

Nick Griffin: a dedicated follower of fascism

Unite Against Fascism briefing document, October 2009

Introduction

This document is intended as a reference guide for anti-fascists seeking information about Nick Griffin, leader of the fascist British National Party (BNP) since 1999. In June this year Griffin gained a seat in the European Parliament representing the North West of England. This has led to hugely increased media exposure for both him and his organisation.

Journalists and politicians are by and large ignorant of Griffin's history and background in the fascist movement. Moreover, since 1999 Griffin has led the BNP on a path of consciously and deliberately hiding the party's Nazi political agenda. The combination of these two factors has meant that Griffin gets an easy ride in the press from interviewers and reporters who are either unwilling to confront him or incapable of dealing with a fascist who systematically dissembles in order to conceal his real views.

Unite Against Fascism believes that the BNP should be exposed as a Nazi organisation and driven out of the political arena. Media interviews and debates with BNP members rarely achieve this task and usually end up normalising the organisation's racist views. That is why UAF argues for the "no platform" position – journalists should refuse to interview the BNP and politicians should refuse to debate them. The BNP is not a democratic political party, and it should be shunned by civil society.

On the occasions when contact with the BNP cannot be avoided, it is still important to be armed with the facts about the organisation and to challenge it. Anyone who believes BNP representatives will somehow "expose themselves" if given a platform is deluding themselves. Griffin has spent the past decade covering up his Nazi views – he is not going to start goose stepping around the Question Time studio at the earliest opportunity. Anti-fascists have to expose the BNP – the BNP won't do it for them.

This document is split into two sections apart from this introduction. The first offers a potted biography of Nick Griffin and a political history of the BNP. We have avoided detailing every twist and turn in his ideological development and focused instead on the key points that anti-fascists need to know. The second lists quotes from Griffin that can be used against him, with notes on when he said them and how he tends to react when challenged. We have also included a few comments about how the quotes reflect BNP propaganda and tactics more generally.

Griffin's political history

Nick Griffin has been a Nazi for his entire adult life. He read Hitler's "Mein Kampf" aged 13, attended National Front meetings as a teenager and set up a National Front student group while studying at Cambridge University. After the National Front splintered in the early 1980s, Griffin got involved with a variety of Nazi outfits until ending up at the BNP in the mid 1990s.

During this period he strongly resisted any attempts to dilute the Nazi message and gained a reputation as a hardliner focused on Holocaust denial propaganda. He wrote a pamphlet called “Who Are The Mindbenders?” alleging Jewish control of the mass media. In 1998 Griffin was charged and convicted with incitement to racial hatred for publishing *The Rune*, an antisemitic Holocaust denying magazine.

Shortly after receiving a suspended sentence, Griffin executed a political U-turn. He challenged the BNP’s founder John Tyndall for leadership of the party and advocated a “Eurofascist” strategy of the sort pioneered by Jean-Marie Le Pen’s Front National in France. This involved playing down street thuggery and overtly Nazi and racist politics in order to present the BNP as a populist “patriotic” party. The aim would be to focus on electoral gains while developing a Nazi cadre at the core of the BNP.

Griffin won control of the BNP from Tyndall and soon started remoulding it along Le Pen’s lines. The BNP magazine was renamed “Identity”, emulating the Front National’s “Identité”. The BNP started holding annual “Red, White & Blue” festivals, emulating the Front National’s “Bleu, Blanc, Rouge” events. The more overtly thuggish elements of the party were sidelined. The focus on “rights for whites” was replaced with more fashionable discourse about cultural preservation.

In recent years Griffin has steered the BNP to focus on two targets: immigrants and Muslims. Its electoral propaganda focuses on attacking these groups and blaming them for social problems. But the party is still committed to a creating an “all-white Britain” (despite its current claims to desire only “voluntary repatriation”) and still deeply racist and antisemitic. Occasionally Griffin will flash a glimpse of these tendencies to reassure the Nazi faithful and harden up newer, softer supporters.

Nevertheless Griffin understands that the BNP’s success has come because of its ability to systematically dissemble about its true project. He knows that the “Nazi” tag is what really hurts him, and that overt 1970s-style racism is not a vote winner, even among the bigots he seeks to cultivate. That is why he will lie when challenged on the former score and dissemble when challenged on the latter (eg by invoking spurious distinctions between “civic” and “ethnic” Britishness).

Griffin in his own words

The following quotes from Nick Griffin are arranged thematically and accompanied by notes on sources, context and what kind of responses he gives when challenged on these issues today.

On the Nazi Holocaust:

“I am well aware that orthodox opinion is that six million Jews were gassed and cremated or turned into soap and lampshades. Orthodox opinion also once held that the earth is flat... I have reached the conclusion that the ‘extermination’ tale is a mixture of Allied wartime propaganda, extremely profitable lie, and latter [day] witch-hysteria.”

From Griffin’s 1998 trial for distributing material likely to incite racial hatred.

“There is no doubt that hundreds, probably thousands of Jews were shot to death in Eastern Europe, because they were rightly or wrongly seen as communists or potential partisan supporters. That was awful. But this nonsense about gas chambers is exposed as a total lie.”

From an interview in The Cook Report in 1999.

Griffin was convicted in 1998 and received a nine month prison sentence suspended for two years. The charges related to The Rune, an antisemitic Holocaust denying magazine that he produced. In the magazine he also described the Holocaust as “the Holofoax” and “the hoax of the 20th century”.

It is astonishing how rarely journalists bring up this criminal conviction when interviewing Griffin. On the rare occasions when he has been challenged about it, he claims that he has since changed his mind and that he now accepts that the Holocaust took place (albeit with question marks over numbers or methods of extermination). When pressed on why he changed his mind, he implausibly claims that he cannot go into details since it is “illegal under EU law”.

On racist murders:

Stephen Lawrence: “Everyone down there knows he was notorious for taxing kids for their dinner money and he was a drug dealer. According to many people within the Metropolitan police, he was killed by another black – not a white racist attack at all.”

From a speech made in 2004 in Morley, West Yorkshire, and filmed secretly by the BBC.

Anthony Walker: “This was made out as a Stephen Lawrence-style cause célèbre. The truth is, you talk to any one around here, that isn’t the case. Everybody says Anthony Walker was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. It wasn’t a racist murder and there’s no doubt about that.”

From a BNP video made earlier this year and posted on YouTube.

These statements by Griffin have received very little publicity. They display a standard BNP tactic of presenting white people as the “real victims of racism”. Hence the party systematically claims that high profile racist murders were “not really racist”. Conversely, murders of white people by black and Asian people are painted as “racist” regardless of the actual motivation behind them.

On black British people:

“We don’t subscribe to the politically correct fiction that just because they happen to be born in Britain, a Pakistani is a Briton. They’re not. They remain of Pakistani stock. You can’t say that especially large numbers of people can come from the rest of the world and assume an English identity without denying the English their own identity, and I would say that’s wrong. In a very subtle way, it’s a sort of bloodless genocide.”

From an interview with BBC Radio 4 earlier this year.

Griffin is uncomfortable about claiming that black people are not truly British and tends to gloss the issue when cornered, by claiming that black people are British “in civic terms” but not British “as an ethnic description”.

Journalists invariably accept this explanation, rather than asking the obvious question of which “British” the BNP means when it talks of putting “British people first”.

The latest version of the BNP constitution states that the party is “wholly opposed to any form of racial integration” and is “committed to stemming and reversing the tide of non-white immigration” in order to restore “the overwhelmingly white make up of the British population that existed prior to 1948”. Britain is currently 92 percent white – but clearly this isn’t overwhelming enough for the BNP.

On Islam:

“We’re faced with the progressive Islamification of the West. The total transformation, destruction of our civilization within the next few decades... You give me twenty minutes or an hour, a special programme to dissect the Koran, and I will show you that we have a monster in our midst... There’s a fundamental clash coming between Islam and the West.”

From an interview with the BBC in 2004.

“Western values, freedom of speech, democracy and rights for women are incompatible with Islam, which is a cancer eating away at our freedoms and our democracy and rights for our women and something needs to be done about it.”

From an interview with Channel 4 news earlier this year.

“Any woman that they can take by force or guile is theirs. If they get a non-Muslim girl and they get her pregnant then her community doesn't want her and the child generally grows up to be a Muslim. And that’s the way that this wicked vicious faith has expanded from a handful of cranky lunatics about thirteen hundred years ago, till it’s now sweeping country after country before it all over the world.”

From a speech made in 2004 in Morley, West Yorkshire, and filmed secretly by the BBC.

In recent years Griffin has started aggressively promoting “Eurabia” conspiracy theories about a covert Muslim takeover of Europe. These theories were confined to fringe elements of the racist right until a few years ago but have increasingly entered the mainstream, with commentators such as Christopher Caldwell and Max Hastings pushing respectable versions of this thesis.

The Morley speech led to an unsuccessful attempt in 2006 to prosecute Griffin for incitement to racial hatred. The failure to convict Griffin has led the BNP to be more aggressive in its attacks on Muslims than on any other group. For many in the BNP “Muslim” has become code for “Asian”.

On gay people:

“The TV footage of dozens of gay demonstrators flaunting their perversions in front of the world’s journalists showed just why so many ordinary people find these creatures so repulsive.”

Griffin wrote these words after the April 1999 bombing of the Admiral Duncan pub in Soho that killed three people. The bomb was the third planted by David Copeland, a former BNP security steward. Copeland said his aim was to start

a “race war” so that white people would go out and vote BNP. Griffin has to our knowledge never been challenged on this statement.

On the aims of the BNP:

“The electors of Millwall did not back a postmodernist rightist party, but what they perceived to be a strong, disciplined organisation with the ability to back up its slogan ‘Defend Rights For Whites’ with well-directed boots and fists. When the crunch comes, power is the product of force and will, not of rational debate.”

Written in the wake of the BNP winning its first council seat on the Isle of Dogs in 1993.

“I want to help stop the immigration which is destroying this and every other white nation in the world. Then I want to see that deadly tide turned. I want to see Britain become the 99 per cent genetically white country she was just eleven years before I was born.”

From an article in the BNP’s Spearhead magazine, November 1998

“Instead of presenting the party as a revolutionary alternative to the system, we must present them [the electorate] with an image of moderate reasonableness... Of course we must teach the truth to the hardcore. But when it comes to influencing the public, forget about racial differences, genetics, Zionism, historical revisionism and so on.”

Article in the BNP’s Patriot magazine, 1999

“There’s a difference between selling out your ideas and selling your ideas. The British National Party is not about selling out its ideas – which are your ideas too – but we are determined now to sell them. And that means, basically, to use the saleable words: freedom, security, identity, democracy.”

Speech to the American Friends of the BNP, April 2000, alongside KKK leader David Duke

The chronology of these quotes is important. In 1993 Griffin was opposed to the BNP’s current strategy, which is precisely to pose as a “postmodernist rightist party”, and argued in favour of an openly fascist organisation. Over the years from 1990 to 2001 he steered the BNP onto its new course, in the process spelling out to the party faithful that this meant a change in the party’s language and image rather than any fundamental change in its Nazi political orientation.

In particular during this period Griffin openly argued that the BNP’s commitment to “voluntary repatriation” would be a temporary measure only. Once in power, the BNP would enact legislation to make life intolerable for all those it deemed “racial foreigners” and then make moves towards “compulsory repatriation”. Of course, no kind of “repatriation” will be possible without a campaign of racial terror waged against Britain’s ethnic minorities – and that is what the BNP intends to whip up, regardless of what it might publicly claim.

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