

ALL OUT AGAINST FASCISM!

KNOW YOUR HISTORY

Antifascism in Scotland

Spanish Civil War 1930s

Glasgow's monument to the volunteers of the International Brigades depicts Dolores Ibarruri, La Pasionaria, who popularised the phrase "No Pasarán" in her speech of April 1936 to the besieged population of Madrid. The statue remembers the 65 volunteers from Glasgow who were killed in the fight against Fascism in Spain. Young men and women went from across Scotland to volunteer in Spain, from anarchist broadcasters and printshop pioneers Ethel MacDonald and Jenny Patrick to International Brigades fighters like Alexander Marcowich, a Jewish anti-fascist from the Gorbals.



No platform for fascists 1930s

At the gates of Queens Park political speakers would regularly address large crowds. Though most speakers were from left-wing socialist, anarchist and communist groups, in 1936 members of the British Union of Fascists tried to hold a meeting at the gates. But here, as on all other occasions when they tried to meet publicly in Glasgow, they were beaten back by young people from the Jewish Workers' Organisation, the Young Communist League, and the Labour League of Youth. The protesters would disrupt proceedings with loud shouting and singing to drown out the speeches, or sometimes taking more direct action. Monty Berkely remembered confronting fascist politician William Joyce: "I had the privilege of taking one of the platform legs and throwing the platform up in the air. We then had to run and were chased by the police but got away." This is the origins of the phrase 'no platforming'.

National Front 1970s

The National Front rose in popularity across the UK through the 1970s. NF meetings took place across Scotland, frequently met with huge counter-demos organised by trade unions and anti-fascist. In 1975 an anti-fascist picket of a NF meeting in the Kingston Halls on Paisley Rd was violently attacked by the police, and five van-loads of people were arrested and taken to a nearby police station in Govan. Some of those arrested discovered an open window in the police station, climbed out and took the bus back to rejoin the picket where they were promptly re-arrested by the confused officers.

Anti-Fascist Action & Red Action 1980-90s

Glasgow branches of these connected militant anti-fascist organisations were active throughout the 80s and 90s. AFA operated a "twin-track" strategy of both physical and ideological confrontation with fascists. Red Action formed initially as a rapid response unit to street violence by NF skinheads in London.



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British Union of Fascists 1930s

Oswald Mosely claimed that “he experienced more enthusiasm for his speeches calling for a fascist, Jew-free utopia in Scotland than in England.” While the BUF’s numbers in Glasgow never topped 50, strongholds of fascism existed around the country. Their magazine described Galloway as ‘the cradle of Fascism in Scotland’ and the Dalbeattie branch was the largest in the country with 400 members. Some have suggested that the reason for Fascism’s lack of success in Scotland as a political ideology was not due to morality but sectarianism, given the association between fascist regimes and the Catholic church in Spain and Italy.

Support for Franco 1930s

Not everyone in Scotland supported the Republican cause in Spain. There was a Scottish branch of the Friends of National Spain. They held a meeting in St Andrews Hall — now part of the Mitchell Library — in April 1938 which was hotly contested by the Socialist Group on Glasgow Town Council. After much discussion it was eventually allowed to go ahead on the grounds of free speech. 1,500 people turned up to hear a speech by Arnold Lunn speak, an ardent supporter of Franco. The audience struggled to hear him though as he was “confronted with continuous interruptions, clenched fists and attempts at singing the Internationale”.

Scottish Defence League 2010s

A tiny fringe group, the SDL marched through Pollokshields, one of Glasgow’s most diverse neighbourhoods, in 2013. Throughout the 2010s the group mustered small rallies and activity attempting to create division among smaller communities across Scotland hosting refugees.

Patriotic Alternative 2020s

PA is a white nationalist group whose supporters in Scotland include neo-Nazis and former members of the BNP and the SDL. The Ferret reported in 2021 on a leaked list, claimed to have been compiled by the group’s Scottish wing, which collected information on anti-fascist groups and individuals. The whistleblower said he had left PA because he “thought the organisation was a fucking farce”.

Be Vigilant

The appeal of fascism is not limited to one political tendency. The ideology has held fascination for high-profile Scottish nationalists like poet Hugh MacDiarmid, one of the founders of the SNP who in the 20s and 30s wrote of the need for a Scottish Fascism — before seeing the horror of Spain and Germany. On the unionist side, the historic ideas of the Orange Order have often fed into white supremacist ideas given the racialisation of Irish Catholics.

BRITISH UNION OF FASCISTS
Scottish Campaign
(GALLOWAY CONSTITUENCY).
J. M. LITTLE
WILL SPEAK ON
FASCISM
TOWN HALL, CASTLE-DOUGLAS,
FRIDAY, MARCH 1st, at 8 p.m.
MISSION FREE. RESERVED AREA — 1, 2, 3
b Street, Dalbeattie.
“BRITAIN FIRST.”