





THE IRISH FRANKENSTEIN.

portrayed the leader of the Young Ireland Movement, John Mitchell, as a vicious monkey, while Roy Mason, former Northern Ireland Secretary, continued this tradition claiming the troubles in Northern Ireland to be 'ingrained' and part of 'the Irish temperament'. The British State has learned many lessons from the last ten years of military occupation of Northern Ireland, later applied in Britain itself. The Special Patrol Group and the use of riot shields for control of civil disorder both surfaced first in Northern Ireland.

Fascist groups like the NF have a clear allegiance to the Loyalist forces in Northern Ireland. The Ulster Volunteer Force, for example, regularly reproduces articles from the NF's *Spearhead* and more 'practical' support has been noted in combined NF-UVF gunrunning enterprises. When the NF established their offices in Belfast, the UVF wished 'every success to the NF in Northern Ireland and trusts that it may grow from strength to strength'. *Loyalist News* has regularly echoed fascist ideas: 'The time will soon be ripe when the Republican scum will make their final effort. Already the signs are manifesting themselves, this time we must give them the *final solution*' (18.1.71)

The NF broke up an NCCL meeting in Manchester in 1977 whose aim had been to oppose the Prevention of Terrorism Act. In 1979 the combined ranks of 400 NF, BM and Loyalists harangued the Bloody Sunday march in London which mourned the murder of 14 civil rights marchers in 1972 in Derry by British Paratroopers, and also attacked a Troops Out march in Glasgow. The anti-fascist movement must urgently draw the link between racism and fascism and lend its support to the United Troops Out of Ireland Movement and campaigns against the PTA. The joint UTOM/ANL march through East London in the summer of 1979 was a hopeful sign but the low priority given to it by the Left shows there is much to be done.

### Southern Africa

Racist media coverage of Southern Africa, and particularly of Zimbabwe, of

the 'drug-crazed terrorists murder white missionaries' variety may well encourage people in this country to support Smith or Muzorewa; but its *primary* effect is to harden attitudes towards blacks in this country. Racist whites will talk in the same breath about sending 'them' all home and shooting 'them' in Rhodesia. The NF realise this. Their first major growth in 1972 was a result of cashing in on the hysteria against the Ugandan Asians. And they've undoubtedly got their links with fascists in Southern Africa who provide both finance and increasingly new recruits fleeing from the liberation struggle. The Afro-Caribbean community in Britain understands the link very well. Many of its members feel strong emotional and ideological links with the liberation struggles in Southern Africa and are aware that the defeat of racism can only strengthen *their* position in Britain.

That the ANL conference passed a motion (despite the opposition of the Steering Committee) calling upon it 'to use its resources and membership to publicise the liberation struggle and to actively support initiatives taken in this country by the Patriotic Front, or groups who work in solidarity with it' indicates that at last the anti-racist movement is beginning to take opposition to imperialism seriously. Not before time — racism in Britain doesn't just have its roots in Britain's imperialist past. It's also a legacy of the failure of socialists in Britain to build an effective anti-imperialist opposition — the chickens always come home to roost.

### We're here because you were there

The anti-racist and anti-fascist movement must take up struggles against imperialism. Firstly because the success of these struggles lessens the room for manoeuvre of British and other capital. The recent events in St. Lucia, Grenada, Dominica and Nicaragua are important in this respect. Secondly, the choices open to the immigrant working class in Britain are enhanced by the weakening of imperialism's grip in places like Southern Europe, Ireland and the Caribbean. Lastly, racist consciousness must be undermined by constantly explaining the real issues surrounding anti-imperialist struggles.

This is no *moral* issue or one of political 'purity'; for an anti-fascist movement to gain ground it must tackle the various bases for racist and fascist appeal and must not cut itself off from the anti-imperialist struggle. This realisation is growing in Britain — the UTOM/ANL demo and a desire to commit the ANL to support for the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe show this. But there is much more to be done. In particular we should:

1. engage in solidarity work against the kind of regimes that give encouragement to racism and fascism — S. Africa, Chile etc.
2. where possible try and draw the links between Northern Ireland and the anti-fascist struggle.
3. attempt to understand and give support to the most progressive aspects of struggles where immigrants come from, most especially the Caribbean, India / Pakistan and Southern Europe.



Photo: Union Place Collective

Picket of the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia Constitutional Conference, September 1979

# The Struggle against Fascism

It would be a mistake to believe that fascism has no popular appeal or is just the preserve of lunatics. It doesn't appear from nowhere but is the extension of the everyday racism, nationalism, authoritarianism and attitudes to work and sex which have been fundamental to twentieth century capitalist societies. This has many important applications which those doing anti-racist work are only just beginning to think about. It means seeing as central to our practice the undermining of the ideas on which the foundations of fascism are built. Obviously, racism is an important keystone in the fascist edifice and we've argued the need to tackle it already, but it's not the only one. We should never argue that a political challenge to the NF or BM is a choice between 'Smash the Front' or Fight Racism or Fight Sexism. It's necessary to constantly challenge the material divisions of power within the working class from which fascism feeds and oppose fascism in a qualitatively different way; not reproducing the sexism, racism, nationalism and so on in the way we fight.

Fascists attempt to resolve the crisis in sexual relations (see Ch. 3 'Up Against the Wall') by re-inforcing reactionary sexual stereotypes — the dependent Mother, the Protective Male — in the service of Master Race and Nation. The Anti-fascist movement is cutting its own throat on those occasions when such stereotypes are glorified 'in the cause of anti-fascism'. The streetfighting man, who like St. George slays the fascist dragon to 'protect the helpless maiden' does only damage to the struggle. Slogans like 'We are the IS Boot Boys' and comments like 'We smashed the NF — they were a load of cissies' must be dispensed with.

## Anti-fascist propaganda

The general tendency of anti-fascist propaganda over the last decade has been to equate the NF (quite correctly of course) with Nazis. However there has also been a neglect of fascism's oppression of women and gays and a constant danger of reinforcing an unwanted 'spinoff' from our NF=Nazis propaganda, the common misunderstanding that the NF are putting forward an alien, unpatriotic philosophy imported from Germany. Some of our propaganda has bordered on being anti-German. Of equal importance is the low level of understanding of fascism apparent in much anti-fascist propaganda. A useful, if unnecessarily obscure article in *Wedge* magazine showed this up — whereas the fascists have their 'World Jewish Conspiracy' theory we have a 'Fascism as a Disease' equivalent.

The language used by anti-fascists is often a real barrier to our understanding. Terms like rat, vermin and scum are common and suggest that fascists are essentially evil. This is not a view of people who are the product of specific historical circumstances but of people who have a fixed, unchangeable set of

characteristics. It is essentially an irrational account of irrationality; theological rather than Marxist. Calling someone 'vermin' means saying 'kill it' which leads to the sort of abuses of 'No Platform' we will discuss below. This view gives no guide to how we can attempt to convert the followers of the NF. This problem is usually got round by making a division between the leaders who are 'evil' and the followers who are simply 'misguided'. Thus the real appeal that fascist propaganda has to its followers is denied. Such an attitude is counterproductive and cuts us off from communicating with people. On many demonstrations, for example, 'scum' is chanted at anyone who makes hostile remarks, as if they were all hardened fascists. A perfect example of what anti-fascist propaganda must avoid comes from two *New Musical Express* journalists writing in *Socialist Worker* who manage to reinforce nearly every reactionary stereotype:

*'Face to face, they're fat, fortyish, wizened Nazi wankers having flaccid fantasies of butch, blond Bavarian boys resplendent in leather hot pants — they're male menopause Boy Scouts who've been flouncing through selected high streets under a red, white and blue swastika since 1974.'* (29.4.1978)

## Anti-fascism and sexual politics

Fortunately, however, there is a significant trend in the opposite direction. One of the richest developments in the anti-fascist movement has been the organised intervention of feminists and gay socialists. Sweeping aside the notion that women and gays are victims to be protected, a variety of women's and gay anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations have sprung up, such as Women Against Racism and Fascism, Gays Against Fascism and later Women and Gays against the Nazis. It is these groups which have been mainly responsible for challenging the 'Smash the Front' Boot Boy tactics of much of the anti-fascist movement.

Reflecting the increased consciousness

and organisation of black women in Britain who have played leading roles in strikes like the ones at Imperial Type-writers and Grunwicks, in struggles against racist schooling and the sexist interpretations of the already racist immigration laws, there has been a recent growth in black women's organisations. The National Black Women's Conference in March 1979 was soon followed by a mobilisation against state harassment of black people and the number of black women's groups seems to be growing. Women Against Imperialism groups too are considering women's struggles in the context of imperialism. Although not recognised generally as part of the 'anti-fascist movement' this is exactly what these groups are. Without, them, the struggle against fascism would be immeasurably weaker.

## Alien culture?

Margaret Thatcher believes there's a threat from an 'alien culture' and the new right wing backlash seeks to re-establish traditional morals and values. This is not something we can ignore to concentrate instead on the bread and butter issues. Every day people are struggling with what kind of social surround gives them comfort and stimulation. Youth especially have taken up a fight for a new culture, again and again. One of the greatest strengths of the anti-fascist movement recently has been its ability to provide a taking off point for a progressive culture and an alliance has been made between anti-racist and anti-fascist sentiments and this cultural endeavour.

The background of the ANL's (and Rock Against Racism's) popular support has been the opportunity it provided for the flowering of an anti-authoritarian youth movement, a movement which involves many working class youth, both black and white, identifying to an important extent with each other and with anti-nazism. At the same time there continues to be an important



Picket of the Home Office by Asian women's organisations, Feb. 1979



Notting Hill Carnival, August 1977

growth of an independent black culture. Examples range from reggae and the Notting Hill Carnival to black poets like Linton Kwesi Johnson and writers like Farrukh Dhondy with his book *East End at Your Feet*. On a whole number of levels challenges are being made to the dominant bourgeois culture.

### No platform for fascists

Having gone to great lengths to criticise the commonly held view that *all* you need to do to defeat fascism is to prevent them from organising we would emphasise the vital importance of *No Platform for Fascists* as one essential aspect of our political work. By *No Platform* we mean that Fascists must be stopped from using public platforms such as Town Halls and television. Although fascism grows through the cracks in capitalist life and therefore attacking its roots must be our priority, fascist organisations can *still* grow on their own. We must constantly prevent them from organising.

The political slogan *No Platform for Fascists* achieved by our own efforts follows from an understanding of the nature and goals of fascist movements. Firstly, fascist parties, unlike say the Conservatives, do not accept the democratic rights to organise independently and discuss politics won by the working class. Why should we allow 'free speech' to those who would take it from us? Weighed against the lives of millions of people, the fascist right to 'free speech' is cheap rhetoric. Secondly, violence is to fascist parties as heads are to human beings and every fascist movement has its 'combat organisation', for example Hitler's *Stormtroopers* or the NF's *Honour Guard*. These are the organisations used to attack, intimidate and demoralise all those who oppose them. Fascism will try to demonstrate its strength and power, its Master Race nature. While the NF at the moment

appears to seek power through parliamentary channels its long-term goal necessitates violence. Thirdly, fascist parties are built on extreme authoritarianism, with unswerving loyalty and blind obedience to their leaders. There is simply no place for rational debate and discussion with them.

This understanding leads us to our *No Platform* position. Some support the Labour Party and Communist Party view that we should 'Ignore them and they'll go away'. All history has shown they won't just go away. Militant *No Platform* activity — picketing their meetings, counter mobilisations to their marches and so on — are absolutely necessary to diminish their influence and disrupt their organisation. Our activity has contributed to the decline of the NF's vote, kept the majority of members off the street by driving a wedge between the hardcore and the thousands of racists who voted NF. Further, we should ensure that fascist organisations are not allowed to freely attack *any* individual or group, *whatever the issue*, since such actions are a way of training their combat organisations, boosting their morale and dividing their opponents. We should adopt a second policy, *support for any group or individual threatened with fascist violence, whatever the issue*.

### No Platform by our own efforts

Many anti-fascists have adopted a policy of asking the police, local councils or the Home Secretary to ban the NF marches under the Race Relations Act. BF believes that this policy which means handing over to the state the power to take crucial decisions is dangerously mistaken. History has shown, that in the final analysis, the bourgeois democratic state will not prevent the fascists from taking power. But more importantly such bans are likely to rebound against socialists. The Public Order Act of 1936 was the state's response to a call for banning the BUF — but it didn't work at the time and ever since the Left has found itself more frequently impaled on its spikes than the right.

More recent events clearly show how these bans make the socialist and working class movements suffer most. For example, the widespread calls from reformists to ban the NF's march in Hyde on October 8th 1977 was used by Chief Constable Anderton as an excuse for the most blatant collusion between him and Webster, giving the NF the freedom of Longsight, while holding up the Left in Hyde and Stockport with 9,000 police and helicopters at a total cost of £270,000 to the taxpayer. On 22nd February 1978 Metropolitan Police Commissioner McNea announced the banning of an NF march due to take place in Ilford three days later. At the same time he banned *all* marches for two months — including several progressive marches. Under these circumstances, to claim the ban on the NF as a 'partial victory' is nonsense. Several weeks later the police tried it on in Leeds. The banning of the NF march was extended to include the traditional May Day Rally. Leeds Trades Council decided to ignore the ban, and there were several arrests. The lesson is clear. We must have nothing to do with calls to the state to ban the NF. We must build a mass *independent* anti-fascist movement to stop the fascists.

### But what when the police outnumber us?

Since the Lewisham anti-NF demonstration the police have consistently thrown thousands of people and pounds into the field and the anti-fascist movement has not had the force to physically stop the fascists. However, the slogan of *No Platform* has been *politically* implemented when our mobilisations have sent much smaller numbers of fascists scuttling down the side streets protected by thousands of police. It dents their Master Race image.

An important part of future activity must therefore be to keep up the pressure and maintain the situation where the fascists can't hold marches without massive police protection. The ANL had had a bad record on this count, the leadership fearing to offend its influential



Picket of NF meeting, Blackburn 1976

establishment supporters. When 80,000 gathered in Victoria Park (East London) in April 1978 the NF were allowed the day before the unprecedented freedom of the streets of Central London. Worse still, in September 1978, as Carnival 2 gathered its even greater numbers against racism in Brockwell Park, the ANL leadership hindered support for a call to defend Asian areas in the East End against an intimidating NF march. Just over a year later, the ANL leadership was chasing along to catch up with the movement, late in the day supporting calls for No Platform in Leicester and Southall.

### The abuse of No Platform

While we support No Platform we must be wary about some of the abuses of the demand. One is to believe that counter-mobilisation alone is sufficient to defeat fascism. Another is to glorify violence against the fascists, setting up 'goon squads' for revenge and individual acts of violence against fascists. Tit-for-tat operations against individual fascists at their work or home do not advance the struggle and place the whole anti-fascist movement in danger via reprisals. The

hard core ideological Nazis will not change because of being beaten up and many of the periphery can be won over by argument or ostracism, while assaulting them could be counter productive.

'Only one thing would have stopped our movement — if our opponents had from the very beginning smashed the nucleus of our movement with the utmost brutality.' This quote from Hitler has been used too often and too approvingly. We hope this pamphlet shows how limited such a view is.

## The Struggle against Racism



The racism of the state has been constantly underestimated by the white left and anti-racist movement. In Chapters Two ('Roots') and Three ('Up Against the Wall') we have already examined it in some detail. However, the new Tory Government is intensifying this racism and bringing in more legislation to back it up. They are strengthening the racist division present in existing immigration laws between 'patrial' and 'non-patrial' in new immigration law proposals and a new Nationality Act (which had its origins in the previous Labour Government); Starting from the false problem that there are too many 'non-patrial' (i.e. usually *black*) immigrants able to get in and too many able to 'slip through the net' by simply lying

about the numbers, there are new plans to intensify counter measures against illegal immigrants, and 'remove some of the possible sources of future immigration'. The new Nationality Act threatens to make many black Britons stateless. The families of black people will be divided, as husbands and fiancées are refused entry, and the entry of dependents, including teenagers and grandparents is restricted. These are just a few of the measures that will strengthen racist feeling, and threaten the position of all black people in Britain.

Already we have seen several successful campaigns to contest the increasing racist harassment sanctioned by these laws such as the successful campaign against the deportation of Abdul Azad.

The size of the demonstration called by a very wide range of organisations within the black community on 25th November 1979 has shown the strength of feeling on this issue. Following it, much work needs to be done to build good, local campaigns. The role of the white left is clearly to energetically support such initiatives against state racism from the black community. Its other main task should be to make a much greater effort to tackle the racialism of the white working class.

**Support for an autonomous black movement**

One of the most enriching experiences for the whole working class in Britain over the last decade or so has been the development of struggles confidently waged by sections of the black working

class. There has been the emergence of autonomous organisations, both of black revolutionaries and more generally black youth, particularly Asian. Big Flame, unlike most of the white left, offers unconditional support for these organisations. We do this both out of solidarity with the daily needs and battles of black people and out of our understanding of how the revolutionary movement and its party will be built.

The working class is divided because, although the whole class is oppressed and exploited, certain sections have greater material power relative to others. Thus in general factory workers have more power than the unemployed, men have more power than women, older workers have more power than school students. What is most relevant here is that white workers have more power than black. Because of the rewards that go with these power differences the more powerful are, in general, reluctant to give up their relative

privilege. *Class unity* cannot develop until certain struggles have been won by black people, and white working class people have realised that their real interests lie in taking power from the bosses. Class unity can only be maintained on the basis of the strength of those sections which are at present weak, because only then can the weaker sections force the fact of their relatively greater oppression onto the political agenda.

Most white leftists will say that current black organisations are too local, lack national cohesion and that they do not advance what we call revolutionary politics. This is the sort of arrogance black militants have come to expect from us. The white left continually confuses 'separatism' with a political concept of 'autonomy'. While the influence of the autonomous groups is growing, that of the separatist, black nationalist groups is declining under the influence of *class* issues brought to the fore by the crisis.

The autonomous groups see the issues of race and class as intertwined, accepting the need to overthrow capitalism and imperialism with unity with the white working class on their own terms. The need for the socialist wing to grow within the black movement is crucial for the development of revolutionary politics in Britain, but there is no way these can be forced by 'interventions' from white groups.

When black people decide to join (white) left groups they play an essential part in educating white revolutionaries and developing the political line of the group. But we would argue that the prime role for any black members would normally be, wherever possible, to contribute to the growth of the autonomous revolutionary tendency in the black working class, and that this is where the political activity of the vast majority of black revolutionaries will and should take place.

## The Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Movement

Big Flame believes that the fight against racism and fascism must take the form of *broad front* organisations which bring together those in the Labour Party, Communist Party and revolutionary groups like ourselves. This is for two reasons. Firstly unity is necessary if the struggle is to be at all effective. No single party or group can achieve much by itself. Secondly working inside broad fronts gives us the opportunity to argue in front of more people for our revolutionary politics rather than reformist positions and convince them that only the former can successfully challenge racism and fascism. Examples of broad front organisations are the various Committees or Campaigns against Racism and Fascism which sprung up all over the country in the mid 1970s.

Before 1976 the numbers involved were very small. On the numerous occasions when the reformists were unwilling to organise opposition to the NF demos, a hardy band of anti-fascist activists spent untold weekends galivanting all over the country, running down backstreets in pursuit of the fascists. We became obsessed with the problem of numbers. The number of demos organised by the NF gave us little breathing space in which to convert the necessary numbers to a No Platform position, so we solved the problem in the short term by organising regional bodies, such as the North West Anti-fascist Committee, so as to centralise our ability to produce propaganda and draw on wider areas for demo fodder.

This was followed by the establishment of the National Anti-racist Anti-fascist Co-ordinating Committee and brought significant improvements in our surveillance of the fascists and our knowledge of developments around the country, as well as our ability to transport the already committed around the country. The spring and summer of 1976 marked an important watershed in the

AF struggle in the country: 4000 anti-fascists, 50% of them black, marched in Bradford against the NF; and a few weeks later a similar-sized demo opposed the NF march against Relf's imprisonment in Birmingham. Blackburn anti-racist Alliance broke the back of the National Party with its demo in September.

This escalation of the struggle owed little or nothing to the strategy of the Anti-fascist Anti-racist Committees; it comprised the mass emergence of black people onto the streets to oppose fascist marches and activity on their doorsteps — the NF made the mistake of provoking the black community directly and has been paying the price ever since, for, as black people have arisen in their self-defence they have inspired large sections of the white working class to take a stance against fascism.

The forces paraded at Lewisham in 1977 summed up the new stage of

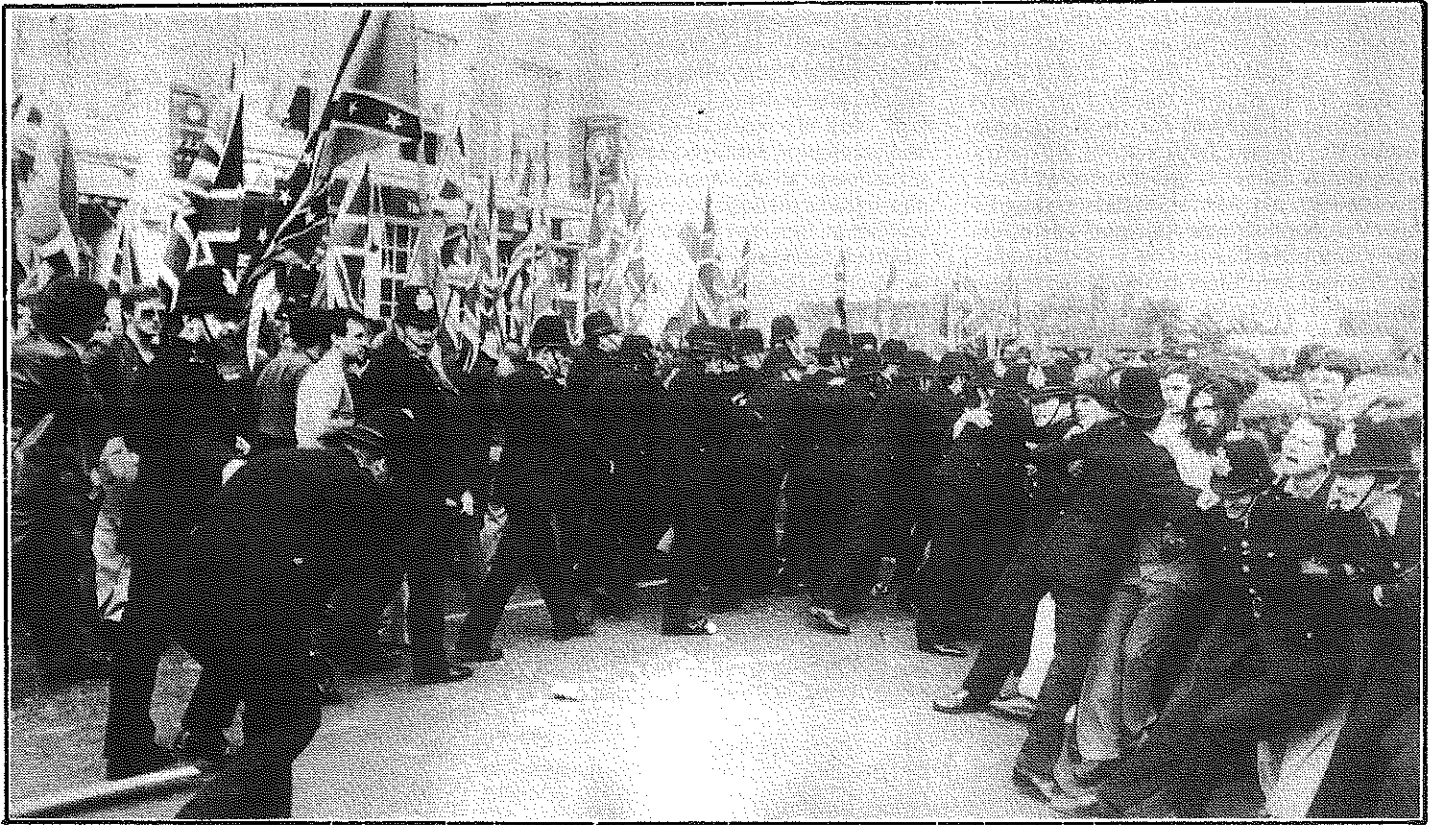
struggle. The NF, hoping it could march through and intimidate a predominantly black area, was faced by a massive mobilisation of black people to defend their area, a considerable force of white anti-fascists, including women, gay, youth, trade union and other contingents. We almost stopped the NF marching at all, as it was they managed a short trot. The police vowed never to allow anti-fascists to deprive them of control of the streets again.

### The national ARAFCC Conference

Anti-fascist/anti-racist activists, meeting in the National ARAFCC, decided that the time was ripe to create a national body to co-ordinate the AF/AR work that was already happening. The draft aims of this new organisation, to be formed at the conference in June 1978, were 'to wage and help to co-ordinate a struggle against racism and fascism in all their aspects', to build 'the



Anti-fascist demonstration in Blackburn, 1976



*Police protect the NF at Lewisham, August 1977*

widest support amongst the working class' and to build 'mass mobilisations against the racists and fascists'.

Coming as it did at a time of the escalation of the struggle and the relatively recent entry into it of women, gays, black organisations and trade unionists, the conference was almost bound to explode. There were those including feminists who were involved because of the centrality of sexism to fascist ideology and practice, gays because they were increasingly the target of fascist attacks, trade unionists who had come to understand fascism's historical role of destroying independent working class organisation, and black groups reflecting the new found confidence of the black community. Virtually everyone had different reasons for being there, and this proved to be more important than what we had in common. This was not helped by an overt agenda with much competition for speaking time and little chance to get to know each other's perspectives. There was also a deep division between those who wanted a National Steering Committee elected at the Conference and those who wanted a delegate committee based on the existing local AF/AR committees. Given all these conflicts it is not surprising that this attempt to build a unified and democratic organisation failed.

### **Arise the ANL**

However, probably the main reason for this failure was the rapid growth of an alternative organisation, the Anti Nazi League. The ANL represented a radical and welcome departure from traditional forms of AF activity. For the first time the AF struggle began to develop into a

mass movement. Its alliance with RAR, the enormously successful Carnivals fused together a mass cultural movement, expressed through music, and a political campaign and gave us a bridge to tens of thousands of people, particularly the young. The campaign overflowed with energy and enthusiasm, it was successfully carried into all sectors of society. Trade union branches against the Nazis, Women against the Nazis, Gays against the Nazis, and particularly in some towns, football supporters against the Nazis which began successfully to fight back against the racism of many football supporters which was threatening to become a very important recruiting ground for the NF. The campaign has undoubtedly played a major role in the massive electoral decline in the NF and driven a wedge between them and many potential supporters.

At the same time the ANL failed to deal with many of the problems and weaknesses apparent in past practice and has compounded this with the creation of quite new ones. For the SWP the ANL was an attempt to counteract the media's 'Red Fascists' smear which had followed Lewisham, while for some in the Labour Party it was a chance to counteract NF electoral gains in Labour strongholds. These motivations account in large part for the two key weaknesses of the ANL – its failure to adopt the No Platform position in practice, and its failure to tackle racism. Many racists such as Sid Bidwell have been able to pose as anti-racists by associating themselves with the ANL.

Those of us who held a No Platform position and recognised the importance

of anti-racism failed to organise ourselves so as to be an effective force within the ANL and influence its development. Had the ARAFCC Conference not collapsed, we would have been far better placed as an organised force within the ANL, but, as it is, the only organised force inside the ANL seemed to be the SWP. Unfortunately, it seems to be true that the ANL is fading away since the general election. This was most obvious in the failure to mobilise full opposition to the murder of Blair Peach and the Southall trials, i.e. at the point where the state displaced the NF as the main antagonist. We need to understand why this is happening if we are to draw full benefit from the experience of the ANL.

### **To the winter of '79**

Much of the explanation lies in the attitudes of the Labour Party and the SWP. Labour saw the ANL primarily as an electoral machine for fighting the NF at the ballot box, and consequently allowed it to stagnate last winter during the long wait for the election. Electoral work is only one amongst other tasks, but even for just this purpose the decision to keep the ANL on ice until the election was a mistake – many ANL supporters were allowed to drift away and did not return in May 1979. This need not have been the case, and in some areas like Nottingham the local activists managed to keep the mass of supporters involved with the ANL.

As for the SWP, it has become increasingly clear that its decision to concentrate on building an anti-Tory campaign in the trade unions has involved pulling out of the ANL. Obviously it is wrong to expect any socialist organisation

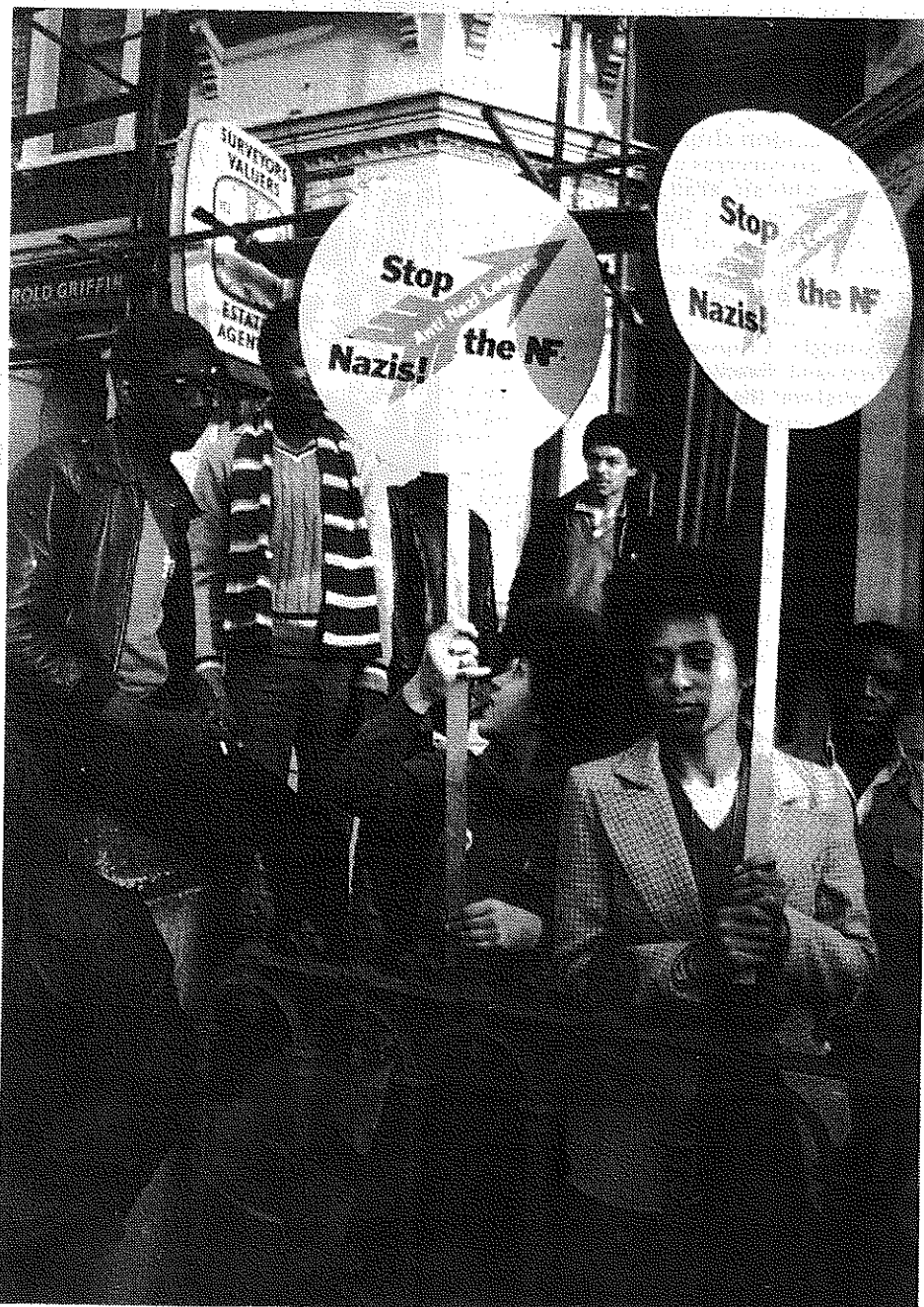
to devote all of its energies to just one area of class struggle but, having done just that in relation to the ANL since 1978, the SWP's more or less complete withdrawal since leaves a bad taste in the mouth. Had the SWP a much wider conception of ARAF work than sticking the Nazi label on the NF it would realise that there is no clear line to be drawn between anti-racism and anti-fascism and the rest of the class struggle. The example of sectoral AF/AR organisations like Rail Against the Nazis shows how combatting divisions within the workforce can contribute to building rank and file solidarity. It is crucial to integrate these aspects of the struggle together at a time when the Tories are launching simultaneous offensives against trade unions and black immigrants.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to reduce the question of the ANL's decline to the attitudes of Labour and the SWP. The rest of the revolutionary left sought to change the ANL in the wrong way — by committing the ANL conference to a whole list of advanced political positions in preference to fighting for those positions amongst rank and file ANL supporters. As a consequence of this 'revolutionary socialism', the rump of the ANL has some very good paper positions but little or no practice based on them. Again, important exceptions indicate that things could have been different; Merseyside ANL, for instance, publishes a regular bulletin of articles taking up the historical roots of racism and the need to fight the immigration laws, thus making membership of the ANL there a real educational, involving experience; a bridge between a gut hatred of fascism and socialist consciousness.

For all these reasons the ANL has failed *in practice* to go beyond the task it initially set itself of simple opposition to the NF. Having set themselves such a narrow task the *leadership* of the ANL saw little reason for carrying on after defeating the NF at the ballot box. No doubt the ANL or something like it will rise again when the Fascists pick themselves up from the floor, but we question whether the ANL type of organisation, despite its successes, is sufficient in

combatting fascism. It reproduced many of the old faults and added some of its own. Crucially, it failed to take up racism. At the time of writing it seems probable that the ANL's decline has gone

too far for anti-racists to base our fight against the immigration laws on it, and yet there is no credible alternative to the ANL for fighting fascists, nor is there likely to be.



## The Present and the Future

The Tory government's actual and proposed restrictions on immigration and nationality have evoked an opposition which has already gone beyond these immediate attacks to challenge the racist immigration laws already passed. For two decades the racists have had it all their own way over immigration. The success of the ANL and the demonstration on 25th November 1979 against immigration laws are the bedrock on which we can, and must, build a movement which will attack the roots of British racism. Moving from defence to attack is the only way to consolidate the successes of the ANL.

November 25th marked the advent of

a new force in British politics — large numbers of black people taking to the streets to oppose immigration laws. The future of that movement will depend to some extent on how much support white anti-racists can win for it in the white working class. Unfortunately, the response of much of the left to this development has been a simplistic repetition of 'No to all Immigration Controls'. We have to find ways of doing anti-racist work amongst whites parallel to the black movement, and keep our noses out of black politics except when asked for support.

Big Flame regards all immigration

controls as racist and incompatible with communism, but disagrees with those who want to demand adherence to the slogan 'No to all Controls' as a condition for taking part in the campaign against the new proposals. There are enough problems getting unity around opposition to the 1971 Immigration Act. Getting the 'correct', 'principled' political basis first and trying to build the movement second is a recipe for condemning ourselves to the margins of politics. Similarly we must avoid the manipulative, patronising attitude of much of the white left towards black organisations believing they can teach the black movement how



to achieve unity. A more worthwhile task is the hard work of fighting the arbitrary arrests, detention and deportations of black people right now as part of our opposition to the existing laws.

### Don't abandon ship

What also concerns us is the number of socialists who are abandoning anti-racist and anti-fascist work for 'the struggles of the moment' against the cuts and the Tories' attacks on the unions. As we have already said, AR/AF work should not be compartmentalised off from the rest of the struggle. Chapter One showed how Fascism and Fascist ideology are linked to Capitalism; that Fascist ideas are more extreme versions of what passes for commonsense in this society.

Chapter Two established that our society is drenched in racism derived from Imperialism past and present. That racism, in all its manifestations, is an ongoing barrier to the development of working class unity and to our ability to organise and struggle for our needs. Slogans such as 'Blame the bosses, not the blacks' barely touch the surface of racist ideas; that approach is based implicitly on the assumption that racism can be put down to the current Capitalist crisis; it can't. It is no good simply proving to whites that black people are not to blame for unemployment and housing problems so long as whites consider that they deserve rights over and above those of blacks. Accepting that blacks should be below you makes it easier to accept that bosses and others should be above you. It is in this sense that a race which enslaves another cannot free itself. A phenomenon like racism which has been built and refined over hundreds of years cannot be countered by a quick campaign around catchy slogans.

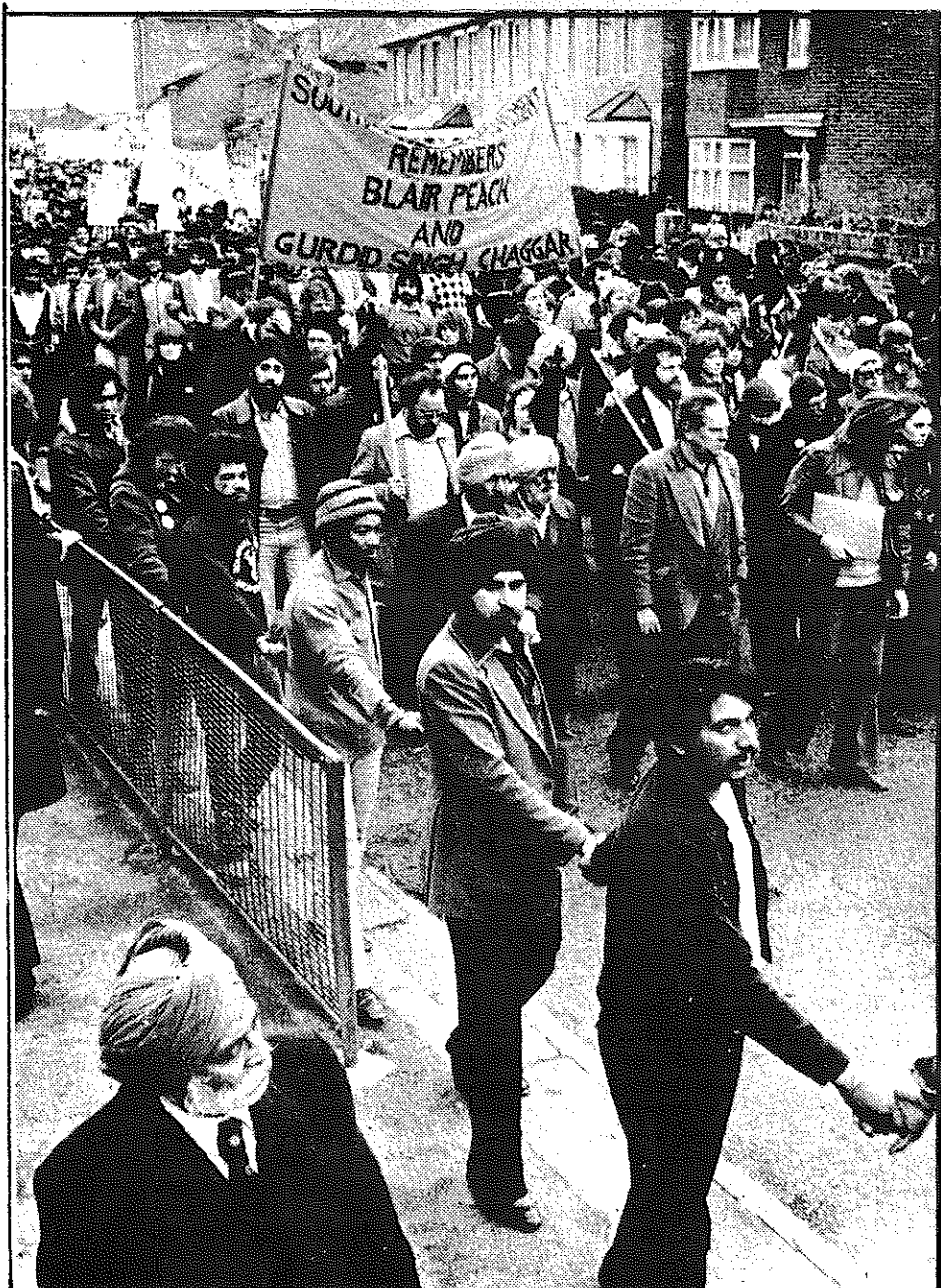
While racism and fascism are more than simple expressions of capitalist crises, they can take on new and more dangerous forms during such periods. Chapter Three looked at the specific form they have taken during the present crisis and argued that this crisis is much more complicated than a matter of economic difficulties, but also included political, ideological and psychosexual dimensions. It concluded that fascism is not the main danger, but racism and particularly the state racism most obviously expressed in the immigration laws.

At the moment it is the struggle against immigration laws which is taking off; last year it was the ANL. The tragedy is that often different sets of people have been involved in the two struggles, thus reproducing the sectional nature of post war class struggle. Anti-racism will no more 'deal with the NF in passing' than the ANL made serious inroads into racism. We need to do both, and to link up AR/AF work with struggles in the workplace and of women, tenants, gays, the unemployed, and youth, and against imperialism. It that sounds like creating a mass socialist movement, that's because we need one. Fascism succeeds because socialism fails; the reality of racism and the danger of Fascism will be with us for as long as Capitalism and Imperialism survive.



(Above) Sit down in Brick Lane, August 1978

(Below) March in Southall in memory of Blair Peach, May 1979



# Recommended Reading

## CHAPTER ONE

- Big Flame, *Fascism and Sexuality* (Big Flame)  
Daniel Guerin, *Fascism and Big Business* (Monad)  
Joe Jacobs, *Out of the Ghetto: My Youth in the East End, Communism and Fascism, 1913-1939* (Janet Simon)  
Maria-Antoinetta Macciocchi, 'Female Sexuality in Fascist Ideology', *Feminist Review* No. 1, 1979  
Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (Penguin)  
Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Economy and Class Structure of German Fascism* (CSE Books)  
Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society* (Croom Helm)  
Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle against Fascism in Germany* (Pathfinder)  
Mihaly Vajda, *Fascism as a Mass Movement* (Motive)

## CHAPTER TWO

- Johnson Asiegbu, *Slavery and the Politics of Liberation* (Longman)  
Michael Barratt Brown, *The Economics of Imperialism* (Penguin)  
Michael Crowder, *West Africa under Colonial Rule* (Hutchinson)  
V.G. Kiernan, *Lords of Human Kind* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson)  
V.G. Kiernan, *Marxism and Imperialism* (Edward Arnold)  
David Killingray, *A Plague of Europeans* (Penguin)  
National Association for Multi-Racial Education, *African History - What do we teach?*  
A. Sivanandan, *From Immigration Control to 'Induced Repatriation'* (Race and Class)  
A. Sivanandan, *Race, Class and the State* (Race and Class)  
Third World First, *Get Off Their Backs* (Third World First)  
Eric Williams, *Slavery and Capitalism* (Andre Deutsch)

## CHAPTERS THREE AND FOUR

- All London Teachers against Racism and Fascism, *Handbook on Teaching Against Racism* (ALTARF)  
Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Councils, *Blood on the Streets* (Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Councils)  
Big Flame, 'Black Autonomy and the Class Struggle', *Revolutionary Socialism* No. 2, 1978  
Big Flame, *A Close Look at Fascism and Racism* (Big Flame)  
David Edgar, *Racism, Fascism and the Politics of the National Front* (Race and Class)  
Gay Activists Alliance, *Anti-Fascist Handbook* (GAA)  
Stuart Hall, 'Racism and reaction', *Schooling and Culture* No. 4, 1979  
Stuart Hall and others, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (Macmillan)  
Institute of Race Relations, *Police against Black People* (Race and Class)  
Vic Seidler, 'Masculinity and Fascism', *Achilles Heel* No. 1, 1978  
Martin Thom, 'Anti-Racism: Infections of Language', *Wedge* No. 3, 1978  
Veronica Ware, *Women and the National Front* (Searchlight)  
Martin Walker, *The National Front* (Fontana)

In addition to these books, pamphlets and magazine articles, there are a number of periodicals it is worth reading regularly especially *Searchlight*, *Race and Class* and *Race Today*.

### SOCIALIST REVOLUTION — THE ONLY ANSWER

Capitalism means war, unemployment, poverty, sexual and racial oppression. Big Flame doesn't believe in patching it up with piece-meal reforms through Parliament. Nothing less than the destruction of the capitalist state will pave the way for socialism.

Socialism means the end of all forms of exploitation and the creation of a free, equal, and classless society in which all human beings will be able to realise their potential.

### SOCIALISM — A STRUGGLE OF THE WHOLE WORKING CLASS

There's no substitute for the mass involvement of the working class in the struggle for socialism. People must fight for their own freedom. Nobody can give it to them.

Unity cannot be imposed from above. It must grow out of the struggles of the working class. Socialists have a duty to recognise the differences that capitalism creates to hold back our unity — and to fight to overcome them. We support the struggle of women, black people, gays, and youth against their special oppression. We support their right to their own independent organisation.

Ultimately, Big Flame believes in the need for a new revolutionary party of the whole working class, which will play a leading role in the struggle for socialism. There is no short cut to the creation of a new party: thousands of independent socialists and militants must be won to the idea that we need it.

### BIG FLAME AND WOMEN'S STRUGGLES

We are active in the women's movement and the socialist feminist tendency, where we fight for:

A Woman's Right to Choose on abortion, contraception and sexual relationships.

Freedom to walk the streets without fear of sexual violence.

Refuges for battered women.

An end to the division of labour between men and women, inside and outside the home.

### AGAINST SEXISM AND RACISM

Big Flame supports the struggle of black people to live in equality and free from the fear of racist attacks. We support their right to form their own independent and self-defence organisations.

We fight for the Anti-Nazi League to take an anti-racist stand against all forms of official harassment of black people.



### TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND NOW!

Capitalism is international. The struggle for socialism and national liberation abroad aids our fight against British capitalism. The international unity of the working class is crucial.

We are in solidarity with all socialist and republican movements fighting to free Ireland from British imperialism. We support the United Troops Out Movement and call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops and

self-determination for the Irish people as a whole. A united, socialist Ireland will assist the liberation of the British working class.

### IN THE WORKPLACE

Our aim is to build independent rank and file organisations opposed to the reformist leaders of the trade unions. We support the fight for higher wages, shorter hours, a lighter work load, and for full pay — work or no work. Differentials deepen the disunity and we want to see them narrowed. We oppose redundancies, incomes policies, and every device to increase exploitation.

### IN THE COMMUNITY

We argue for closer links between the struggles in the community and those at work. We fight for better, community-controlled public services and for decent homes for all.

If you agree with us, why not find out more about us? We have branches or members in many cities throughout England and Wales. Send off the form if you want to find out more about Big Flame.

To Big Flame, 217 Wavertree Road, Liverpool 7.

I would like more information about Big Flame.

Please send me a copy of *Introduction to Big Flame*.

I enclose a postal order for 18p.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

Big Flame, 'The Past Against Our Future' ISBN 0-906082-03-X  
Published by Big Flame, 217 Wavertree Road, Liverpool 7  
Typesetting by Community Typesetters, 2 St. Paul's Road, London N1 2QN (01-226-6243)  
Printed by Spider Web, 9 Rosemont Road, London NW3 (01-794-6576)

Trade distribution:

Southern England: PDC, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 (01-251-4976)

Northern England and Scotland: Scottish and Northern Book Distribution Coop, Birchcliffe Centre, Hebden Bridge, W. Yorks (042284-3315)

Cartoons by Navvie Brick

Front cover by Chris Rivilin

# ***The Past Against Our Future***

## **- fighting racism and fascism**

The winter of '79 has turned out different from our expectations. The National Front is down, but not out. The Anti-Nazi League has lost much of its momentum. The Government is attacking the black community, but black people are fighting back.

It is necessary to consider the past to be able to decide how best to shape the future.

This pamphlet tries to show how we can go beyond the success of the ANL, by knowing our enemies and knowing ourselves. The Carnival is over but the struggle continues.

---

### **other Big Flame publications**

---

**An Introduction to Big Flame** 10p  
Our politics, history, structure and publications.

**Draft Manifesto for a New Revolutionary Organisation** 1977  
25p. A comprehensive manifesto written to clarify our political positions and as the basis for discussing the organisation of a mass politics tendency.

**Labouring under the Tories or a Socialist Alternative?** 20p  
A new pamphlet which argues the need to challenge the defensive basis of existing politics in the working class movement and stress instead rank and file socialist alternatives in industry, the public sector and social life in general.

**Century of the Unexpected** 65p  
Another new pamphlet which puts forward new insights about the nature of 'socialist' societies arguing that they should be seen as a new mode of production — state collectivism.

**The Revolution Unfinished: a Critique of Trotskyism** 50p  
A non-sectarian critique of Trotskyism which links the strengths and weaknesses of Trotsky's original ideas to the theory and practice of current Trotskyist organisations.

**A Close Look at Racism and Fascism** 20p  
Articles from the Big Flame newspaper covering such topics as fascism and women, the National Front and youth, police harassment and black people, and includes an interview with A. Sivanandan.

**The Crisis in Education** 30p  
An analysis of the restructuring of education which argues for taking struggles further than fighting the cuts and wage battles. Sections on teachers, pupils and parents, as well as the experience in Russia and China.

**Revolutionary Socialism** 50p  
Quarterly magazine of Big Flame. Subscription: 4 issues for £2. Back issues available:  
No. 4. Articles on local organising, health, communal living and childcare.  
No. 3. Articles on recent events in Italy, the Labour Party, shop stewards, women and the labour market.  
No. 2. Articles on black autonomy, youth culture, abortion, the crisis of the revolutionary left.  
No. 1. Articles on Socialist Unity, Argentina, Middle East and Portugal.

#### **FORTHCOMING**

**Sexuality and Fascism** 25p  
A reprint of papers from a Big Flame dayschool on women in Nazi Germany; women and the NF; and the NF and masculinity and fascism.

All these publications can be obtained by writing to Big Flame, 217 Wavertree Road, Liverpool 7.  
Make Cheques and postal orders payable to Big Flame Publications and include 10p postage for each item ordered.