FIGHTING TALK

The Battle of Cable Street—
Learning The Lessons

Journal of Anti-Fascist Action (Incorporating Cable Street Beat)
FIGHTING FASCISM IN THE 90s

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first issue of Fighting Talk, the journal of Anti-Fascist Action and of Cable Street Beat. It will carry regular coverage of AFAs activities, and articles which set out our political agenda—which chart the growth of the fascis threat and set out the tasks necessary for the confrontation of that threat.

We make no apologies for the fact that our journal is not aimed at the curiosity of the armchair "intellectual", nor for the fact that on occasion we will highlight the shortcomings of those on the left who purport to share our goals. AFA has spent too long arguing that the growth of the far right across Europe and at home be taken seriously and combated as a necessity, for us to flinch from hammering home the facts as they present themselves to us today.

AFA sets itself two tasks to combat the fascists both physically and ideologically. The work we undertake in both areas will be reflected in the pages of Fighting Talk. AFA's job is to remove the influence of fascist organisations from working class areas (communities, workplaces, trade union, football grounds, schools, etc.) and to create spaces for progressive ideas to gain a foothold. AFA unites a number of progressive working class organisations under its banner in a united front against fascism. Within AFA, different strategies and tactics are argued out, and decisions reached democratically.

Across London, AFA has played its part in "inspiring" local racial attacks to attack and even murder black people, as in the case of Robin Adams and Ovind Ikir in Thamesmead.

The willingness of local councils to support in (Tower Hamlets) and then (in Tower Hamlets) Liberal Democrat-to-oppose popular tactics for their own ends fuels the spiral of racist attacks which pass almost without comment across London today. Groups like the BNP can organise the racist attacks, they have an ideology and a degree of political legitimacy. In East London, at least, AFA has been able to challenge the balance of power. The regular fascist paper sale in Brick Lane has been disrupted, fascist pubs have been picketed, "white" estates long abandoned by the left and sold to those in need, the first steps have been taken to turn the tide away from the fascists, as AFA has demonstrated its ability to provide a political alternative, and meet the physical challenge the fascists offer.

But the fascist threat exists beyond the boundaries of East London. In the next general election the National Front threatens to contest 60 seats, including Tooting, Slough, Birmingham (Edgbaston and Hodge Hill). While targeting more "strategic" constituencies, the BNP also intends to have an impact on the general election. In Edinburgh, BNP leader John Tynagh will stand. Racist attacks are on the increase across Scotland. It is far from a coincidence that the BNP has devoted more resources to its campaigns in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

With the Tories playing the race card in the run-up to European unity in 1992, and the anti-immigrant backlash of the Gulf War and "New World Order", the political climate is more and more favourable to the fascists. Every day black people are attacked in their homes, on the streets, at work, mosques, community centres and synagogues are targeted.

The fascists get away with much of this because there exists no coherent national organisation capable of opposing their growth. AFA sees the forging of such a network of anti-fascist groups as a necessity in the months ahead. Our London work is a step in that direction. As one of its members put it, "We can talk, but it's better to act."

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Published by AFA, subscription £5 for four issues from:
AFA, BM 1754, London
W9 2JX.
The Archivist

LONDON ROUND-UP

South-East London

The main focus of AFA’s work in South-East London has been Thame and Woodford, which attracted nation-wide publicity earlier this year when two black people were stabbed to death within weeks of each other. After the first killing, of 15 year old Rolan Adams, local anger and the desire to do something to fight against racist attacks led to a campaign being set up in the Adams family name. Frequent meetings were held in the area, and initially it was mainly local black youth who came along. They were angry and they wanted action. As people apart from their personal experiences, it emerged that the level of racism, organised and spontaneous, in Thame and Woodford had reached alarming levels. The Personal representatives who attended an early meeting were Andy Apele and I, and he was identified as part of the problem, not part of the solution. All looked set for a militant, action-oriented campaign.

One local pub in particular, The Whistleblower, was identified as a meeting place for the racist and the fascists who inspired them. Immediately after the meeting in question, a posse went down to the pub to let the landlord know the scene and to demand that what was described in the meeting as an unofficial colour bar. It was a successful first step in a campaign against the racist and fascist presence in the pub or to close it down as one AFA speaker put it: the pub should be a facility for everyone in Thame and Woodford, or it would be a facility for no one.

However, before any of this could happen, some of the people from the meeting, including members of the Socialist Workers Party who had made cousing speeches about fighting racism “by any means necessary,” set themselves the task of talking to everyone the pub to close it down at all. They got the answer: unthinkable, and had to stand behind their part of the bar, with their tables between their legs.

And despite the fact that there was no question of violence or disruption—it was a peaceful drink, the first time in a long while that things could have a peaceful drink in the pub—the police very soon appeared and emptied the pub of anti-racists.

AFA IN ACTION

South London: AFA Report

In recent months South London has been the centre of a number of activities in the campaign against the British National Party (BNP) and the “white power” fringe. The BNP has been prevented from entering the borough of Southwark, standing on a “Rights for Whites” platform, and the police have served up the pubs and bars and banned the fascists from using them.

The BNP’s campaign has been targeted at local housing associations and suspended the council’s local housing officer (and suspended Lambeth council’s Rachel Webb who, as we were told, was more concerned with evicting “white residents” for being “German” than with evicting the Nazis, who are considered “white.”

Southwark in one of London’s poorest boroughs and is run by the Labour council on a working-class and left-wing basis. On the estates the housing conditions provide fertile ground for the BNP among discontented white residents. According to the city council, the area is a “dangerous multi-racial slum.”

As well as distributing anti-fascist literature on the estates, AFA helped organise a rally on the estate which attracted upwards of 100 people. The rally was held in the early evening, with a march of AFA supporters.-

AFA speakers have addressed anti-racist meetings in Southwark and Lambeth wards. In one of the meetings, one of the speakers said: “We want a token campaign which expresses our opposition to AFA and racism, but does not actually confront the fascists, or do we insist on concrete action against specific targets?”

AFA raised these issues because where people within the campaign stood, and some were not above a bit of mud-slinging to hide their capitulation, either. If something constructive is going to be done then it has to be done now, before the next local elections are held, and the list of acceptance starts to grow. We have to deal with the fascist threat. The response from the left has been typically evasive.
their credit, both Rachel Webb and a Southwark councillor, Ian Driver (who received a death threat for supporting the rally) addressed the rally. The borough's other Labour councillors declined to give support, and the Socialist Workers Party turned up on the night to give us a leaflet telling us all not to get browbeaten by the BNP.

During the election campaign, the fascists didn't hold even one public meeting to promote Steve Tyler's claim to political fame. However, they did hold a "secret" rally on the Birminham estate which wrong-footed local anti-fascists simply because it was never publicised, but when AFA held a meeting of over 120 people the following week, the BNP, despite a number of threats, again failed to put in an appearance.

On the night of the vote count, over 500 anti-fascists rallied outside the Town Hall, while the BNP hid inside from early in the evening. (No thanks are due, however, to those members of the SWP and Revolutionary Communist Group who disappeared at 16:30pm, had an hour before closing time, and half an hour before the BNP left the hall.)

When Tyler and his squad finally showed, it was difficult to see them, obscured as they were by the police escort they obviously decided was necessary to protect their "rights as whites" from the "dangerous multi-racial slum dwellers" who had come to cast their votes on as many fascist skulks as presented themselves. In the event, Tyler got 132 votes, which indicates that Labour's betrayal of working class people in Southwark have driven a small number to back to the BNP for an answer. At present the BNP are only confident enough toleaflet the estate after mid-night, or on a circus. Rather than allow their confidence to grow, we should organise to smash their paper sales and tell them of the street once and for all.

EAST LONDON

The East End of London is a critically important area in the struggle against fascism in London and in Britain as a whole. It is the area which the Nazi British National Party has singled out as a national priority. It is a poor area, with bad housing conditions, high unemployment and large numbers of homeless people. The BNP aims to divert the justified anger of the East End's overwhelmingly working class population away from the real causes of the problems they face down into the blind alley of racial confrontation. They participate in and encourage race attacks, and carry on a sustained propaganda offensive aimed at organising a race war to head off the class war.

Central to all their efforts is the weekly paper sale at Brick Lane Market. AFA is in Bethnal Green. Each Sunday, they stand there alongside their fellow Nazis of the National Front (Flag group) at the very popular market in the heart of the East End's Bengali community. It is a provocation, of course, but it is much more than that: it is their chance to make contacts and build their organisation. After the sale, they nip off to the pub to firm up their contacts and plan their attacks.

So the two key targets of AFA work in the area are the paper sales itself, and the pubs used by the fascists. In our pamphlet Introduction to London AFA (published by us earlier this year, and available from AFA BM box 1734, London W11 3XX, price £1 plus postage) we set out details of how our campaign has built up. Since then, following a very successful demonstration against the fascist paper sale and a mass picket of The Sun public house on Bethnal Green Road in March, East London AFA stepped up the pressure with leafleting campaigns and "Flash" pickets called at short notice. Very soon the landlord recognised that serving beer and providing facilities to Nazis and convicted war criminals and race attackers was not such a good idea. After the fascists were unceremoniously pushed out of this watering hole, they fled for a while to the comparatively safer of another pub in Bethnal Green Road–the Shakespeare, right next to Bethnal Green police station.

Predictably, their stay there was not long. They've moved over the road to the Ship, where the AFA campaign is once again on their tail. The campaign against the paper sale is necessarily a long-term one. It is the fascists' only remaining regular sale in London, and one which they will not give up easily. A variety of tactics will be needed before they are shifted. One tactic we've used so far has been to challenge them by taking over their patch. We arrive at Brick Lane before them and defend ourselves against the inevitable violent attacks they launch against us without success—at regaining their sales pitch and their pride. Other tactics have been to mobilise far larger numbers in peaceful and vocal demonstrations. Another demonstration along these lines is planned for October.

AFA takes its commitment to both ideological and practical confrontation of the fascists very seriously. Our demonstrations, whether aimed at direct confrontation or at peaceful protest, are always well supported by potential fascist counter attacks. The same goes for our leafleting and other activities, like our participation in the East End Yesterdays festival (see the article on Cable Street for details). We have never been chased off, nor had to abandon any of our activities because of physical threats from the fascists. The opposition does not have such a good track record, we are glad to say.

Currently, we are involved in raising the public profile of AFA in what are quite new ways for us. Not only are we preparing a permanent exhibition detailing the history of anti-racist and anti-fascist struggles in the East End to go round schools and libraries; we are also actively re-mobilising our members (see the article on Cable Street for details). We have never been chased off, nor had to abandon any of our activities because of physical threats from the fascists. The opposition does not have such a good track record, we are glad to say.

Following a highly successful mobilisation against a National Front local election meeting in the Hertfordshire area of which the fascists were forced into a precipitate and humiliating retreat, Red Action members in Hatfield decided that it was high time that anti-fascist activity in the region was co-ordinated in the form of a dedicated anti-fascist organisation.

The initial meeting was enthusiastically attended by an excellent turn-out of anti-fascists from around the county too many to name, in fact, for the room that we had booked. In addition to unattached individuals, representatives from the SWP, Militant, Direct Action Movement, and a hitherto little recognised local organisation, AGM (Asian Gang Members), plus a healthy
number of Red Action members already linked with London AFA participated.

It was first of all agreed that the correct strategy in opposing racist activities was to be based upon both ideological and physical confrontation.

Hence, the arrest of a number of anti-fascists during the disruption of the National Front's election campaign in Hemel Hempstead there was no campaign formed. Of the four defendants charged, one was acquitted of all charges and the other three of the main charges of assault and assault on the police. The magistrates felt it necessary, in order to uphold the majesty of the law, to hand them guilty of the remaining charges of threatening behaviour.

Incidentally, our style of electronic campaigning evidently impressed the local electorate far more than the campaigning of the fascists' candidates received votes, presumably including his own. In Hatfield, we have already held a widely publicised public meeting named Anti-Fascist Action to which a number of local bands donated their services. Despite blood-curdling threats from the fascists to disrupt the event on the night, not a single person spoiled the gig. It attracted a large number of people from all over the area and generated a substantial amount of money and publicity as well as being a highly enjoyable occasion in its own right.

In each of the meetings so far, hundreds have been laid upon the necessity of forming local anti-fascist branches in each town or area so that any interventions as they become necessary, could be conducted with appropriate local knowledge and agreement. Given the spread of towns and areas represented, local reports were given from each, allowing an insight into the regional situation as a whole regarding racist activities. Particularly the state of fascist organisations.

It became clear that large numbers of racist activities, from shootouts to attacks by the same people the second time resulting in injuries that put him in a coma for a week. It was clear that the perpetration in its most generalised racism rather than specific ideological commitment to any fascist groups. Action was taken that hopefully will have ensured that the problem, at least with those individuals, does not recur.

The fascists appear to have an organised presence in only one town in the immediate area with smaller, less visible branches elsewhere. A strategy has been evolved which will become apparent to those fascists in the course of watch.
Andersson, Chair of the NF, announced that they would instead rally on the steps of the town hall. AFA announced that it would rally at the same spot an hour before the fascists, but unfortunately both Militant and the SWP decided for whatever reason that they would both be holding their own demonstrations.

This of course was only to be expected from these organisations, but it did allow a 30- to 40-strong AFA stewards group to move around the city centre free from the attention of the police. The stewards group was able to deter several fascists from attending the meeting, when they took over the NF's redcress point. At the meeting eventually went ahead in a hotel in Wrexham (about six miles from the city centre).

Elsewhere, on the right, a group calling itself the 'Independent White Party' stood in the recent local elections in Bury and gained a nalty £5 vote. Apart from this the only sign of any other group active in the area was the odd 'League of St. George' and 'English Solidarity' sticker.

The one occasion a year that does bring the fascists out into the open is the Manchester Empire's Commemoration, which until recently brought out considerable opposition from both the fascists and the Loyalists. However, the decline of the Empire's Commemoration has mirrored the decline of the opposition. The march known as Ascot to local fascists can still be regarded as an attempt to attract the attention of a few moronic die-hards.

The problem for anti-fascists in Manchester is the lack of any coordination between the various anti-fascist groups, and the lack of any coherent strategy to deal with the fascists in the areas where they are strongest. The problem at present is not massive, it's a small, but growing problem. While the recent BNP campaign in Rochdale only managed 308 per cent of the vote in the local elections in May, this in fact represented a considerable setback for the recently established branch. It is a problem that should be dealt with sooner rather than later. To this end a meeting will be called in September and it is expected to map out a strategy to deal with this problem. All anti-fascists will be invited.

D. Strachan (Manchester AFA)

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**THE LAUNCHING OF AFA IN DUBLIN**

Having witnessed an increase in fascist activities in the last few years, a group of independent socialists and members of Red Action decided to come together and form an anti-fascist organisation in Dublin. Having previously opposed fascism/racism in an individual capacity, we now went about clearing these texts in an organised and more effective manner.

To date, we have been relatively successful. Many of our members had previously confronted the fascists whenever they came across them but now, with an organisation behind us, we set about finding the Nazis and physically forcing them from our streets.

At the same time, we have set about the task of informing people of the threat the fascists pose, even at present they are small in number and badly organised.

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**FIGHTING FASCISM IN SCOTLAND**

Anti-Fascist Action was formed in Scotland as a direct response to the growth of the British National Party. Whereas in the past fascist groups found some difficulty in attempting to build a base in Scotland, the BNP have had relative ease in the form of a recently formed group called the Scottish Nationalists. This group has been instrumental in attempting to build a base in Scotland, and has recently taken over the BNP's North East Scotland branch.

As a result of this, the BNP has been forced to respond by attempting to build a base in Scotland, and has recently taken over the BNP's North East Scotland branch. The group has been instrumental in attempting to build a base in Scotland, and has recently taken over the BNP's North East Scotland branch.

The BNP's strategy has been to aggressively contest local elections in areas with a large fascist population, and to try to gain support from the local community. This has resulted in a significant increase in the BNP's electoral success, with the group winning several seats in local elections.

However, the BNP has also faced criticism for its association with fascist groups in other parts of the UK. In particular, the group has been linked to the English Defence League, a group with a history of violent and racist activities.

Despite this, the BNP remains a significant force in Scottish politics, and continues to challenge the established parties in local elections. The group's success is a cause for concern for many Scots, who see the BNP's rise as a threat to the country's democratic and pluralistic values.

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**Glasgow's Ayrian supermen with their police guards.**
TURNING THE TIDE

The Lessons of Cable Street

This October marks the 50th anniversary of the most famous street fight in the history of the anti-fascist struggle in Britain—the Battle of Cable Street. Everyone, it seems, from liberals and Labour MPs through to the far left, recognises the importance of the victory at Cable Street in 1936. The Communist Party, who did the bulk of the organising, see it as a victory example of their policy of the popular front in action. Dissident communists like Joe Jacobs, who was expelled from the CP for his more confrontational approach to fascism, see things differently, and emphasise the fact that the CP leadership initially had opposed the call for a mass mobilisation against the planned British Union of Fascists march through the East End on October 4.

The dispute is not just between different revolutionary tendencies of course—there are plenty of less radical voices who play down the role of the organised far left in making sure the fascists did not pass on that day.

Sir Oswald Mosley formed his British Union of Fascists in 1932. The BUF advocated the abolition of democratic government, political parties, strikes and trade unions. From 1935, inspired by Hitler’s rise to power, the BUF began to focus on anti-semitism.

Like today, Britain was deep in recession. Like today, East London was among the most deprived areas in the country. Like today, fascists took advantage of hardships among the working class population to stir up racial rivalry. They blamed unemployment on Jewish workers, low wages on Jewish employers, high rents on Jewish landlords. Like today, these arguments were powerfully backed by elements of the popular press - The Daily Mail and the Evening News — supported Mosley. Like today, the racist propaganda was relentless. Venice, the battle of Cable Street and member of the CP, Solly Kaye, describes the conditions he and other Jews lived in at the time: “You had massive unemployment, immense poverty, social services nowhere near what they are today, terrible slums. In a street where 17 people lived in one little block of three flats with one outside toilet... the fascists could involve people on the basis of envy, fear, by saying, OVER THERE the Jews, they’ve got your houses, OVER THERE the Jews they’ve got your jobs, even though we were living in bloody poverty with bugs crawling, all over us in the night.”

For Mosley the Battle of Cable Street was a physical defeat and a propaganda disaster from which he would never recover. Within a year he had lost much of his following and, dismissed all his senior staff for lack of funds. BUF membership declined from about 140,000 in 1935 to just 5,000 in 1940. And at the outbreak of world war two, Mosley and 800 other Hitler supporting BUF members were arrested under Defence regulations.

But it wasn’t the end of fascism in East London. Just one week after the battle of Cable Street, as a ‘victory’ march wound through the East End, fascists thugs were back - throwing Jewish shop-keepers through windows, smashing and looting their shops. And in the East End of London today, fascists are once again stepping up their activities - the British National Party have made their work there a national priority. They see the East End as their natural territory, and it is true that Bethnal Green and Shoreditch have been important bases for them in the 50s and 70s. And in a recent local council election in Bethnal Green, the BNP polled 15 per cent, since the ward is evenly split between white and Asian voters, this translates into a vote of nearly one-in-four of the white community.

But the East End is not nor was it ever “their patch. It is, and always has been, an overwhelmingly working class area. It is the only part of England ever to have returned an MP on a straight Communist ticket (in 1945) and it is no coincidence that he was Phil Piratin, one of the key CP organisers in the prewar period and a veteran of the Battle of Cable Street. Before that, in the 1920s, Bethnal Green had a Labour-Communist Mayor. The East End is our area, not theirs. We have a history of left wing organisation, of struggle against fascism, and of victory. For the fascists, the history of the East End is a history of defeats. That is the first lesson for us as we organise to make sure that the 90s go down in history as another decade of defeat for the fascists.

But there are many other lessons to be drawn from this period, lessons about tactics and strategy as well as about the possibility of victory.

It is a fact that the leadership of the CP, who had planned a mass rally in central London in support of the Republican government in Spain, were reluctant to allow Mosley’s decision to march through the East End to disrupt what was for them a nationally and internationally important event. Local CP members saw it very differently, and argued their case strongly enough for the party to change its plans and put resources into building a massive counter to the BUF.

The CP was split over how to oppose and fight fascism, but it was serious about doing so. And it certainly had no parallel illusions about defeating fascism without physical confrontation.

The divisions within the CP at the time were about how best to do this, not about whether or not it should be done. The CP and other anti-fascists disagreed on BUF events, most notably at Earl’s Court where the level of violence against and fascists was condemned widely even in the capitalist press. Some, like Joe Jacobs, asked for a line rather similar to the one pursued by the German Communist Party under von Neumann - namely hit the fascist whenever you find them. Others, like Phil Piratin, put the emphasis more on mass mobilisation. If these themes seem familiar to us today, it is for a good reason - the same arguments sprang up again in the 1970s and 1980s, and are with us even now.

As in the past, the polarisation between the advocates of these tactics is a false one. No one, least of all Joe Jacobs, would argue that a march on the scale of October 4 1936 could have been stopped by a small squad of communist heavies. And no one, least of all Piratin, could have argued that mass mobilisation could have been sustained 24 hours a day. In between the mass demonstrations, fascist gangs still have to be opposed, and on a necessarily smaller scale. To fight fascism, we need a flexible approach which combines a variety of tactics, with which is based on the understanding that to politically confront fascism means, inevitably, that there will be physical confrontation.

Only someone who is willfully politically dishonest - and there has been no shortage of those through the years - could describe the attempt to organise self defence and anti fascist offenece as “squaddism.” Perhaps the attempts through the years to organise workers defence squads to defend demonstrations and picket lines were “squaddism” too.

If Cable Street tells us anything, it is that the better organised this violence is, the more effective it will be. Fascists today must learn what their forerunners in the BUF learned in 1936 - there is no easy target for their thugs, and there is a price to pay for advocating race hate. Every time they attack and get away with it, the fascists grow stronger; every time they are chased off or get one of their attacks disrupted, it sets them back.

This point is so self-evident that it does not need reiterating.
55 years after Cable Street, but unfortunately, there are plenty who hide behind the slogan of “mass actions” to justify doing nothing to actually confront the fascists now, and who accuse those who take a more serious approach to the tasks at hand as “squaddism.” Worse than that, as we have seen at Thamesmead and on other occasions, so-called revolutionaries have been too happy to march away in the anti-fascists’ face, and then denounce them later for any confrontation with the fascists—be it political or physical or both—that effectively gives them a free hand. If we say that there should be no platform for fascists, we should take the necessary steps to prevent them having a platform whenever we can.

This leads to another central lesson of Cable Street. The majority of people, when they think of the battle, imagine that it was a fight between anti-fascists and fascists, or even between the CP and the BUF. This was not at all the case. It was a fight between the anti-fascists and the police for the most part.

On its demonstrations it is common to hear the chant “The police protect the fascists” and “The fascists need the police.” It’s true, of course, and never was it truer than at Cable Street. To fight fascism, then as now, means not confronting the police but the fascists themselves, but with the police. It is no accident that militant anti-fascists are such prominent targets for police repression. It is not enough to denounce this fact; we want action as well as demonstrations. If the police protect the fascists, and if the police attack anti-fascists whenever they can, we must respond with our own tactics to counter them.

Already, many lessons have been learned on this score from what happened during the campaign of the printworkers’ strikes through to the poll tax struggle. Legal observers on demonstrations have helped prevent the police from intimidating of demonstrators, and have assisted in uncovering illegal police tactics. This is an area of work that AFA is expanding in alliance with others with more experience. Right now, it is an extremely important tactic. But it is not the only tact. The police use “march squads” to pull out individuals on demonstrations. They use pretences. They get tapped. Each tactic, each example of repression demands specific counter-tactics. At Cable Street, they fought off the police and were not afraid to be arrested in the process. And they succeeded. We have to do the same.

In recent months the fascists have stepped up their attacks both against black people and other racial groups and against left-wing meetings and paper sales. They feel increasingly confident in doing so. We have no choice but to stop them.

As Cable Street veteran Sally Kaye observes, there is no excuse for complacency in the fight against fascism. “We don’t want to underestimate the danger that people will underestimate. In spite of Cable Street, in spite of the war, in spite of the suffering caused to millions by fascism, racism exists and is widespread in our society today. I experienced it in the ’50s and I tell you, it’s worse today.” Sally and his generation fought back, organised themselves, and defeated fascism. They did what was necessary—they fought on all fronts. We need to do the same today. There is a place in the anti-fascist struggle for everyone who accepts that fascism needs to be defeated; and there is a place in AFA for anyone who recognises that we have to fight against fascism.

This exhibition added a new dimension to AFA’s campaign in the East End of London. It helped to publicise AFA’s aims and to build up new contacts in the area. We plan to use the material from the exhibition to create a permanent display which can be taken round to schools, libraries and community centres, and we will be putting it on show at the anti-racist carnival we are organising in East London in December. AFA will also like to highlight the Community Arts Office at Oxford House, where the exhibition was held. The speakers, Dereen Gadd and everyone else who contributed.
Calling All Veterans

AFA wants to contact Cable Street International Brigade and other Anti-Fascist veterans for oral interviews about their past struggles and experiences in the movement. Write to: AFA, BM 1734, London WC1N 3XX.

Cable Street veteran Charlie Goodman addressing schoolchildren at the afternoon session.

THE BATTLE OF CABLE STREET

The BUF's 4 October march was intended to capitalise on escalating racial intimidation and violence in the East End. The fascists were to assemble at Royal Mint Street at 2:15pm and march east to Commercial Road, a meeting at Limehouse and a rally in Victoria Park Square.

The Home Secretary was reported to ban the march. He would not. So a call was issued to block the streets. In a massive collaborative effort to mobilise resistance, a million leaflets were issued, bands of clubs and gallons of whitewash were used to cover walls and parapets with slogans: "All out on 4 October," "The shaft not past!" On the day, a quarter of a million took part.

By 2:15pm on 4 October, crowds of anti-fascists were assembled at four different locations. Leman Street, Goodman's Corner, Cable Street and St. George's Street. They were blocking all possible routes the fascists might take. At 2:15pm 3000 fascists assembled at Royal Mint Street, protected by 5,000 police. With hand chargers the police proceeded to clear Royal Mint Street of anti-fascists. The march moved off.

The police tried to carve a way up Limehouse, but the people stood their ground, helped by an anti-fascist minibus driver who'd abandoned his vehicle, blocking the way into Commercial Road. Messengers boys on bicycles spread the word that the march would be rerouted.

Three barricades were rapidly thrown up across Cable Street. Firing stones were thrown up by a lorry, donated for the purpose, was overturned. The police managed to bunt one barricade. Hand to hand fighting went on for several hours. Every time the crowd was scattered it re-formed. Children's milk bottles were thrown into the road to keep mounted police back. Elderly residents threw down milk bottles and bags of soot from upper floors. The resistance was so strong that the police were forced to abandon their efforts.

As a veteran of the battle, Yvonne Kapp recalls: "Short of murder and mayhem, no force could have broken up that tight-packed, telltale press of people standing there, a human barricade, in war and apparently invincible strength."

Mosley, who had arrived late at Royal Linton Street, was told by the Chief Commissioner of London Police that the march through East London must be abandoned. They did not pass.
TRAGEDY AND FARCE

FASCISM IN FRANCE

Although the beginnings of modern fascism are usually traced to Mussolini’s Italy, the roots of much fascist ideology are more deeply embedded in France than anywhere else. Indeed, for the last decade, France has witnessed the growth of the largest, most powerful and best-organised fascist tendency in Europe - the Front National. It would be absurd to think that fascism in France today existed merely for historical reasons, rather than as a result of contemporary social conflicts. Nevertheless, French fascism today is able to draw on traditions which help to give it a stronger appeal to the population imagination than in the case elsewhere.

Between the Revolution of 1789 and the foundation of the Third Republic in 1871, France was convulsed by more revolutions and counter-revolutions than any other country in Europe. Those hectic eighty years there were two Empires, two absolute monarchies, two constitutional monarchies, two republics and two radical republics. It was this which prompted Marx to comment that history repeated itself, the first time as tragedy and the second time as farce. The course of those turbulent years, almost every conceivable ideology had its brief moment of power. For this reason much of the rhetoric of modern French political life was not about a vision of the future, but about reviving the ghosts of the past in the present. For this reason too, political currents that rejected the government of the day were never merely disaffected, they were organised, vocal and active.

By the end of the 19th century France’s Third Republic still contained powerful reactionary elements that were extremely anti-republican. What strengthened these groups was the inadmissible belief in French society in general of the superiority of French culture over any other and a deep sense of humiliation at France’s subordination among the European powers. Foremost in every Frenchman’s mind was the terrible humiliation of defeat at the hands of Bismarck’s Prussian in 1870. The Third Republic had signed the treaties surrendering Alsace and Lorraine to Germany, and this shame was to haunt France until the finally secured their reintegration at the Versailles Peace Conference after World War I.

Thus France was already experiencing in the 19th century what Germany was to go through in the 20th century. But during the wars Convicted of her superiority, she was in fact subjected to peace conditions that she considered shameful and appalling. The Reich which had legalized the robbery of French territory by a foreign power was widely regarded as a refuge of traitors. Society was rife with rumours of plots and coup, and obsessed with 1815 columnists who were held to have stabbed France in the back.

The Dreyfus Trial & Action Française

France did not have to look far for its scapegoat. Anti-Semitism burst in a spectacular theatre of hate during the Dreyfus trial. The affair began in 1894 with the court-martial of a Jewish army officer, Alfred Dreyfus, for high treason. He was sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil’s Island, after the Paris mob had watched him ritually stripped of his rank screaming “Death to the Jew!”. The case opened every division between progressives and reactionaries, and the fight raged for years. Finally the novelist Emile Zola, in his famous pamphlet “J’accuse” (I accuse) exposed how the documents used to convict Dreyfus were in fact forgeries. He also showed that the court-martial had conspired to cover up the crime.

The collapse of the Dreyfus case and the exposure of the reactionary conspiracy drove ultra-conservative elements in France into a frenzy. In 1898 a new organization sprung up called the Ligue de la Patrie Française (League of the French Fatherland). The founders were deluged with over a hundred thousand applications for membership.

In the same year Charles Maurras formed an organisation called Action Française. This group may be considered the ideological forerunner of modern French fascism. It was fanatically anti-Catholic and anti-Protestant, pro-Monarchist and anti-Third Republic, pro-Empire and anti-Jewish. It consisted at first of a group of like-minded intellectuals meeting in a Paris café and occasionally publishing a pamphlet.

This marginal existence was transformed when, in 1906, a court finally rehabilitated Dreyfus. Action Française activists stood up in the courtroom and denounced the judges as traitors. Two years later the group began publishing a newspaper, and Action Française boozers beat up a liberal professor of history during a lecture at the Sorbonne University. In front of his students, the President of the Republic was slapped across the face by an AF sympathizer. On the last day before the outbreak of war in 1914, the Socialist leader Jean Jaurès was assassinated by a man inspired by Action Française propaganda.

Allied victory in the Great War meant the dreams of French reaction to do more than an underlying growth. The Third Republic emerged from the battlefield intact and strengthened. Alain-Fournier was reunited with France, and the rich German confs of the San were placed under French control. Germany was also forced to pay heavy sums to France in war reparations. The war left France with a military and economic neck. This, the economic, social and political conditions which were to lead to the creation of Action Française, and to maintain a strong pro-monarchist line. While mainstream conservatives were satisfied with the post-war settlement, Maurras clung to an outdated political philosophy, leading Action Française up a dead end. Most of all, Action Française failed to mobilize any mass support in the effective way that Chamberlain, then Hitler succeeded in raising. The old atmosphere of the Paris intellectual cafés lived on, and the potential of rallies, radio broadcasts and other methods of mass-communication were completely ignored. Action Française was not defeated by anti-fascist action, it continued political suicide.

In the inter-war years other small organisations sprang up, inspired by Maurras, but none was able to muster the support for their hero commanded.

Conservative dominated parliament for two decades, and so fascist groups turned their attention to the question of control of the streets, disrupting left wing meetings and organizing attacks on Jews and political opponents. This is a common division of labour, of course.

VICHY

The collapse of the Third Republic brought Maurras and his political associates the real possibility of forming a fascist-style French state for the first time. France was unique in its response to the Nazi menace. Of all the nations faced with Hitler’s onslaught, France was alone in surrendering her sovereignty - the French parliament acceded to its own liquidation. Marshall Petain ruled the occupied part of France from Vichy, with the enthusiastic and enthusiastic support of Charles Maurras.

Indeed, most of France acquiesced enthusiastically in its own submission. Collaborators greatly outnumbered resistance sympathizers almost till the end of the war. One of the most surprising aspects of the post-war trial of the Nazi war criminals Klaus Barbie was how it brought into the open for the first time the extent of collaboration in France. The only active resistance was largely Communist-dominated. It was this strength of Communist resistance which concerned Roosevelt and Churchill. At Churchill’s behest De Gaulle, who had landed in London for much of the war, was spirited across the Channel after D-Day to form the non-Communist resistance. At the end of the war, a few ex-Marcel Petainists were put on trial, including, of course, Charles Maurras. He was dragged off to his prison cell shouting “Vive la France!” However, neither De Gaulle nor his Anglo-American backers were primarily interested in Vichy leftists. They were much more concerned that the Communists were surging forward in public support, and had a real chance of forming a pro-Soviet regime in Paris.

The Vichy Head of State, Marshal Petain, and his Prime Minister Laval, were both sentenced to death, but this was commuted to life imprisonment. The majority of low-level and medium-level collaborators were not re-integrated into the institutions of the new Fourth Republic, a process which was formalized through an official amnesty for all collaborators and Vichy officials granted in 1953. The French police force in particular was fully re-integrated into the alliance of various rights-wing elements succeeding in waging the Communist menace. Vichy
renegades have continued to remarcel French political life ever since. Laterly, the French Minister of the Interior in the mid-eighties, Papon, had previously held office in the Vichy regime.

De Gaulle & Algeria

The infant Fourth Republic was modelled fairly closely on its predecessor, the Third, and faithfully reproduced its weaknesses and instabilities. It was in fact only the arrogance of De Gaulle which saved it. He formed a violently anti-Communist and nationalist party called the French People's Rally, which took 40% of the vote in local elections in 1947. He then demanded that parliament dissolve itself and allow a new, authoritarian constitution. But as one political commentator put it, to most people, “a bad republic was still preferable to a good tyranny.” His influence fell away sharply and his bid for power failed.

The Fourth Republic had an air of déjà-vu in which the old battles of the Dreyfus era came to the fore again. Once again France was confronted with a crisis of weakness which did not sit easily with its grandiose self-image. The failure of the French plan to crush Egypt's nationalist leader Nasser in the Suez Crisis of 1956, with the help of Britain and Israel, exposed the country's military weakness and subservience to the new power of America. The failure of the French to re-establish their role in Vietnam, and in particular the humiliating defeat of France's elite military units at the hands of poorly armed Communist-led Vietnamese nationalists at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, forced France to concede independence. Tunisia quickly followed Vietnam into formal independence. The fact that it was a Jewish Prime Minister, Pierre Mendès-France, who signed the colonies away only fuelled the old reactionary conspiracy theories and made extremists dig their heels in all the harder over Algeria.

It was the conflict in Algeria which brought the fascist far-right to the fore again, and which was to sow the seeds of support for France's current leading exponent of fascism, the Front National. The Algerian War of Independence began in 1954. It was a particularly bloody and brutal war since Algeria had so many French colonists living on its soil - well over a million. They grew ever more frustrated in their demands that the Paris government use harsher and more effective methods against the Algerian nationalists.

They were echoed in France by a new right-wing extremist party led by Pierre Poujade. This grouping combined outraged shopkeepers at home with extreme imperialism abroad. This absurd but very specific political movement polled around 10% of the vote in the mid-fifties - a base of support that was to resurface thirty years on for the Front National. The future leader of the Front National, Jean-Marie Le Pen, led a group of extremists even more right-wing than Poujade in Parliament, and made a name for himself by organising a thousand policemen in a noisy anti-parliament demonstration outside the National Assembly.

Finally, in 1958 two French generals in Algeria staged a putsch, and this was closely followed by another in Corsica. It was clear that the army in France supported the rebel officers, and that the government in Paris was about to fall. Desperate to save itself, the Fourth Republic summoned De Gaulle back into office with sweeping emergency powers.

The Third Republic had liquidated itself voluntarily accepting French fascist rule as marginally preferable to German fascist rule in 1940. Eighteen years later, France was once again undergoing that strange experience of repeating history. The Fourth Republic dissolved
itself since it considered a right-wing militarist it knew to be preferable to one it did not.

The Front National

The Fifth Republic has so far survived 23 years. Dominated throughout the sixties and seventies by right-wing leaders, it finally saw a Socialist government elected in 1988. Socialist Party leader Mitterrand has consistently adopted a policy of clearing conservative thunder to pre-empt a right-wing backlash. So far as mainstream conservative parties concerned his policy has been largely successful, but the eighties have seen a new wave of ultrarightist party revival in the shape of the Front National.

The Front National currently has 10 Euro-MPs, over 1,000 local councillors, one mayor, and a parliamentary representation which was recently drastically reduced by the abolition of proportional representation. The party has in excess of 100,000 members. It runs three national newspapers, two of which are weeklies. The third, a daily, has a circulation of 100,000. In other words, by far the most successful far-right movement since De Gaulle's French People's Rally in the mid-fifties, at the height of reactionary panic over Algeria. Its principal powerhouse was in the South, where racial tensions were particularly high. Here the colonists who had left Algeria in 1961-62 came face to face with very large numbers of North African migrant workers. The party's initial successes were in and around the ports of Marseilles, the gateway to France for Algerian, Tunisian and Moroccan workers entering the country.

The racist anti-Arab campaign rapidly struck chords in other parts of France too, particularly when Mitterrand steered through a law granting amnesty to illegal immigrants in the early eighties. The industrial working class of the northern cities was experiencing a sudden high wave of unemployment and Mitterrand's quasi-monarchist policies hit them, and the added threat of cheap North African labour undercutting their wages led to a wholesale abandonment of the Communist Party in its traditional strongholds, most notably the "Red Belt" in the working-class suburbs of Paris, as workers rallied to the racist and protectionist calls of Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Le Pen, France's political parties indulged in the usual chestbeating and rhetoric about defence of the Republic, but were unable to match their squirmish distance for the Front National with any strategy to defeat it. In some areas the threat it posed was so overwhelming and so disorienting to parties traditionally strong in the region that it could find no other strategy to fight than to imitate it. The most notorious example of this was when a Communist mayor led a racist mob in an attack on a migrant workers' hostel.

After several years of silence and expressions of horror, the establishment came up with a "solution" in yet another repetition of history. The Gaullists, this time in the shape of the 1986 Chirac cabinet, abolished proportional representation, which robbed the Front National of the majority of its seats in parliament. This manoeuvre, growing insidious to muzzle Le Pen, it was followed up by the Socialists' government last year, which began a major initiative to improve housing and the environment in the Paris suburbs, hoping thereby to regain the loyalty of the Paris working class to a vaguely leftish programme. But the central question is how serious is the government about devolving the necessary resources? Given Mitterrand and his friends' record over the years, it is impossible to believe that this is anything more than a cosmetic effort and window dressing.

It is no coincidence that the fascists grew so strong during a period of Socialist Party rule. Mitterrand was originally elected on a left-reformist ticket in alliance with the Communist Party, committed to policies like those put forward by Tony Benn and the Labour Party leftwing. But in power, the leftist pretensions soon fell away, and the administration settled down to the serious work of diluting the socialist class for the free-enterprise and free-market capitalism was going through a similar process. Le Pen and his party have been able to create a political opening for the far right.

The situation in France had an added twist, though. Throughout the postwar period, the Communist Party had been the party of opposition, the anti-establishment party which naturally attracted the protest vote. It was, and remains, the largest political party by far in the country, with over 600,000 members and a widely circulated daily newspaper, L'Humanité. At its peak, the CP could poll a third of the votes cast. But the progressively rightward shift of this party, under the guidance of Eurocommunism, the name given to the attempt to combine acceptance of the capitalist state and its political system with the traditional Communist commitment to socialism, and in particular its willingness to participate in an anti-working-class government ended by making the party virtually indistinguishable from mainstream social democracy.

One does not have to be a supporter of the CP's previous policies to see that this transformation could not but lead to disillusionment both within the ranks of the party and among those it used to influence. The Communist vote declined sharply, with the Socialist Party and the Front National both gaining ground at its expense. But the most significant point here is that the rise of the fascist threat was causally linked to the decline of the main force which had opposed fascism in France, a particularly dangerous combination which has now been further reinforced since the CP left the government and consciously attempted to return to its roots. But while the CP has reasserted its control in the "Red Belt" electorally, the fascists remain a major force, and not only in terms of votes. Elections, local and national, are very important, of course, but control of the streets is, literally, a matter of life and death. In this respect, it would be a grave mistake to regard the Front National as the only threat alongside these mainstream fascists are a plethora of smaller even more violent Nazi groups and terrorist networks.

The major anti-racist campaign in France, SOS Racisme, has been very successful at getting young people to protest against racism, police violence and political correctness. But it has also been that the police have already increased running fascist demonstrations in Marseilles, fearing that these might bring "bad publicity". You cannot regain control of the streets with that type of politics.

The experience of the last century in France has been that ultrarightist movements can draw on deep currents of racism, anti-Semitism and fear of working-class organisation. It has also been that establishment politicians have no effective strategy for combating it. A rising tide of fascism is confronted first of all with the rhetoric of disgust, and then with acquiescence, either to the fascist threat itself, or to the authoritarian right-wing rule which is almost as bad.

The recent rise of the Front National has disoriented even France's only previously effective anti-fascist force, the Communist Party, and left liberals and anti-racists cooperating with the police to suppress militant anti-fascist organisation. France desperately needs an anti-fascist organisation that does not either concede most of the arguments to the Front National, or attempt to fight it with slogans and general goodwill alone.

If such an organisation does not arise soon, then France may find itself repeating its own tragic history once again. If it does, then the fascists may not easily be distinguished from the tragedy.
CABLE STREET BEAT

Fuel for the Fire

The above is the title of the German tour in January and February of two British bands, the Dik Ugly Ensemble and The Blaggers. The aim of the tour was to raise money and support for the Anti-Fascist Action Defence Fund and the Trafalgar Square Defenders Campaign (TSDC). The tour was organised by AFA affiliates billed under the heading of "Cable Street Beat" in Britain and a couple of Red Aid members in Germany.

The tours were accompanied by a film showing struggles in Britain since the miners’ strike - inner city riots, the Wapping dispute, the anti-poll tax campaign. The politics of the times and the history of the skinhead movement in Britain. Although this is becoming popular in Germany there is an ignorance amongst many German skinheads of the movement’s working-class multi-cultural roots. This film set the record straight and put the movement in its proper historical context.

In all the Dik Ugly Ensemble undertook nine gigs and The Blaggers eight. Venues included Berlin, Bremen, Hanover, Kiel, Duisberg, Giessen, Hannover, Bremen, and Rostock in the old East Germany. On a number of occasions groups of fascists threatened to attack the concerts but on no occasions were they considered enough to try and carry out their threats.

Some of the venues which held the gigs were owned and managed by the anti-fascists themselves, and both bands agreed that it would be great to see similar venues being established in Britain.

One especially exciting event which took place when the Dik Ugly Ensemble band was in Rostock was to witness school students marching out of their schools to protest against the start of the Americans’ attacks on Iraq in the Gulf War.

Because of the costs (especially travel) involved in organising the concerts not as much money was raised as was hoped. However, over £150 was given to both the AFA Defence Fund and TSDC.

"Overall reception was good, the people hospitable to a fault, and everywhere we found a lot of interest in the anti-poll tax struggle and other struggles of the British workers," the Dik Ugly Ensemble told us on their return.

The Blaggers saw the tour in similar terms. "The response to the political aspect of the tour was overwhelmingly enthusiastic and encouraging, with people talking about going off and organising anti-fascist benefits themselves. Important contacts were made and strengthened, particularly amongst skins of the SHARP scene and also the German section of Class War, who have had individuals attend the AFA mobilisation and pickets at Brick Lane. Many people took down addresses of poll tax prisoners and also the AFA address to send mail to the prisoners."

Anti-Fascist Action would like to thank the bands and everyone who helped organise the tour. Over 5,000 people attended the concerts. It would however like to thank Karen Wein in particular for the work he carried out to make the tour a success. Karen has organised tours and raised thousands of pounds for the miners, printers, sea eaters, the United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets, TSDC and AFA. A fuller report on the first leg of the tour appears in the TSDC Bulletin Stand Firm number 6 on sale at 50p (plus postage) from TSDC c/o Brixton Law Centre, 306 Brixton Road, London SW9. Tel. 071 433 6958.

NOT SHARP ENOUGH

Recently 2-tone band The Selectors performed and played a blistering set at The Powerhouse in London. The venue was packed solid. The Selectors stomped through all their classics, the sweat was flowing and the dancefloor was literally swaying in unison with the masses of crazy foot. However it has to be said that the atmosphere at the gig was a bit uneasy due to the antics of a certain element in the crowd. A group of seven or eight hooligans identified as being fascists because of their dodgy t-shirts and badges, were spotted drinking in a nearby pub before the gig by some anti-fascist activists.

Amazingly, the fascists gained entry into the venue. All they had to do was remove the offending regalia.

Naturally, there was some concern over the safety of the gig in the wake of the Nazi attack on black reggae singer Desmond Dekker a few weeks earlier. Fortunately this was not repeated at The Selectors gig, but the decision to let these musilis in was dangerous and a disgrace to the organisation set up to promote the positive, anti-racist side of the skinhead movement, Skinheads Against Racism Pressure (SHARP).

It is doubtful whether the venue, bands or indeed most of the crowd knew there were fascists at the gig. But the fascists knew there was an anti-fascist presence alright, and proceeded to point out the anti-fascists to other groups of skinheads.

Amongst the skins in question were some wearing SHARP badges and even SHARP t-shirts, which you would have thought meant they were anti-racists.

But after the gig, the fascists and their cohorts were waiting...
outside for the anti-fascists, who were by now strongly outnumbered. The security on the door prevented the anti-fascists from leaving with empty bottles, and so they decided to wait behind and eventually the fascists departed.

There are a number of questions which stand out clearly from this incident, and they need to be tackled urgently. Fascists are still turning up to skin gigs largely unchallenged. The week after they attacked the Desmond Dekker concert, they had a visible presence at a Bad Manners gig, one day before The Selecter gig.

This cannot go on. The fascists must be challenged and confronted by bands, audiences, venues and gig organisers now! To nip the problem in the bud is essential – if we don’t, the result will be yet more attacks on concerts and a boost in confidence for the fascists.

It certainly doesn’t help when the so-called anti-racist skinheads team up with fascists. When skinheads with the S.H.A.R.P. logo are seen socialising with fascist bohemes, some questions have to be asked.

It’s been said before, and it will be said again, but there can be no sitting on the fence over the issue of fascism. You are either anti-fascist or pro-fascist – it’s as simple as that.

Wearing anti-racist badges and turning up with fascists is worse than hypocrisy – it’s condoning fascism and racism.

There can be no question of generalising about all S.H.A.R.P. skins on the basis of this one incident. Many are 100% solid anti-racists. But there is an underlying political criticism of S.H.A.R.P. which cannot be ignored.

Some skinheads in S.H.A.R.P. describe themselves as ‘over-authentic’. This is not enough.

S.H.A.R.P. has never described itself as political and has primarily concerned itself with portraying a positive, anti-racist image of skinheads as a reaction to the media’s negative and often sensationalist coverage of skinheads, condemning them all as racists.

Cable Street Beat and Anti-Fascist Action have received mail from S.H.A.R.P. groups who are just as anti-socialist or anti-communist as they are anti-racist. One slogan is “Committees and nazis – give em both the boot!”

Racism is a tool of the capitalist system used to divide and control the working class. The fight against racism is a class issue and a political issue. S.H.A.R.P’s failure to tackle the problem of racism and fascism is a reflection of this. If the anti-racist facade of S.H.A.R.P. is to be maintained, it must be shown that S.H.A.R.P. stands for more than just skinheads.

SLO OFF THE MARK

A new anti-fascist skinhead organisation has been set up in England called the Skinhead Liberation Organisation (SLO). Like S.H.A.R.P., it was originally set up in America and has been launched here as an alternative to S.H.A.R.P.’s non-political stance.

SLO aims to concentrate on combating all forms of racism, fascism, sexism and homophobia. This means, as they put it in their first newsletter, “supporting the class struggle and smashing the ruling class oppression.”

For more information and to receive the regular newsletter, contact SLO via PO Box 253, Osathingale, Telford, Shropshire TP2 8HL. (Donations to help pay for the newsletter are most welcome, they tell us.)

RECORD REVIEWS

“Don’t Call Me Vanilla!” – The AK47s

Shit title. Cosh cover. Excellent record. This debut album by Totenhams finest contains solid songs of resistance set to catchy danceable reggae. No compromising musically or lyrically. The highlights are “Totenhams Three” (“Get them free cos they’re not guilty”), “Spirit of Resistance” (“From Tottenham to Belfast, the struggle's the same”) and “Too deaf at the law” (“You can do one more, and you’ll have a picture for ever, The Police, a picture for ever”).

Away from their “Big Audio Dynamite meets The Clash” type sound in this, their debut single for Savage Records. “I Feel Fine” appears as an uptempo ravey sort of song which is instantly likeable. “An American Abroad”, which appears on the B-side, is a slower acoustic ballad telling the story of the post tax uprising, making you wish to drift away to that eventful day of March 31st. A classic.

On the 3rd and 4th May this year Cable Street Beat took part in an international anti-fascist festival held in Italy. The event was organised under the banner “Grigliato: No al Fascismo, No al Razzismo” (Shout it loud: No to Fascism, No to Racism) by a group called “Brandi Basso”, and took place in a massive squat in the grounds of a ruined mill, Porte Prenestina, near Rome.

CSL along with Anti-Fascist Action and Red Action were invited to speak at the gathering, as were representatives of SACLH freedom and Carla Capponi, a woman veteran of the Italian anti-fascist resistance during Mussolini’s dictatorship.

Our speaker gave a short...
The stage at the Forte Princesi.

communicating on an international level the importance of this cannot be exaggerated.

The second day of the festival ended with a 400,000 people. The entertainment was provided by old punk favourites The Angelic Upstarts, Boggers LTA and Bullfinch Blonde. Despite a weak P.A. the bands overcame the poor sound usually associated with open-air gigs and the place kicked particularly during The Blaggers LTA set. The night climaxed with members of all three bands on stage for versions of White Riot and Guns of Brixton.

October had to be seen to be believed. The Woodford studio is one of the largest studio centres in Europe and is used for meetings and gigs, as a cafe/bar, and has facilities for video shows, a theatre, recording and rehearsal studios. All that remains of the old fort is the portcullis gate, the only entrance (ideal for security), tunnel-like corridors and a load of cavern-type rooms which used to be cells. Video shows, exhibitions, stalls and posters were among the other attractions at the festival. The publicity was extensive. It was rare to walk down a street in Rome and not see a poster for the festival. Unfortunately this was also the case with fascist graffiti, Celtic crosses and posters, providing a stark reminder that fascism in Italy is growing and worrying threat. Despite this, the festival went ahead unchallenged by the fascists. But a few weeks later they launched an arson attack on a different squat in another part of the city in which one man died.

Carla Capponi spoke briefly about the Waffenfabrik during and after the war. She pointed out that there have always been attacks on the resistance to discredit the Communists. The festival was held in the city in which one man died. The history of the Waffenfabrik CSF before 1934. They went on to give details about the current fight against the RPD in London. It was stressed that the fight against fascism is a class issue. The fascists ideological cause nothing to offer the working class, and they have therefore rebelled against them. When the speaker called for the fighters to be taken to the fascists to make them react to anti-fascist initiatives, rather than the other way around, the crowd responded enthusiastically, as they did to the call at the fort on an international scale based on the principle of fighting fascism on both political and physical levels.

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