

STOP THE BNP

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BOOTED AND SUITED -- THE BNP'S NAZISM

The British National Party is a classic fascist organisation whose leaders believe in Nazi race-science and whose members carry out physical attacks on their perceived opponents. These are the simple facts that they keep concealed from their voters. When the BNP goes on the doorstep - its propaganda draped in the union flag - it wants us to believe that it really is just a party standing up for beleaguered local people. As local election results have shown over the recent past, many people have been taken in by the BNP's respectable façade. By Steve Silver

Men in suits: a short history of the BNP

The BNP is no ordinary political party. It is a split from the 1970s National Front and harbours in its leadership people who started their political life in Oswald Mosley's prewar British Union of Fascists, the postwar Union Movement and even more hardline organisations such as the 1960s National Socialist Movement.

The BNP was founded in 1982 a few years after the National Front's electoral disaster of 1979, when the Conservatives stole its thunder on the issue of racism, the one topic on which it had gained most of its support.

The 1980s were wilderness years for Britain's fascists as they operated on the margins of political life. The BNP spent much of this period distributing material such as *Holocaust News*, which argued that the extermination of six million Jews didn't happen. Its obsession with antisemitism was never really concealed. Led by John Tyndall, who had been in the National Socialist Movement in the 1960s - and is an unabashed nazi - it found it difficult to make progress. The media would wheel out photos - usually courtesy of *Searchlight* - of Tyndall in nazi-style uniform, which just wasn't something that was going to appeal to the British public.

The international demise of the left in the late 1980s gave the BNP a new found confidence. In 1989 it set up a headquarters in Welling, southeast London. Within a couple of years it had a significant base in the area and BNP supporters were involved in considerable violence. In 1991 BNP supporters launched a violent attack on an anti-racist demonstration in Bermondsey. Demonstrators were beaten up and the BNP held an impromptu celebratory rally. This was just at the time that the Soviet Union



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was collapsing. Steve Tyler, the local BNP election candidate brought together some of the key elements of the BNP's fascism when he told the assembled mob:

"All blacks are muggers, all blacks have got Aids, we want them out of our country, we want white power. What we have seen in Southwark today is exactly the same as we have seen in Russia over the past week. People power, white power, BNP power."

There one could see the racism, violence and anti-communism coalesce. Like the old Nazi song they believed that "tomorrow" belonged to them. Racial violence in southeast London was to infamously culminate in the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 at the hands of young BNP sympathisers.

In September 1993 the BNP's chief steward, Derek Beackon, was elected for a short time to the local council in Millwall, east London. The BNP was unable to build on this success and it was not until Tyndall was ousted from leadership by the younger Cambridge educated Nick Griffin in 1999 that things began to change.

British fascists had looked longingly at how the Front National in France and the NPD in Germany were building up their membership and vote while the BNP remained a fringe phenomenon. Under Griffin's leadership the party began a process of "mainstreaming", of shedding some of the things that had stifled its growth. Above all else, it went for an image change.

At an ideological level there is little difference between Tyndall and Griffin. They had both been in the original National Front. They both believe the planet is in the grip of an international Jewish conspiracy, and this shapes their world view. While it is the BNP's anti-Asian racism that we see at street level today, the BNP itself sees non-white immigration into Britain as part of a Jewish plot to undermine the white race. This isn't of course an original idea and can be found in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

Under Griffin's leadership the BNP changed its public face. Griffin sought out the media and cultivated it in a way that Tyndall never managed.

Griffin became wrote an article in *Spearhead* which explained why the BNP was ditching its policy of compulsory repatriation of non-white citizens. It was not because he no longer believed in it, but because for the time being it was unacceptable to the British public. The BNP went for an image change, and the media loved it. The BNP set up a media-monitoring unit, the main purpose of which was to complain if it felt the party did not get fair

coverage. Also, whenever the media needed someone to speak on the topic of racism, the BNP could wheel out a spokesperson. That's how Griffin became a household name.

From the mid-1990s the BNP became well aware that one of the greatest problems that the National Front had faced was the violence associated with its demonstrations. It's hard to win council seats if the only thing people have seen or heard about you is your violence. That is why the BNP stopped attempting to hold marches and demonstrations, so that it could not be seen to be publicly associated with violence. It is this media savvy BNP that has secured a swathe of councillors.

The BNP jackboot: from theory to thuggery

The BNP's racism is its most public expression of bigotry. However, what distinguishes the BNP as a fascist organisation is its fusion of nationalism, anti-communism, anti-rationality and crucially antisemitism and racism. The fact that its entire world view is refracted through the prism of antisemitism and race distinguishes it from all legitimate political parties. Yes, the other political parties have racists in them, they even pass racist immigration laws, but they don't reduce everything to race. This was the Nazi contribution to European fascism - where race is all. This makes the BNP not only a fascist party but a nazi one.

Having said that, it would be a mistake to get hung up on the "theory". Fascist theory, such as it is, is a mish-mash of racism mixed with socialist rhetoric, unper-turbed by its internal irrationality because rationality isn't considered to be a virtue anyway. For fascists what is important is racist intuition and "action".

What this "action" means in practice is plain to see in the form of the violence and intimidation that it metes out to its political opponents, who are often white trade unionists or other political activists.

Violence is endemic to fascism, even among those such as the BNP who are going for respectability and trying their utmost to shake off the skinhead boot boy image in favour of suits and electioneering. While the BNP avoids public clashes with anti-fascists so that it can keep a clean image, out of the public eye its activists intimidate and attack their opponents. During the local election campaign in May 2003 these incidents occurred in so many places across the country that they demonstrated how coordinated the campaign was.

A key part of the BNP's campaign of intimidation is the Redwatch internet site where details of the BNP's are opponents are published so that they can be lined up for physical attack. BNP activists and organisers regularly pass information to the website, which is linked to Combat 18, and threaten anti-fascists with putting their details on it. Several BNP activists, including Tony Wentworth, the Young BNP organiser, have taken photographs that later appeared on the Redwatch site.

Smash the British Nazi Party

Our task is to pin the nazi label firmly on the organisation, as was done with the National Front in the 1970s. The only way this is going to happen is if we understand what it is about the BNP that puts it outside the realms of legitimate political expression.

This job is made more difficult by the fact that there are few people around today who would instinctively recognise and recoil from a fascist party. Even when anti-fascists brand the BNP as fascist or nazi, these terms are used so loosely today in other forums that as a political concept they are meaningless to many people. After all, most people alive today were not yet born when fascism was in power in Europe, there are hardly any survivors left who bore witness to the extermination and concentration camps, and the passage of time has consigned the reality of fascism and nazism to the history books.

Because BNP propaganda is primarily opposed to "asylum-seekers" and Muslims, it is easy to view the BNP - wrongly - as solely an expression of organised racism. This is how it wants to be seen, as a populist party that refuses to be intimidated by "political correctness" on the issue of race. If we view the BNP as just a racist party and sling the epithet "fascist" at it as merely a term of abuse then we have little chance of driving it back.

Racism is what the BNP uses to build its base of support and its effects have devastated communities. The BNP has been instrumental in whipping up serious racist disturbances in the northwest of Britain recently, but in other places too over the years.

Yet the BNP sees the world as being in the grip of a Jewish conspiracy in which all else fits into place. The BNP believes that capitalist "globalisation", trade union socialism, non-white immigration and de-industrialisation are part of a Jewish plot to create a "one world government".

Understanding that there is more to the BNP than its racism is essential to

organising successfully against it. The BNP cannot be defeated by anti-racist organisations alone, only by broader forces that include people campaigning on other key issues in their localities. The main political parties, trade unions and community groups need to confront the BNP head on and expose it for what it is. We will not defeat the BNP by campaigning solely against racism or antisemitism or its anti-leftism. The BNP's politics are a fusion of all these things so it cannot be successfully beaten by attacking one element. The BNP needs to be treated and exposed as the bunch of nazis that it is. History has taught us that only a full scale gloves-off onslaught both within and outside of electoral politics against the BNP nazis can drive them back.

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