

Suited and Jackbooted: Behind the Hype, the BNP are Still a Fascist Party

Ben Drake

FIRST OFF, thanks to Andrew McKibben for a clearly sincere contribution to the debate on combating the BNP, and for expressing doubts which I know are shared by quite a few genuine anti-racists and anti-fascists.

And well done too for reiterating the violent and thuggish nature of the party. It never gets reported enough that Nick Griffin's right-hand man Tony Lecomber has convictions for assaulting a Jewish schoolteacher and for – I kid you not – bomb-making. (Check the public record!) On this anniversary of 7/7 you'd think that'd be mentioned occasionally when the media decide to do one of their sporadic BNP publicity-fests.

But also, for all their shiny-suited entry into the wonderful world of spin-doctoring, the leadership and core membership of the BNP remain hardcore Fascists in the full sense.

I wholeheartedly agree terms like Fascist and Nazi shouldn't be thrown about with abandon. They need to be used carefully and specifically, to describe only those movements driven by the principles and forces that drove Mussolini's and Hitler's parties – and with the potential of leading us into the same hell-on-earth if ever allowed into power. For that reason I have no truck with abusing groups like UKIP or Kilroy's erstwhile mob as Fascist – right-wing populists for sure but that's many leagues short of Fascism. Nor on the other hand is it accurate to lump in Al-Qaeda or their ilk with Fascism, though I acknowledge some (*Searchlight*, notably) might dispute this.

But the BNP are Fascist. First, because the dark heart of their politics remains "Race and Nation" with the latter absolutely defined in terms of the former. They continue to operate as part of an international network of White Supremacist groups, and their stated mission is still to "save" the (ill-defined) "white race" from multiculturalism. Of course they make strenuous efforts to disguise this – they've finally twigged how absurd and paranoid it seems to sane people. But scratch the sur-

face and it's still there, in many cases semi-publicly in their publications and on their websites and bulletin boards.

It's true that Muslims have replaced Jews as their preferred number one hate group for the new century. But that's not fundamental. Fascists are shamelessly opportunistic – they absolutely need scapegoats but it doesn't matter really who they are, as long as they can be defined as "Other" (non-White) and a threat. Hence Jews in the 1930s, Muslims now.

(Once in power the Nazis killed Jew and Muslim alike – as well as other non-Whites, Slavs, Travellers, gay people, socialists, trade unionists, feminists, disabled people. It's never been a good idea to ignore the lessons of history – in this case, that Fascism is everyone's enemy.)

And second the BNP are Fascist in their methods and strategy. What sets Fascism apart from "bourgeois" right-wing ideologies – and what makes it such a menace – is their unvarying strategy to use violence (initially street-level and then state violence wherever they get power) to physically smash all opposition, especially workers' organisations. This is a step beyond normal politics of any stripe.

The Merseyside Trades Council activist and anti-fascist who recently had his face slashed is only their latest target. Anti-racists and anti-fascists can report a catalogue of such attacks and abuse. As reported in Parliament recently, BNP supporters even maintain a website recording names, addresses and photos of "Reds", with fairly self-evident intent.

And the final culmination and destination of such political violence was played out in what remains the greatest horror of the 20th century – the Holocaust, where some fifteen million, including at least six million Jews, died in the Nazi death camps.

If the BNP have really put such an aim behind them, then ask yourself why they continue so in-

sistently to deny and downplay the Holocaust. They're fools but (alas) not idiots – they know they'll get nowhere if they admit their ideological link to the Nazi regime. But their Holocaust denial gives the game away.

Behind the shiny suits lurks the same hatred,

the same rotten ideology. We must expose them for who they are, and stand together to stop them. Never forget, never again.

This article first appeared on the SUN website (www.socialistunitynetwork.co.uk)

Why the BNP is Still Fascist

Geoffrey Brown

THE GAINS made by the BNP in local elections in recent years – it now has almost fifty councillors, an achievement unprecedented in the history of the far right in Britain – have been assisted by a systematic revamping of the party's image. The public expressions of Nazi sympathies and Holocaust denial for which the BNP had become notorious have been junked and it now presents itself as a respectable, mainstream political party. The question arises – does this amount to a fundamental change in the BNP's political character, or is it a cosmetic exercise designed to fool voters into backing an organisation that has in reality failed to break with its fascist past?

Origins of the BNP

That the British National Party has fascist origins is of course indisputable. The party was founded in 1982 under the leadership of John Tyndall, a longtime Nazi sympathiser whose involvement with the far right dated back to the 1950s. A former chairman of the National Front and editor of the fascist magazine *Spearhead*, Tyndall was on record as stating that "*Mein Kampf* is my bible".

Having resigned from the NF in 1980 after losing a factional struggle against his rival and former close collaborator Martin Webster, Tyndall formed his own group called the New National Front. He established the BNP on the basis of a fusion between the NNF and two smaller fascist groups, the British Movement and the British Democratic Party. Tyndall remained at the head of the BNP until 1999, when he was successfully challenged for the position of chairman by the present incumbent, Nick Griffin. After his death in July 2005 a *Guardian* obituary rightly described Tyndall as "a racist, violent neo-Nazi to the end".

Enter Nick Griffin

For all the carefully cultivated "reasonableness" of his public persona today, Griffin has a similar far-right background to Tyndall. He was a national organiser for the NF in the 1970s, and in the 1980s was heavily influenced by Roberto Fiore, a leader of the Italian fascist organisation the Armed Revolutionary Nuclei (NAR), who fled to Britain to avoid prosecution over the 1980 bombing of Bologna railway station in which 85 people died. Throughout the 1980s Griffin was a leading figure in what remained of the NF, promoting a NAR-inspired "Third Positionist" ideology that claimed to offer an alternative to both capitalism and communism. Griffin and the Third Positionists advocated a "political soldier" strategy which rejected the 1970s NF's objectives of mass membership and electoral success in favour of building an elite corps of professional fascist "revolutionaries".

However, as the NF fragmented in an outbreak of political infighting, the Third Positionists broke away in 1989 to form a separate grouping, and by 1991 Griffin had abandoned organised fascist politics altogether. After a brief period in the political wilderness he joined the BNP in 1995 and became editor of Tyndall's magazine *Spearhead*. Ironically, in view of subsequent developments, Tyndall brought Griffin into the BNP to act as a counterweight to an opposition headed by Tony Lecomber and others who favoured playing down the fascist character of the party in order to establish a wider popular appeal.

Griffin used *Spearhead* to denounce the "spiral of sickly moderation" and scorned the idea of the BNP projecting an image of restraint and respectability. Commenting on the party's earlier success in a council by-election in Millwall in 1993, Griffin