

FIGHTING TALK

Issue 24

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Anti-Fascist Action

Front cover: '1985 - 2000; 15 YEARS AND STILL FIGHTING'. AFA was formed in 1985. The founding statement committed AFA to provide "physical and ideological opposition" to the fascists. Since then AFA has faithfully fulfilled this role, playing a pivotal part in the fight against fascism. The front cover photo shows the 4,000 strong AFA demonstration against racist attacks through London's East End, 1991.

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AFA on the Internet

The AFA Web Site can be found at:
www.geocities.com/capitolhill/senate/5602

**REGULARLY UPDATED NEWS
PAGES AND FEATURES**

APPEAL FOR INFORMATION

WE URGE ALL OUR READERS TO SEND ANY INFORMATION ON FASCISTS IN THEIR AREA DIRECT TO AFA. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO GUARANTEE THE MILITANT ANTI-FASCIST MOVEMENT HAS THE NECESSARY INFORMATION TO SUCCESSFULLY BEAT THE FASCISTS.

AFA NATIONAL OFFICE
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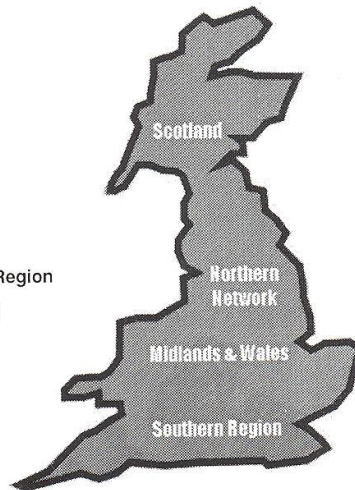
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JOIN AFA

Contact the National Office for details

AFA CHARTER

- AFA is committed to fighting fascism both physically and ideologically.
- In the struggle against fascism the working class must look to reinforce its own class position at every opportunity. It must take the field as an independent class power not as a junior partner to middle class liberals.
- When the Far Right prioritise community politics over street confrontation militant anti-fascism must adapt accordingly. The Far Right must not merely be removed from working class areas but in order to fill the political vacuum, the ambition of militant anti-fascism is to see them replaced there.
- AFA rejects the 'anyone but fascist' strategy of cross-class alliances. In the direct competition for working class hearts and minds, militant anti-fascism owes no loyalty to bankrupt political formulas designed mainly to protect the status quo.
- Between fascism and anti-fascism the State is never neutral. It always has its own agenda. Which is why, principle apart, AFA refuses to collaborate with the police, or intelligence services, in pursuit of short term advantage.
- AFA recognises its responsibility in the fight against race attacks. Not least because race attackers are a significant part of a large reactionary pool from which the fascists seek to recruit. All racial violence needs to be addressed from a political rather than moral or criminal perspective.
- Starting with the defeat of Mosley in the 1930's, in every successful campaign since (from the paramilitary 43 Group to the 'squadists' of the 1970's) the tactic of physical confrontation has proved indispensable. AFA is determined to maintain that physical force tradition.

IN THE AREA



Welcome to Issue 24 of Fighting Talk. We start with our usual round up of news and views from the front line against fascism.

West Midlands AFA stewards immersed themselves in the pre-election campaign against the Black Country BNP, unarguably one of the most progressive BNP branches in the country. WMAFA members have distributed several thousand leaflets in BNP target areas, such as the Victoria Park area of Tipton Green, where the BNP boast of prolific involvement in three residents groups. Householders were warned that their areas had become the focus of a fascist pilot scheme to import Euro-Nationalist inspired 'community politics', in order to build on their electoral base before the May local council elections. Last year the BNP scored their biggest ever vote outside London, attaining 17.2% in Tipton, and over 13% in the neighbouring Great Bridge ward. Even at that point the BNP had greater electoral support amongst the white working class in Tipton Green than the Labour Party. Hardly surprising then that the Labour Party have largely rejected the white working class out of hand, preferring instead to court a 70 to 80% Asian turn out at the polls, to the point where exclusive Labour council surgeries are held in a local mosque. This is despite the fact that only 16% of Tipton's population are described as 'ethnic' - which is a relatively low figure compared to much of the West Midlands. Clearly it's not only the BNP who have an interest in racialising their electoral campaigns.

Since the 1999 elections Black Country organisers, Sharron Edwards and husband Steve, have rapidly risen through the ranks of the BNP, with the former now in the post of deputy chairman of the party at a national level, and the latter elected as national elections officer. This year's Tipton BNP vote was up a further 50% on last year, giving them a very comfortable 23.7%. In the neighbouring Priory ward, on the edge of Dudley, the BNP achieved 16% - largely from the domino effect of their successful growth in Tipton. A criminal investigation has begun though, after both the BNP

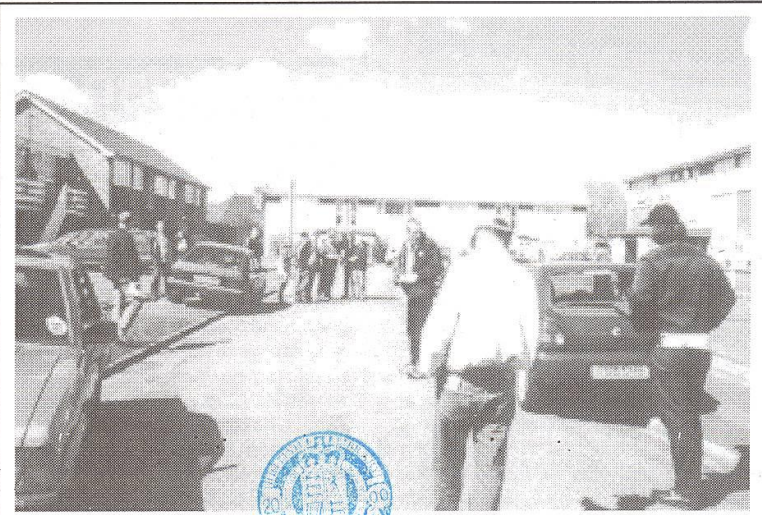
WEST MIDLANDS A.F.A.



Photos this page: West Midlands AFA activists at work on Black Country estates

and the Tories complained of Labour vote rigging - both saying they had evidence that Labour have illegally 'leant' on the Asian electorate to ensure victory. The majority of Black Country BNP activity, it should be noted, is largely centred around arbitration work - with the BNP proffering itself as a 'go between', making representations on behalf of residents to the local authorities, such as the housing department, social services and the police. Much of this work is simple and quick, perhaps as easy

as a telephone call, but it's clearly effective nonetheless. Although the local Labour Party feign ignorance about the steady BNP growth, they kow-tow to the BNP's demands on behalf of residents because they know full well the resonance of the BNP's community orientation. In actual fact though, handing the BNP very localised victories as they do only furthers the BNP's credibility in what is an increasingly neglected and unrepresented community. Public excursions for the BNP are few and far



AFA ROUND-UP



between unless they're undertaken with a considerable amount of pre-planning, drafted in teams and with the knowledge of the local police - the 'hardcore' of self-styled renegades in highly questionable outfits such as 'No Platform' and 'Leeds Anti-Fascist Group' should take note - WM AFA will provide all the maps and background information you need to stage your own Little Big Horn right in the belly of the BNP beast if you so wish, even if only to prove you haven't 'sold out', 'retreated' or even 'collapsed' like the rest of us. Incidentally West Mids AFA were using in the region of 30 very capable stewards for their Tipton campaign - so good luck!!!

On April 8th the NF, rather unsurprisingly, failed to turn out for their supposed picket of Birmingham Trade Union club. This was despite several press releases to various London papers and the Irish Post stating the NF were going to mobilise to show their disgust that the Birmingham branch of Troops Out were allowed to convene conferences and meetings in a building that houses a cenotaph on it's front driveway. On the same day as the Margate anti-refugee demonstration AFA knew full well that B'ham NF would not risk yet another rout. On political life-support though the NF refuse to shuffle from this mortal coil, holding another council-prohibited St. George's day march on April 22nd in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire.

West Mids AFA held a successful benefit gig in Wolverhampton on May 13th, featuring P.A.I.N., Dubrokkaz and Global beats DJ Cosmo Naughty. About two hundred people turned up to see an excellent show, with the AFA stall also doing a good trade. More gigs are planned in the coming months.

With the Socialist Alliance looking to become a national organisation WM AFA have made interventions at SWP so-called public meetings around the issues of asylum seekers and anti-fascism. AFA are always well received at such events by non-party members and observers, less so by the useless manipulative parasites that run them! At a meeting addressed by ANL national organiser Julie Waterson, under the guise of 'Driving the fascists out of the West Midlands', AFA produced a leaflet entitled 'Driving them out or packing them

in???' which served as a warning that the ANL's wrecking antics, or indeed those of the Socialist Alliance, would not be tolerated in Tipton and the Black Country where AFA have begun to make promising political inroads against the BNP. On June 8th several AFA delegates also attended what was billed as a large public meeting in Birmingham entitled 'Refugees are not to blame'. The meeting, as it turned out, was no more than a fragile looking SWP rally as no-one from the floor was allowed to speak, despite the fact that the SWP charged an admission fee!!! As controversial as ever AFA distributed leaflets headed 'Refugees welcome where?', highlighting the need to draw attention to injustices against all of the working class, and calling for a reinstatement and subsequent increase of services and provision in areas of refugee dispersal.

WM AFA produces an informative bi-monthly newsletter. This and assorted WM AFA leaflets are available from the Midlands PO Box.

EAST MIDLANDS



Anti-fascists are starting to reorganise against increasing fascist activity in the East Midlands area. In

Nottingham the NF have been leafleting estates and agitating around the issue of asylum seekers. An anti-fascist stall was threatened in the town centre but the fash got a bit carried away with themselves when 3 of them turned up at a public meeting, only to get on the wrong end of some more militant anti-fascists who are hoping to be able to get AFA up and running in the area soon.

In Leicester a left-wing bookshop has been attacked and there was a St George's Day march which was supported by some of the local football firm.

OXFORD



Oxford AFA lead by example when it comes to raising AFA's profile, with several letters printed in the local paper. A very successful benefit gig was held in March at the East Oxford Community Centre, featuring local reggae band Mackating and DJs Hadyn, Natty Mark and Ras James. The event was packed out and made over £400. This was followed in June by a club night at The Cricketers called Insurrection featuring top DJ Hadyn, playing punk, funk, soul, reggae and indie, and was hopefully the first of many.

LIVERPOOL



Liverpool AFA held their first benefit for 5 years in March. 300 people packed into The Picket on Hardman Street

to see Vamos, Western Avenue and Zeb play an eclectic mix of punk, hip-hop and dance grooves. The audience was a diverse mix of dockers, Republicans, students, musicians and other odds and sods that make the Liverpool scene so unique. Liverpool's own Tommy 8 provided the well-received poetry in between Western Avenue and Zeb.

Andy Johnson spoke on behalf of AFA: "The BNP branches in the north have doubled in the last five years. The jackboots have gone in the cupboard, out has come the suit and tie. They are trying to become the respectable face of racism. Correspondingly, AFA must change its strategy to reflect the new challenge. The point of this gig is to tell them that, yes, we know you are still out there and active, but we're still here too. The message of this gig is that come what may, come the BNP, come the National Front, come the UVF Orangemen, Liverpool stands firm against the fascist menace!" (loud cheer). After the gig AFA organised a party in Aigburth that saw the Chrome Collective play to a rammed crowd. Deluxe and Crash FM's Sam Du Play ignited the masses with their electric set of drum'n'bass.

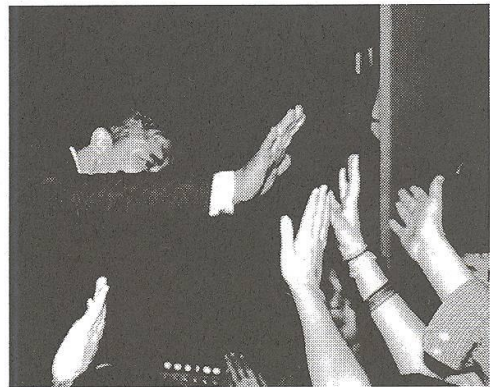
On April 16th Liverpool AFA worked closely with the Hillsborough Justice Campaign to organise a benefit in aid of the Miscarriages of Justice Organisation. On the bill were Liverpool's own DJ Sonny, DJ Piper and DJ Nicky M, while Tommy 8 provided a stand up routine. Pete Wylie (he of The Mighty Wah! fame) played an acoustic set which included his classic 80s songs as well as a splattering from his new album. A fair sum of money was raised for MOJO. Thanks go to the following for their support: everybody that played, the James Larkin Republican Flute Band, all the lads from Pogue Mahone's, and the one and only Tommy 8 who resolved a problematic crisis.

Liverpool has always had one of the most respected and active branches in AFA, and these gigs are the opening of a new chapter in Liverpool anti-fascist history. An influx of new faces means that the underlying anti-fascist presence on Merseyside will become visible on the streets again.

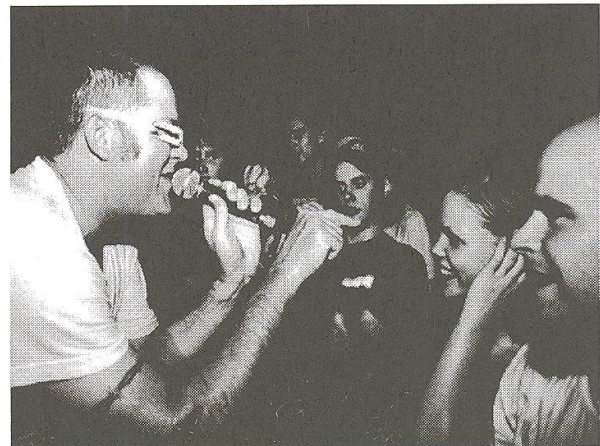
BRIGHTON BENEFIT

In May, AFA teamed up with the Just One Life Collective in Brighton again to put on another successful benefit gig. The Bank Holiday Skankathon featured a package of American bands who have just completed an Anti-Racist Action tour in the States, along with a range of British ska-core groups. Headliners MU330 and other bands such as The Chinkees and Lightyear were interviewed for the new Cable Street Beat newsletter and other bands expressed their support for AFA's work by offering their services for future gigs. Around £400 was raised and new contacts made. AFA would like to thank all the bands and the organisers for another great gig. If any more bands and DJs would like to play for AFA or let us have a stall at your gigs, write to the PO Box and add your name to a growing list.

The full line-up for the day was: Mu330, Link80, The Chinkees, Capdown, Smog UK, Lightyear, Longshot.



Clockwise from top: The Chinkees, Mu330, Link 80



SOUNDINGS

Hot on the heels of Nigel Copsey's history of anti-fascism (see Reviews) comes another academic work that looks at AFA in a positive light. Soundings "is a unique venture that combines hard-edged political argument with a broad spectrum of political content." In Issue 14 a section of the journal poses the question: "Anti-Fascist Action, radical resistance or rent-a-mob?"

The authors, Mark Hayes and Paul Aylward, identify the developing threat from fascist parties throughout Europe, and summarise the various explanations offered up by the Left and others as to why the fascists have never experienced the big breakthrough in Britain. However, the main body of the text focuses on AFA. Why AFA was formed, the reasoning behind, and the implementation of, the organisation's strategies. The street level MO is examined and the authors aim to demonstrate that AFA is a viable

organisation: "...when it comes down to the specifics of street confrontation the AFA 'mobilisations' are relatively well organised and disciplined... 'Contact' with 'the enemy' is invariably preceded by extensive intelligence gathering and 'scouting'. Objectives are clearly defined and relayed through the so-called 'stewards group'".

They then move on to the current situation, the BNP's move towards respectable politics and AFA's response: political work in the working class communities. The authors conclude: "...our evidence would suggest that AFA is more ideologically complex, tactically sophisticated and mission-committed than conventional descriptive accounts have acknowledged."

This, fairly short, piece of work is an honest attempt to present AFA as a serious political force, an interesting contrast to the observations of many 'comrades' on the Left. Soundings (Issue 14) is published by Soundings Ltd. c/o Lawrence & Wishart.

ANTI-FASCIST ACTION

OCTOBER RALLY

'CAN THE LEFT BEAT THE BNP?'

London

Sun. 1st October, 2000.

Following last year's successful debate on 'Is Anti-Racism Working?' another panel of speakers will be invited to discuss the chances of the Left mounting a successful electoral challenge to the BNP's steadily rising votes. Once again there will be a broad range of views on the platform and full audience participation. For further details contact the National Office.

MAY 2000 ELECTIONS

The May elections confirmed AFA's analysis that the BNP's Euro-Nationalist strategy has the potential to gain electoral support from disillusioned sections of the white working class. In the West Midlands AFA activists confirm that the local campaigning the BNP have been doing is resulting in growing support; in Castle and Priory (Dudley) their vote of 16% showed an increase of 98% since 1999; in Tipton Green (23.7%) it was up 36% on 1999; in Fenton Green, Stoke, (9.3%) it was up by 86%; and in Western Springs, Cannock, (7%) the BNP saw an increase of 75%.

In the North West, 21.5% in Burnley and 9.7% in Oldham, and in the North East 7.8% in Sunderland, show that support for the Far Right is not confined to any one area.

Of particular interest was the Greater London Assembly election in London, because here you had the Left going head to head with the fascists in a major contest. Although the mainstream media and the Left largely ignored it, the BNP saved their deposit in the election, winning 47,670 votes. Despite the efforts of liberal anti-fascists to exclude the Far Right by bureaucratic means, such as increasing the level of deposits for candidates and raising the number of votes needed to save deposits, the BNP gained 2.87% of the vote, passing the 2.5% required to save their £5,000 deposit. Not only does this confirm their gradual increase in electoral support, but it also shows that an anti-fascist strategy based on bureaucratic manoeuvres is not working.



Michael Newland - BNP candidate for Mayor of London

The strategy is clearly endorsed by the Labour Party and conveniently punishes electoral opponents from the Left as well. As more and more working class voters become disillusioned with Labour this strategy will be seen as being more about keeping Labour in power than having anything to do with anti-fascism. There is no alternative now to fighting the fascists politically for the hearts and minds of what is known as the traditional Labour vote.

More important than the BNP saving their deposit is the fact that they beat the main challenge to Labour coming from the Left. The London Socialist Alliance (LSA), which includes most of the Left and is dominated by the SWP, got 27,073 votes in the London List (the only

place where the BNP and LSA were in direct competition) - more than 20,000 less than the BNP.

Although the LSA got 46,530 votes for their candidates in the constituencies (which the BNP didn't contest) pre-election claims by the LSA that they could win up to 4 seats show how unrealistic they are. Mark Steel (SWP member and LSA candidate) claimed on radio that if the Left vote hadn't been split by the Socialist Labour Party (13,690 votes) and the Communists (7,489 votes) then they would have beaten the BNP.

But if you want to play those sort of games if you add the UKIP's vote (34,054) to the BNP then the Far Right get 81,724 compared to the Left's 48,252. With the BNP's candidate for Mayor, Michael Newland, getting nearly 80,000 first and second preference votes, almost 10% of what Livingstone got, and the BNP winning 7.1% of the vote in the City and East constituency, you get a more serious analysis of the state of play.

Although it is a significant development that the Left are prepared to stand against Labour, in contrast to their old 'vote Labour with no illusions' strategy, there is certainly no room for complacency. The emergence of the LSA as an ongoing campaign raises possibilities and concerns for anti-fascists. Their insistence on trumpeting 'Asylum Seekers Welcome Here' shows a complete disregard for already impoverished local communities and could prove to be a major boost for the fascists, but the resources available within the LSA, if used in the interests of working class communities, could provide some sort of positive alternative to the BNP. AFA will be watching developments closely.



As a footnote to the elections, at the end of April the BNP got their first parish councillor elected (unopposed) in Bromyard and Winslow, Herefordshire. Although in itself not exactly earth-shattering news, it does show the ambition of the Far Right. As BNP leader Nick Griffin said, John Haycock's election success "makes it much easier to point out to our people in other parts of the country that if you look for these seats you can be elected."

ASYLUM SEEKERS

Around the country AFA activists have begun challenging liberal anti-racist arguments on the question of asylum seekers. In the same way that the liberals have never put forward a political strategy designed to stop racist attacks rather than just support the victims, on the asylum issue they only address half the problem.

Although the government stated that local councils would be reimbursed for the extra expenditure needed, it is now widely accepted that in fact there will be a shortfall of £30 million by the end of the year. So already hard-pressed communities will be even worse off, a situation made still worse by profiteering landlords milking councils for every penny they can, in some cases up to £450 per week, to house refugees in slums.

Genuine resentment is caused, for example, when Oxfordshire County Council decided to re-open Osney Court nursing home, whose closure had been unpopular in the first place, to house refugees. As a local resident said in the local paper, "we're all shocked that the council does not want to look after its old people yet will look after people from abroad." Is this racist? Or an expression of genuine anger at the way working class people are treated? As Oxford AFA pointed out in a letter printed in the Oxford Mail, "if the government is not prepared to provide both host and immigrant communities with the necessary resources to facilitate integration, then the resulting tensions will be ripe for exploitation by the Far Right."

This point is illustrated by a woman in Margate who supported the NF march

there back in April. Whether she is a dyed-in-the-wool racist or not, it would be foolish to ignore the point she makes, "for too long the opinion of local residents has been ignored. A lot of people protesting here are not for the National Front but if they are the only ones who will highlight our plight, we will have to stand with them." (Extra, 14/4/00).

West Midlands AFA suggested in their local leaflet, "if local services improved as a result of the arrival of refugees it is hard to imagine that the racists and fascists who currently exploit the situation would have as much resonance as they do now." They go on: "It is not inconceivable that the decision makers know the arrival of refugees will serve to divide communities and deflect attention away from their inability to provide decent services in the first place [and any criticism can be denounced as racist - FT]. Whether the motives are sinister, negligent or downright naive - the Left should wake up to reality lest they should continue to be perceived as part of the problem."

Certainly the BNP appreciate the potential benefits. As Nick Griffin told the Guardian (20/5/00): "Its been quite fun to watch government ministers and the Tories play the race card in far cruder terms than we would ever use, but pretend not to. This issue legitimises us."

The way to undermine the racists is to bring class into the equation and support the rights of local communities and the refugees. The alternative can only end in disaster, as another letter from Oxford AFA pointed out: "Ordinary working class people, who see funding for their own communities cut, are being asked to play host to the even less well off." (Oxford Mail, 3/4/00). The choice is ours.

GERRY ADAMS SPEAKS OUT

As militant anti-fascists in Britain we welcome the recent comments from Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein president, in relation to the asylum issue in Ireland. Speaking at a meeting on 17th May, he said: "Not only has the [Irish] government failed to address the needs and rights of refugees and asylum seekers, it has also ignored the needs and rights of urban and rural communities. Communities have a right to be consulted and to expect adequate resources and supports. But communities also have obligations and responsibilities as human beings."

These comments are just as accurate in relation to the situation in Britain. A failure to demand adequate resources along with the rights of refugees can only, as in many communities in Britain, pit the most wretched against the most disadvantaged. For liberals and professional anti-racists to then 'take sides' on the issue of resources without addressing the £30 million shortfall by the New Labour government in recompensing local authorities compounds the problem. A fourfold increase in support for the Far Right in the May elections in London and a doubling of race attacks are some of the consequences.

To our knowledge the Sinn Fein president is the first political leader to promote an anti-racist strategy that is not perceived to be anti-working class, and through that has hopefully helped move anti-racist thinking from the purely moral to the strategic. If so it will prove to be a timely intervention.

ANTI-FASCIST NETWORK?

Recently, malicious rumours have been circulating in certain circles that London AFA has collapsed. This is most definitely not true. Predictably, these rumours coincide with the emergence of a new organisation - Anti-Fascist Network - and the production of a leaflet entitled 'No Platform' which was deliberately designed to look like an AFA leaflet. So much so that someone rang the office to join having seen the leaflet! While some people have taken this opportunity to try and damage AFA and confuse anti-fascists, representatives of the new group approached AFA with a view to 'working together' on activities. These representatives, from the Socialist Party and ex-AFA, have short memories. In the past AFA has worked with activists from the Socialist Party (formerly Militant) but on the two occasions more formal approaches were made to 'work together' on important activities, AFA was badly let down. AFA is not in the habit of repeating mistakes. Exactly what future an anti-fascist organisation has that is solely committed to physical opposition, at a time when the main fascist threat comes from the non-confrontational BNP, remains to be seen. But there is a basic contradiction when the 'militant' Anti-Fascist Network are prepared to work with the pro-State Searchlight magazine, whose publisher sits on the Metropolitan Police's Violent and Racial Crime Task Force and openly boasts of his contacts in the security services. (For AFA's position on Searchlight see Fighting Talk 19.) That this is a rival organisation is clear, because rather than discuss any concerns beforehand, they prefer to announce "there is a need for a new anti-fascist network". AFA has seen all this before, most notably with the short-lived Anti-Fascist Alliance in the mid-90s, and the question remains, is the Anti-Fascist Network just striking a militant pose or are they committed to the long haul?



AFA ROUND-UP

NEW TERROR BILL



Billed as a 'Festival of Anti-Capitalist Ideas and Action', the Mayday 2000 weekend hit the headlines when the inevitable violence erupted on the Monday. Of more concern to AFA was the absence of anti-fascism from the extensive list of topics discussed at the 2 day conference which preceded the demonstration.

Likewise campaigners against the new Terrorism Bill ignore militant anti-fascists in their long lists of groups likely to suffer under the new legislation: Reclaim the Streets, animal rights groups, supporting the Kurds or East Timorese, anti-apartheid, environmentalists, and so on. But there is one glaring omission. The wording of the Act defines terrorism as 'the use or threat of action which involves serious violence against persons or property'. Without putting too fine a point on it, the 'use or threat of physical force' is, though somewhat distilled, an accurate description of the ethos, custom and honourable practice of militant anti-fascism for much of the 20th century.

However, that militant anti-fascism is now to be formally defined as terrorism will cause little eyebrow-raising within AFA, mainly because this is largely how AFA has been, and has learnt to expect to be, treated by the authorities up and down the country for the best part of the last decade. For instance as recently as last December AFA activists were threatened with arrest for distributing an ordinary recruitment leaflet outside Partick Thistle football ground, which the police insisted was an incitement to violence. Naturally when asked they declined to identify precisely who, and where, the likely victims of such incitement were.

Similar suspensions of civil liberties have in the past involved mass arrests, the illegal photographing and videoing of individuals, the use of provocateurs, the bugging of phones, the interference with mail, the contacting of employers, the preventive detention of key activists prior to events, the framing of key activists, the political nature of sentencing

(i.e. 3 years for a first offence), open collaboration with fascists, the criminalisation of the entire organisation, the demonisation of same through a compliant media, the banning of public meetings, the banning even of internal conferences. In other words for AFA, at least a decade prior to the introduction of the Terrorism Bill, the law and its application has proved to be at best arbitrary. This is not say that everyone on every occasion ends up charged with conspiracy, or cops 3 years for a first offence, but the mere possibility has, as intended, a corrosive effect in itself. Not only on the membership, but amongst the wider Left periphery who fear contagion and who as a consequence convince themselves and each other that militant anti-fascists, unlike say decent law-abiding environmentalists, may well have had it coming and are therefore considered undeserving of liberal concern.

So be warned, taking direct action and speaking your mind could make you an enemy of the State, but taking direct action and speaking your mind will also make you, if not enemies, few friends on the liberal Left either.

IRVING TRIAL

As David Irving's libel case was thrown out of the High Court in April, the judge described the historian as "*an active Holocaust denier ... anti-semitic and racist ... he associates with right-wing extremists who promote neo-nazism.*"

While on the one hand anti-fascists have reason to celebrate, there is also cause for concern. Denying the Holocaust has long been a key component in the fascists' attempts to rehabilitate the Third Reich, and anti-fascists have a duty to preserve the memory of the millions slaughtered by the Nazis. But anti-fascists must also be prepared to look at events objectively. Falsifying events harms the Left as much as the Right. An early horror story claimed that the bodies of dead Jews were used to make soap; this turned out to be propaganda but where was the need for this invention? The facts speak for themselves, the horror was all too real, the virtual annihilation of the European Jews took place. But the death camps weren't exclusively Jewish, and when the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, USA, deliberately removed the lines "*then they came for the communists and I did not speak out - because I was not a communist*" from Pastor Niemoller's famous anti-fascist poem, it shows that non-fascists will also distort history to suit their ideological interests. (In fact,

the German Communists, Jews and non-Jews, were the best anti-fascists and deserve better than this.)

Anti-fascists tend to shy away from 'difficult' issues. Unless we can critically discuss the Holocaust, without being labelled pro-nazi or anti-semitic, it allows the fascists to dominate the discussion; and their intention, already being in local or national government in 12 European countries, is to remove the last great obstacle to re-establishing fascism as a bona fide alternative - the Holocaust.

SEARCHLIGHT

A glowing tribute to the Metropolitan Police's Racial and Violent Crime Task Force (CO24), and in particular its leader John Grieve, featured in the April issue of Searchlight magazine. Describing Grieve as "*a very humane and caring man*" and the Task Force consisting of the "*brightest and best detectives*" it is clear that Searchlight approve. Their approval is guaranteed by their inclusion on the Task Force's team of 'advisers', modestly described as "*people with specialist expertise in fighting racism and fascism.*" The whole piece is designed to reassure anti-fascists that the police are on 'our' side. The fact that this "intelligence-led policing" has also been used to harass, imprison and intimidate anti-fascists is perfectly acceptable. Anyone who doesn't back the status quo is fair game. For AFA, our enemies' enemy is most definitely not our friend.

UNITY IN UNISON?

As AFA's fund-raising efforts become more efficient, we were disappointed to hear of recent events at a certain Unison branch in London. AFA is in the process of producing a new pamphlet on the 'History of AFA', providing an account of Britain's most effective anti-fascist organisation over the last 15 years. Obviously a project like this costs money and sponsors have been approached. When an AFA supporter raised the issue at her union meeting the request was challenged by a Central Committee member of the SWP, muttering that it "wasn't a campaign" (or at least not one favoured by the SWP) and "AFA was a clandestine organisation". The damage was done and the donation knocked back. Cheers, comrade!

If anyone reading this would like to help, not least to show the SWP where they can stick their arrogant attitude, then please send donations to the PO Box. Any donations over £25 will receive a free copy of the book which is due out in October.

GONE BUT NEVER FORGOTTEN

MATTY 'BLAG' ROBERTS

1964-2000

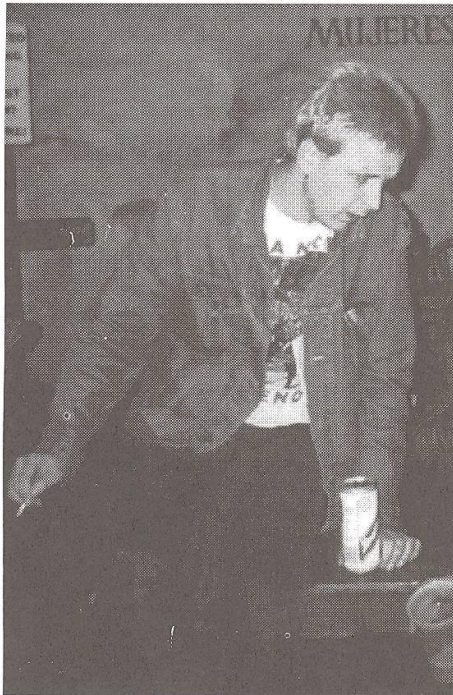
Members of AFA were greatly saddened to hear of the sudden death of Matty Roberts, known to all as Matty Blag, on February 22nd.

Matty had been an active and enthusiastic member of London AFA during the late 80s and early 90s, a demanding time for anti-fascists. Matty was more than equal to those demands and became a valued activist, particularly noted for his courage on the streets.

Matty had started his political involvement on the 'other side', being a teenage member of the nazi British Movement – but he changed his views with the help of another former fascist during one of several spells in prison. Matty really came into his own with the formation of The Blaggers (later Blaggers ITA) where his musical and political talents helped make them one of the best anti-fascist bands this country has ever seen. A dynamic performer, he fronted the band with energy and commitment, and on occasion had to put the anti-fascist message into practice when nazi boneheads tried to disrupt a gig (- always unsuccessfully). When the band signed to EMI and spent the money they were given for a party on full page adverts for AFA in the music press instead, it was the perfect answer to the fools who cried "sell out".

Although in recent years Matty had drifted out of political activity, for those who knew him the memory will always be of someone full of enthusiasm, no half measures, literally straining at the leash to fight fascism.

Representatives of AFA attended the memorial service for Matty in Oswestry, his home town, and were proud to read out a tribute commemorating his role as an anti-fascist. Our thoughts go out to his family and friends.



GARY 'CHUCK' TAYLOR

After the tragic death of Chuck, the Upstarts manager, anti-fascist activist and former FT columnist, Mensi of the Angelic Upstarts pays tribute to a roadie, manager and above all a friend.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who turned up at Chuck's funeral, it made it a day that will live forever in the minds of so many people who thought so much of him.

I'd known Chuck 22 years. I always thought of Chuck as a younger brother and anybody who has ever been in a group will know how hard it is staying together for two years, never mind twenty two.

Chuck and me used to fight like cat and dog sometimes but we always ended up being committed to the same ideals, anti-fascism and the fight to establish the Angelic's as a premier league anti-fascist band.

Chuck had been to prison on numerous occasions but I don't think I ever met anyone as honest, if that makes any sense.

If the Angelic's decide to carry on it will never be the same, there will always be something missing that will never be replaced.

*Sunderland till I die!
Anti-fascist till I die!
Love you. Miss you.
Mensi*

Between the Sheets

with Elvis Mondallant



LAPTOPS AND LEDERHOSEN

On February 4th the new Austrian government was sworn in, a coalition between the extreme right-wing Freedom Party (FPO) and the conservative People's Party. The FPO had previously won 27% of the vote in last October's elections, a larger share of the working class vote than any other party, and 52 parliamentary seats. Now the coalition has given them half of the cabinet. However, Jörg Haider has not taken a seat in government and has recently resigned as party leader, keeping a low profile for the time being.

Apparently, at the swearing in ceremony, the outgoing Social Democrat chancellor, Viktor Klima, "appeared to be on the verge of tears and several of his staff wept openly." (*The Guardian* 5/2/00); it has to be said that the response of governments throughout Europe has hardly been any more robust. Most have reduced bilateral relations with Austria while maintaining links at the EU level. The French defence minister, Alain Richard, was moved to cancel an order for six Austrian ambulances while Danish diplomats pulled out of a dinner at the Austrian embassy in Copenhagen. Also off the menu - a visit to Austria from our very own Prince Charles. This must be serious.

The British Government have maintained a wait and see approach to the situation, Robin Cook has made it clear that he does not want Austria's involvement at the EU level to be hampered. Some diplomats, throughout Europe, have suggested that any measures taken against Austria might be removed in six months on the basis of good behaviour. Prior to the establishment of the new Austrian government, 58% of Austrians felt that the EU response was exaggerated and that the coalition should be sworn in.

The Austrian president, Thomas Klestil, obviously reluctant to sanction the coalition government but unable to see any alternative, squeezed out a "declaration of European values" from the incoming parties underlining support for democratic principles. Klestil, despite pressure from many, was reluctant to call fresh elections, only too aware that this

might provide the FPO with the opportunity to build on its vote and possibly be returned as the majority party.

Our old friend *The Guardian*, in its editorial of February 1st was one of those kind enough to offer up fresh elections as a strategy that might put this particular problem to bed: "...it is the Austrian electorate which must bear prime responsibility for tolerating and encouraging Mr Haider's rise and rise, from 5% public support in 1986 to 27% last October." And now the punch line: "Over 70% of Austrians did not support the Freedom Party last time around. And those who did, now more fully aware perhaps of the awful consequences for their country if Mr Haider advances, should also be given the chance to think again, and think very hard." There we have it, the old guilt complex strategy, favourite weapon in the liberal armoury. If we are all made to think "very hard" about politics, examine ourselves for racist trends and other unpleasantness then there is a very good chance that we'll begin to think and behave along the right lines.

Back to the real world for the moment. Of course Klestil's instincts are probably spot on. It has been widely speculated that the FPO strategy is to allow the coalition to become discredited and, after fresh elections, for a much strengthened FPO to be returned to power. Haider's recent resignation is, as *The Guardian* correctly observes, an opportunity for him "...to position himself as prince-in-waiting, as Austria's chancellor-to-be."

The press have been fairly quiet about opposition at street level, preferring to focus on diplomatic efforts to tame Austria. However there has been much activity on the streets of Vienna culminating in a 300,000 strong demonstration, organised by SOS Mitmensch on February 19th.

According to *The Socialist* (newspaper of the organisation formerly known as Militant) we are witnessing "the most politically conscious movement in Austria's post war history." This may well be the case, as little else seems to have

THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE OUTRAGEOUS

"Barry Hearn has sparked a row with his club's own community programme organisers after commenting on immigration. The Leyton Orient chairman said during a BBC Radio Five phone-in programme: "It is a huge problem. I think its disgraceful we let all these people into the country. It's about time we started looking after ourselves. I wouldn't have one of them in."

(News of the World, 12/3/00)

"A sudden move to the far right by the UK Independence Party, which won three seats at last year's European elections, has raised fears that extreme racists are gaining a power base in a mainstream party. The Far Right British National Party has even proposed a merger with the UKIP. There is growing evidence that there are an expanding number of Far Right sympathisers within the UKIP who would welcome such an initiative. This month a long message praising the BNP appeared on the party's internal Internet bulletin board, under the name of a senior officer in the London UKIP."

(Jay Rayner, *The Observer*, 21/5/00)

"The new, modernist nationalism to which the BNP is now firmly committed is not about confrontation ... this means finding ways to describe the nationalist position in terms with which ordinary people feel comfortable; it means that we must be seen as the defenders, not just of a set of abstract ideas, but of their personal, material interests."

(BNP magazine *Identity*, Jan/Feb 2000)



MAN AT C&A

"During the Second World War it clothed the Luftwaffe chief, Hermann Goering, and supported the Nazis." (*The Independent*, 3/6/00, referring to C&A, the high street store)

happened, but it is not class consciousness that we are talking about here.

Many different organisations appear to have contributed to the opposition movement and a sample taste of the resulting political stew (or should that be 'revolting' political stew) comforts us with familiar flavours: large portions of pity from the liberal middle class and a pinch of sectarian spice from the disciples of Leon Trotsky.

A look at the ANL on-line was almost as distasteful as looking at them in the flesh. They have been busy boys and girls and were, of course, in attendance on February 19th, in addition: "simultaneous demos were held throughout the world, including protests organised by the ANL in London, Edinburgh, Dublin, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield and Birmingham" apparently.

Reports from the big demo and profiles of some of the organisations involved were provided via a link to the I-CARE (Internet Centre Anti-Racism Europe) web site, which was nice. The I-CARE organisation informs us: "The people who need our support right now are the anti-racism organisations in Austria who are actively fighting the Haider rise-to-power."

We find ourselves looking at organisations, located in Austria, whose names we have never heard of, but whose politics we are all too familiar with. One such grouping is ZARA who are, amongst other things, a "team of professionals specialised in assisting people individually in the process of resolving racist experiences." Oh dear.

Other groups are highlighted, all of who leave a nasty taste in the mouth: the unmistakable tang of middle class liberalism. I could find no evidence of any working class involvement, although as we all know, this is often masked out by our betters.

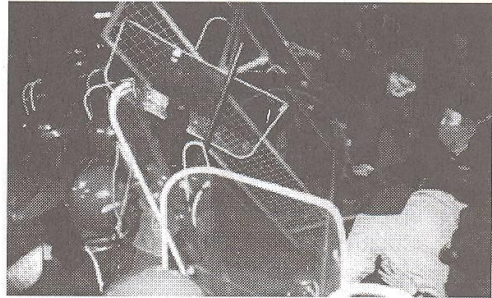
Whilst the fascists have remained succinct, initiatives from the Left have played out with almost mundane predictability. What type of army have the Left mustered? Well "Red fly the banners high", unfortunately several miles from the front and facing in the wrong direction. As Gerry Adams has said: "Socialism is what socialism does". Political stretcher bearers in the shape of ZARA and others have taken position but who is to actually engage the enemy and how?

Jörg Haider's now familiar grin will no doubt be extended across the span of his face as he contemplates the opposition. Whilst the FPO have secured a substantial working class vote, thousands of students, social workers, teachers, etc. parade up and down various high streets throughout Europe like the arse end of a pantomime horse, outraged that such events have come to pass. Whilst the Left wander aimlessly and prepare field hospitals for the casualties to come, the fash are already mopping up in some areas and preparing for new battles ahead.

As throughout the whole of Europe, the fascists in Austria have moved away from the street and developed a sophisticated brand of radical, populist politics. As Nick Griffin put it recently in an interview with *The Independent on Sunday*, regarding the BNP's shift in this direction: "You could say we've decommissioned the boot." Confrontation at street level is not the immediate issue. The front, if we stick with military analogy for the moment, is the working class constituency where the fash have made so much headway. Whilst the Left runs through its repertoire of street theatre, the FPO are addressing the concerns of Austrian workers. As in the past, despite the dogmatic denials of the Left, the fash aim to gain credibility and support in what they regard as a vital constituency: the working class.

It is ironic that while the various religious congregations on the Left who propose leading the working class to power often have little contact with, let alone an understanding of, working class life and politics, the fash have always understood the potential for developing their ideas in this constituency and are often more successful. In Austria the post-war political carve up between the Social Democrats and the People's Party has arrived at the beginning of the end. For decades these two organisations have not only enjoyed political power at national and local level, every aspect of life in this country has been tainted by the lazy corruption of these people.

The fascists have found resonance in both working class and middle class constituencies by challenging the status quo and offering up radical solutions. This is combined with a new image of respectability, the 'laptops and lederhosen' strategy.



Whilst the fascists aim at achieving this new respectability, references to the Third Reich pop up now and again just to remind us of what we're dealing with. In Haider's home town, a skiing resort, postcards are available on the slopes bearing the legend: "Ski Heil".

Searchlight, in their March editorial ask for more pressure to be applied to Austria by European governments: "...a number of European governments which profess opposition to racism have said nothing. The silence of Britain's Labour government...is particularly noticeable. Britain should play a full role in isolating Haider and his Freedom Party, and it needs to be seen to be doing so." Despite their many years of experience, *Searchlight*, like many others, appear to have learnt very little about politics. Rather than look to the people and resources available in working class communities, as ever, they are content with politely reminding the establishment of its responsibilities.

AFA's outlook is uncomplicated. The battleground, not only in Austria but throughout Europe, is in the working class communities. It is here that political allegiances will be won or lost and where the opportunity to build a formidable and radical working class movement exists for both the Left and the Right. It is here that serious anti-fascists, including some who will have involved themselves in recent events in Vienna and elsewhere, will need to address the rise of fascism.

Rather than endless marches, pickets and petitioning exercises featuring whatever issue springs to mind this week, it is the fears, problems and anxieties experienced by working class communities that need to be addressed on a consistent basis. It is precisely at this level where people have been failed by the establishment parties and the Left. Housing, crime, unemployment and social exclusion are the issues at the top of the agenda. None of this is very glamorous, but then war is not glamorous.

Seen any interesting quotes or media comments? Send a copy to Elvis c/o London AFA

15 YEARS AND ST

A packed meeting in Central London, 15 years ago this summer, led to the formation of Anti-Fascist Action. Since then AFA has seen a lot of changes, from the physical battles of the late 80s and early 90s to the present day political opposition. AFA is unique in being able to draw up and implement effective anti-fascist strategies that are relevant to the times. But AFA has never been popular in many circles, either on the Right (for obvious reasons!), or on the Left, who have always resented AFA's stinging criticisms of their failings and weaknesses. Against all the odds AFA has survived and is still fighting, and it is appropriate to take this opportunity to salute the courage and commitment of all the men and women who have led from the front in the fight against fascism. To celebrate the last 15 years we have selected some choice remarks, from friend and foe, that serve to illustrate the not inconsiderable impact that militant anti-fascism has made.

"LAST YEAR AFA DECIDED IT SHOULD MOUNT ITS OWN PARADE AND LAY ITS OWN WREATHS TO REMEMBER THOSE WHO FELL FIGHTING FASCISM AND THE VICTIMS OF FASCISM AND RACISM SINCE WORLD WAR TWO. OVER 2,000 PEOPLE ASSEMBLED FOR THE MARCH ... OUR MARCH HAD BEEN WELL DISCIPLINED AND ORDERLY AND, DESPITE AN EARLY ATTEMPT BY THE FASCISTS TO ATTACK US, HAD SHOWN RESTRAINT AND DIGNITY BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF THE OCCASION." (SEARCHLIGHT, 1987) ... "IN THE PAST 4 YEARS OF ANTI-FASCIST [AFA] REMEMBRANCE DAY MARCHES, THE ONLY REGRETTABLE FEATURE HAS BEEN THE NARROW AND OFTEN SECTARIAN NATURE OF THE EVENT." (SEARCHLIGHT, 1989)

"THOUGH WE MIGHT FIND THE POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF MR CRANE REPELLANT, NEVERTHELESS IT IS YOUR ACTIONS THAT WILL CAUSE THEM TO WIN AND THEN WE HAVE ANARCHY." (THE JUDGE'S SUMMING UP AT THE TRIAL OF 3 AFA MEMBERS JAILED FOR A TOTAL OF 11 YEARS AFTER A CONFRONTATION WITH LEADING FASCIST STREET-FIGHTER NICKY CRANE, 1990)

"WE HAVE TO ADVERTISE OUR GIGS BY WORD OF MOUTH. IF THEY [AFA] GET TO HEAR ABOUT IT THEY WANT TO TURN IT INTO A BLOODBATH." (IAN STUART, SKREWDRIVER, EVENING STANDARD, 1990)

"HOW VERY NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN!" (IAN ANDERSON, NF CHAIRMAN, ON THE ARRIVAL OF 40 'LATE ARRIVALS' TO A PUBLIC MEETING IN HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, YOU CAN GUESS THE REST...1991)

"A MOST SERIOUS ERROR OF JUDGEMENT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN MADE LAST NIGHT BY THE BBC, IN OFFERING AIRTIME TO A GROUP [AFA] WHICH QUITE UNASHAMEDLY ADVOCATES THE USE OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE. IN PRESENTING A NATIONAL PLATFORM TO A GROUP WHICH LOOKS SUSPICIOUSLY LIKE LEFT-WING FASCISTS EAGER FOR A WAR WITH RIGHT-WING FASCISTS, THE BBC WAS PLAINLY NOT SERVING THE INTERESTS OF DEMOCRACY. HOW CAN IT WITH EQUITY RESIST A DEMAND BY THE BNP FOR THE RIGHT TO REPLY?" (DAILY MAIL, REGARDING AFA'S OPEN SPACE PROGRAMME, 1992)

"VARIOUS SUPPORTERS OF AFA WERE SHOWN IN SILHOUETTE AS THEY TALKED WITH RELISH OF VIOLENT CONFRONTATIONS WITH THE BNP ... THEIR MAIN SPOKESMAN, A BURLY RUFFIAN WITH A THICK GEORDIE ACCENT, A LEATHER JACKET, AND A WOOLY HAT, SNEERED AT GOOD OLD FASHIONED LIBERALS AND TRENDY LEFTIES WHO WOULD BE WARY OF HIS MESSAGE OF VIOLENCE." (DAILY MAIL, AS ABOVE, 1992)

"FASCISM IS THE BIGGEST INVISIBLE PRESENCE ON PLANET ROCK 1993... SO GO ON THEN, AFA AND ARA, END THE PHONEY WAR; TERMINATE BRITAIN'S LAST 200 OR SO NAZI SKINS." (SIMON PRICE, MELODY MAKER, 1993)

"YOU HAVE TO DO WHAT AFA DO: FIND THE NAZIS AND SORT THEM OUT. AFA ARE THE ONLY ORGANISATION THAT GOES OUT THERE AND DOES SOMETHING. THEY MAKE IT PHYSICALLY HARD FOR THE NAZIS TO MOVE IN THIS COUNTRY. THIS IS THE ONLY EUROPEAN COUNTRY WHERE THE NAZIS DON'T HAVE A FIRM FOOTHOLD, AND THAT'S BECAUSE OF AFA." (KALIPHZ, NME, 1994)

STILL FIGHTING...

"THE RED ATTITUDE FANZINE [PRODUCED BY AFA], ON SALE OUTSIDE OLD TRAFFORD, URGES UNITED SUPPORTERS TO JOIN THE BATTLE AGAINST THE THUGS FROM FASCIST GROUP COMBAT 18, WHO SPARKED THE CARNAGE IN DUBLIN 11 DAYS AGO. AND THE FRIGHTENING FEUD BETWEEN THE TWO RIVAL GROUPS THREATENS TO TURN NEXT YEAR'S EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP IN ENGLAND INTO A BLOODY ORGY OF VIOLENCE." (NEWS OF THE WORLD, 1995)

"THE ELECTION OF DEREK BEACKON PUT THE ANTI-RACIST MOVEMENT TO THE TEST. BOTH AFA AND ARA DREW THE SAME CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RISE OF RACISM. THEY BOTH BELIEVED THAT THE WHITE WORKING CLASS IS RACIST AND HAS NO ROLE TO PLAY IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE NAZIS." (SOCIALIST REVIEW, 1995)

"A MASSIVE 'NICE ONE' TO AFA AND FIGHTING TALK FOR WORKING WITH US WHEN MOST PEOPLE STEERED CLEAR. AS WE ALWAYS SAY 'FUCK FASCISM BEFORE IT FUCKS YOU!', CHEERS." (RODDY MORENO, THE OPPRESSED, 1996)

"AFA ARE NO LONGER THE STRONG MOB OF TEN YEARS AGO." (THE ORDER, C18, 1996)

"YOUR GENERATION IS FACING AN UNPRECEDENTED SITUATION. FASCISM IS ON THE RISE THROUGHOUT EUROPE. IF WE DO NOT DO FOR THEM THEY WILL CERTAINLY DO FOR US. YOU REPRESENT OUR BEST HOPE FOR THE FUTURE AND OUR CLASS - ALL POWER TO YOUR ARM." (TONY HALL, 62 GROUP, OCTOBER RALLY, 1996)

"MY HEART GOES OUT TO ALL OF YOU WHO ARE CARRYING ON THE FIGHT, AND THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE REALLY PUTTING EVERYTHING OF YOUR LIVES INTO THIS STRUGGLE AGAINST THIS CREED OF FASCISM. ALL THE BEST TO EVERYBODY AND MAY THE RALLY BE A GREAT SUCCESS." (CHARLIE GOODMAN, CABLE ST VETERAN, OCTOBER RALLY, 1996)

"THEIR [AFA] SOLUTION TO THIS IS TO PLAN TO FORM A POLITICAL WING TO CONTEST SEATS IN COUNCIL ELECTIONS SO AS TO PROVIDE DISILLUSSIONED LABOUR VOTERS WITH A

'SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE' AND TO STOP THEM VOTING BNP. WHILE THEY ARE DREAMING THEIR PIPE DREAM, NATIONALISTS WILL NOTE THAT SUCH A MOVE WILL EXPOSE THEIR KEY PERSONNEL, MAKING IT VERY EASY FOR SMALL GROUPS OF DEDICATED PATRIOTS TO CONTACT THEM PERSONALLY AND THROUGH INTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS PERSUADE THEM TO LEAVE OUR CANDIDATES, CANVASSERS, AND LEAFLETTERS IN PEACE - WHICH IS ALL WE NEED TO WIN." (NICK GRIFFIN, SPEARHEAD, 1997)

"THE POLICE SET THEIR DOGS ON THE AFA CREW, EXPECTING THEM TO MOVE, BUT THE AFA HUNKERED DOWN: BITTEN BUT NOT SHY. THERE WAS SOMETHING HOMO-EROTIC BUT WEIRDLY IMPRESSIVE IN THIS ACCEPTANCE OF PAIN." (JOHN SWEENEY, THE OBSERVER, 1997)

"I NOTE THAT YOUR ORGANISATION BELIEVES IT IS NECESSARY TO ROUTINELY BREAK THE LAW IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVE IN OPPOSING FASCISM. MY VIEW, AND THAT OF THE LABOUR PARTY, IS THAT WE SHOULD STAY WITHIN THE LAW. THE CAMDEN IRISH CENTRE APPEARS TO BE WELL WITHIN ITS RIGHTS IN REFUSING TO PERMIT YOUR ORGANISATION TO HOLD MEETINGS AT THE CENTRE." (RICHARD ARTHUR, LEADER OF CAMDEN'S LABOUR COUNCIL, 1997)

"ON SUNDAY AFA WILL HOLD ITS RALLY WHERE NEWCOMERS CAN READ ITS PAMPHLETS BOASTING OF 12 YEARS OF BOMBINGS, DISORDER AND 'HOSPITALISING' OPPONENTS." (DANIEL FOGGO, MAIL ON SUNDAY, 1997)

"HAVING BEEN THE TARGET OF A NAKEDLY SECTARIAN ATTACK CARRIED OUT BY LOYALIST BIGOTS, IT MAKES ME PROUD TO SEE THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE PREPARED TO STAND UP AND DEMAND AN END TO SUCH COWARDLY ATTACKS. TO THOSE WHO OPPOSE RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AND INDEED ALL FORMS OF BIGOTRY SHOULD SUPPORT THE AIMS OF THE CELTIC FANS AGAINST FASCISM CAMPAIGN." (SEAN O'CONNOR, 1998)

REVIEWS

"Even so, it [Waterloo] was still a major victory for AFA not least because it finally substantiated its claim to the radical anti-fascist tradition."

ANTI-FASCISM IN BRITAIN

NIGEL COPSEY

Macmillan Press. ISBN 0-333-69636-0

Like a breath of fresh air, at last a major work on anti-fascism that acknowledges AFA's pivotal role in the anti-fascist struggle. After years of being written out of history Nigel Copsey has produced an important book that takes an objective view on events. Although written by an academic, and the cost of nearly £50 will presumably restrict its sales to libraries and colleges, the fact that a comprehensive reference book on anti-fascism presents AFA as a key player cannot be underestimated. At last there is research material available that isn't discredited by a narrow sectarian approach.

Although Copsey is no supporter of AFA, he does not appear partisan to any other particular group either. He is even prepared to question Searchlight's motives, referring to an alleged fascist plot to bomb the Notting Hill Carnival in 1981, he writes: "there are doubts as to whether such a plot actually existed as no prosecution was ever brought. One commentator has even speculated that the plot was deliberately fabricated by Searchlight."

The book covers the period from the 1920s onwards, and quite rightly points out that the first anti-fascists in Britain came from the militant Left in response to the murderous anti-working class activities of Mussolini's Blackshirts in Italy. But it is the last chapter, 'Fighting Fascism in the 80s and 90s', that is of most interest to AFA. The fact that there are 35 references to Fighting Talk, which he describes as an "uncompromising magazine", means that AFA's analysis is given due attention.

AFA is credited for many successful activities ("BNP election meeting... disrupted by AFA militants", "...successfully besieged a local public house favoured by BNP activists", etc.), although most of the references refer to events in London and ignore achievements in the rest of the country. Just as importantly AFA's criticisms of other anti-fascist groups' strategies are presented, providing a crucial service for anti-fascists. For example, "AFA refused to accept the ARA line that only victims of racist attacks could define the anti-fascist struggle as



Waterloo, 12th September 1992: Fascists and police overwhelmed by AFA

all sections of the working class were held to be potential victims of fascism." On the Welling demonstration against the BNP HQ in October 1993 Copsey explains "AFA held that the proposed march served little purpose as there had already been 6 marches against the BNP's headquarters and 27 lobbies of the local council to no effect." He also covers the subsequent World in Action programme which tried to set up AFA, labelling the organisation 'paramilitary' and responsible for the violence at Welling (despite not being there!). Throughout the chapter all the various organisations (ANL, ARA, YRE, CARF, Searchlight, etc.) are examined, but AFA is clearly seen as being something different, and effective.

One of Copsey's main criticisms of AFA relates to east London in the early 90s. Although he mentions a lot of the work AFA did (Weavers Field, Brick Lane, Unity Carnival, National Demonstration Against Racist Attacks) he doesn't pick up on the key point that AFA learnt from this period, culminating in the BNP election victory on the Isle Of Dogs. No amount of anti-fascist activity would have altered the outcome of the election - only a political/electoral alternative that

proposed a better solution than the BNP's to the genuine concerns that people had could have achieved that. Anti-fascism had reached a dead end. Copsey does mention the Filling The Vacuum strategy, and describes the ANL's campaign on the Isle of Dogs as "extremely destructive", but comments in his conclusion suggest he hasn't grasped the significance of AFA's political development since then. He states, "although anti-fascist militancy can undoubtedly disable the street operations of fascist groups, a problem obviously arises when adversaries change tactics and adopt campaigning methods that avoid the possibility of confrontation." An astute observation, but one that AFA, uniquely, has been acting on since 1995.

There are one or two factual inaccuracies, but overall 'Anti-Fascism in Britain' is a significant achievement. The fact that Copsey disagrees with AFA, but still places AFA at the heart of the struggle, avoids accusations of political bias and makes the book even more worthwhile. This honest approach is probably the reason why you won't have read a review of this book in certain rival publications!

DAN MARDEN

LEVELLING THE SCORE



THE GREEN ALTERNATIVE An Interview with Celtic Fans Against Fascism

Fighting Talk: Despite 7 years of work by Celtic Fans Against Fascism (CFAF), a recent survey claimed Celtic fans were the third most racist in Britain. What is your reaction to this?

CFAF: We are as confused as anyone else about the findings of this 'survey' by the Sir Norman Chester Institute at Leicester University. The survey's questions centred upon whether fans at various clubs had heard racist abuse in the last season. There was no explanation as to whether they heard this racist abuse from among their own fans or from opposition fans.

Whilst there's always the possibility that the odd individual at Celtic might say or shout something abusive, I can say with some confidence that even that sort of thing meets with a heavy rebuke from the vast majority of our fans. We have been involved in this kind of work for many years now at Celtic and there's no bullshit involved when I tell you that our fans just won't stand for the kind of racist nonsense that goes on at other clubs.

What was most interesting about that 'survey' were the teams who didn't even make it into the top ten of racist clubs. Newcastle and Leeds fans are the worst fans for racist abuse among teams in the English premiership, yet they appeared well below us in this 'racist league'. Surely that couldn't be something to do with the fact that it is Newcastle and Leeds fans who are the guiding lights among the leadership of the Football Supporters Association (FSA)? Or that the liberal anti-racist campaign 'Show Racism The Red Card' is run by Newcastle fans?

The 'survey' is bent. That is about the nicest thing that I can say about it. I didn't see any academics conducting surveys at Celtic Park last season – so which 'Celtic fans' did they talk to? It certainly wasn't Celtic Fans Against Fascism.

FT: The media have suggested Ian Wright was the victim of racist abuse during his time at the club. Is there any truth in this?

CFAF: Total rubbish that doesn't even warrant an answer. Ask Ian Wright – he will tell you himself that this is bullshit. This is mischievous English media speculation just because a black player was offloaded by the club after he failed to do the job that he was signed for. So is every black player who doesn't make the grade in professional football a victim of a racist conspiracy? Ian Wright left Celtic because he was shite. He came up to us thinking that he was on an easy ride towards his retirement, when what we actually needed was a replacement striker for the injured Henrik Larsson who could inspire those around him. Despite our initial enthusiasm

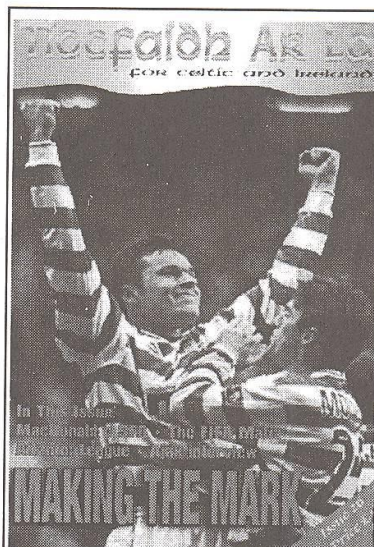
for Celtic's signing of Ian, things didn't work out the way we expected. Wrighty at his peak would have been a tremendous asset for Celtic. Unfortunately, he came to us too late in his career. Accusations of racism from our fans towards Ian Wright are total rubbish.

FT: The level of racist/sectarian violence against Celtic supporters has been well documented in previous issues of FT. Given that the club set up the well publicised Bhoys Against Bigotry why did you feel it necessary to launch the Campaign Against Sectarian Attacks?

CFAF: We launched CASA precisely because it was clear to us that the club's own campaign, Bhoys Against Bigotry (BAB), was not about tackling bigotry and sectarianism but was formed purely and simply to control our own supporters. Its focus on our own fans was particularly inappropriate when you consider that, with BAB in existence, we had one young lad murdered and another slashed in sectarian attacks, which happened close to Celtic Park. Unforgivable was the fact that the club, despite courting press publicity for BAB, point blank refused to make a public comment on the murder of Mark Scott or the maiming of Irish student, Sean O'Connor. They said that these incidents were nothing to do with Celtic and that it was a police matter, nothing more. Faced with that kind of head-in-the-sand attitude from the club we felt compelled to speak out against sectarian attacks and sectarian murders. That is why we formed the Campaign Against Sectarian Attacks.

FT: Since the MacPherson Report a lot has been written and said about racist attacks. Do you think the murder of 3 young Celtic fans in the last 4 years has been accepted as further evidence of racial violence or simply filed away under 'football'?

CFAF: The deaths of our fans have certainly not been cited as further evidence of racial violence at any level. This is despite the fact that most racially motivated violence in the Glasgow area is actually of a sectarian and anti-Irish nature. There was a greater noise made in left-wing circles, and in the Scottish press, over the murder of an Asian restaurant worker in Lanarkshire last year than there was over the murders of three of our fans. There have been two 'officially recognised' racist murders (i.e. black people being murdered) in Scotland in the last 15 years. There have been 3 Celtic fans murdered in the last 4 years. I will leave it for your readers to make up their own minds as to why certain racial incidents get more publicity than others?



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FOOTBALL

I have deep sympathy with the family of the murdered Asian man and I believe that there should be some kind of unity around such racial incidents. It would appear, however, that the Left only see the issue of racism and fascism as affecting people of colour. The Irish have been written out of Britain's history of racial violence and it appears to be because they are white. I am for the development of a strategy to combat racist attacks and racial violence – but any strategy must include ALL victims of racism. You can't possibly hope to lead a progressive movement against racist attacks if you start off by racialising the campaign and prioritising victims according to skin colour. That has to be counter-productive.

FT: In the last issue of FT, St Pauli supporters explained that their close involvement in the running of the club meant that there was very little division between the club's official position on anti-fascism and that of the militants on the terraces. What is the relationship between Celtic and CFAF/CASA?

CFAF: On the surface at Celtic it often appears that the club takes a strong position and that the fans are totally in accord with the club. However, Celtic is one of the biggest football clubs in Britain and they run a massive publicity machine that for the last five years at least has been coat-tailing the activities of their most progressive fans and, at times, the club has stolen the thunder of those Celtic fans who have actually been responsible for implementing an anti-racist/anti-fascist strategy. When Fergus McCann was Chief Executive he had working for him full time at the club two former fanzine editors from 'Not The View' and 'Once A Tim'. The latest addition to the club's absorption of fanzine editors into the club structures is the editor/proprietor of The Bhoyszone fanzine who has sold the jerseys and accepted a £30,000 per year job as the club's IT Consultant and contributor along with his other two radical cronies to the Fanscene (geddit?) section of the club's own official weekly magazine, The Celtic View. It is our view that, under present circumstances at Celtic, any so-called 'fanzine radicals' who takes a job at the club under the new regime, or previously under McCann's regime, by doing so have effectively sold out any rights they had to talk on behalf of ordinary supporters. Once on board at the club they have shown their true colours, attacking the most progressive elements among our supporters. They have advised the club in forming fake organisations like 'Bhoys Against Bigotry' - established by McCann almost exclusively to attack those fans who are

supporters of Irish Republicanism and the TAL fanzine, in particular. Their latest invention 'Nil By Mouth' is an organisation that has suddenly appeared from within the club and is being promoted by the former fanzine men. This organisation is clearly being set up by elements at the club who are opposed to the work being carried out by the Campaign Against Sectarian Attacks which CFAF formed two and a half years ago. Last year our new Chief Executive, Allan MacDonald, made some complimentary noises in our direction. Since then, however, his minions at the club (who are very strongly opposed to our approach) have launched yet another 'anti-bigotry' initiative that reeks of spoiling tactics. All I can say is that I have never seen a business organisation like a football club throw so much money at what are essentially political campaigns and organisations in order to offset the political influence of a section of its own fans. Not a single club in England that has had major problems with racists and fascists over the years has spent the kind of money to rid its club of fascists as Celtic appear to be prepared to spend on getting rid of its anti-fascist supporters. Don't anyone be fooled that Celtic is a united and politically progressive club from top to bottom. The fans are the people who give Celtic that kind of reputation – nobody else. The difference between our relationship with the hierarchy of our club and St Pauli's relationship with the hierarchy of theirs is easily summed up. They have a relationship – we don't.

FT: When Leeds fans joined forces with Rangers fascists to attack Celtic supporters and Irish pubs at the pre-season friendly in Glasgow, the Scottish papers covered the story in some detail. In contrast there was a deathly silence from the official anti-racist football projects, in particular Leeds United Against Racism. Surely it is inconsistent for these bodies to condemn the anti-Asian chants of Leeds fans at Leicester but say nothing about the anti-Irish attacks in Glasgow?

CFAF: Yes, you are right. It is extremely inconsistent for those bodies to condemn one kind of racism but not another kind. Just like they choose which victims of race attacks are more media friendly than others. As you say, it's inconsistent, but it's hardly surprising, is it? It is our opinion at CFAF that the official anti-racist football projects, including Leeds United Against Racism, are deeply flawed at best and at worst are completely counter-productive in terms of what they originally claimed they were set up to achieve. It is undeniable

that they have certainly increased their own profiles in terms of gaining prestige and money from both national and local government. The more important point is what have these projects actually achieved? At Leeds and Newcastle, the two clubs from where the majority of the present leadership of the Football Supporters Association is drawn, you would have to look at the situation on the ground over the last couple of seasons and say that things have actually got worse. Leeds and Newcastle fans are noted for their racism when they travel away from home. Whether that is down to the existence of the FSA, Show Racism The Red Card and Leeds United Against Racism is another matter, but we can say quite clearly that these organisations have had no discernable effect upon those supporters that they were intended to impact upon. The only people that appear to give them credit are other middle class types who are also on the government's payroll. A month after Barry Hearn, the owner of Leyton Orient, made remarks about asylum seekers not being welcome in Britain, we had Piara Power, spokesperson of the Kick It Out Campaign, chair a meeting on social exclusion at Celtic Park. I'd have thought that Piara Power has enough to do at Leyton Orient with regard to his own Chairman's racism than to be jetting around the country to lecture other fans – who have successfully campaigned against racism and sectarianism at their club – about racism and social exclusion. This latching onto the Celtic experience by those very lefties who refuse to speak our name publicly is something that we are watching closely. It won't go unchallenged either. Are they not content with the mess that they have made of their own clubs that they now have to come to Celtic in order to fuck up our club as well?

FT: The work done over the years by CFAF, CASA and the TAL fanzine has meant that Celtic supporters have established an anti-fascist reputation. Has this made any difference with regards to the reaction of other supporters, especially in Europe?

CFAF: Yes, it has made a difference to the reaction of other supporters. In Scotland and England it has meant that the support of most other clubs are very hostile towards us. Whenever we have a friendly match in England, invariably we get fascists from across the regional area of our opponents turning out to have a go at our fans. This happened when we played Birmingham City a few years ago with fascists fighting alongside Birmingham's Zulus – which has a

sizeable black contingent - just so that they could get in on what they expected to be an easy turnover of Celtic. In the end it didn't quite work out the way the fash planned it and it was them and the Blues mob who ended up getting run all over the place. The exceptions to this would have to be Liverpool where a bond has formed between both sets of supporters since the Hillsborough disaster. It goes back further to Kenny Dalglish playing for both teams but Hillsborough had a big effect upon all football fans and the links between Celtic and Liverpool fans were strengthened after Celtic played the first game - a benefit match for the victims - against the Liverpool team after the disaster. Now when Celtic go to Liverpool, or when they come to us, both sets of fans mix together and drink together. The same can also be said for Manchester United and to a lesser extent Arsenal, both clubs where we have played a lot of testimonial games over the years. We are hoping that the coming pre-season friendly against West Ham at Celtic Park will be another friendly occasion but we will be prepared for all eventualities.

In Europe we have attracted the same kind of love-hate relationship with the fans of other clubs. When we played against Hamburg SV in Europe we had fascists from all over northern Germany come to Hamburg in order to fight against Celtic and the St Pauli fans, who were providing our supporters with most of the hospitality while they were in Hamburg. It was the same when Celtic played against Croatia Zagreb. Fascist boneheads were out in force and were extremely hostile towards our fans. Obviously the

fascist communication networks are in good working order. However, we have made many friends in Europe over the years and we continue to make anti-fascist contacts wherever we go. Those fans at the clubs that we would call our friends are St Pauli, Ajax, Breda, Bordeaux, Juventus and Athletic Bilbao. There are others but I'd say that these seem to be the most solid. As well as that we also have contact with Celtic fans from all over the world: in north America and Canada where we have strong support, Australia and New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Malta... anywhere in fact that contains an Irish or Scottish community you will invariably find supporters of Celtic.

FT: The government's Football Task Force and the officially backed Kick It Out campaign have endorsed the work of anti-racist groups at clubs like Newcastle, Leeds, Sheffield United and Charlton. Why do you think the work being done at Celtic is ignored and what is your view on the work of these other campaigns?

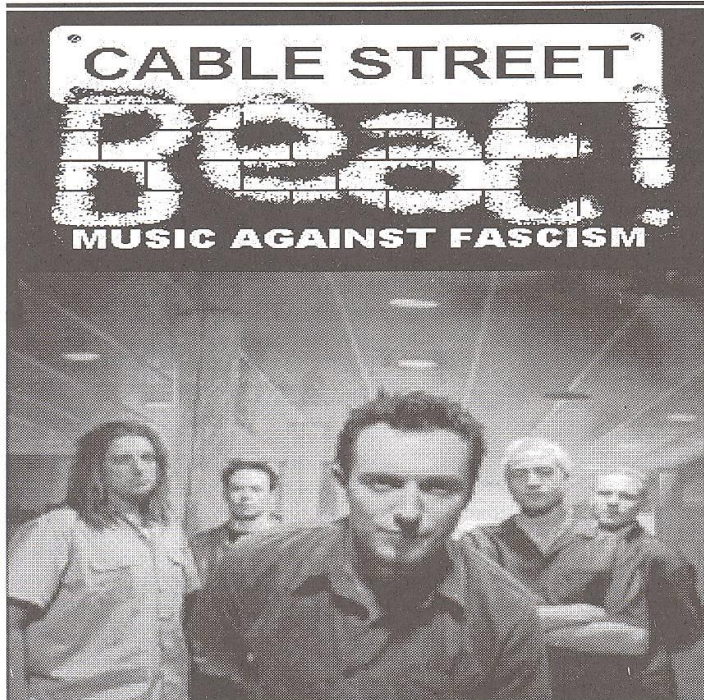
CFAF: Basically, if they want to use these liberal campaigns with their meaningless slogans at their clubs then that is up to them. We draw the line when these Lefties come sticking their noses into our club and our campaigns. They have never given AFA, CFAF, CASA, TAL, etc. any credit for any of our achievements over the years. In fact they spend quite a lot of time slagging us off us to anyone who will listen to them. I suppose it's a backhanded compliment that they are hovering around Celtic. However, I tend to go with the saying that "if they don't

control it they'll destroy it" and that is what I think they are trying to do. In order to cover up for the deficiencies of their own campaigns they have to get Celtic to adopt their organisational models and destroy the existing fan-based initiatives already here. They have the ear of some elements of the club hierarchy who have been trying to get rid of us for years now without success. Anyone who thinks that is paranoia on our part should ask themselves why it is that Celtic PLC have over the last few years virtually devoted a section of their Public Relations Department to undermining, in the press and among the official supporters bodies, every initiative that we undertake? Why do the club wheel out lefties, MSP's and even the occasional media personality in order to try to lay claim to some of our radical and innovative ideas.

We had the ridiculous scenario, early last season, of the media's little revolutionary darling, Tommy Sheridan, actually trying to reinvent himself as a Celtic supporter and a victim of sectarianism in order to ingratiate himself with our supporters on the club's behalf. Obviously the stakes must be high for such people to believe that it is worth their while to have a go at those who have been the mainstay of anti-racism and anti-fascism at Celtic.

There's a lot of money around football clubs and the middle class, liberal, anti-racist element can always sniff out where the cash might be. We are seen as an obstacle to them achieving their money and jobs. That's why they have to write us out of the picture by ignoring and then attacking the nature of the work that we do.





PITCHSHIFTER

Pitchshifter have made their reputation as a powerful live band, welding together the sounds of punk rock guitars with an industrial and dance-influenced backbeat. The Notts based outfit signed to the Earache label (home of Napalm Death among others) in 1992 and since then have gone on to spread their music and message to a wider audience across Britain and the USA with some blistering shows supporting the likes of Fugazi and Static X. Often described as an industrial band in the early days and sometimes compared to the likes of Ministry and Godflesh, this only explains part of their sound which has evolved into something much more varied and experimental. The album www.pitchshifter.com captured their sound perfectly at the time and featured some of their most accessible work to date in tracks like **Genius** and **Please Sir**. They recently sold out the 2000 capacity Astoria in London where AFA ran a successful stall and singer J.S. Clayden gave us a mention from the stage.

Never having been a NME-style band, Pitchshifter have picked up plenty of coverage from the British metal press with magazines like Kerrang and Metal Hammer championing them over the

last few years, and while these magazines have moved away from the spandex and shaggy perms of yesteryear that many of us might remember (or even have worn in the case of one London AFA activist), the band might not seem the most obvious choice for a feature in *Fighting Talk*. But alongside the musical reputation, Pitchshifter have attracted attention (some of it unwanted) for their political convictions, a factor that might mark them out from much of the rest of the British rock scene. One particular incident in Eastbourne last year particularly interested us.

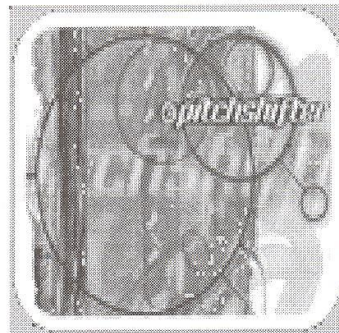
Singer JS Clayden explains to Fighting Talk:

Basically we do a song called **Un-United Kingdom**. It's a very tongue in cheek song a la **God Save the Queen** by the Pistols. The lyrics mutilate the idea of Bronte and Keats' England, where it's all 'summer picnics and boating' and put the country into OUR perspective as poor kids growing up on shitty housing estates: "high rise carparks? ash tray dirt! we could still learn a thing or two from Guy Fawkes!". So at Eastbourne I announced the tune and said that although I was from England and

proud of some of the country's achievements (art, literature, music, sport, technologies, etc.) there were a lot of things that I wasn't proud of about my country (selling of arms, continual racism, domination over the years and the re-writing of history, etc.). Some 'patriot' in the crowd obviously took offence to this and ran up behind me with all the other kids, looking like he was gonna stage dive. But he didn't stage dive, he punched me in the side of the head as hard as he could from behind. I didn't see him or feel it until I hit the floor. God save the queen. England, love it or leave it. That guy was a PERFECT example of what the song is about; needless pointless mindless bigotry.

Not that this put the band off:

Well he didn't kill me and he didn't break anything and I finished the show and the tour and I still played that goddamn tune every night and then we decided to make it into the lead track on our EP just to REALLY piss off anyone we missed.



In an interview with Kerrang last year, Clayden also added:

There's this romantic idea of England that we all drink tea and love the Queen and think Tony Blair's great - and it's all bollocks. My England was miners' strikes and housing estates and growing up in hard times. People say "you're just preaching to the converted and you're not really touching on anything" but obviously we are or I wouldn't be getting punched...

FT: You've been labelled a political band by many people. Why do you think it's important to address political issues in your lyrics and what's your political outlook?

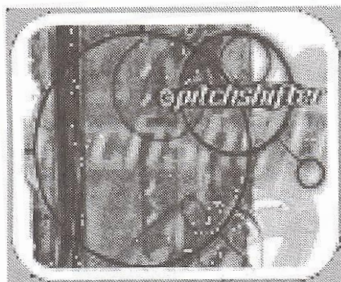
Well we see it this way. We are afforded the opportunity to actually reach people by being in a band. Now

we could use this opportunity to stand on stage like a lot of other bands and grab our nuts and tell everyone how 'fly' we are . . . or we can use the time to try and address a few of the things that we think about and want to impart to others.

We are not totally compliant with any political party or system. Our political beliefs are personal and relevant to each of us. There are a few key points that we all agree on: One, we are all vegetarian. Two, we don't believe that anyone should be treated any differently because of the colour of their skin. It's the year 2000 and still the monster of racism drags its way into the next century. Three, we work hard and we pay taxes. Those taxes then get spent on arms that get sold to other countries so they can brutalise and dominate smaller countries. We don't want to pay for that. We want our money to be spent on HELPING the countries that need it, not raping them and leaving them for dead.

FT: *You've brought up the subject of racism and fascism in the lyrics to several songs; how do you think racism and fascism can be opposed?*

We believe that education is the key. People are afraid and suspicious of things they don't understand. To educate and to demystify the lifestyles and cultures of others races will help us to tolerate them, and they us. There needs to be a lot more toleration if we are to make it into the year 3000!!



FT: *Has your working class background influenced your politics?*

Well, when you have no money, and your parents have no money, and none of your friends have any money you tend to see life a little differently to the brain dead corpses in the House of Lords gorging on foie gras and gargling port. You realise that there is a new minority. Not of race or colour or sexual



orientation. It's a minority of cash. You don't have any cash and you are scum. That's the sad fact in this country. Money buys freedom. Without it you are a puppet to be herded around with the rest of the great unwashed. To that effect you see how the crumbling lunacy of the country's political infrastructure is totally biased towards the rich and it makes you resent it. It makes you want to shout about it, and it makes you want to get up off your arse and try and do something, ANYTHING, to get by and to try and make a difference. I am sure if we were all silver spoon cases since birth then we wouldn't have had the opportunity to experience a few of life's delights like hunger and cold and we wouldn't be so interested in the way things work and how it's possible to change them.

As one of the few rock bands of their type around in Britain who've got a high enough public profile to influence large numbers of young fans, it's encouraging to see that they're dedicated to using it to put forward positive political ideas, particularly when you look at the nihilistic teenage self-obsession of bands like Slipknot who are currently pulling in the punters elsewhere. Judging by the eagerness of their (surprisingly young) fans at the Astoria gig in picking up AFA literature and other material from the MayDay stall, there's plenty of appetite for radical ideas and Pitchshifter should be applauded for their stance.

AFA supporters would undoubtedly

take issue with a purely educational approach to defeating racism and fascism; as we've argued in previous editions, the accepted practices of anti-racism, including education, don't seem to have halted the tide of racial incidents in Britain nor the spread of fascist ideas - the BNP recently picking up some 70,000 votes across London in the GLA elections. As the band have acknowledged elsewhere, somewhere along the line you actually have to start addressing the issues which make people vote for fascist parties, rather than just denouncing those that do.

Education is clearly part of that process, in that it makes people more aware of what they need, but so too is taking a stand to represent the interests of those who have no political voice rather than letting the BNP be the only ones doing it. As the band add, "Fascist parties prey on the specific needs of those who are easiest targets to recruit... People don't understand just exactly what the BNP are peddling and how damaging it is in the long run."

Pitchshifter's new album **Deviant** is available on MCA records, featuring a cover painting by Gee V of Crass fame and the band tour Britain in October when AFA hopes to hook up with them again.

The band's excellent website is also well worth a look at <http://www.pitchshifter.com>. Cheers to Stuart and Jon for their time.

MUSIC

The Beat Goes On

A couple of issues have led to some interesting arguments in the music press over the last few months. First there was the entry of the Far Right Freedom Party into government in Austria. This led some to cancel gigs in protest, such as Lou Reed - who claimed that the people of Austria were free to elect parties like the Freedom Party "but that didn't mean other people had to go near them" - while others argued that they should go there and take the opportunity to promote anti-fascism. A letter in the NME advocated "intelligent bands should go to Austria, put on some fuck-off-fascism, riot-inciting, swastika-burning show", a view which was endorsed by Atari Teenage Riot's Alec Empire when he said, "I'm not boycotting it, it's a reason for us to go there. Fuck it."

It seems clear to us that it is better for anti-fascist bands to go there with a message than just to walk away, or better still to give money raised from the gigs to anti-fascist groups. Even Bush's Gavin Rossdale, a band not noted for any radical views, made an anti-fascist statement on stage when they played there recently.

An interview with Mark Morriss of The Bluetones in the NME provoked some heated debate when he said, "You see people who've worked hard all their lives suffering because the nation has come so - as they see it - choked with, um, y'know, people from Europe and Africa and Asia ... we're talking about a sense of Englishness that's been lost." This was met with howls of protest and accusations of racism, despite Morriss going to great lengths to stress that he was not a racist. Many of the resulting letters took the liberal knee-jerk response that anyone talking about race in an honest fashion - and who wasn't part of the race relations industry - had to be a racist, while other letters apparently supported Morriss's alleged "racist" views.

What seems to have got lost along the way is the issue of a white working class abandoned and betrayed and how people's perceptions of unfairness in the way they are treated has created the opportunity for the Far Right to grow. If this can't be discussed in public without screams of derision then the only people to

profit will be the fascists who are quite happy to address these concerns in their own way.

album review



ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION
COMMUNITY MUSIC

ADF's third album is probably their most musically diverse yet, but lacks none of the punch of their previous efforts. Opening track and single, **The Real Great Britain** - an attack on what the band call the Blair Kitsch Project and the myth of "Cool Britannia" - strikes a familiar tone to tracks on **Rafi's Revenge**, with its trademark scuttling breakbeats and buzzsaw guitar charge. Lyrically it hits home too, with an attack on New Labour's obsession with style over substance: *Not enough schools/Not enough homes/Just "Phoney Care" in his millennium dome/More prime cuts than beef on the bone/And there's still too many questions you're not answering Tone.*

Probably the most immediate tracks after this are the lush and poppy **New Way New Life**, the ska-tinged **Crash** which sounds in parts like The Specials' Ghost Town relocated to Brick Lane, and the slow-building **Taa Deem** which reworks a Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan tune into something that comes on like a pogging rhino. Elsewhere the pace is maintained with dance-based tracks which wouldn't seem out of place on albums by more recognised floor-fillers such as Fatboy Slim or Bentley Rhythm Ace, while there are calmer moments too on tracks like **Committed to Life** and **Scaling New Heights** which close the album.

Following the interview with the band in the last Fighting Talk, AFA supporters might be interested to hear what the band have to say from a political perspective and may not be surprised to hear that the songs probably come across better than the band in person when they are forced

to pick apart their ideas in print. Many tracks attack the ever-growing gap between the rich and poor, while **Officer XX** takes a broadside at the old bill and the Macpherson report: *MI5 them building up Combat 18/ Nazi Turnouts and the BNP inbetween/Running drugs for money for the loyalists/Macpherson how come you missed the whole a this ?*

Fair enough, and sentiments that most FT readers would agree with, but there is a slight irony that in the sleeve notes they give a thank you to Searchlight who along with MI5 were the main source of disinformation on C18, in fact the first to big up (as it were) Charlie S and his hopeless henchmen.

Perhaps the weak link in an album that otherwise - lyrically and musically - hits most of the right buttons is the track **Colour Line** which quotes anti-racist activist A.Sivanandan's words over a lolling, low-key backing: *Today, the colour line is the power line, is the poverty line/ Black is not just the colour of our skins/ It's the colour of our politics.*

While it's hard to argue that on a global scale the countries most exploited by capitalism are populated by those with a black skin, try telling the dispossessed and politically unrepresented white working classes on estates all round Britain - and the rest of the West - that it's colour and not class that defines *the poverty and power line* and you'll be met with a frosty reception.

Obviously ADF's politics are not just a question of race, but to choose a soundbite that simplistically racialises an issue that is all to do with class hardly does the rest of the album's politics a service, or in fact Sivanandan himself, who has gone on record as suggesting that class interacts with race in examples such as the Ricky Reel and Stephen Lawrence cases to create a distinction between "the racism that discriminates and the racism that kills". Not just a question of black then...

So, all in all, ADF still pack a powerful punch on this album and should extend their reach to an ever wider audience which can only be a good thing. **Community Music** is available on London Records now.

★ anti-fascist history ★ anti-fascist history ★ anti-fascist history ★

“For the Volk”

Afrikaner supremacy, fascism and anti-fascism in inter-war South Africa

Throughout the 1930's and 40's the Union of South Africa (it didn't become a republic until 1960), although a dominion of the British Empire, was governed by a series of increasingly right-wing administrations whose mandate and constituency was made up largely of a pool of reaction which developed from resentment towards the British into an open fascist movement with vocal support for the Third Reich. It was a movement that permeated all areas of white society, including the highest levels of government.

Around half of the white population were Afrikaners - descendants of Dutch settlers who reached their adopted homeland via the 'Great Trek' of the 1830's. They had fought and lost to the British in the Boer War (1899-1901) which if not independence, gave rise to an Afrikaner nationalism so potent that it was to become a prime breeding ground for fascist and National Socialist ideas in the 1930's. Although with the outbreak of war in 1939 the South African government backed the allies, many of its politicians felt their real loyalty to Hitler not Churchill. Many Afrikaner Nationalists backed Hitler as they saw a victory for him to mean the destruction of the British Empire, and also they tended to hold a great affinity with the German people believing they came from the same 'blood stock'.

The two major right-wing parties during these years were both homes to strong Afrikaner supremacist and National Socialist schools of thought and organisation. The United Party (UP), which was born out of the original National Party (formed 1915), was the result of a fusion between the followers of General J.B.M. Hertzog (founder of the NP) and General Jan Smuts. The UP, which came about primarily to try to alleviate the worst excesses of the Depression on the country's economy, came to power in 1934. However, many Afrikaners saw the UP as a sop to British imperialism and a split under Dr. Daniel F. Malan led to the founding of the Purified National Party. Malan was a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church who saw

Afrikaners as God's chosen people with a strong *volkish* character in a mirror image to Hitler's view of the Germans. This idea of the *volk* was central to Afrikaner Nationalism and helped give rise to several openly fascist groups whose membership often overlapped with that of the UP and NP.

THE BROEDERBOND

The first of these to be formed was the Broederbond (BB), meaning 'Association of Brothers', in 1918. It's



Dr.D.F. Malan - leader of the white supremacist National Party in the 30's

stated aim was merely to promote the Afrikaner culture and language but by 1924 its leadership decided to go underground in order to spread the Afrikaner supremacist message through all society's institutions by stealth. It remained an elitist organisation with membership carefully vetted - in 1944 its membership was estimated at only 2,600. However the BB's influence on society was to hold the balance of power in the country. Members included top clergymen, lawyers and 60 MP's, both of the UP and NP. Rather like the Freemasons its *modus operandi* was to ensure its members were placed in key positions of power to utilise the 'advancement of the *volk*'. The

BB's internal structure was based on that of the Third Reich, consisting of the *Fuhrerprinzip* ('leadership principle'), gauleiters and cells. In 1934 the Nazis had sent a delegate, under the pretence of attending an educational conference, to consult with BB leaders (including Malan). Among the items on the agenda was a plan in which the BB would ensure South Africa's support for Germany in the event of a war.

The BB member was taught to be vigilant against "sickly humanism" - liberalism, tolerance, atheism, communism and significantly Judaism. Importantly the BB had a strong membership in education and schools were subject to increasing swathes of BB propaganda.

Even the more 'moderate' UP had its keen admirers of the Nazis. One figure was Oswald Pirow, Minister of Justice. On a tour of Germany in 1938 he publicly praised Hitler, Goering, Mussolini and Franco. Even Hertzog who was widely seen as the most pro-English of statesmen, supported Hitler in his campaign to have Germany's former African colonies returned to her (they had been confiscated under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles after the Great War). Hertzog admitted National Socialism to suit the "moral and religious outlook" of the Afrikaner, which he dubbed 'Christian Nationalism'.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Due in part to the activities of the BB, the National Party came to adopt anti-semitism as official policy. The 1920's had seen Jews in prominent Party positions, but despite Hertzog's continual reassurances to the Jewish community more and more Afrikaners supported the NP's stance. In 1930 when he had been Minister of the Interior, Malan passed the Immigration Quota Act designed to curb east European Jewish immigration. However, increased Nazi persecution resulted in an influx of German Jewish refugees and the Hertzog administration (albeit reluctantly)

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passed tighter immigration controls in November 1936. This led to the famous *SS Stuttgart* incident that saw the first large scale clashes between fascists and anti-fascists. In an attempt to beat the immigration laws the *Stuttgart* was chartered to quickly bring in 600 German Jewish refugees. This was a prime target for the fascists and provided the first outing of the fascist 'street' outfit - the Greyshirts. When the *Stuttgart* anchored at Cape Town on 27th October 1936, the Greyshirts held a rally led by their leader L.T. Weichardt at the dockside. In the nearby town of Paarl 1000 Greyshirts paraded. This high profile action was joined by the emergence of a further group - the South African Gentile National Socialist Movement, led by Johannes Van Strauss Van Moltke. A Eugene Terre Blanche of his day, Moltke's stated aims were "to destroy Jewish influence in economics, culture, religion and ethics and to re-establish European Aryan control in South Africa."

Initially the mainstream politicians distanced themselves from such 'fringe' groups, but when they saw what mileage they could get out of them, relations, especially those between the NP and the Greyshirts, became cordial. In a letter to the Greyshirt leadership, the Secretary of the NP, F.C. Erasmus stated: "My Party is glad to give sincere appreciation of the useful work done by the Greyshirts in one important aspect, namely drawing the attention of the people to the Jewish problem. This service to the nation deserves recognition." Greyshirt officers began openly joining the NP and during the 1938 election campaign Malan publicly called upon Greyshirt support. After the war the Greyshirts fully merged with the NP, with Weichardt a member of the Senate until the 1960's.

THE OSSEWABRANDWAG

A further Far Right group was the Ossewabrandwag (OB). Formed in 1938 the organisation's name was Afrikaans for 'Oxwagon Guard'; the oxwagon being the mode of transport used by the Afrikaners on the Great Trek. At its peak it reached a membership of 300,000 with strong support from the Army and rail workers and attracted cross party support. The OB strongly resembled Hitler's S.A. With a 'commando' structure and uniformed militia it was fond of Nuremberg style rallies and torchlit processions headed by its leader J.H.J. Van Rensburg. When the UP government

narrowly voted to back the British at the outbreak of war the OB launched its 'anti-imperialist' struggle. Its units engaged in sabotage, including bombings, in an attempt to damage the war effort. For this Rensburg and other OB leaders received jail terms. One such was Johann 'John' Vorster who was later to become a NP Prime Minister.

Even the NP itself tried to reverse the government's support for the war. At a rally calling for a republic and an immediate withdrawal from the war, 70,000 whites listened as prominent NPer N.J. Van der Merwe called for a new order in South Africa based on "Christian Nationalism and the maintenance of white civilisation" and he claimed that the United Party was acting under a "British-Jewish influence."

ANTI-FASCIST OPPOSITION

As with the rest of the world in the 1930's, the overwhelming opposition to fascism in South Africa came from the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and significantly the Transvaal Council of Non-European Trade Unions. The TCNETU was the first organisation to successfully organise black workers on a mass scale. Formed in 1940 it later became the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) which helped lead the anti-apartheid struggle.

The anti-fascist movement fell into two camps: the small, white, Labour Party formed the League Against Fascism and War in March 1934. It was a pacifist alliance of the Labour Party and moderate white Trades Unionists with white intellectuals and liberals. Communists had tried to radicalise it without success. Militant CPSAers and Trade Unionists formed the Anti-Fascist League and committed the organisation's black, Asian and white workers to physical confrontation. Clashes between the AFL and the Greyshirts became common in the Cape Province and Johannesburg. James Madhlope Phillips (who was later a militant of the ANC and a founder of the TCNETU) joined the CPSA in 1940 and remembered that its weekly meetings on the steps of Johannesburg Town Hall were frequently attacked by thugs from the Ossewabrandwag and Greyshirts: "More often than not the fascists retreated with bloody noses and cauliflower ears."

Unsurprisingly the State was not

impartial between fascists and anti-fascists. When the government banned Phillips and Solly Sachs (General Secretary of the militant and vocally anti-fascist Garment Workers Union) from active union work and speaking in public, a mass protest was organised at Johannesburg Town Hall by the GWU. The police, in collusion with the Greyshirts, hid inside the hall while the fascists silently mingled with the crowds. When the police pounced the fascists were given a free reign. Those beaten were nearly all women garment workers.

In 1936, despite the resilience of the AFL, the white leadership of the CPSA could no longer resist calls by moderate labour leaders to form a united People's Front (PF) encompassing the Labour Party, liberals, Trade Unionists and communists against the Right. This move was a disaster for militant anti-fascism as the PF failed to attract militant blacks and Asians. The cross-class policies of the PF were multi-political and were rightly seen by militants as defending the status quo which, of course, was rotten in the eyes of all blacks and Asians. The PF only went as far as to combat fascist propaganda among whites. Even militant whites who clashed with the Greyshirts never linked their struggle with that of black liberation. The PF failed (or avoided) to address the system that was the root cause of fascism. In this respect the gulf between black and white anti-fascists was still huge.



Black worker being arrested during the 1922 Miners Strike

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FIGHTING TALK BACK TALK

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

Dear FT

Although I didn't make the first anti-NF march in Margate I did make the second and I was appalled at the feeble anti-fascist presence (and it is being led by the SWP/ANL). My question to AFA is this: will AFA be at the next NF rally and march in Margate? Will the NF be able to take to the streets again or will they be stopped?

In solidarity

M.M. (Brighton)

FT Reply: An interesting question. The BNP's withdrawal from confrontational street activities has caused confusion for many anti-fascists. They can see the Far Right are gradually gaining support but they can't literally see the opposition. When the NF decided to exploit the 'gap in the market' and organise street demonstrations, all of a sudden the problem was solved. A visible target ... charge! This is essentially a knee-jerk reaction. A lot of changes have taken place since the mid 90s when the fascists last had a street presence. Firstly the State has criminalised militant anti-fascism (see 'New Terror Bill' in In The Area). Secondly, the main fascist threat comes from the non-confrontational BNP and needs to be dealt with politically. And thirdly, with regards to asylum seekers the priority for the anti-fascist movement is to develop and promote a strategy that isn't seen as being anti-working class. AFA has argued that there are two groups of people with rights and needs in the asylum issue, and if the NF can portray themselves as the defenders of the 'host' community, does that put anti-NF demonstrators in the position of being

seen as anti-working class? Certainly many people in Margate see it that way. Anti-fascists who have demonstrated in Margate, and Dover beforehand, have made life difficult for the NF. Good. But have they convinced the locals that they're on their side as well? These demonstrations must be part of a wider strategy, outlined above, which needs to be put in place first. Not easy, maybe, but this is the priority for AFA. Having said that, if the NF think they can draw any comfort from this, let no one be mistaken - AFA is monitoring the situation very closely.

THE SHANDY MAN

Greetings.

You sent me a copy of the latest Fighting Talk plus an information pack (Levelling The Score). Although very interesting and laudable stuff, was there any particular reason why it was sent? After all, whilst I am as anti-racist and anti-fascist as the next man, I have no interest in supporting any organisation which uses violence as a tool. It is totally unacceptable to me because it goes against every principle I have.

Dougie Brimson

FT Reply: The reason AFA sent the Levelling The Score info pack to Dougie Brimson, an author and so-called expert on football hooligans, was because in the past he has preferred to invent stories about AFA. In line with AFA's policy of briefing journalists, and other interested parties, with up to date information and facts, it was hoped the info pack would be useful. Obviously not. And as for violence being against "every principle I have" - presumably that is every principle except making money out of it!

DRINK RELATED CRIMES

Dear FT

The anticipated trouble at Euro 2000 has produced the usual rhetoric from the Press. However the gentrification of the game has added some new angles. "It is certainly true that you can be a football fan without being a thug," wrote Mirror columnist Quentin Letts, "will it ever be possible for our young men to enjoy a glass of wine instead of too many beers?" Letts waxes lyrical of his dream that one day a glass of Muscadet will replace overpriced warm lager at football grounds - a wish for social engineering from a man who claims national service would solve the problem.

In contrast to the sensationalism and bigotry of most reports, an article by Charlie Whelan in the Guardian, was refreshingly honest. Under a headline "Riot? What riot?" he fairly gets stuck in to the British media. At the Portugal game "Jon Sopel for BBC TV news had to file his report. He could have filmed his piece in the main square where everyone was having a party. Instead he found a spot miles away where the backdrop was a line of police vehicles and police horses." Referring to the trouble at the game against Germany he paints a very different picture to the rest of the press. "The police let gangs of Germans into the square. They obligingly tipped off the TV crews that they were going in to arrest some Germans and the rest is history. The incident with the water cannon that the TV reported lasted no more than 10 minutes, while 15,000 England fans enjoying themselves with Germans in the hundreds of bars around the square received no coverage." Surely he couldn't be suggesting it was a set up?

Similar to First World War generals, always miles from the action, he points the finger at some of Britain's finest. "Jeff Powell for the Mail, allegedly writing from Charleroi but probably from his five-star hotel in Spa ... Ian Wooldridge, writing from the safety of a bar in South Africa after a couple of whiskies" gives you an idea of the integrity of the journalism involved. And as for accuracy, "Charles Bremner of The Times told us that 'The battered Charleroi residents were happy to see England fans go home'. I was in Charleroi for seven days and that is simply not true ... Martin Kelner in the Guardian thought it was 'a shame the Belgium riot police were not equipped with real bullets.'" Not bad for a former New Labour spin doctor!

C. Butler



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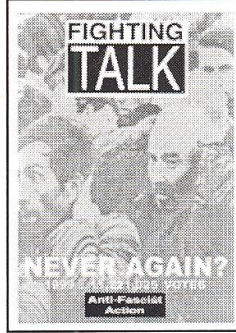
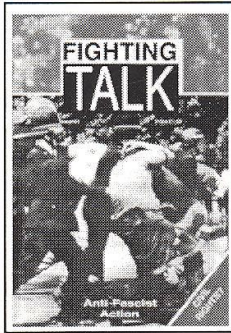
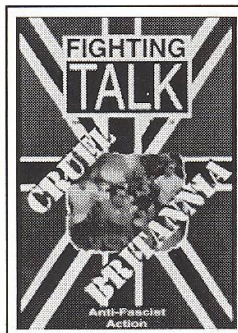
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