Cross



RECENT TIMES

INTRODUCTION

After 20 years of extremely limited progress since the end of the Second World War, the Far Right set about re-organising itself in the mid-60s. Several small groups (League of Empire Loyalists, British National Party, Racial Preservation Society) came together in 1967 to form the National Front, and although initially they publicly distanced themselves from the openly National Socialist groups, this policy was ignored after a few weeks.

Across Europe the late 60s was a time of student protest and industrial unrest, dominated by the Left, but in Britain the birth of the NF saw the start of a decade where the fascists, unlike their counterparts in Europe, became increasingly successful and entered the political mainstream.

Enoch Powell's famous 'rivers of blood' speech in 1968 boosted the NF's campaign against black and Asian immigration, and disillusioned Tories started to join the Front. Their electoral experience proved valuable, and by 1973 the NF managed to save their deposit in a West Bromwich by-election.

Active campaigning and growing electoral support increased the level of anti-fascist opposition, and the ex-Tory members in the Front began to feel the nazi element were hindering their progress. On the streets the Left were becoming more militant and in 1974 Kevin Gately, an anti-fascist, was killed when a counter demonstration to an NF rally in Conway Hall was attacked by the police. By the Remembrance Day march that year the NF had set up the Honour Guard to protect their marches from attack.

The Labour Party realised the NF were picking up support from traditional Labour supporters as much as right-wing Tories and so their candidates were instructed not to share a platform with the NF in the run up to the General Election in October 1974, and by 1975 120 Labour councils had banned the NF from using their premises. A year later the National Union of Miners called for the NF to be banned. Opposition was growing, alarmed by the election of 2 National Party councillors in Blackburn. (The NP was a 'populist' split from the NF). By the time the NF got 117,000 votes in the 1977 London GLC elections they were regularly beating the Liberals into third place.

When the Front tried to march through Lewisham in south London in 1977 they met with the heaviest opposition they had encountered. This led to the formation of the Anti Nazi League, who replaced the independent anti-racist/anti-fascist committees as the cutting edge of anti-fascism - particularly the 'squads'.

Effective confrontation and a Thatcher-led Tory Party, playing the race card, led to the collapse of the NF vote at the 1979 General Election, and soon the NF split. Tyndall set up the New National Front which became the BNP in 1982, although all the various splits remained small and isolated.

The ANL was wound down after the election, although groups of anti-fascists continued to oppose the fascists whenever they tried to organise, preventing them taking advantage of the rising level of racist attacks. As if to prove that they couldn't be ignored the fascists attacked and disrupted a massive GLC festival in 1984 which became the motivation for setting up AFA in 1985. With anti-fascists organised again, and on the offensive, the NF were all but destroyed by the end of the 80s.

The one high point for the fascists in this period was the creation of a neo-nazi youth movement - Blood & Honour - but they were forced underground after AFA put them under heavy pressure in 1989.

Ironically, while British fascism had very little success in the 80s, the European situation changed dramatically, particularly in France where the Front National successfully developed the 1970s NF strategy. By 1990 the BNP launched the 'Rights for Whites' campaign and, learning from the increasing success of the Far Right in Europe, have laid the foundations for the re-birth of British fascism.

LONDON 1969

"The growing confidence of the NF (up to the general election) had been confirmed in its own eyes by the increasing attention it was getting from its militant opponents on the Left. In May 1969, the office of its Croydon organiser was raided, documents were stolen and the Union Jack was burnt. The following month, a stolen lorry was reversed into the Nationalist Centre at Tulse Hill The NF's annual conference of 1969 had to be switched to another hall when two men sneaked into Caxton Hall's switch room and smashed the electrical gear with axes."

(The National Front - Martin Walker.)

LONDON 1970

"Shortly after opening the office on 22 October, O'Brien (NF leader) was knocked to the floor by three unidentified men who took with them the subscription files on 6,000 members and other documents."

(The National Front - Martin Walker)

BRISTOL 1971

"To add to the disappointment, NF candidates' homes in Bristol had been attacked with bricks and daubed with swastikas on the eve of the poll."

(The National Front - Martin Walker)

BRIGHTON 1971

"O'Brien had also been told of NF members attending a Northern League rally in Brighton in November of 1971, with Colin Jordan. The meeting was invaded by fourteen demonstrators, who attacked the assembled Germans and NF members (the Monday Club later denied any of its members had attended), yelling 'Nazis, SS, Nazis.' "

(The National Front - Martin Walker)

OXFORD 1974

"Within minutes of its opening, thirty members of the Oxford Anti-Fascist Committee burst in. They tore down the Front's Union Jack emblem, overturned the speakers table and threw Anderson out on his arse."

(Fighting Talk, Issue 16)

GLASGOW 1975

"Twelve days later in Glasgow, there was another riot as the mobilised Left tried to stop an anti-EEC meeting called by the NF. Among the 65 arrested were David Bolton, vice-president of the National Union of Mineworkers, Ian Mackay, secretary of the Scottish Communist Party and John Reidford, general

secretary of the Glasgow Trades Council. The NF were reaping the whirlwind of organised opposition that had been sown at Red Lion Square. When the NF meeting finally took place twelve people attended."

(The National Front - Martin Walker)

LONDON 1977

"Violence erupted in Wood Green on Saturday when a racist march by National Front protestors provoked a massive protest and wrought havoc in the High Road. Fifty people including some marchers were arrested and 13 others injured by flying bottles, stones and smoke bombs. At several points along the route the heavy police cordon broke and there were bitter clashes between the National Front and objectors."

(Hornsey Journal, 29/4/77)

LEWISHAM 1977

"We broke the march just behind the 'Honour Guard'. There followed a few minutes of vicious fighting, the fascists were left battered and bruised, many were clearly terrified of what had just taken place. The march disintegrated, with fascists running around in blind panic. Most ran away, a few stood their ground and got overwhelmed by the sheer weight of anti-fascists."

(Anti Nazi League - a critical examination. A Resistance pamphlet.)

LEWISHAM 1977

"A carving knife, honed to razor sharpness. A metal pipe, with wickedly lacerating studs. These exhibits, held grimly aloft by a London bobby, come from the murderous weaponry deployed against the police on Bloody Saturday. Truly they are the regalia of hate. Hate for the police, for authority, for law and order and liberties enshrined within that order. Here was no honest, spontaneous anger by decent people against a racist parade. This was a contrived assault, with acid and knife and brick and bludgeon on the police: an evil and premeditated attempt to scar authority, slash liberty and engender panic and fear in an already troubled community. Gashed, bruised and bleeding. Britain's police held the front line for freedom. They have not seen rougher nor more ominous action since the Thirties. In defending the right of the repellant National Front to march through the racially sensitive areas of Lewisham and Deptford, they presented themselves as the prime target for the Red stormtroopers of the Left. But it wasn't bags of flour and placards and jeers they had to face this time. It was blinding ammonia and caustic soda."

(Daily Mail, 15/8/77)

LEWISHAM 1977

"There have been clashes as violent in recent years, especially in Northern Ireland, but it was a frightening and tragic sight to see on a London street one group of extremists, backed by an artillery of bottles, bricks, rocks, staves and tins, advance on their rivals with such vicious intentions."

(Sunday Times, 14/8/77)

LEWISHAM 1977

"I was inspired by Lewisham. I am extremely proud that the Left in this country finally said: 'Sod it! We'll fight!' I saw it as a real step forward. I had a friend there filming with a TV crew, who said it was fantastic ... if Lewisham was violence, then I'm for it!"

(Journalist Anna Raeburn - Women's Voice, June 1978)

EDINBURGH 1977

Michael Napier was fined £30 for punching John Tyndall in the face at a counter-demonstration against the NF in Edinburgh last year. His defence - "I was justified in hitting him six million times over. He has in the past committed himself to the extermination of thousands of Jews. My very mild blow cannot be compared with the gigantic crime he wishes to perpetrate."

(CARF - the paper of the Anti-Racist, Anti-Fascist co-ordinating Committee, No.4, 1978)

LEICESTER 1977

"Anthony Reed-Herbert, the unusual Front specimen (as the Guardian recently referred to him), has announced that he is resigning from active membership of the NF following threats on his family."

(CARF, Oct/Nov 1977)

KIRKLEES 1978

"Tyndall, Webster and about 100 NF members (and friends from the BNP) were recently stranded in pouring rain for 45 minutes, after someone jammed the locks on a Kirklees council hall, where they were due to have a public meeting."

(CARF, No.4, 1978)

LONDON 1978

"There is also evidence that the NF had a radio link with the police. On one occasion on a deserted street a group of anti-racists stoned the NF loudspeaker van. Within minutes three vans of police were on the scene."

(CARF, No.6, 1978)

LEEDS 1978

"On Saturday 22nd April, 1978, a National Front election meeting was held in Leeds just prior to the May local elections. The meeting was made the target of a so-called "mass picket" by Anti Nazi League supporters. Some 80 NF members, including Martin Webster, were attacked on their way into the meeting by a mob of about a thousand Anti Nazi League and SWP banners. The NF members were again attacked on the way out. After about 20 minutes of persistent attacks the mob succeeded in fragmenting the group of NF members. As soon as the Anti Nazi League mob saw that Martin Webster was left with only nine other persons, he was beaten up and had to be taken to Leeds Infirmary to receive hospital treatment."

(Lifting the lid off the Anti Nazi League - an NF publication, October 1978)

IPSWICH 1978

"The young National Front didn't quite get the reception they'd hoped for at Copleston High School in Ipswich, where they were handing out the Fascist 'How to spot a Red teacher' pamphlet. The new-Nazis claimed they were punched and kicked by 30 boys and girls. Local Young National Front organiser complained he was pulled from his car and punched and kicked. He said four other members of the group were also attacked."

(CARF, Issue 6.)

LONDON 1979

"There was a relatively successful attempt to kick the NF off their pitch at the top of Brick Lane on the Sunday. Local NF leader Derrick Day and his Hoxton thugs were routed, with Day running and attempting to hide under a parked lorry. Unfortunately the fat bastard couldn't fit and attempts by our comrades to kick him under were not appreciated by Derrick. Not even a thank you!"

(Anti Nazi League - a critical examination. A Resistance pamphlet.)

LONDON 1979

"At least four people were taken to hospital and many others were hurt in fights and scuffles that broke out between fascists, fans and a group of heavies claiming to be from the SWP Perhaps 30 or 40 identifiably NF or British Movement youths marauded through the audience, some of them wearing NF t-shirts, swastikas and, in one noticeable case, an Ulster Volunteer Force badge The violence started early with the fascist groups picking on people ...The real violence started at about ten with a confusing series of incidents. In one, a youth said by one witness to be a 'real nutter' ran into the hall and shouted "come and get me" at a group of skins. After a shouting match they all went for him. Scuffles broke out in the darkened body of the hall, bottles and cans were thrown and a number of people hurt. In a separate

incident, which started at the door, eye-witnesses described a group of between ten and fifteen youths claiming to be SWP members, some of whom were wearing Rock Against Racism badges. Other witnesses said they thought they were a football gang "They came in shouting 'Fuck the Front' and there was bother at the door. Someone hit a kid wearing a Union Jack badge and then they all piled in on him." Another witness said: "The SWP gave a Union Jack guy a right beating but he was nothing to do with the British Movement. One of them had a knife out. They said they were the SWP - they weren't skins or punks, they looked fairly ordinary. Their leader was Scots. Having dealt with the youth this group then marauded into the hall and joined the general melee."

(The Leveller magazine)

UCKFIELD 1980

"Manny Carpel, a freelance journalist, was sent to prison for 2 and a half years after pleading guilty to an arson attack on a racist printing press on November 5th, at Uckfield, Sussex. Carpel's council Mr Leonard Krickler told the court that the printing press had originally been used to publish for the Racial Preservation Society and was printing for the National Front at the time of the attack."

(Searchlight, June 1981)

LONDON 1981

"The battle started just after 11am when about six National Front supporters began selling copies of their newspaper outside Kingsbury Underground Station. Eyewitnesses said a group of men rushed from an alley next to Neighbour's Hardware Store and started to attack the Front supporters. Mr. Graham John, NF local organiser, later claimed that the newspaper sellers were the victims of a calculated attack. Men who ran out from an alley "assaulted anyone in their way - not just our people. It was a calculated and indiscriminate attack and it developed to a point where people were seriously injured. They could have killed one man."

(Harrow Observer, 28/8/81)

LONDON 1981

"A vicious attack on a small group of NF News sellers was mounted by a Red 'hit squad' in Kingsbury, North London, on Saturday 22nd August. The NF salesmen were assaulted with pickaxe handles, iron bars and shovels by the gang who suddenly emerged from an alley. Several NF salesmen were injured, including Mr. Graham John, NF North and West London Regional Organiser. NF Haringay Organiser Paul Nash was hospitalised after his head was gashed open and one of his hands slashed."

(NF News, October 81)

MANCHESTER 1981

"The beginning of the Eighties saw the NF attempt to sustain a paper sale in the centre of Manchester. This was met with attack after attack and on one occasion the whole NF group was ambushed at their meeting point. A number of NF supporters were taken to hospital including a German soldier on leave from NATO duties."

(Fighting Talk, Issue 7)

LONDON 1981

"The next major incident was in November 1981 when an anti-racist conference was held at Archway, not far from Chapel Market. Anticipating a fascist attack the anti-fascists kept a low profile inside the hall, and sure enough, right on cue (ie. Sunday afternoon closing time) 30 fascists were escorted up the road by the police. Led by prominent Islington NF members they confidently marched up to the door, unaware of the anti-fascist presence inside. The door flew open, and as the NF let off smoke bombs a large group of determined anti-fascists appeared through the 'mist' and caused considerable damage to the fascists."

(Fighting Talk, Issue 19)

ROCHDALE 1981

"On 8th December 1981, eight supporters of Manchester Anti-Nazi League were sent to jail for taking a militant stand against fascist violence and intimidation in Rochdale. The sentences range from 12 to 15 months, and as a result the families of the jailed comrades face serious financial hardship. Supporters of the fund so far include: UB40, Seething Wells, Red Action Manchester, Red Action London, South Manchester ANL, Tony Ahearne Provisional Sinn Fein, Manchester IRSP, Manchester Poly Students, Central Manchester ANL, ICI Shop Stewards Committee, Islington ANL."

(Searchlight, May 1982)

HARROGATE 1981

"A cowardly ambush was sprung by members of the ANL on NF Chairman Andrew Brons on Friday 15 May, as he walked into Harrogate College of Further Education where he is a lecturer in government and politics."

(NF News, July 1981)

HARROGATE 1982

"About 20 Red Action supporters took part in a demo to oust NF leader Brons from his job as a lecturer at the College of Further Education. Following

reports that Brons was lecturing elsewhere, Red Action led people to another building where they met the fascist gang and totally routed them. Steve Gaunt, the local NF organiser, had to flee to the protection of the police and a number of fascists met with unfortunate accidents."

(Red Action. Issue 2)

LONDON 1983

"Over 1,000 people turned out to protest outside a National Front pre-election rally in Tottenham, North London, on Tuesday 3 May. An equal number of police in riot gear clashed with the crowds who jeered and stoned the nazis as they arrived, resulting in 34 arrests and a number of nazis suffering head wounds."

(Searchlight, June 1983)

LONDON 1983

"3 swaggering boneheads who demanded to know where the commies were, to their dismay actually found some in the shape of 4 Red Action supporters. After an intense discussion one of the skinheads lost all sympathy from the motorists of West Kensington by lying in the middle of the road, blocking all the traffic and generally making a perfect nuisance of himself."

(Red Action. Issue 10)

LONDON 1984

"A Red Action laddie was returning from work one day when he saw this pathetic little git (Patrick Harrington, NF student organiser) selling NF papers with some mates at Hammersmith. He informed young Patrick and company that he'd be back in a minute. Now Harrington, obviously not that bright a student, ignored the warning and sure enough a few minutes later him and his mates were kicked all over the place by a nice little anti-nazi team."

(Red Action. Issue 12)

BRADFORD 1984

"Members of the National Front in Bradford were driven from their newspaper pitch by members of Workers Against Racism. About 30 WAR supporters approached NF paper sellers on Broadway and told them to move on. When they refused, a brawl developed, during which NF papers were seized and destroyed. Local WAR organiser Eileen McEvoy said her group was prepared to take the law into its own hands to keep the NF and the BNP off the city's streets."

(Bradford Telegraph and Argus, 26/7/84)

STOCKPORT 1986

"The NF attempted to hold a march and rally in Stockport in 1986. The SWP were strategically massed behind the police cordon outside the Town Hall, whilst the NF walked past waving banners. Two vans travelling in opposite directions pull alongside the nazis, whereupon anti-fascists emerge from the rear and engage in meaningful dialogue with them. The nazis and the police retreat to the shelter of the Waiting Room of Stockport British Rail station. A line of police moved on the anti-fascists who in turn moved towards them, whereupon the police and dogs turn and run! Attempts to induce the nazis to leave the Waiting Room with the assistance of smoke bombs proved unsuccessful. However one Manchester NFER complains of a little 'chestiness' to this day! Four fascists arrived late in a shiny new Saab (Daddy's?), and on realising we weren't fascists they drove off at high speed. The car escaped but only to a set of red lights, whereupon anti-fascists turned the car upside down complete with the occupants, and some kind soul threw in a smoke bomb for good measure."

(Fighting Talk, Issue 7)

LONDON 1986

"In mid-June the NF carefully laid plans to attack a meeting of the West London branch of AFA. On this occasion things seem to have gone awry, with two groups of attackers falling foul of anti-fascists. The evening ended with many new recruits for AFA and several nazis nursing their bone heads."

(Searchlight, August 1986)

BURY ST EDMUNDS 1986

"As the NF passed a building site, building workers showed their appreciation by pelting the marchers with bricks, planks, lumps of concrete and the occasional scaffold pole. The Albert Marriner banner, pride of the East London branches, was captured and destroyed."

(Searchlight, August 1986)

BURY ST EDMUNDS 1986

"In July 60 members of AFA travelled to Bury St Edmunds to oppose a proposed NF march. From the point of view of the fascists the whole thing was a disaster, with the 'race warriors' taking second prize in a number of skirmishes before and after the march, which was itself completely disrupted at one stage when a Red Action led ambush in a narrow side street caused the police to rush forward leaving the back of the march unprotected. The resulting free for all lasted a couple of minutes, during which time the NF lost a banner and a lot of their previous arrogance. The day ended on a high note when, while under police escort to the edge of town, we came upon a member of the Front's

National Directorate and a few of his lackeys on foot. As we swept past, to the utter astonishment of the local plod, one of the political soldiers was felled by a cheeky denim-clad arm swinging a blunt instrument. The motorised cudgel-carrier then sped off, hotly pursued by an outraged Old Bill, leaving NF chairman Nick Griffin holding his hands in the air as if appealing for divine intervention. Apart from the ritual condemnation of the days events in the local press by the NF and the Labour Party, there was in stark contrast a private endorsement from a veteran anti-fascist who actually lost members of his family in the concentration camps, and was himself arrested on the demo. He described the attitude and tactics of the anti-fascists as "inspiring". Sufficient vindication for anyone I would have imagined."

(Red Action. Issue 26)

LONDON 1988

"Last month's Searchlight reported that a hundred nazis had tried to attack an Irish meeting at London's Conway Hall two days before Remembrance Sunday. The BNP reports that it was a cross party operation and was in fact led by Richard Edmonds (two lovely black eyes), John Morse (two lovely black eyes and a broken wrist) and Tony Wells, aka East and Lecomber. Wells, the barmy bomber, claims he was sprayed in the eyes with CS gas.

(Searchlight, January 1989)

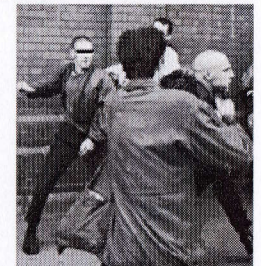
LONDON 1989

"It began when Sunlight Laundries gave up the premises in favour of what was introduced to the Coigleys by their estate agents as a "music retail outlet". They were not to know that the music was by neo-nazi bands like Skrewdriver On May 27 Cutdown became a gathering point for dozens of skinheads and neo-nazis from all over the world heading for an international concert in Gravesend. That night the shop was attacked by anti-fascists with sledgehammers. After a second attack on June 10, Mr. Coigley's insurance company said his cover would be revoked unless he installed a watchman at a cost of £100 a day."

(Sunday Telegraph - 2/7/89)



WATERLOO



POSTSCRIPT

The examples of physical opposition to the fascists deliberately finish at the end of the 1980s as it was felt that more people would be familiar with activities in the current period. In fact the early 1990s was a very active time for anti-fascists and AFA's continual harassment of the BNP all over the country in this period forced them to change their tactics in 1994 and withdraw from the streets. (Undoubtedly they intend this to be a temporary situation, hoping to grow strong enough to force their way back on the streets at some point in the future.)

At the same time Blood & Honour, licking their wounds after their defeat at Speakers Corner in 1989, were starting to co-operate with the BNP and between them they hoped to be able to organise a large scale public event which they hoped would open up all sorts of political and financial possibilities. With fascists expected from all over Britain and the rest of the world they told the media they would be available for interviews on Waterloo Station at 4pm on Saturday 12th September, 1992. From there they would be travelling to a major gig in south-east London. And so to emphasise that the struggle against fascism didn't finish at the end of the 80s, our final example of successful physical confrontation tells the story of the famous Battle of Waterloo:

"Hundreds of anti-fascists clashed with the police at a railway station yesterday as they tried to thwart a neo-nazi rock concert. Terrified passengers fled Waterloo as masked demonstrators chased gangs of skinheads across the concourse and pelted police with missiles. Worried officers closed down both the mainline and tube stations as PC's with dogs fought in vain to control the running battles.

As the fascists huddled together for safety behind police lines, one black-shirted skinhead had a heart attack and was taken away in an ambulance. An abandoned Rover was smashed up by the crowds.

Posters for the event - organised by neo-nazi group Blood & Honour - had urged supporters to go to Waterloo for directions to the venue. But those who did were met by up to 500 Left-wingers from the Anti-Fascist Action group.

The Left-wingers tried to storm police lines to reach the skinheads, who were clearly terrified at the size of the crowd. One police constable said: "Its like Custer's last stand in there."

(News of the World, 13/9/92)

Previous page: Waterloo station, London 1992 - anti-fascists keeping up the honourable tradition of giving the opposition a pasting.

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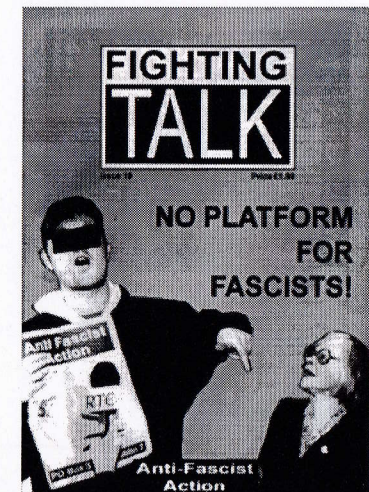
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