

# AFA - In The Area

An Intoduction to Manchester Anti-Fascist Action - FREE!

For many people, talking about fascism conjures up images from the past .... fanatical, power-crazed, Hitler-type figures goose-stepping across Europe. For others, fascism will invoke horrific pictures of concentration camps at the end of the Second World War. For those who aren't acquainted with the horror of the Holocaust, nazis or fascists may be viewed as being lunatic boneheads who spend their time sniffing glue, starting fights and generally being anti-social. Alternatively for some people, the term fascism may mean nothing at all.

Many who hold these views regard fascism and fascists as being a thing of the past, a terrible freak of history or just a bunch of racist nutters on the fringes of society. Is this the case?



## Fascism today

Massed ranks of seig-heiling thugs and organised violence at football matches, fascist councillors in the East End of London, organised racist attacks, hit-lists of political opponents. The fascists are on the march again

Combat 18 (A being the first letter in the alphabet and H being the eighth - AH standing for Adolf Hitler - clever, eh? Not). the shadowy far right-wing organisation that organised the riot by England fans at Lansdowne Rd., has links with paramilitary loyalist groups, such as the Ulster Defence Association (UDA)

It compiles hit-lists featuring the names and addresses of people who are seen as posing a threat to organised fascism. The recent heightened media interest in C-18 and fascism in football has come in the wake of a resurgence of fascist activity in Britain over the last couple of years.

The British National Party (BNP), Britain's largest neo-nazi outfit, won a council seat in Tower Hamlets in London a few years ago. They narrowly lost the seat soon after - but the BNP vote remains strong in parts of London, and there has been a continued upsurge in vicious, racist attacks, in Tower Hamlets, and in other parts of the East End.

Welling, in South East London, where the BNP has its national bookshop and headquarters, has seen numerous racist attacks and even murders. Anyone who argues that such an upsurge of attacks in relation to BNP strongholds is purely coincidental, is either a fool or a member of the BNP.

Even more disturbingly, the rise of fascism continues on a larger scale across Europe. In Germany, fascist activity continues to increase daily despite the valiant efforts of militant anti-fascists. In France, Jean Marie Le Pen's Front National boasts over one million members and polled 15% of the national vote in the last French general election (the total fascist vote in France was 20%).

As the Russian economy continues to collapse, Zhirinosky, the Russian fascist, commanding the laughably-named Democratic Party regularly rants about conquering huge chunks of Europe to revive the great Russian Empire. Surely the ravings of a babbling insane idiot? His tens of thousands of supporters don't seem to think so! Italy; Austria; Belgium; Sweden; all of these countries and many more in Europe have seen an alarming rise in fascist activity over the past few years.

In America, the Oklahoma bombing which killed over 100 people was the work of the Michigan Militia, a fanatical right-wing terror group from which C18 would like to think it draws its inspiration. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) is still organised,

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armed and dangerous, and has recently been looking to extend its influence into Britain and Europe.

To ignore fascism, to pretend it doesn't exist or to argue it's just a thing of the past is dangerously misguided. Fascism hasn't gone away in this country, nor has it in Europe. In fact, fascism, if allowed to grow, could still have its day. Don't be fooled. Such horrific scenes from the concentration camps of Belsen, Treblinka and Auschwitz, where millions were gassed could still happen again.

We in Anti-Fascist Action are determined to do everything we can to stamp out the fascist menace. This leaflet is an attempt to tell you a little bit about our activities and hopefully to convince you to join our struggle in whatever way you can.

## What we mean by fascism

Fascism is not just organised racism. Without wishing to downplay the particularly dangerous threat it poses for black, Asian, Jewish people or anyone who is dubbed by it as being foreign or different, it represents a much wider threat to all working class people.

As a movement fascism seeks to rule by force; it waits in the wings until governments start to lose their grip on power in times of economic crisis. It, then, steps in to serve the rich by smashing any form of opposition.

Basically, fascism protects those tiny few who possess the majority of the country's wealth by building a movement of working-class foot soldiers who take over the way in which a country is administered and policed. One famous anti-fascist described fascism as "**a razor in the hands of the bosses**".

Because organised working class people represent the biggest threat to their ambitions, they seek to divide us, hence their endless racist propaganda and attacks upon political opponents. If they had their way, you wouldn't be able to join a trade union, in fact you wouldn't be able to join any organisation except theirs, you wouldn't have a vote, in fact you wouldn't have any say at all in the way that you live your life.

**Do you want this to happen? No, neither do we. If like us you believe that fascism can and must be beaten, then read on.....**

## How we fight fascism

### Physically.....

Fascism is a movement of physical force that seeks to smash all forms of democracy, and because it encourages violence against immigrants, political opponents, minority groups, and anyone else they disagree with, the anti-fascist response must also contain a physical element.

AFA organises to stop the fascists from having meetings so that they can't plan their activities, we stop them from standing in elections and from handing out leaflets so that they are unable to fill people's heads full of fascist propaganda. We confront them at football grounds, on council estates, and anywhere else they try to organise.

Sometimes this means we have to physically confront these people. We don't shy away from this task, unlike certain other groups we could mention who make brave proclamations about "smashing the nazis" but when it comes down to it, the leaders of these groups always seem to find some reason as to why they should restrict their actions to passive protests or even why their members should go home. "**But I can't do that**" you may be thinking, and if you are that's fine, we aren't all street-fighters, but all of us are of the opinion that you can't fight fire with hot air.

The immediate effects of this policy can be seen in Burnley where the BNP have been split asunder, and in Rochdale where they have been driven off the streets by us on numerous occasions resulting in the near collapse of their branch there. When they tried to set up a branch in South Manchester recently it lasted less than 2 months after pressure was applied by AFA. They have been unable to operate openly in Manchester for a decade.

Many young recruits to fascism join because they are impressed by the image of fascists as hardened street-fighters. When anti-fascists kick these so-called street-fighters all over the tarmac it has a demoralising effect on these new recruits. Many never go on another fascist event or activity again.

Physical opposition to fascism has the effect of isolating the hardcore from their periphery leaving them vulnerable and weak. Physical opposition to

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fascism is a tactic that works. AFA has proved it time and again. Not only in Manchester and the North-West, but all over the country, in places like North London and Glasgow, where the fascists cannot operate openly for fear of attack by AFA.

### **Ideologically.....**

We know only too well that the physical struggle against the fascists is just one aspect of the overall battle, we are fully aware that, despite all our efforts, they will get their message across to some people.

Fascists aim their propaganda at the people who are the most desperate - the unemployed and the low paid, those who live on run down and overcrowded estates and generally, those white working class people who are the victims of Tory Britain.

The fascists are trying to fill a vacuum that has been created by the failure of the existing political process to fulfill ordinary working class peoples' hopes and ambitions. People no longer have any faith in the mainstream political parties due to decades of betrayal, incompetence and deceit.

The fascists will argue that the reason why there is so much poverty, unemployment and crime is because of the blacks, the Jews and the Asians, they argue that the reason why there is so much homelessness is because of immigration. Basically, they will play on any fear that people have and twist it around using their own perverse logic to suit their own political agenda.

Therefore, a very important aspect of our work is countering their lies with our own propaganda. We don't blame black, Asian, Irish or Jewish people for unemployment, poverty, inadequate housing and crime.

We blame the politicians and the fat and greedy directors and heads of industries who grow richer and richer at the expense of those of us who do the real work. We don't give into hysteria and blame homelessness on immigration or the homeless themselves, but point to government cuts to local authorities which prevent more homes being built.

We try to put our arguments across in a way which is accessible to everyone and in a way which doesn't seek to preach or patronise. We do this by using leaflets similar to this and by talking to people on estates, at football matches or at music events.....

### **On the music front .....**

We aren't just trying to counteract the negative message of the fascists. We are also trying to get across our own positive message and to promote the creative interaction of people from all cultures and races. Cultural diversity is our strength not our problem.



One great way in which we have started to do this has been setting up "Freedom of Movement" This is a collective of Djs, musicians and promoters who have decided that the time has come for them to take a stand and have got together to put on club nights, gigs and events to promote the cause of Anti-Fascist Action.

Freedom of Movement has already put on highly successful nights at Home nightclub in Manchester and at many raves across the country. The Manchester gig, in particular, not only raised a lot of money for our activities but also allowed people to enjoy a great night and got the anti-fascist message across to them. Justin Robertson, Norman Cook, Luv Dup, the First Priority Djs are but a few of the great names in Manchester who have already put their names to this exciting project.

Every year in the summer, Anti-Fascist Action has also put on a national festival featuring top anti-racist bands and performers. In the past, these have been

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hugely successful, being enjoyed by young people from across Britain. In addition to this, we enjoy the support of bands such as the Kaliphz from Rochdale, who fully endorse what we are trying to do.

This is one area where we are constantly expanding and having great success in raising our profile and we are constantly looking for bands, club owners, promoters, graphic designers, etc. who can help us to keep up this work in the future.

## On the football front

Manchester and the North-West is privileged to be the home to several great football clubs. The fascists see football grounds as a fertile source of potential new recruits.

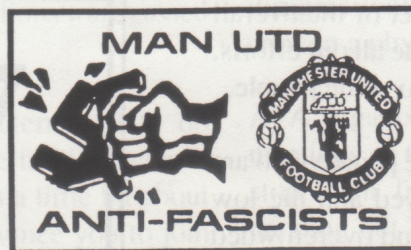
Many of us in AFA, just like everybody else, love our football and we are determined not to allow the situation to arise again whereby our football grounds are plagued by racist chanting and violent attacks and abuse hurled at black supporters and players.

We don't think that existing anti-racist football campaigns are enough to deal with the problem. We have, therefore, begun to take it upon ourselves to put our own anti-racist message across at football grounds.

At Manchester United we have launched the highly successful 'Red Attitude' fanzine which has been written by Man Utd fans and has proven to be very popular with each new issue selling out very quickly.

Again, this has been brought about by the work of highly enthusiastic and energetic people who have decided to take a stand.

We want to see similar fanzines appearing at City, at Bolton, at Stockport, at Tranmere, at Burnley, at Rochdale, at Bury, at Wigan, and all North-West football clubs so that we can build up a successful anti-fascist football supporters network. Calling all fans .....



## How AFA is run.....

Most importantly we decide amongst ourselves which is the best way of doing things, while the fascists are wholly undemocratic, we aim to be wholly democratic and allow everyone to have their say at meetings in the way in which the organisation is run.

Unlike certain other groups who don't have any forum for discussion or debate and who are run by self-appointed leaders who are unaccountable to anyone but themselves, and peddle their own political agenda, we aim to let everyone have a say.

Unfortunately there is a lot of rubbish talked in the anti-fascist arena. We try to cut through the confusion by being as honest and as straightforward with people as we can.

However, we are very security conscious - we have to be, both the fascists and the state try to monitor our activities and we try to encourage caution amongst our membership for obvious reasons.

We hold with the old adage that unity is strength, we therefore

maintain links with other AFA groups in the North and at a national level. Because fascism is on the rise internationally, we also think it very important to maintain solidarity with militant anti-fascists in other countries. To this end we bring anti-fascist activists over to this country to inform people what is happening abroad and in return we send speakers over to those countries.

There is a place in AFA for anyone who takes the fight against fascism seriously, and for anyone who is willing to contribute to our struggle no matter how small that contribution may be.

Whether you feel you are confident on a street level activity or if you are in a band and you want to support AFA by playing fundraisers, or if you think you can get something going or help out with an anti-fascist campaign at your football club, or even if you don't know how you could contribute, but you just want to get involved, there is a place for you in AFA. Our track record speaks for itself

We need scouts, we need people who can write leaflets, we need people who can speak at meetings, we need artists and musicians. If you have a talent then rest assured we'll find a use for it.. Everyone has their part to play in the struggle against fascism, no matter how small.

The message is simple ..... get involved ..... **JOIN AFA!!!**

**Manchester AFA**  
**PO Box 83**  
**SWDO**  
**Manchester 15.**  
**Tel: (0161) 232 0813**

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