

FIGHTING TALK

Issue 2

Spring 1992

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AFA march through Bethnal Green

Hounding Le Pen

The ANL then and now

Débâcle in Bermondsey

JOURNAL OF ANTIFASCIST ACTION
INCORPORATING CABLE STREET BEAT

FIGHTING TALK

Unity in action

In the first issue of *Fighting Talk*, Anti-Fascist Action said it was going to set the agenda, and not just respond to the far right's initiatives. Since then, AFA has done just that, and has recorded an impressive number of successes, particularly in East London.

In September, our Unity Carnival in Hackney attracted 10,000 people to a day of music and protest. A month later, in October, some 300 attended our picket of the fascist paper sale at Brick Lane in Bethnal Green, too many for the opposition to handle despite a national mobilisation. And in November, our national march against racist attacks brought 3,500 militant anti-fascists on to the streets of Tower Hamlets, forcing the fascists – who claim the East End as “their” patch – to make themselves scarce.

In 1992, AFA will be building on this firm basis to extend and deepen the anti-fascist struggle.

Three new organisations have appeared on the scene in the last period. The Campaign Against Fascism in Europe has been formed in response to the growing fascist menace across the water, while the Anti-Racist Alliance, formed late last year, and the Anti-Nazi League, re-launched early in 1992, are focussed on domestic developments.

AFA has always welcomed any new forces into the anti-fascist arena, and to the extent that ARA and ANL are prepared to pose a real challenge to the fascists, we are keen to see the greatest possible unity in action between the various campaigns. How easy this will be in practice remains to be seen.

One thing is certain, AFA will do nothing to impede united and effective actions. If there is sectarianism, it will not come from us. We have years of experience in the struggle against fascism, and we have scored a number of notable victories in this time, but we have never pretended to be the only force in the battle.

As far as we are concerned, it is impossible to fight fascism ideologically without also fighting it physically. The fascist gangs who attack blacks, gays, women, socialists, trade unionists and even democrats and liberals are no ordinary opponents. Fighting the BNP and the NF is not the same as fighting against the Tories. Different tactics, different methods are needed.

Obviously, this means it is absolutely necessary that every anti-fascist leafleting session, every anti-fascist meet-

ing, every anti-fascist demonstration be able to defend itself against the very real threat of fascist attack.

But there is more to it than that. Fascism is a knife at the throat of the working class, and fascist organisations can be given no room for manoeuvre whatsoever: they must have no platform for their poisonous ideas.

Most organisations on the left pay lip-service to “no platform for the fascists”, but in practice look the other way when the fascists show their faces. For AFA, “no platform” means exactly what it says: no rallies, no marches, no meetings, no paper sales, no leaflets, no stickers, no shops selling their badges, records and pamphlets. We say that “no platform” must be changed from a rhetorical slogan into a practical policy.

Against the background of major successes for fascist and far-right parties across Europe, only a fool would deny that the potential exists in Britain for similar developments. With the general election around the corner, the National Front and the British National Party are bracing themselves for a major campaign aimed at securing a breakthrough into the big time.

They are still small now, but there can be no guarantee that they will remain that way if they are left to operate unmolested. They see the election as an opportunity. Anti-fascists should see it in the same terms: an opportunity to throw them into disarray, an opportunity to crush them whenever they surface.

The ANL and ARA have attracted a lot of media attention and have won support from a very wide spectrum of people, from pop stars and vicars to politicians and trade union leaders. In itself, this is a positive development. But the key to success in the fight against fascism remains the difficult task of mobilising ordinary working class people on the street. Without that, even the most successful pop concert against racism or the longest petition against racist attacks can achieve nothing.

The fascist election campaign will prove a testing ground for those who say they are opposed to fascism and racism. If unity in action means anything, it must mean uniting to stop that campaign ever getting off the ground.

AFA has issued an open invitation to any anti-fascist or anti-racist organisation to co-operate with us on the basis of “no platform”. We mean it. Do they?

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**As the fascists increase their activity around Britain
Anti-Fascist Action has risen to the challenge.**

**Anti
FASCIST
ACTION**

On November 10, Remembrance Day, Anti-Fascist Action organised a national march against racist attacks in Bethnal Green, in the heart of London's East End. Thousands turned out to make it one of the biggest anti-fascist demos in the area since the 1930s.

The march started appropriately from Gardners Corner, where the anti-fascists assembled in 1936 for what came to be known as "The Battle of Cable Street". Veterans of Cable Street, who have been regular supporters at AFA events over the years, joined us on the day.

It was a massive show of defiance and anger in solidarity with the many local victims of race attacks. And as the hugely confident, belligerent crowd wound its way down the Bethnal Green Road, it was clear that the BNP and the local racists had decided to stay away in the interests of their health. A wise move. Any counter-demonstration they might have thought of staging would have been dwarfed, not to say physically smashed, by the vast crowd of anti-fascists.

The choice of location was not accidental. Tower Hamlets has the worst record for racist attacks in the country, and the British National Party have made it a national

**From the East End of London
to Glasgow city centre we
are sending the fascists a
message they will do well to
listen to.**

**We report on some of our
recent successes**

AFA marches through Bethnal Green

priority. They will be standing leading Nazi Richard Edmonds as a candidate in the general election, and have had some success in local elections.

Bethnal Green has been called the "spiritual home" of the far right since Mosley's blackshirts built a base there in the 1930s. The area around Brick Lane was also the

scene of violent confrontations between the National Front and the Anti-Nazi League in the late '70s.

We in AFA have never accepted the strange logic that working class areas like the East End are the natural hunting ground of fascists. Working class estates are our territory, and the East End in particular has a long record of left wing activity stretching back to the start of the century. Part of AFA's approach has been to reclaim this tradition of working class militancy.

The march was a fitting end to a year's work in East London in which AFA has used a variety of tactics against the fascists and has scored a string of successes. The fascists have been forced out of their favourite watering holes in Bethnal Green Road, as landlords reluctantly got the message that serving fascists was bad for business, to say the least. The fascists have also seen their regular paper sale in Brick Lane under threat, and had to look on impotently as AFA and Cable Street Beat rallied 10,000 to their "Unity Carnival Against Racist Attacks" in nearby Hackney.

The only negative aspect of the day was provided, perhaps predictably, by some sections of the left. The Socialist Workers Party, which hadn't decided to relaunch the ANL

Continued over

Nazis driven out of Glasgow

In Glasgow on Saturday November 30 a group of Seig-Heiling Nazi thugs kicked and beat up a woman in the city centre after she had protested at their actions. The next day Argyle Street erupted in a "Race Clash". At least this is what the papers would have us believe. The truth is somewhat different.

The Nazi British National Party tried to hold a national rally in Glasgow on that Sunday. Anti-Fascist Action and others stopped them rallying in our city.

The BNP leadership were holed up in their "secret" meeting place, the Gallery Bar on Argyle Street. For several hours the BNP and their "Fuhrer" John Tyndall cowered behind

the pub doors and their police guardians, in fear of the 200 strong group of anti-fascists who had surrounded the pub.

While Tyndall and the other racist rats inside the pub escaped through the sewers under Central Station, many of his other brain-dead followers were being physically confronted on the streets.

We made it clear that we will resist any scumbags who peddle the lies that Hitler's gas chambers were a hoax, that black people are to blame for unemployment and crime, that fascism has anything to offer working class people and who attack people who have a different skin colour. They must be stopped and kicked out of our city!



ANTI-FASCIST ACTION LEADS THE WAY THROUGH BETHNAL GREEN

at that stage and whose members therefore were still parroting the line that "the Nazis are not a threat", went on local radio posing as the organisers of the march. They hadn't even sponsored the event, despite repeated approaches from AFA.

Not content with that, they demanded speaking rights at the start of the march, and when that was denied, their chief steward set to heckling a speaker from Red Action, shouting "Let's hear what shit

she's going to come out with", until removed by the stewards.

The Class War contingent treated us to a near hysterical response to a non-existent "fascist threat" which turned out to be a lone pensioner shouting from the sixth floor of a tower block. They brought the march to a halt, and provided the police with a perfect opportunity to make arrests and disrupt the march. Only the timely intervention of the AFA stewards,

who got between the Class War contingent and the police, but facing the Territorial Support group, prevented this from happening.

Likewise the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), which insists that fighting fascists is "absurd" and which proceeded to tell people on the march that they were, in fact, wasting their time, used the demonstration as an opportunity to sell their glossy *Living Marxism* (or was that *Living Comfortably?*) while they went about collecting money for what they coyly referred to as "the demonstration." Which demonstration? Surprisingly enough, not the demonstration they were on but one they themselves were organising two weeks later in central London.

The RCP rounded off their exemplary non-sectarian performance by attacking some demonstrators at the closing rally in Ilichy Park. Thanks comrades, look forward to working with you again in the future.

Despite these distractions, the march was a tremendous achievement for AFA and for anti-fascism and anti-racism in general. There were in total just five arrests: three marchers and two from the opposition; or, in the immortal words of Chief Constable Crooks: "three of yours and two of ours"!

Anti-fascists hound Le Pen

Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) has always attempted to keep abreast of the fascist groups activities abroad as well as involving ourselves in opposition to the homegrown groups in Britain. To foster relations with our European anti-fascist comrades AFA recently designated one of our activists to maintain contact and dialogue with such groups outside of this country.

In this spirit of solidarity Anti-Fascist Action was pleased to support the recent actions to oppose the visit to this country by Jean Marie Le Pen the leader of the French fascist party, Front National, in early December 1991.

Le Pen is widely predicted to be chief opposition candidate in the forthcoming French presidential elections and already commands widespread support throughout France. Support that has enabled his party to set the agenda for the racist

acts of the French government, which appears to be falling over itself to appease his supporters. This policy has resulted in Le Pen seeming to be a reasonable force within conventional politics and being portrayed as a person of, at worst, somewhat eccentric racist policies.

The action against the visit was initiated by the hastily formed Ad Hoc Committee to Stop Le Pen, with the intention of displaying the hostility of anti-racists and anti-fascists to the visit. A week of pickets and protests centring around the Sheraton Park Tower hotel, used as a base during the visit by Le Pen, culminated in a 1,500 strong demonstration outside the Charing Cross Hotel where he was due to hold a meeting with influential members of the far right.

The mood of the demonstrators was militantly confrontational and

Rochdale - fascists be warned!

On Saturday 15th February the fascist British National Party (BNP) intended to hold a launch rally for their election campaign in Rochdale where Ken Henderson hopes to be their parliamentary candidate.

The Anti Nazi League (ANL) and Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), along with other local anti-racist and labour movement organisations, built for a counter-demonstration to stop the BNP scum spreading their nauseating race hate message in the area. Six hundred people came on to the streets to get the message across that Ken Henderson and his fellow brainless thugs were not welcome in the community.

After a mass leafleting people dispersed to occupy the pubs in which the fascists might have tried to hold a rally. Seven fascists unwit-

tingly turned up at one of them. However, once they saw a fair sized crowd of anti-fascists already settled in they swiftly legged it off down the street.

Shortly after this incident a worried looking ANL steward, who no one could remember electing, told the assembled anti-fascists that physical confrontation with the fascists was to be avoided at all costs unless in self-defence. The fascists were not to be "provoked".

AFA supporters countered this by arguing that with such a large number of our forces present it was an excellent opportunity to teach the BNP goons a lesson that would make them think twice about trying to intimidate and attack local people.

These same self-appointed stewards argued at a meeting later on in the day that it

would be pointless to go to a place where we knew the fascists would definitely be on the grounds that "to physically confront the fascists would be a diversion" from the "victory" of turning out 600 people on the streets leafleting against the BNP. Apparently this had effectively turned Rochdale into "a fascist free zone".

AFA members argued that while mobilising 600 people against the BNP was a good thing it would not be enough to merely leaflet against them.

To stop them having any foothold in Rochdale we need to physically smash them time and time again preventing them from polluting our streets, dirtying our terraces and infecting our pubs with their anti-working class racist garbage through fear of strong local resistance.

displayed a determination to impede the progress of the meeting. Unfortunately, Le Pen arrived before the majority of the anti-fascists and was able to get inside losing nothing but his dignity. The demonstration continued for some three hours, blockading The Strand and Trafalgar Square, forcing the French fascist to scuttle out of a back entrance and return to his hotel in the full knowledge that his obscene politics are vehemently opposed.

This principle of "No Platform For Fascism" must be strenuously invoked at any occasion at which fascism raises its head. It is of no value, and is politically incorrect, to call for or rely on state bans when the state is operating to an agenda that actively supports many of the ideals of fascism.

The growth of the extreme right in Britain, across Europe, in the United States and in other countries

The Campaign Against Fascist Europe (CAFE) have produced a booklet exposing the fascist nature of Le Pen's Front National. Entitled *Front National - A Nazi Front* it is available from:

Campaign Against Fascism in Europe
PO Box 273, London E7
Tel: 071 - 277 0817

requires us to build links with militant anti-fascists worldwide to prevent the rise of groups like the Front National. The fascists maintain worldwide contacts to promote their ambitions. Our ambitions cannot be less.

We appeal to all anti-fascist groups and individuals to contact Anti-Fascist Action so that we can work together, in the knowledge that fascism can only be defeated by drowning it in a sea of working class ideological and physical activity.



The ANL then and now

The Anti Nazi League was relaunched by the Socialist Workers Party in January 1992. Why? Anti-Fascist Action has existed since 1985 and, having a democratic structure, can accommodate organisations like the SWP. But up until Christmas, the SWP refused to accept that the fascists were a problem, despite having many of their paper sellers beaten up (some badly). They wouldn't even sponsor AFA's Unity Carnival or National Demonstration Against Racist Attacks last year.

So, though they haven't been involved in the anti-fascist movement since the '70s, rather than join an existing, experienced organisation, the SWP has set up their own. Most of the time AFA is ignored, treated as if it simply doesn't exist – in fact, the SWP claimed *they* organised our march through the East End in November 1991. Peter Hain MP, at

the ANL re-launch stated that the ANL would avoid the "politics of the punch-up" – a rather smug, patronising reference to AFA. Yet the ANL/SWP continually claim "we smashed the Nazis off the streets before, we'll do it again now." The stupidity of this approach – of treating anti-fascism as something that can be turned on and off at will – is apparent, but the fact is that the ANL did play an important role in the fight against fascism at a certain stage. In that sense it is worth looking at its history. As will be seen, the ANL did not follow a consistent set of tactics throughout its existence. Rather, it is as if there were two ANLs: the early, confrontational ANL and a later, ineffective one. The critical question for all anti-fascists is: which ANL will the SWP be reviving?

By 1977 the National Front had gained a level of support that had to be stopped. They were replacing the liberals as the "third party" in many places (117,000 votes in local elections in London, 30,000 in Leicester etc). They planned a march through Lewisham, in south-east London, but thousands of anti-fascists occupied their assembly point, fought off the police attempts to remove them, then broke through police lines to attack the NF march. The level of violent opposition forced the police to divert and cut short the march, and even after the fascists had been bussed out of the area, fighting with the police lasted at least another hour.

This militant confrontation was the "inspiration" for the ANL, launched shortly afterwards. It is a far cry from the type of anti-fascism that cowers behind the police lines shouting abuse at the fascists as they go about their business unhindered – as the SWP did at Weavers Field, East London, in 1990 and at Enfield in 1991. Militant opposition in

The last few months have seen a resurgence of interest in fighting racism and fascism with the founding of new groups such as the Anti Racist Alliance and the relaunch of the Anti Nazi League. Here we examine the original ANL's track record and ask what is the new ANL up to?

1977 – good, militant opposition in 1992 – bad!

The ANL, dominated by the SWP then as now, achieved a lot. Alongside Rock Against Racism, they mobilised hundreds of thousands against the NF. By using imaginative propaganda and campaigns endorsed by music and sports personalities, they broke out of the left wing "ghetto" and reached out into the working class, especially the young.

By organising anti-fascist "squads", the ANL was able to protect its own initiatives and disrupt the fascists. Between 1978 and 1979 virtually every fascist march and meeting was challenged, some were stopped, and the fascists had a hard time building up to the General Election in 1979. The ANL had also clearly established that the NF were a Nazi organisation. The Tories played the race card in their election campaign and thousands of "soft" racists transferred their allegiance from a discredited NF to the Conservative Party. The NF vote collapsed in the 1979 election.

The second ANL/RAR carnival, in south London in 1978, was important, because the ANL leadership knew in advance that the NF were going to march through the East End – the heart of the Asian community – on the same day, but refused to change their plans. The Asian community were abandoned because the carnival was more important, because the carnival



WILL THE ANL MKII SUCCEED IN REACHING OUT TO WORKING CLASS YOUTH, OR MERELY CELEBS AND SOAP STARS?

reflected the politics of the SWP leadership more than confronting the fascists in working class East London did.

It has sometimes been argued that the reason for not opposing the fascist march was to keep the "star" sponsors, but in fact many had left already - the boxer John Conteh of all people said the ANL was too violent! What it does show is that there was a hidden agenda in the ANL, that of the SWP, and the SWP was changing.

The confrontational role of the ANL didn't end there, though, because there was still significant support for it on the ground. But after the General Election the ANL, or more accurately the SWP, argued that because the NF vote was destroyed there was no need for the ANL. The ANL staggered on for a few years but it changed beyond all recognition. NF marches were "opposed" by meeting on the other side of town and heading in the opposite direction, for example in Oxford in 1980 and Blackpool in 1982. The squads were disbanded or expelled, and there was nothing any of the activists could do about this because there was no internal

democracy.

When eight anti-fascists from Manchester (mainly SWP) were jailed in 1981 for anti-fascist activity, the ANL/SWP disowned them. The backbone of the organisation was now an embarrassment.

Rather than adopt the tactics of the ANL to the changes in the far right, which was re-organising and becoming more violent, the SWP disbanded the ANL. Ex-ANL activists who still organised against the fascists were now evil "squadists" who substituted "individual terrorism" for "mass action", according to the SWP official line. The argument seemed to be: mass action or nothing, so the SWP decided to do nothing, justifying it by saying the real enemy is the Tories. It was presented as an either/or situation, while we simply argued - fight both!

According to the new (unelected) ANL leaders, the fascists are back and so the ANL is back - but the new ANL hasn't learnt the lessons of before, and is very much the largely ineffective post-1979 version.

There are no branches, no democratic structure, so people are expected to join an organisation

and carry out orders from a political party that abandoned the anti-fascist struggle over 12 years ago! An organisation that had to ring the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* to try and get some information on the fascists because they didn't know what was happening.

The political situation has changed, the fascists have changed, but the ANL won't! National Socialism is back on the agenda - they don't mind being called Nazis these days. They are proud to be associated with (and sometimes trained by) the new German Nazis, the South African AWB, the French NF and the Loyalist death squads in Northern Ireland. The fascists have gained a toe-hold in some working class areas where they have no right to be. If the ANL are going to be part of a campaign to drive them out and create the space for a genuine working class movement to grow, then they must learn the lessons of the past, and they must realise that the success of the ANL in 1978-79 period lay in its militant, confrontational approach. The trouble for the SWP is that they no longer have those people who could implement that strategy.

Principles vs sectarianism

Last year we in Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) set ourselves the target of getting the growth of fascism and race attacks into the public eye, as well as challenging the fascist gangs in an area they claim as their own. We have encountered some success. We note the emergence of the Anti-Racist Alliance, the relaunch of the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), the revamping of the RCP's Workers Against Racism and the possibility of Youth Against Racism and Fascism as well as the continuing action of existing groups like the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism and the Campaign Against Fascism in Europe.

This widening of participants in the arena of anti-fascism and anti-racism made us consider our response to their existence and to see if and how we can work together. We decided to hold a

number of public meetings in an attempt to open the debate with these groups.

The first of these was called for Thursday 13th February 1992. Speakers from *Searchlight* and the ANL were invited as well as from Anti-Fascist Action and the Brick Lane Four Campaign. The ANL was immediately contacted by telephone and letter, as was the SWP, its sponsoring organisation. Their initial response was positive and local contacts with the ANL "membership" aka SWP indicated that they would support the meeting. They certainly never approached us to reject the invitation. However, in true sectarian fashion the ANL speaker failed to show up on the day and no individual members attended to participate in the discussions either.

Why, we must ask ourselves, did they decide to boycott an

important meeting about a subject they profess to show an interest in?

A possible answer can be postulated when we consider their recent behaviour in South London, where AFA, the ANL and local non-aligned residents held a joint planning meeting. This meeting decided to produce propaganda bearing the names of AFA and ANL as joint sponsors. Two days later ANL leader and SWP member Paul Holborow contacted South London AFA declaring that only the leadership of the ANL could sanction such an initiative. And they of course rejected it completely, without giving a reason.

This, together with their East London actions, suggests they are less interested in fighting fascists and Nazis than in meeting potential new recruits, and will cynically ignore

Continued over

Fighting fascism in the 1930s

Out of the Ghetto by Joe Jacobs
Phoenix Press
(Available from *Fighting Talk*, price £9)

This remarkable book is a first hand account of the struggle against fascism in the East End of London in the 1930s, written from a revolutionary working class perspective by someone who played a key role in the events at the time. The decision by Phoenix Press to republish it could hardly have been more timely, with the rise of the far-right across much of Europe and the neo-Nazi British National Party targeting the East End as a national priority.

Jacobs was a key figure in the local Communist Party (CP) structure – he was secretary of the Stepney CP at the time of the Battle of Cable Street in 1936 – but he was never a “party line” man. On the contrary, he was one of those who fought a rearguard action against what they saw as the CP leadership’s opportunist retreat from the critical task of confronting fascism on the street. It was his intransigence on this that led to his expulsion from the party in the late 1930s, the details of which are documented in this book.

Inevitably, it is the section of the book dealing with the events around the Battle of Cable Street that will attract the most attention, and rightly so. Although the official communist tradition in Britain looks back on that day as a major victory for the policy of the popular front, the fact is that at first the CP leaders were not at all keen to organise the local community to stop the fascists’ planned march through the heart of the Jewish East End.

Instead, they wanted to go ahead with a planned national demonstration in Trafalgar Square in support of the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War, followed by a march through the East End, *after* Mosley’s fascists had departed. In other words, they were prepared to let the fascists strut through the East End unmolested. Only when local party members, with Jacobs at their head, pushed for a militant counter-mobilisation did the London District CP leadership change its line.

This matter is usually brushed over in the official story. At the time, the leaders justified their original decision on the grounds that there was not sufficient time to organise a demonstra-

tion big enough to stop Mosley, and that to say “Stop the fascists” when you knew you couldn’t was just a provocation. They were right about the second point, of course, but they couldn’t have been more wrong on the first, as Jacobs and his comrades knew only too well. They argued that the mood was right for a confrontation, and that if the CP did not lead this resistance, it would end up discrediting itself.

The line change came at the eleventh hour, but in the few days that were left to mobilise for the counter-demo the local activists did what was necessary: a quarter of a million came out, and inflicted a humiliating defeat on the fascist movement.

Looking back on these events, Jacobs saw them as no accident. Rather, it reflected a deep division within the CP on how to fight fascism. For Jacobs, there could be no successful anti-fascist movement without physical confrontation, and while the CP leaders paid lip-service to this, they were only too willing to organise non-confrontational events which let the fascists off the hook.

These issues will have a familiar ring to anyone who was involved in the Anti-Nazi League at the end of the 1970s. Despite their verbal criticisms of the 1930s CP policy of the popular front, the Socialist Workers Party leaders behaved in the same way as their CP counterparts had in the 1930s. As in the 30s, what began with militant confrontation ended up with excuses for not confronting the fascists. In the ANL as in the 1930s CP, the division was essentially the same.

Jacobs and his comrades knew that rhetoric and propaganda stunts were never going to be enough to stop fascism, and that anti-fascists also had to confront the fascists physically if they were serious about it.

As is clear from this book, they did not see themselves as challenging the popular front so much as demanding its consistent implementation, and though not everyone will agree with them on this score, Jacobs’ insistence on the centrality of mobilising the workers to actually confront the fascists, rather than simply express their disapproval, is as relevant today as it was in October 1936. Essential reading for every anti-fascist.

Len Holloway

any action that does not meet this sectarian criteria.

Another possibility is that they may be too embarrassed and/or apprehensive to attend another activity in the East End of London. Twelve days previously the adventurers of the ANL leadership had called on outsiders to come into Whitechapel for a leafleting session. This exercise was aimed primarily at press and media coverage rather than at organising opposition to the Nazis. The result was entirely predictable, and all the more disgraceful because of its predictability. The anti-racists were viciously attacked. Undeterred, the ANL claimed this to be a “huge success”, and denied the extent of the attacks.

We understand that at least three incidents occurred resulting in serious injuries requiring hospital treatment for the victims. It was left to a local SWP member to comment that with that number of people on the streets it was “sods’ law” that someone would be assaulted. Anti-Fascist Action extends its sympathy to the poor sods who suffered as a result of this law. We also extend our condemnation to the Holborrow/Hains/Roberts cabal who allowed this misconceived action to proceed. All of this begs the question “Does the SWP/ANL require a new martyr in the anti-racist cause for the 1990s?”

AFA takes the view that activity can only be undertaken when a base has been built in an area. Hectic and ill-considered activity is no substitute for building this base. It not only leads to casualties which, deterring potentially good anti-fascists from getting involved for fear of being left in the lurch again. It also boosts the confidence of the opposition.

We therefore demand that the ANL reconsider their strategy. We genuinely welcome every group and individual which now recognises the undoubted menace posed by the race attackers and fascist gangs to the working class. We call on them to act in a principled non-sectarian manner so that we can turn the fascist thugs into a shabby, blood-stained detail of history. AFA will continue to hold the door of co-operation open to all who choose to enter the battlefield of anti-fascism.

From the Nazis' concentration camps to the streets of London today, lesbians and gay men have been a target of fascist attacks. We examine this history of persecution

One evening in Croydon two men were walking home together. One had his arm affectionately around the other. As they reached the British Rail station concourse they were set upon by six skinheads. It was 23 April - St Georges Day - and unwittingly they had just walked past a pub full of National Front members.

Pedestrians and travellers stood by and watched as the two "dirty queers" were kicked and beaten to the ground, while the skins screamed abuse. Only the ticket collector went to help them, bundling them both into his booth and summoning the police. Later in casualty they were subjected to more homophobic abuse, this time from fellow patients, when one tried to comfort the other.

The increased level of racist violence in Welling after the opening of the BNP's headquarters there, the grave situation for black people on estates in Bermondsey and Tower Hamlets, are often pointed to by anti-fascists. But in each of these areas alongside the growth of race attacks there is also a rise in "queerbashing".

Queerbashing is less easy to produce statistics for even than race attacks but there are thousands of anti-gay attacks each year, often resulting in serious injury and even death. However, normally the victim will try and avoid any publicity or contact with the police.

But isn't the BNP and NF's anti-gay bigotry just a more extreme version of the prejudice to be found in so much else of society? Yes, at one level it is. But where does that prejudice come from, what is its cause? It is born out of a social system - capitalism - which has always, to a greater or lesser degree, discriminated against homosexuals.

For the bosses homosexuality challenges the way they like to maintain social control of society and reproduce the workforce which they exploit. The family is used as a way of breaking up the working class into small units. Feeding, clothing and caring for the existing workforce and preparing the next generation for the same fate is done within the family by the workers themselves (mainly women), not the

Legacy of the pink triangle

bosses. And all the time the politicians, media and the church feed us "moral" arguments to justify this set up.

Lesbians and gays rock the boat. They show that relationships can be about more than simply having kids and bringing them up. This is a problem for the bosses and in times of economic and political crisis, they promote "family values" in order to help stabilise the situation.

The fascists have always understood the importance of the family in maintaining capitalism. They glorify motherhood and fertility and like to paint man as the dominant fighter and worker for the "super-race". As one Nazi propagandist said in the 1930s:

"In the ideology of National Socialism there is no room for the political woman . . . [Our] movement places woman in her natural sphere of the family and stresses her duties as wife and mother. The political woman, that post-war creature, who rarely 'cut a good figure' in parliamentary debates, represents the denigration of women. The German uprising is a male phenomenon."

Or as another put it more succinctly, "Woman . . . her duty the recreation of the tired warrior". The British Third Position slogan

"Faith, family, nation" echoes the old Hitlerite "Kirche, Küche und Kinder" (Church, Kitchen and Children).

So it is no surprise that one of the first groups targeted by the Nazis once they had achieved power in 1933 were male homosexuals (they regarded lesbianism as an irrelevance). In 1928 the Nazis had issued a statement declaring:

"Those who are considering love between men or between women are our enemies. Anything that emasculates our people and that makes us fair game for our enemies we reject, because we know that life is a struggle and that it is insanity to believe that all human beings will one day embrace each other as brothers."

Right from the beginning of Hitler's regime a conviction for a homosexual offence guaranteed a trip to a concentration camp. The anti-gay legislation already in place - Paragraph 175 of the German penal code - was quickly added to and the criminal police set

Continued over

Subject to gruelling physical labour and the murderous brutality of the guards, four-fifths of the "pink triangles" died within a year of being sent to a camp



VICTIMS OF BUCHENWALD

up a special department, the Reichs-Centre for the Fight Against Homosexuality and Abortion. The name alone illustrates the link in Nazi thinking between homophobia and the question of reproduction. A kiss, even eye contact, became a felony and once a pink triangle was stitched onto his prison uniform a gay man's prospects were bleak indeed. As one historian put it:

"Inside the concentration camp, mere suspicion was enough to label a prisoner as homosexual and thus expose him to denigration, general suspicion and special dangers."

No one inside a camp would assist a gay prisoner, no one outside would dare contact or visit one. They were generally considered to be in the lowest category – "asocials" – below political prisoners and criminals, and were subjected to gruelling physical labour and the murderous brutality of the guards. Four-fifths of the "pink triangles" died within a year of being sent to a camp.

We don't know how many gay prisoners there were in total – probably about 10,000, maybe as many as 15,000. This is a small number compared to the horrific slaughter of the Jews of Europe, but their systematic persecution and suffering is still a hideous crime by any standards, and one often left out of accounts of the camps.

Britain, the USA and the Soviet Union, the countries which liberated

the few survivors, all regarded homosexuality as a criminal offence too, and it would continue to be one in both East and West Germany for another twenty years. As a consequence no surviving homosexual prisoner received compensation for the war crimes committed against them.

The left has had a very poor record of support for the rights of lesbians and gay men in recent times. Ironically, one of the reasons for this is that gay-baiting was considered a handy propaganda weapon against the Nazis in Germany and elsewhere by both social democrats and Stalinists. It was an open secret that a number of key Nazis, such as Röhm and other leaders of the SA, were homosexual (many of them perished during the Night of the Long Knives, 30 June 1934).

The Stalinists, in particular, who by then idealised the family and motherhood, had recriminalised homosexuality in the Soviet Union in 1934. They tried to score cheap points against the fascists in this way. As the Stalinist Maxim Gorkii said at the time:

"In the fascist countries homosexuality, which ruins the youth, flourishes without punishment; in every country where the proletariat has audaciously achieved social power homosexuality has been declared a social crime and is heavily punished."

This was in complete contrast to early statements by Soviet sexologists such as Doctor Grigorii Borkis, who codified the Bolsheviks' approach to homosexuality in 1923:

"Concerning homosexuality, sodomy, and various other forms of sexual gratification, which are set down in European legislation as offences against public morality – Soviet legislation treats these exactly the same as so-called 'natural' intercourse. All forms of sexual intercourse are private matters."

The fact that the labour movement in Germany had fought unreservedly against Paragraph 175 since the 1860s is now largely forgotten. In Britain the old Stalinist position that homosexuality is a deviation caused by capitalism was held by many in the labour movement until the birth of groups such

as the Gay Liberation Front in the 1970s, and by some until much later

Many lesbian and gay activists are taking a stand against fascism. Some have been actively involved in supporting AFA in recent months. The London based group OutRage! had a stall at the Unity Carnival, members at the Brick Lane picket and a banner on the 10 November demonstration in the East End. They had a large and militant contingent at the picket of Le Pen outside Charing Cross Hotel too and are now affiliated to London AFA.

However, there are some who see anti-fascism as an issue for the "straight left", not for them. We can and must convince them that they are wrong. We must encourage those who do support us to get more involved. And we must not forget that AFA has lesbian and gay members already, though they may not all be open about their sexuality. Amongst other things this means we must not tolerate homophobia, not only queerbashing by fascist thugs, but the "everyday" prejudice found in a hospital waiting room too.

On the October picket of the BNP's Brick Lane paper sale an anti-fascist started shouting anti-gay abuse at Tyndall and his goons. One gay member of AFA said afterwards that despite being angry at this he did not have the confidence to challenge it there. The individual was challenged (by a gay man) and stopped shouting this rubbish.

Clearly AFA cannot and should not vet every person who attends its events to see if they are pro- or anti-gay. All anti-fascists are welcome to take part in our activities. But all AFA members have a duty to lesbian and gay anti-fascists not to tolerate open, homophobic behaviour. That means straight comrades taking it up if it occurs.

AFA is committed to taking this fight seriously. By clearly standing against all the bigotry and lies spread by the fascists we can swell the ranks of anti-fascists with new layers of militants. We urge lesbians and gay men who are against fascism to fight alongside us and we commit ourselves to help them in this way towards liberation.

Sam Lowry

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CABLE STREET BEAT REVIEW

Reclaiming the skinhead tradition

The fascist skinhead has become part of the left's mythology. CSB takes a look at a new book by George Marshall, which cuts through the myths to give a more balanced account of skinhead culture

"Spirit of '69" is about working class youth, having a crack. It's also about what happens when the left fails to identify its interests with working class youth, and about how the space that opens up gets filled.

The book's purpose is to reclaim the skinhead tradition from the hands of the far right and the gutter press. As George Marshall puts it "Here in Britain, we are slot

ted in nicely somewhere between devil

dogs, England fans and serial killers in the tabloid scare story league, and things aren't much different in any other country."

Along the way, Marshall gives us some brilliantly written portraits of the '60s skinhead scene, and of a skin's

eye view of the Summer of Love, where "middle class youngsters everywhere said goodbye to the real world and started turning on, tuning in and dropping out (man). Well, at least until Daddy found them a plum job at the office anyway."

Marshall pinpoints the real birth of the skinhead style in the emergence of gang mods or hard mods, who replaced smart suits with shirt, jeans and boots, and whose hair "proceeded to go down the barber's scale from four to one." What happened next gives the lie to the "skinheads are racist" bullshit which is accepted from the *News of the World* to Ian Stuart Donaldson:

"Young white mods soon became regular visitors to the blues parties and

illegal drinking holes that could be found in North Kent, Sheffield, Birmingham, Bristol and areas of London like Notting Hill and Brixton. It gave them a chance to hear the very latest sounds and this in turn brought them into regular contact with black youths."

The best of Marshall's book is his description of early skin styles - the Charlie George style mutton chops, steel toe-capped boots with the metal tip exposed, and "eight or ten hole boots and none of this boots up to your armpits nonsense that caught on after punk." The joys of terrace rucks are touched on as well, with Marshall nailing the hypocrisy of the media:

"Most of the answers to the trouble at football from a supposedly car-

Continued over

Fanzines - ours and theirs

Tighten Up is one of the sharpest fanzines around right now, devoted mainly to the ska and Oi scenes. No-one reading *Tighten Up* will have any doubts about where it stands. In issue 7, they write:

"When I first read the news about Skrewdriver being arrested in Germany, I was jubilant. But then I started thinking, this is just the sort of publicity [skins] don't need . . . There wasn't one mention of SHARP or the fact that most skins are not Nazis."

It carries reviews and interviews with up-and-coming ska bands like Bakesy's Midday Juggers (who describe their influences as stretching from ska to De La Soul - and are well worth a listen) as well as Red London and Red Alert (still the most up-front of the street/Oi bands on the scene).

Tighten Up is well worth a read, and you get a picture of the skin scene which

is about working class pride and good music, not glued-up boneheads who think they're the master race.

Last Chance on the other hand is a cheap Nazi rag that tries to tell us it's for "all skinheads". All the bands interviewed or reviewed are fascist/Blood and Honour bands. The editor is a self-confessed Nazi - "Alex from Chelmsford" who is also one of the half-wits who make up Battlezone. In issue 10, Alex seems to interview himself:

"I suppose that we could be labelled a racist, fascist, right wing band. And realistically that's what we are. As far as music is concerned, I don't know how we would class our music . . ."

Well, Alex, we could start with unlistenable shit!!

One good thing about *Last Chance* is that it prints lyrics from "nationalist" bands. In issue 9, you get to read how Grade

One will "Smash our enemies with the mighty hammer of Thor". Too many Marvel comics, lads. In issue 10 we find Violent Storm who aren't so confident, telling us that "the nightmare has begun" and "the reds are getting stronger". Violent Storm have obviously run into AFA along the way.

Last Chance also gives us Paul Burnley of No Remorse, in an "in-depth" interview. Here are Paul's views on Odinism:

"Well, I think that there is a lot in Odinism that is good for the cause but when it is taken to the extreme, like dancing round the fire with no clothes on and all that its a bit stupid innit."

Thanks Paul.

Last Chance is worth nicking for a laugh. More importantly (and bear this in mind, Merc M) those who sell it and those who stock it are fair game. *Last Chance*? I think you've blown it.

Tighten Up is available from:
1 Shah Place, Ramsgate, Kent CT77 7QD
(50p plus 50p postage)

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ing society were more violent than the problem itself. Whip them. Bring back National Service, get some discipline back into their lives. Great stuff. Not on the terraces please boys. Save it for the trenches."

Marshall takes us rapidly through the seventies, with bands like Slade jumping on the skin bandwagon, and the "Clockwork Orange" cults, which led to "small armies of droogs who turned up in white boiler suits."

It's the late '70s that cause Marshall problems, though. He's clear enough about the bullshit and hype which was "punk":

"Punk was never any spontaneous street rebellion made good . . . More like a weekend exercise in shock, courtesy of the oh so trendy fashion and art colleges. And all this a million miles away from the snotty nosed kids in their snorkel coats, too busy booting a ball about a sprawling council estate to lead a charge of the punk brigade."

He's clear also that what he calls street punk, bands like Sham 69, Cock Sparrer and Menace, were a positive alternative. The problem for the scene at this time was simple:

"A lot of the skinheads who followed Sham and the other street punks bands supported the National Front and the British Movement."

Marshall suggests that Sham 69 were wrong to play a Rock Against Racism gig as a response to the growth of far-right activity amongst their following. The fact that Sham tied their colours "to the RAR flagpole" led directly, according to Marshall, to the British Movement-led attack on their farewell gig at the Rainbow.

Marshall repeats this analysis later, when he looks at the Oi movement. He recognises the importance of Oi:

"For probably the first time ever, the people on the stage really were the same as the people on the dance-floor." Working class bands addressing a working class audience, "havin' a laugh and havin' a say."

Most of the bands had little or no connection with the far right. Their songs were about issues which any socialist could (or should) agree with - The Gonads' "Jobs not Jails", the Business' "Employers Blacklist" - but the far right were in the area, and bands like Last Resort, with songs like "Britain's Not Dead" and Combat 84, whose singer Chubby Chris was an open fascist, were prepared to pave

the way. When the Business, the Last Resort and the 4-Skins played the Hamborough Tavern in Southall in July '81, local Asian youth, facing an influx of Sieg-Heiling thugs, burned the pub to the ground.

Marshall's problem is that he treats the forces involved with Oi as political innocents and blames the Asian community for over-reacting. But the facts speak for themselves. Bands like The Elite and Combat 84 were openly Nazi. The 4-Skins' manager Gary Hitchcock was an ex-British Movement member. Leading light of the BM, Nicky Crane, was on the cover of the "Strength Thru' Oi" LP.

In dealing with Oi, and with the far right's attempts to infiltrate the skin scene in general, George Marshall is never more than half right, but the fault isn't his.

When Sham played for Rock

Marshall's problem is that he treats the forces involved with Oi as political innocents and blames the Asian community for over-reacting

Against Racism, the Socialist Workers Party said "thanks" and left the band to face the backlash on their own. So Marshall concludes that Sham were wrong to run the risk at all. The truth is that Sham were right to follow the courage of their convictions, and the left was guilty of turning a blind eye to the consequences.

With Oi, things took a turn for the worse - faced with a movement of working class youth, the left opted out of the battle for their hearts and minds, concluding that Oi was "mindless music for an equally mindless audience, and everyone remotely connected with the movement was branded a racist", which let the fascists make all the running.

Marshall tells us that "Oi ended up being dobed with a massive big swastika and the music industry couldn't distance itself quick enough." He's correct, and he's right also when he details the extent to which the best of the bands fought against this, with Info Riot and the Business playing Oi

Against Racism gigs, and the 4-Skins offering to arrange an anti-racist gig in Southall.

Marshall's analysis of the strength of the far-right amongst sections of the working class youth is spot-on. "While virtually everyone else was condemning football hooliganism and other skinhead pastimes, the Young National Front hailed them as terrace warriors and published a regular league of louts feature in Bulldog. Here was a party that didn't talk at you, but talked to you, and didn't look down at you, but treated you as the cream of British youth."

Marshall's analysis is flawed despite this because he's been let down by a gutless, middle class left so often he ends up thinking it's wrong even when it's been right, and blaming it for sins it's not guilty of. He tells us that Skrewdriver turned to the right because anti-fascists kept on getting their gigs cancelled: "With nowhere to go and no media publicity, Skrewdriver turned to the only friends they had left, the National Front."

He's sickened by the growth of the White Noise and Blood and Honour movements, and glad for the brief alternative posed by the Hard As Nails fanzine, the ska revival and the burgeoning scooter scene. When he talks of the attack on a Desmond Dekker gig at Great Yarmouth by 30 NF skins as showing "how far sections of the skinhead cult had drifted from their roots. If the original skinheads had had their way, Desmond Dekker's birthday would have been a national holiday," you know that Marshall is on the side of the angels.

His problem, and the problem of both the *Spirit of '69* and his regular *Skinhead Times*, is that the failure of the left to deliver the goods has left him with little but the hope that "maybe the day will come when skinheads will once again leave politics outside when they go to gigs and dances, and maybe petty politicians who do all the mouthing and then lead from the back, will find some other mugs to fight their battles."

The trouble is, these days the politics which gets injected into the skin scene all too often comes from the right. What's necessary is the forging of a working class anti-fascist left that won't buck the battles ahead, that won't put up with bands like Skrewdriver performing shit like "White

After the débâcle of Thamesmead, on Saturday 24th August 1991 an anti-racist march, called by the National Black Caucus and supported by the Society of Black Lawyers, wandered from Peckham through Camberwell along the Old Kent Road and into Southwark Park, Bermondsey. The march attracted some 300 people. No real effort was put into building for a large principled opposition to the racists and/or the fascists who have been operating in South London. Effectively the largest group working in this area are Anti-Fascist Action (AFA). We were neither informed of the march nor invited to any planning meetings. In contrast to this exclusion of AFA was the invitation to the police to attend the stewards meeting (they accepted)! These decisions defy all logic!

If invited to planning meetings AFA would have argued against having such an event at that time. Despite this position AFA decided that it should have a presence on the march in order to have an influence on any future activities hatched up by the incompetents of the National Black Caucus. In the event the AFA contingent was the largest to attend.

All the rumours of various groups being politicised and turning up *en masse* to support the initiative turned out to be the predictable hot air that the National Black Caucus seem to specialise in. There were very few members of the local communities present. This was a direct result of the lack of planning, lack of publicity and lack of vision that had typified the (mis)organisation of this demonstration.

As the march progressed there were constant rumours about groups of fascists and racists waiting on the Old Kent Road. They always seemed to be exaggerated, and the stewards either contributed to them or ignored them, being happy to let the march straggle out far too loosely for safety's sake.

However, on turning into the estates it was immediately apparent that the rumours in fact grossly underestimated both the number and quality of people opposing the march. The streets were alive with people, with groups of up to sixty voicing their very militant opposition to the march. As the march reached Southwark Park it was confronted with almost the entire population of the surrounding estates leaning from balconies and lining the streets, complete with Union Jack flags, shouting abuse at the "invaders".

As the march started to enter the park further progress was prevented by a wave of some 300 racists storming across the park towards us. This was bad, but worse was to come as two further waves of about the same numbers also charged across to join their compatriots. Fortunately they did not attack the march. However, there is no doubt that the vast majority of the counter-demonstrators were willing and

Those who wish to lead a serious offensive against racism and fascism on the streets and estates of London cannot afford to be casual about building grass roots support. Bermondsey shows what can happen when this is not done

Débâcle in Bermondsey

able to physically oppose the demonstration. Equally there is no doubt that the vast majority of the demonstrators were both unwilling and unable to defend themselves. As the threat became more apparent the march stewards formed up holding hands, with their backs to the racists and faced the demonstrators – see no evil and there is no evil!

The organisers then began demanding that the racists be removed from the park, claiming that the police had reneged on their promises. How can they seriously expect those that they purport to oppose to either make promises in good faith or to honour those promises once things begin to go wrong – particularly given that the most consistent chant on the march was "Who are the racists – the police are the racists"? Yet another proof that the National Black Caucus exists on a planet completely separate from the rest of us.

The extra-terrestrial influence was again displayed when it was announced, from the roof of a minibus whilst we were still under siege, that the march was a success and that it would be repeated before the end of the year. The only success that could be envisaged at this stage was getting out of the area safely. Any realistic analysis must conclude that march was a complete and abject failure.

Surveying the local streets and shopping areas in the afternoon and evening reinforce this view. Asian and black shopkeepers were seen in their shops looking out through pulled-down shutters into the area where they live and work, in fear of the consequences of this adventure. These fears were realised as the day progressed and the black and Asian working class residents and workers in the area suffered verbal and physical abuse to themselves, their cars, their shops, their homes and their bodies. This, while the middle class leadership of the National Black Caucus and Society of Black Lawyers scuttled back to their comfortable areas. Instead of uniting the residents around the class they

were split on the basis of colour.

What was the reaction of the press to the demonstration? For the most part they found it inexplicable and chose to ignore it. Those that mentioned it, in contrast to normal practice, over estimated the number of anti-racists, and, in keeping with normal practice, minimised the threat posed by the racists.

The local papers opened their letter columns to the people of Bermondsey, and most writers expressed views in support of the counter-demonstration and against the antics of those who called the march.

The SWP in a paragraph hidden away in their paper offered the opinion that it was a minor defeat. Anti-racists, having set the timetable of events, had the opportunity to work for as long as they needed, but only mobilised 300. The fascists of the BNP were able, in a few days, to mobilise a whole working class estate to their side. If the SWP's position is really to take the socialist struggle to the labour movement and inspire the working class then the day's events can at best be described as the portent of a major disaster.

British Nationalist, the BNP paper, offered the view that it was a victory for them and for the working class of Bermondsey. In this analysis they are half correct; it was a victory for the BNP, but it was a clear defeat for the working class, a defeat suffered at the hands of the march organising committee.

We should have no illusions about the events of 24th August. It was a major disaster. It has set back the work AFA is doing in South London appreciably. To be successful any demonstration has to involve the local community both during the event itself and at its organisational stages. This was never done. No attempt was made to contact community groups, labour movement or political groups, workers, or residents of Bermondsey. The result was hardly surprising.

The BNP are not as naive as groups not actively involved in anti-fascist struggle

like the National Black Caucus, SWP, etc would have us believe. They did produce propaganda that alerted local people and called on them to "protect Bermondsey against invasion". They did not, in the lead up to the day, play the race card - they had no need to. The unsuitable propaganda of the National Black Caucus had already identified all white people in the area as racist supporters of the race-attackers.

The BNP had no need to add anything more to their message until the march started. By then they held all the cards and were able to win support on the basis of being the controllers of the streets, the group that empowered workers enabling them to exercise influence in their areas. The BNP are truthfully able to say that they chivvied a ragbag march along the streets of South London, confined it to a dismal corner of a park, contained it until they got bored and then pushed it out of the area.

The march should have gone through working class areas and estates with a message to unite the class. However, as with many things the practice needs a little more thought, a little more planning, and a lot more than merely announcing a demonstration, publishing a route and strolling along on a march.

To effectively combat fascism and/or racism a full campaign must be launched. Not isolated, possibly well-intentioned, events. AFA's position has always been to argue against the "publicity stunts" of "gesture" politics. A solitary march cannot be described as a campaign though it could be the prelude to a campaign. But no campaign was intimated prior to the march, nor to the participants on the day. Nor has one emerged in the weeks following the march. But if there is no campaign planned what, then, are the motives for the march?

Is it that the organisers knew of the likely response? Maybe they had taken heed of our position - that despite the relatively low numbers of active fascists their potential strength is enormous. Perhaps the strategy was to lift the stone and look at the maggots. If so, no thought was given to the consequences, to the number of maggots exposed. No one considered that the maggots might decide to occupy two stones once they had been disturbed. If this is truly the reason then it smacks of the revolutionary tourist faction of political activity - untenable and indefensible.

Were the motives more sinister? Rumours abound that the National Black Caucus and the Society of Black Lawyers are keen to increase their state funding. Clearly to do this they need to have a high profile. Numerous activities in the public eye suit this strategy, whilst the more arduous planning and street level work a good campaign needs has too low a vis-

ibility level to attract funds.

Or, more likely, were the motives political naivety? Perhaps the middle class leadership of the NBC and SBL do not know how working class estates operate. Perhaps they did not know that these particular estates were predominantly white and racist with an historical connection to the far right.

It is abundantly clear that these people do not recognise fascists. They still live in the late 1970s and early 80s where it was far easier (though never totally accurate) to say that all fascists are skinheads and all skinheads are fascists. Nowadays it is dangerous to make those assumptions.

The BNP, the National Front, and the British Movement are not predominantly composed of skinheads and the anti-fascist movement does include a significant number of skinheads. The organisers and stewards were visibly shocked that the opponents were casuals and completely non-plussed that a number of AFA supporters were skinheads.

Regardless of the motives behind the schemes of groups like the National Black Caucus it is clear they have neither the political analysis, the base in the community nor the willingness to develop a base through grass roots work.

After August 24th AFA representatives were invited to a number of local meetings to debate the merits of another similar march through the same area. Fortunately AFA has more credibility and more logic than the adventurers who want a repeat showing, and we were able to isolate the supporters of a follow-up march. Our view is that no more events should be attempted without first doing grass roots work on the local estates and streets, and without involving a wide section of the community in building for it.

AFA is active in South London and is prepared to assist with building a campaign with realistic and achievable objectives. If the lessons of Bermondsey are learned and translated into a workable strategy then AFA would show support and encourage people to attend.

However, the end 1991 saw the National Black Caucus threatening to invite Farrakan to this country on the grounds that "if they can invite a white racist [Le Pen] then we can invite Farrakan". And 1992 has seen the re-emergence of a proposal that everyone hoped was pure rhetoric - to march on Bermondsey again. Again it is thought this can be done without any work in the community. Again it will fail. Again the responsibility will lie with pure political opportunists. We need no more evidence of their failure to grasp the realities of broad-based anti-racist anti-fascist work. No support should be given to these opportunistic misconceived adventures.

London Anti-Fascist Action will be inviting other groups with the same, or similar aims and objectives to ourselves to a meeting in April with a view to re-launching the national network.

If your group is not listed below and you would like to either attend the meeting or be kept in touch with other groups throughout the country please contact London AFA as soon as possible.

London AFA

BM 1734, London WC1N 3XX

Birmingham AFA

PO Box 2414, Handsworth, Birmingham B21 0TZ

Brighton AFA

c/o London AFA

Cardiff AFA

PO Box 36B, Cardiff, Wales CF2 1SQ

Cleveland AFA

Box 13, c/o St Mary's Centre, Corporation Road, Middlesborough, Cleveland

Derby CARF

PO Box 70, Derby DE1 9JW

Exeter AFA

c/o The Flying Post, 1 Parliament Street, Exeter

Glasgow AFA

PO Box 266, Glasgow, Scotland G1 5RX

Herts AFA

c/o London AFA

Leeds AFA

Box 151, 52 Call Lane, Leeds LS2 6DT

Leicester AFAR

c/o Leicester TC, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester

Manchester AFA

PO Box 57, SDO Manchester M20 8WG

Tyne and Wear Anti-Fascist Association

c/o The Cloth Market, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 1EA

York AFA

c/o York University Students Union, Goodrich College, York

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Camden Trades Council
Lambeth Trades Union Council
Southwark Trades Council
Tower Hamlets Trades Council

TGWU Region 1 (London & South East)

Central London ACTS 1/524
Hackney ACTS/TGWU 1/477
ACTS/TGWU 1/1148
Hackney Teachers Association
Middlesex Hospital COHSE
Newham NALGO
Newington TGWU 1/1255
Redbridge NALGO
Senate House NALGO
Tower Hamlets CPSA
Cardiff MSF 351
Sheffield General COHSE 1254

Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) has always said that fascism can only be fought effectively from a working class perspective. To understand fascism, it is necessary to see the class nature of these movements, and the class interests that underlie their message of race hate, male domination, gay bashing and red-baiting. Fascism poses a threat to the entire working class, black and white, women and men, straight and gay.

Whenever fascism gets into power, the first target for its sharpened knives has been the organised working class – the trade unions and the working class parties. Any anti-capitalist rhetoric is dropped as the leaders get on with their real task – rescuing capitalism.

Fascism aims to divide the working class in order to crush it. But united, the working class has unstoppable strength; so long as it brings that

strength to bear, fascism will be beaten. The working class needs unity in action.

AFA is mindful of this. Thankfully, so are a growing number of trade union activists and branches. AFA speakers have addressed a large number of union meetings in the past few months, and the campaign to increase the role of unions within AFA is gaining momentum.

We welcome affiliations from labour movement organisations and also from individuals committed to taking part in that struggle. If your union branch has already affiliated to AFA, turn that affiliation into active participation. If it hasn't, make sure it does by the time the next issue of *Fighting Talk* appears.

Send cheques, payable to Anti-Fascist Action, to our box number and we will keep you informed of future meetings and activities.

Group rates

Political organisations £50.00 p.a.
Trade union branches £20.00 p.a.
Student unions £20.00 p.a.
Community groups £10.00 p.a.

Individual rates

Supporter rate £10.00 p.a.
Waged member £10.00 p.a.
Unwaged member £5.00 p.a.