



Black Liberation & Socialism



INTERNATIONAL
IMG
MARXIST GROUP

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THE BLACK SOCIALIST
ALLIANCE



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Introduction

During the recent Moss Side bye-election the National Front were prevented from organising meetings or canvassing by the local Afro-Caribbean community. Only a few weeks later the Bengali community of Spitalfields (Brick Lane) staged the first political strike by black workers against racist attacks.

These examples of militant black self-activity are a continuation of the general level of combativity in the black communities, above all symbolised by the willingness of the black youth to take action when they are attacked, whether by the state or the fascists (Southall and Nottinghill Carnival). As well as these 'community' actions black workers have been to the fore in the fight against the Labour governments austerity program (Grunwicks, STC, Imperial Typewriters, etc).

This militancy by black people reflects their position in society. Overwhelmingly proletarian and discriminated against as blacks, they are potentially a revolutionary force out of proportion to their numbers. This is what Trotsky was talking about in 1938 when he said: "What serves as the brake on the higher strata? It is the privileges, the comforts that hinder them from becoming revolutionists. It does not exist for the Negroes. What can transform certain stratum, make it more capable of courage and sacrifice? It is concentrated in the Negroes. If it happens that we in the SWP are not able to find the road to this stratum, then we are not worthy at all. The permanent revolution and all the rest would be only a lie." (1)

The IMG has to take up this challenge that Trotsky threw down forty years ago and which the blacks of Moss Side and Brick Lane are reissuing today. Only by developing a strategy and tactics to fight racism and support black liberation can the IMG take up this challenge.

Racism and Resistance

Colonialism and the slave-trade played a crucial role in the development of British capitalism. Racist ideology grew as a justification for the ravaging of Africa and Asia and the barbarous enslavement of hundreds of thousands of Africans. The profits of imperialism helped the British ruling class to create the labour aristocracy and bureaucracy, who became the bearers of bourgeois ideology into the working class. The racist and chauvinist justifications for imperialism became an integral part of the reformist ideology of the labour movement, disarming the British workers and preventing them from linking-up with the colonial masses in revolt against their common enemy.

After the second world-war racism found a more direct target. Thousands of black workers from the Indian sub-continent, Caribbean and Africa came to Britain to work in the expanding post-war economy. Racist ideas and support for imperialism was transformed into systematic discrimination against blacks. This discrimination in turn helped to create and re-create itself by developing real, material, divisions within the working class. The nature of these divisions is examined below.

Racism in Britain today is not merely an ideological legacy of colonialism but is also a real, material, factor in social life. Those who see racism as purely an ideological question, of combatting mistaken ideas amongst the workers, fail to understand the real oppression of black people and ignore their real fight for social liberation. This is the policy of the Communist party and left social-democrats who see fighting racism as some sort of glorious educational crusade, carefully avoiding the complicity of the Labour and trade union movements in the real oppression

of blacks. On the other hand, some separatist and black nationalist forces see the material divisions within the working class as the basis of a lasting desertion of white workers of the revolutionary struggle. They write-off the white workers who they see as bought-off by the privileges of racism, an analysis which cripples the black movement and leads to cynicism and demoralisation.

Racist divisions within the working class are now being consciously and deliberately fostered by sections of the ruling class and the media as a means of weakening the working class in this period of capitalist crisis. The reformists, far from fighting this offensive, have capitulated on all the major questions whilst of course making genuflections in the direction of anti-racism. The growth of this offensive has provided a breeding ground for the nucleus of a fascist movement which has, in turn, helped to stoke up the fires of racism.

The black communities have displayed an ability to fight-back and defend themselves against the more direct attacks on them, by whatever means are necessary. There are, however, certain clear obstacles to building an adequate response to the whole gamut of racist attacks and going onto the offensive towards black liberation. The national heterogeneity of creates real barriers to a unified black movement. Not merely does this create language and cultural difficulties, but the recent nature of their immigration means that many blacks retain strong political links with their home countries and the divisions there are reflected here.

The absence of a strong revolutionary party in Britain also helps to disarm the black masses. Because there is no unified and powerful revolutionary movement in the white working class there appear to black activists to be only two alternatives, either an alliance with the reformist leaders of the workers movement in the hope of winning some small gains or a retreat into separatism. Although some small numbers of black militants have joined the existing far-left organisations none of these, including ourselves, has so far been able to help these black socialists develop an adequate strategy and tactics for the creation of a mass black movement.

There is one further factor which weakens the black response to racism. Only about 1 1/4 million blacks live in Britain, in comparison to 22 million Afro-Americans in the USA. Although almost 50% of the black population lives in the greater London conurbation, and a further 25% in the west Midlands conurbation, nowhere are there the 75-100% black ghettos which exist in the USA and have been the powerhouse of the black movement there.

All of these factors combine and reinforce each other as obstacles to the building of a mass black movement. The militancy of Moss Side, Nottinghill, Southall and Brick Lane show clearly that such a movement is both possible and necessary. They show the tremendous scope and vitality of the black masses, but they also show the problems which have to be overcome on the road to developing a mass black liberation movement.

Racism in Practice

The 1968 and 1976 Race Relations Acts have made little impression on the major areas of practical discrimination against black people, in employment, housing and education. These aspects of racism, which affect the daily lives of the majority of blacks, receive little publicity and little attention, even from revolutionaries. But they are the conditions of life of most blacks and the issues around which they could be mobilised.

Black people who rent Council houses pay, on average, the same rent as whites. Yet the housing of blacks is in general inferior to that of whites. Only 0.6% of whites have to live in shared Council housing, whereas 10% of Afro-Caribbeans and 18% of Asians do. For blacks in private accomodation the situation is even worse - the differences in conditions are the same but blacks pay 75-100% more than whites. In Council housing blacks are not merely overcrowded, but also get the older and more decrepit houses - 75% of whites live in houses built since 1940 compared to only 38% of blacks.

In addition to the discrimination which exists for blacks in housing conditions, there also exists discrimination in where they can live. A GLC survey in 1974/5 showed that the GLC itself tended to allocate blacks to specific, poor quality, inner city estates. On the other hand, many of the new and 'overspill' estates are almost exclusively white - in 'Midtown' (pseudonym of a local authority) only 0.9% of tenants in outer and overspill estates were black, compared to 23% for the central area. (3)

These conditions of discrimination in housing are repeated in employment. Whilst during periods of high employment black unemployment is no higher than the average, "as total unemployment rises, so the minorities tend to make up a greater proportion of this total in other words, unemployment of minorities rises more steeply than total unemployment" (4). In the period 1974-1977 general unemployment rose by 138%, but for blacks it went up by 307%, over twice the average. For black youth unemployment has always been significantly higher than for white youth, and over the past years has further increased. For example, in Lewisham in 1974/5 38% of black youth were unemployed compared to 13% of white youth. (5).

Even when blacks get jobs they don't get the best jobs, as the following table shows:

Job level by country of origin - men (6)

	White	West Indian	Pakistani/ Bangla- deshis	Indian
	%	%	%	%
Professional/ Management and White-collar	40	8	8	20
Skilled manual	42	59	33	44
Semi-skilled & unskilled	18	32	58	36

Even within the various categories of employment, blacks earn less than whites on average.

Earnings analysed by job level - black and white men (7)

	Professional/ Management	White- collar	Skilled Manual	Semi- Skilled Manual	Unskilled Manual
WHITE	£53,50	£41,70	£38.10	£34.40	£29.70
BLACK	£46,20	£36.10	£37.50	£35.90	£33.70

The figures for black workers in the semi-skilled and unskilled levels are only higher than whites because a much large proportion of blacks work shifts to make up their earnings, because their jobs are intrinsically worse paid.

Many reformists believe that one panacea for 'deprivation' of black people is to better the educational provision for blacks. This view is based on the belief that blacks are merely the victims of a poverty trap - poorhomes, poor education poor jobs, etc. In fact educational achievements make little difference. Amongst men with degree standard qualifications 79% of whites get Professional/management jobs as opposed to only 31% of blacks. Over 20% of blacks with degree standard qualifications end up doing manual jobs.

Of course, the generally low living standards of black people, the poor quality housing and the fact that most of them live in areas which are 'educationally deprived' means that black youth are at a tremendous disadvantage in attempting to get decent qualifications. Added to this are language problems. Amongst Asians up to 30% of men and 60% of women speak English only slightly or not at all. (9) For Afro-Caribbeans the problem has, in some respects, been more difficult because until recently few educational authorities even recognised patois as a distinct language.

These figures demonstrate that in the major areas of social life - jobs, housing and education - black people are systematicallt discriminated against. The state, local and national, is responsible directly for this discrimination in education and in housing and public employment. The Labour party runs the government and many local councils which are directly responsible for this discrimination. The Trade Unions have acquiesced in the discrimination in employment.

This discrimination in jobs, housing and education is of course not the only way in which blacks suffer oppression as blacks. We have many times detailed the effects of the immigration laws - the fact that in April this year almost 200 blacks were being held in prisons up and down the country, many of them for months, for no crime other than being immigrants, merely reaffirms the barbaric nature of these laws. The hundreds of black youth picked up a summarily convicted under the SUS laws by racist police and magistrates is another example of direct state attacks on blacks as blacks. These examples can be multiplied.

The overall picture which emerges is of systematic discrimination against and oppression of black people as blacks, backed with the full force of the state.

How To End Racism ?

Racism cannot be finally eliminated without the smashing of capitalism and the setting-up of a workers state. Even then only the material and political conditions for the end of racism will have been established, the practical effects of racism will still take time to remove and the ideological problems will undoubtedly linger on for even longer.

Our view that racism cannot be ended without the end of capitalism isn't smething merely derived from theory. There are absolutely concrete facts which support this view. The best example is to compare the achievements of the USA and Cuba. The United States, the richest and most powerful state the world has ever known has proved totally incapable of eliminating racism. Despite the massive black movement, and some of the gains which it has undoubtedly made, blacks still only earn about 58% , unemployment is higher, there are as many black families living in pverty as in 1967, and so on. Since the emancipation of the slaves in the Civial War the USA has had 113 years to eliminate racism. It has failed. Cuba, a tiny, poor country, racked by the problems of underdevelopment and a distorted economy as a legacy of colonialism, managed to eliminate the major effects of racism in a couple of years, ending all discrimination. Not merely were discrimination and segregation smashed but they were well on the way to 'intergration' in the sense of black people occupying a position in society commensurate with their numbers.(10) These two examples should make even the most die-hard reformist pause for reflection on the relative merits of their plodding 'pogressive' policies and the liberating effects of revolutionary socialism.

There is also an example nearer home. The Race Relations Acts, and all the paraphenalia of the race relations industry, have been hailed by reformists as the answer to racism. Yet racism, despite all these changes, remains fundamentally untouched, as the figures cited above show quite conclusively.

Should our position therefore be to tell blacks to "wait til the revolution". Absolutely not. We are not opposed to struggling for reforms, wether they be higher wages, better housing, orending immigration controls. The best way to make black people, or workers, students, women, etc, aware of their own strength in collective actiok and the inability of capitalism to end their oppression is to fight over specific issues. It is even possible, depending on the issue and the relationship of forces, to actually win certain concessions. Such victories aid the masses to self-confidence and consciousness of their power.

The anti-racist policies which we, along with the rest of the left, have pursued have largely been defensive responses to legal and physical attacks on blacks and the growth of the fascist movements. We have to develop a program which tackles all aspects of racism, not merely defensively but going onto the offensive around policies designed to end racism.

The ending of all legal discrimination, the scrapping of the SUS and immigration laws, ending of police harrassment and attacks is obviously a key element. Despite the liberal facade of the race relations industry the state is a major instrument in enforcing racism, repressing black people and attacking militants.

Discrimination in jobs, housing and education are more difficult to tackle because, while it is easy to point to the cumulative effects of racism it is far harder to pin down the individual act of discrimination. Attempting to end discrimination through ending individual acts of racism is the trap of liberals and reformists who see things in individualistic, human rights, terms rather than as social issues. The only way to end these types of discrimination is through the demands taken up and fought for by the Afro-American, Chicano and Womens movements in the USA - affirmative action. Only through affirmative action can the black and anti-racist movements go beyond purely formal (and fictional) equality and fight for actual equality.

If, tomorrow, all employers suddenly started hiring, training and promoting purely on the basis of 'merit' blacks would still be at a disadvantage because of past discrimination (which would take decades to overcome) and because of discrimination in other areas. In any case, employers will not start being suddenly non-discriminatory because it pays to be discriminatory. The state cannot force them (even if it wanted to) to do otherwise, because there are a thousand and one ways to get around any legislation (as the experience of the Sex Discrimination Act shows). Finally, there is no way that the masses of workers, black and white, can force non-discriminatory employment policies (except by taking workers control). However the black workers, and white workers, can fight for affirmative action, demanding that fixed percentages of blacks be hired, trained, promoted, etc. Not merely is this the only practical way for workers to fight against racism in the factory but it also contains elements of workers control, of a dynamic in the direction of workers control.

Various sectarians (not to mention the reformists) attack affirmative action because it is 'racism in reverse', 'splits the workers', etc (11). This nonsense is refuted by the practical experience of movements such as 'Steelworkers Fightback' in the United Steel-Workers of America which had affirmative action as one of its main planks. They won in basic steel (ie the actual industrial workers) on the basis of such a program, defeating the bureaucracy.

Affirmative action demands don not merely apply to jobs but can be applied in other areas, housing, education etc. In the section on 'Self-Determination and Black Nationalism' below the relationship of self-determination to education and housing is examined.

Self-determination and Black nationalism

"The slogan "Black Power" first came to national attention during the June, 1966, voters' march through Mississippi.....At Jackson, Stokely Carmichael, the young chairman of the SNCC,-ended a fiery speech to the marchers with the words "Black Power". The crowd took up the chant, and the slogan was quickly given extensive publicity by the national press.

Civil Rights leaders, black and white, responded with hysteria. The slogan was denounced as "extremism" and "racism in reverse", a device to split the unity of black and white that had achieved so much in the Civil Rights struggle. More conservative Negro leaders rushed to assure the white community that the black power advocates did not speak for the Negor people.

But to the black masses, especially in the urban ghettos, "Black Power" was a clarion call." Philip s. Foner (12)

Black nationalism as a movement amongst blacks within the imperialist countries began with Garveyism, the 'Back to Africa' movement, amongst Afro-Americans at the start of the century. Its modern counter-part in America can be seen in movements as diverse as the Black Muslims, the Black Panthers, and a host of other groups.

It is important to be precise about what we mean by black nationalism. George Breitman, the US Trotskyist:

"....black nationalism can be seen as approximately the following: It is the tendency for black people in the United States to unite as a group, as a people, into a movement of their own to fight for freedom, justice and equality. Animated by the desire of an oppressed minority to decide its own destiny, this tendency holds that black people must control their own movement and the political, economic and social institutions of the black community. Its characteristic attributes include racial pride, group consciousness, hatred of white supremacy, a striving for independence from white control, and identification white black and non-white oppressed groups in other parts of the world."(13)

Black nationalism is not the same thing as **seperatism**. Seperatism is a movement which says that the only solution for racism (in Britain or America) is the seperation of the races, either through a return to Africa (or the Caribbean, etc) by black people (as in Garveyism, the Black Muslims, Rastafarianism) or through a seperate black state within the existing state (the Black Muslims, partially). As the SWP put it "all seperatists are nationalists but not all nationalists are seperatists."(14)

Seperatism in Britain only exists in the form of a 'return to Africa' movement, (the Rastas,) and a fairly large 'return to the Caribbena' sentiment amongst Afro-Caribbeans. It is important for revolutionaries to be absolutely clear about our attitude to seperatism, because, although it is not a mass movement our attitude to it will be seen by some black militants, quite correctly, as a test of our commitment to black rights. We have to be absolutely in favour of self-determination for black people in Britain. That means that we defend the right of black people to either emigrate or set up a black state within Britain. This is not in any way similar to segregationism, apartheid, etc, which liberals insist on confusing with the right to self-determination. Segregation is imposed - all we are saying is that if the majority of black people decided that they wanted to emigrate or establish a black state we would defend their right as an oppressed minority to do so.

We must be careful to distinguish a seperatist sentiment from an actual seperatist movement. C L R James, talking about Marcus Garveys' Universal Negro Improvement Association of the 20's, said: "Garvey raised the slogan "Back to Africa," but the Negroes who followed him did not believe for the most part that they were really going back to Africa. We know that those in the West Indies who were following him had not the slightest intention of going back to Africa, but they were glad to follow a militant leadership. And there is the case of the black woman who was pushed by a white woman in a street car and said to her, "You wait until Marcus gets into power and all you people will be treated the way you deserve." Obviously she was not thinking of Africa."(15)

It is quite possible that in Britain the political and social awakening of the black masses will be marked by a strong seperatist current. If however an actual seperatist movement arose, in the shape of an actual and practical migration, it would signify that the black masses had despaired of ending racism in capitalist Britain and that the white working class had failed to take up the defence of the black minority. Such a movement would obviously signify a tremendous defeat for the class struggle in Britain. However, to attack the actual seperatist currents that do exist is to completely misunderstand their objective function in developing the self-confidence and combativity of blacks. As Malcolm X put it: "If black men become involved in a philosophical, cultural and psychological migration back to Africa, they will benefit greatly in this country."(16)

Black nationalism, ie a black movement demanding 'black power' here in Britain today would be a great and positive leap forward in black consciousness. It would signify the determination of black people to 'stand up and fight for their rights', and should be encouraged and applauded by revolutionaries. Naturally there are 'dangers'

in a mass black nationalist movement. George Breitman again:

"One can be both a black nationalist and a separatist, but one can also be a black nationalist without being a separatist.....How long this will be true no one can now foretell.....if racism is completely eliminated in the near future....black nationalism will disappear.....But if racism is not uprooted soon and if black people reach the conclusion that full equality is not attainable in the foreseeable future, separatist moods and activities are sure to arise among Negroes as a whole as well as among those who can now be considered black nationalists. In that case, the historical judgement will be that black nationalism in its present phase was only embryonic, incipient, not fully developed....." (17)

However in Britain today there is no significant black nationalist movement. Such a movement has tremendous barriers to overcome because of the heterogeneity of the black communities which we described earlier. In many ways this makes black nationalism, black consciousness, an even more important phenomena than in the USA because such a movement would be able to break down the divisions amongst blacks and weld them into a united movement to oppose racism.

Finally, the question of self-determination as a political (ie state) question has been dealt with. The question of recognising national rights also extends to other questions, the two best examples being housing and language. The recent controversy over housing of Bengalis by the GLC, during which the council proposed to create all-Bengali areas 'for their protection', posed sharply this question. It is crystal clear that the only consistent, democratic, policy is to demand that the Bengalis themselves must decide on their housing. The logic of such a position also demands raising the demand for community control of housing, in an analogous way to affirmative action having a logic towards workers control. Naturally, the IMG would have an opinion on what the best policy for the Bengalis to pursue would be, conditioned by a whole series of tactical and other considerations. However our main campaign would be for their right to decide and it would be important that any specific proposals came from black comrades.

The question of language rights is equally important. We defend the right of national minorities to learn in their own languages, and to have facilities in schools, the media, libraries, etc to use their own language. We are absolutely opposed to any policy of 'intergration' which forces black people to abandon their own languages (and cultures). This will be a crucial issue in areas of high black concentration, for example in Hackney, Wandsworth and Lambeth where around 30% of children are from the minorities. (18)

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How to organise?

"There can be no black-white unity until there is first some black unity", wrote Malcolm X. He was expressing the basic idea that oppressed groups have to organise to fight their own oppression. It is important that racism be fought by the whole of the working class and its allies, which is why we have consistently fought for the building of a mass anti-racist movement which would not merely take on the fascists but begin to challenge racism in every sphere. The development of a black movement, of black people organised as blacks to fight racism, is however crucial to defeating racism. It is also crucial to the building of a mass anti-racist movement, because only through black people standing up and fighting will the real issues of racism be posed sharply and clearly for the whole class. Thus we must have a two-pronged strategy for the creation of an anti-racist movement and a black liberation movement.

That does not however solve the problem of what type of mass black movement is best suited to the struggle in Britain. In the USA the Trotskyists have fought for the creation of a Black party, and such an idea has repeatedly cropped up here (Black Unity and Freedom Party in the early seventies, Black Peoples Political Alliance in Moss Side,) The Black Party project in the USA has two clear foundations: the concentration of the urban ghettos and the non-existence of a Labour party. These two factors mean that the only alternatives for revolutionaries to project for blacks in the political terrain would be either abstentionism (between the two bourgeois parties) or call for a vote for

a vote for the SWP where it can stand. These are not real alternatives for the black masses and fail completely to tap the strength of black nationalist sentiment in the ghettos. The Black Party strategy is designed to do just that, to politically organise that black nationalist sentiment and break the black masses from their traditional support for the Democratic party.

Such a strategy does not apply to Britain because neither of the conditions for its success, the urban ghettos and the non-existence of a Labour party, apply. On the political terrain here different tactics apply. The majority of blacks support the Labour party and the question of organising this support to have an impact on the Labour party is central. The question of organising black caucuses is already becoming important as more blacks actually join Labour. We need to pay some attention to what other forms of organisation can be used to organise Labour's black supporters to take the issues of racism into the LP. Additionally of course we can argue for black support for socialist alternatives to Labour, such as Socialist Unity, where they are created.

The crucial form of black self-organisation however is the creation of a black liberation movement. Such a movement would be based around an anti-racist program. It would not be an explicitly anti-capitalist program, as the program of the womens movement is not, but it clearly would have an anti-capitalist dynamic in practice, in struggle. Such an autonomous black movement would organise blacks in the fight against racism in all spheres, although it would obviously focus around certain key issues or attacks on black rights. In that sense its program of demands would not be radically different from an anti-racist movements program. The crucial difference is self-organisation, although of course there would also be differences of emphasis, etc.

It is important to stress that, whilst we understand the 'line of march' towards a black liberation movement, such a movement will be the outcome of a process of struggle which will involve all sorts of partial and temporary forms of organisation. The living struggle of the black masses is rather unlikely to fit neatly into any preconceived notions of ours, and we will need to continually assess and develop our strategy and tactics towards a black movement.

This obviously poses serious and difficult problems for black revolutionaries. These problems will and can only be solved in the framework of a unified revolutionary party, capable of synthesising the experiences and struggles of all sections of the oppressed and fusing them with the lessons of history and the international class struggle. Any concessions to separatism on this question would be disastrous for the development of the black movement because it would isolate and disorient black revolutionaries. We completely reject the conception of the SWP/Flame of an 'autonomous' black revolutionary organisation 'in solidarity' with the revolutionary party.

Besides black organisation in the Labour party and the creation of a black liberation movement other types of black self-organisation are also necessary to develop a full black fightback. In the trade unions the organisation of black caucuses can be central to taking up this issues of discrimination in employment, training and promotions and to fight for affirmative action. In the USA such caucuses have emerged spontaneously in many unions in the wake of the creation of the black nationalist movement.(19) In the black communities we already have examples of struggles over housing and self-defence, most notably in Brick Lane. The development of forms of community self-organisation, capable of organising the masses, can undoubtedly be developed around such specific issues (along the lines of neighborhood councils, tenants associations, etc). Such organisations are crucial to any fight around housing, education and self-defence.

None of these types of organisations yet exist in Britain. The difficulties of the Bengali community in defending itself in Brick Lane despite massive mobilisations shows that this question of organisation is the central problem we will have to confront as the black movement broadens and deepens.

Bob Hutton, 11 October 1978. NB The general line of this document is based on two other documents, one submitted to the Socialist Challenge/Socialist Voice school and one submitted to the Political Bureau, both of which were in general agreed by the PB.

NOTES

Our Attitude to the Black Socialist Alliance

1. Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination, p62
2. David J. Smith, Racial Disadvantage In Britain (1977), pp236-241
(Many of Smiths figures are exclusively about men, unfortunately)
3. Ibid, pp 297-299
4. Ibid, p69
5. CIS Pamphlet, Racism:Who Profits?, p9
6. Smith, op cit, p73
7. Ibid, pp84-86
8. Ibid, pp75-76
9. Ibid, pp54-55
10. Harry Ring, How Cuba Uprooted Race Discrimination.
11. IP/I No38
12. Philip S. Foner, Organised Labor & The Black Worker, 1619-1973, pp400-401
13. George Breitman, The Last Year of Malcolm X, pp55-56
14. Ibid, p62
15. Trotsky, op. cit., p40
16. Breitman, op. cit., p63
17. Ibid, p56
18. ILEA document on Multi-Ethnic Education (8 November 1977)
19. Foner, op. cit., Chapter 25, 'Black Power in the Unions'.

The BSA has become a significant force in the leadership of the Black community and organization. It has already opened, despite its weakness, a new level of Black militancy from the major sections of the Black community and different areas of the country. We will be encouraging our Black comrades and supporters to join the BSA and agree for it to direct itself towards the question of a mass Black movement, without of course in any way substituting itself for a movement.

We make no bones about the fact that we are for the construction of a united, anti-racial, revolutionary party and are in favour of Black solidarity joining the IMI. Initially the IMI is organized a Black liberation fronting, of Black and white comrades but ultimately pre-eminently Black, to organize our work in all sections of the Black community. We also recognize the problem for Black socialists in pre-eminently white revolutionary organizations and recognize their right to discuss these problems. Obviously the comrades active in the BSA will be under the discipline of the IMI and will organize to promote our politics and ideas within it.

Bob Burton, 11 October 1978

This document has been agreed by the IMI Political Bureau

Our Attitude to the Black Socialists Alliance

The Black Socialists Alliance (BSA) had about 50 supporters at its national meeting in London on 8 October 1978. It has produced a provisional program and is doing work around state harassment of black people, where they played a leading role in initiating the Black People Against State Harassment (BASH) campaign. They are also planning work around the Fords strike.

The BSA is composed of both members and non-members of existing far-left groups and black militants who have not been members of such groups.

In our opinion there are certain contradictions in the initial program, work and nature of the BSA. We hope the BSA can resolve these contradictions in a positive direction and we believe it is possible for the BSA to make a major contribution to the development of the black struggle.

As we see it there are two alternatives for the BSA. Either it can see itself as an independent black revolutionary organisation or it can be an alliance of black militants who share common goals, ie the creation of a mass black liberation movement.

Some indications in the BSA's program suggest the black revolutionary organisation line: the attacks on "white dominated left organisations", the statements about the need to develop a "Black socialist cadre that can seriously develop Marxism in relation to the struggle for Black Liberation." These statements are reinforced by some of the public interventions of leading BSA members. On the other hand, the fact that the BSA sees itself as an alliance, sees itself open to membership of black members of existing far-left groups, tends to suggest the opposite approach.

The BSA can become a significant intervention into the crisis in the leadership of the black communities and organisations. It has already succeeded, despite its weaknesses, in drawing together a significant layer of black militants from the major sections of the black communities and different areas of the country. We will be encouraging our black members and supporters to join the BSA and argue for it to direct itself towards the creation of a mass black movement, without of course in anyway substituting itself for such a movement.

We make no bones about the fact that we are for the construction of a united, multi-national, revolutionary party and are in favour of black socialists joining the IMG. Internally the IMG is organising a black liberation fraction, of black and white comrades but obviously pre-dominantly black, to organise our work in all sections of the black communities. We also recognise the problems for black socialists in pre-dominantly white revolutionary organisations and recognise their right to caucus to discuss these problems. Obviously IMG comrades active in the BSA will be under the discipline of the IMG and will organise to promote our policies and ideas within it.

Bob Hutton, 11 October 1978

(NB: The general line of these notes has been agreed by the IMG Political Bureau)

NOW THE CARNIVALS OVER - WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE ?

(Resolution on Anti-Racist, Anti-Fascist Work for the Political Committee)

CARNIVAL 2 was undoubtedly big enough to confirm the continuing size and strength of the anti-fascist movement which the ANL and RAR have galvanised and led. Despite this massive example of the strengths of this movement, the Carnival also showed the signs of the problems which we have identified previously (eg inadequate program, democracy, etc) starting to come to the fore, signaling a crisis of perspectives for the movement.

1. The period between Carnivals 1 and 2 (April-September) was one of massive defeat for the political project of the fascists (gaining a respectable political standing and following) and of big steps forward for a mass anti-fascist movement.

The major factors which contributed to the defeat of the NF were: (i) the massive youth radicalisation amongst the 'giro generation' with which the ANL and RAR managed to link up; (ii) the turn of sections of social-democracy towards 'anti-fascism' both as a left cover and as a reaction to the successes of the NF in its political project (ie its high votes); (iii) the turn by the SWP, the largest farleft organisation, towards a united front type initiative, which built on the previous work of the anti-fascist movement; (iv) the growing mass radicalisation within the black communities; (v) the turn by the Tory leadership to a racist offensive, coupled with the Select Cttee Report, which took the wind out of the NF's sails.

It was the combination of these factors which turned Carnival 1 into such a massive event, upsetting in the process a good many apple-carts.

For the bourgeoisie, and its Labour supporters, this was a new and alarming phenomena. Despite their obvious alarm at this development they adopted a cautious 'wait and see' approach, which was especially important for the reformists who saw in the ANL a way of undercutting the fascists political offensive without tackling its real origins. They wanted to 'contain' the ANL, exploiting certain weaknesses of program and democracy to do so. At the same time the reformists united with the main bourgeois parties in a vain attempt to set up an alternative to the ANL, the Joint Committee Against Racism, which however could mobilise only miserable forces (about 800 at their Trafalgar Sq mass rally).

By the time Carnival 2 came along certain sections of the bourgeoisie, the press and the reformists had obviously decided that the 'containment' strategy was insufficient and, further alarmed by the "Pull the Plugs" campaign, began a witch-hunt. Others however maintained the 'containment' approach, as shown clearly by Benn's presence at the Carnival.

2. The debate around the Carnival about what attitude to take to the NF march in East London illustrated absolutely clearly that the far-left is the dominant force within the anti-fascist, ANL, movement. It was essentially a debate between far-left forces.

For the SWP the ANL started life a glorified version of the Right to Work Campaign, something which would remain essentially under SWP control and would serve as a massive party building aid. In this they undoubtedly failed - the ANL took on a massive life of its own. It is difficult to assess intended or wanted the ANL to go as far as it has - whatever their subjective plans they in practice built an enormous anti-fascist movement, and for the first time in recent history engaged themselves in a real united front campaign.

The SWP have now clearly become disorientated by the success of the ANL, cutting across as it does some of their worst sectarian and economist habits. The upsurge in industrial struggles, coupled with the non-Election, has compounded these problems. The results are clear to see: complete lack of homogeneity in tactics in local ANL's; lack of profile and party building; consequent failure to recruit; upsurge of economism, 'back to the factories' in the ranks; etc etc.

This paralysis obviously will not last, but its immediate effect is that the SWP has an equivocal and vacillating attitude towards the ANL. This is potentially extremely dangerous, because it will undoubtedly open up room for the reformists to manoeuvre, will give elbow room to the sectarian opponents of the ANL, and create general confusion in the forces around the ANL.

It is now clear that there is a significant sectarian layer which has crystallised in opposition to the ANL. This doesn't merely embrace the grouplets, (the RCG, RCT, WSL, WP, etc) or the lunatic fringe (WRP etc) but also embraces a layer of anti-fascist militants from the old anti-fascist organisations. Finally, and importantly, a layer of black militants, basing themselves of quite genuine and correct criticisms of the ANL, have also adopted a thoroughly sectarian practical attitude to it, refusing to go into it and fight for their positions.

The confusion of the SWP and the emergence of both a reformist and a sectarian attack on the ANL gives a big responsibility to the IMG in fighting to preserve and take forward the forces mobilised around it.

3. It was in this context of a certain malaise within the ANL, coupled with attacks from without, that the National Front attempted to wreck the Carnival through a massive Lewisham style provocation in the East End, provoking a massive confrontation and thus 'exposing' the ANL.

It is important we take a sober account of the actual possibilities in the situation. Firstly, it was perfectly clear that the state had absolutely no intention of allowing the NF to provoke the black community. That community had already demonstrated an ability to take really massive action and any real NF threat would undoubtedly have been met with enormous resistance. Given this, and the 50,000 plus expected at the Carnival, any attempt to allow the NF to march into Brick Lane had all the makings of a political and possibly military defeat for the police.

Despite this realistic estimate however, it was absolutely correct to fight for a mobilisation to defend the area against the fascists, to place no reliance on the state. Such a mobilisation, to both appear and to actually be credible, needed a presence of at least 2-3 thousand on the streets, preferably a bit more. We fought for such a mobilisation through (i) an East London ANL mobilisation and (ii) forces to be sent from Hyde Park by the ANL. At the same time we fought for the Carnival to go on, arguing that the best response to the NF's provocation was a defended Brick Lane area and a massive Carnival.

This position was 100% confirmed by events. The failure of the ANL to send adequate forces, properly organised and in good time, to help defend the Brick Lane area was a big mistake which undermined confidence in the ANL itself and left that area without adequate self-defence. This decision also shows the very weak relations of the ANL with the black community and militants and the real dangers of an inadequate democratic structure.

On the other hand the position adopted by the Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Committees fell into the trap set by the NF. The Defence Committees call for 'everyone to Brick Lane' and for 'stopping the Front march' failed to understand either the need to have the Carnival or to adopt a defensive posture in Brick Lane. This position was both influenced by, and aided, the sectarian currents who oppose the ANL.

4. The period between the two Carnivals was essentially the period of growth and consolidation of the ANL forces as organised forces. The Carnivals themselves played a crucial centralising role. The General Election was to be the next major national focus.

In that period we were absolutely correct to adopt a position which said that the priority was to build the ANL organisations around its existing political basis. We were tactically opposed to the ANL adopting positions on a whole spectrum of anti-racist

???

/issues

which might have split the movement.

Now we are entering a much more complicated phase of the ANL's development where we want essentially to begin to turn it towards taking up anti-racist issues but again being very careful not to adopt sectarian tactics which would let the reformists off the hook. *they are going to leave.*

This is even more complicated by the fact that there are no obvious national foci for centralising the ANL, like the election.

There are three essential things which we have to take up to develop the forces around the ANL and take them in an anti-racist direction:

** central national initiatives, which attempt to minimise the inevitable fragmentation which is currently occurring (eg ANL TU Conference, ANL Conference)

** build on the gains of the ANL, using the ANL's strengths, its attraction to the youth and others, to build mass actions in the localities

** build the initiatives of the black movement and other anti-racist initiatives as a way of posing to the forces in the ANL the importance of taking up these questions.

It is quite possible for us, if we are sensitive enough, to take anti-racist issues into the ANL without being sectarian and giving the reformists the chance to opt-out. For example, the crucial question of immigration controls can be taken up on the 'opposition to the 71 and 68 Acts' basis which we have advanced which does not exclude the reformists. There is however no simple formula, no magic wand, which can solve all the tactical problems.

5. The major initiatives which the IMG has to put its efforts into in the following months are the following:

1) ANL TU CONFERENCE - (December 2) this was originally proposed to the ANL Conference by the IMG and is now actually happening. Given the massive growth of sectoral ANL groups (Dyers and Bleachers Against The Nazis, etc) this Conference will be extremely important. The central issue we want to inject into this Conference, and the sectoral groups, is that of racism in employment, along the lines indicated in the 'Racism and Black Liberation' document. We should recognise that as a 'sub-debate' we have to be absolutely clear on the 'no fascists in the Unions' campaign and resolutely oppose the ultra-left demand to expel all NF members from the Unions.

2) ANL CONFERENCE - three issues necessitate the calling of the ANL Conference promised at the last one - the organisational fragmentation of the ANL forces and the need for an authoritative conference to pull them back together; the need to prepare for the General Election adequately; the need to elect a genuinely authoritative leadership responsive to the ANL supporters (as illustrated by the Brick Lane fiasco). *not counterpose*

3) DEFENCE CAMPAIGNS the successes of the Wolverhampton Defence Campaign provide a basis for beginning to develop serious defence work in other areas. The coming together of the Tower Hamlets and Hackney Defence Committee and the ANL to launch a defence campaign for those arrested on the 24th is a major achievement. Similarly, in Manchester the Ahmed Defence Campaign is beginning to get off the ground. These campaigns serve the function not of simply defending victims of state attacks but of going onto the political offensive against state harassment of blacks and anti-racists.

4) SUPPORT BASH The development of BASH (Blacks Against State Harassment) is a qualitative step forward for the black movement, bringing together a wider range of forces in a single campaign than has been seen since the late sixties. It is paralleled by developments such as the Bradford Asian Youth Movement which has broken significant barriers between different groups of Asian youth. BASH/BAYM are planning important anti-racist initiatives and we must put real forces into building them nationally.

5) 'INDOOR CARNIVALS' to continue the initiative we should, where possible, fight for student unions etc to be turned over to the ANL/RAR/Steering Committees to hold big anti-racist festivals. Such festivals (in the spring) would attract thousands, give the scope for political debate and specifically anti-racist activity which was not present at the Carnival, and generally keep up the morale of the movement. Links can be built with the local black communities by using such events to promote 'speak outs' on state attacks, etc. In some areas it will be possible to launch labour/black movement enquiries seperately (eg Manchester).

6) SOWETO DEFENCE CAMPAIGN as has already been agreed in a seperate discussion we want to inject the issue of southern africa into the anti-fascist/anti-racist movement via the trials of the Soweto militants and launch the defence campaign which the AAM won't.

7) BUILD CAIL/CADRIL Whilst the main initiative for any real activity around immigration laws has to come from the black groups, we should continue to fight to establish united front bodies which co-ordinate and educate around this issue. The CAIL day-school (December 9) and its newsletter should be used; particularly by the London organisation, to take this issue and campaign into existing ANL(s, anti-racist cttees.

6. There is clearly a need for a certain propaganda offensive by the IMG around the 'new' issues and positions which we want to inject into the anti-racist movement. These centre around four issues:

- ** Black liberation/self-defence/self-determination/nationalism around which we now have a clear enough position to 'go public' and really project
- ** Racism at work where again we have a clear position and useful agitational material with which we can really begin to push into the movement
- ** Democratic Rights/Fascism where we have yet to fully clarify our positions but where we already have clear advantages over the ultra-lefts and the reformists which we fail to spell out adequately - *too right.*
- ** Strategy for an Anti-Racist Movement spelling out more clearly our conception of the relations between fascism and racism, our attitude towards an anti-fascist and anti-racist movement as well as towards a black liberation movement.

The exact form that this should take needs to be carefully discussed but we can agree initially on the following:

- i) More coverage in SC on the first two, linked to the NB tour.
- ii) Building the RABL School on December 3 (with NB) as a major national school to launch the debate on black liberation into the organisation as a whole.
- iii) using the NB meetings/interviews to take up these issues (using the US example) and project them into the anti-racist movement.
- iv) continue the debate already stimulated around Brick Lane to develop the question of self-defence.

Bob Hutton,
7 November 1978.