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'PROMOTING MULTICULTURALISM AND COMBATING RACISM – BEST PRACTICES FROM THE 'NEVER AGAIN' ASSOCIATION'

Never Again Association¹



The 'Never Again' Association is the leading anti-racist organization in Poland. Its mission is to promote multicultural understanding and contribute to the development of democratic civil society in Poland, as well as in broader regions of Central and Eastern Europe. 'Never Again' is particularly concerned with the problem of education against racial and ethnic prejudices of the youth. The Association was established as an informal group in 1992 and it was officially registered in 1996 as an independent organization, not linked to any political party.

When getting to know the 'Never Again' Association, it is necessary to learn about Marcin Kornak, who passed away on the 20th of March 2014. He was a co-founder and the chairman of the 'Never Again' Association as well as the editor-in-chief of the *Nigdy Więcej* magazine. He initiated high-profile campaigns called "Music Against Racism" and "Let's Kick Racism out of the Stadiums" and he authored several editions of *The Brown Book*, which will be discussed more closely in the next sections. Marcin Kornak was also an Ambassador of the Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE).

Born in 1968, Marcin Kornak was confined to a wheelchair since the age of 15. He was renowned as a poet and the

¹ During the Dialogue, the NA Association was represented by Mr. Jacek Purski.

author of lyrics for several independent rock bands. During his time as the leader of the Association, he received several highly recognized awards for his activities. For example, in 2011 the President of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski, awarded Kornak the Officer's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta – one of the highest honours in Poland. Marcin Kornak was fighting against racism, discrimination and inequality throughout his entire life; his lifetime project, the 'Never Again' Association, is derived from his personal beliefs and values, and is committed to keep Marcin's memory alive.

The major objectives of the 'Never Again' Association include: breaking the silence and raising awareness of the problems of racism and xenophobia; building a broad and inclusive movement against racism and discrimination, a movement for respect, inclusivity and diversity; eliminating or marginalising racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic tendencies in various spheres of life.

The organization mostly deals with young, often rebellious people, who incline towards the ideology of the far right in their search of a sense of belonging or a structure they could identify with. Such groups are often involved in football hooliganism, and they support racial and nationalist tensions generated alongside club rivalry that might escalate into violence. Most of group-related hatred and exclusion that the 'Never Again' Association copes with revolves around race- and ethnicity-based prejudices and the resulting discrimination. Some of those prejudices, especially xenophobia and anti-Semitism, are additionally fuelled by the right-wing political discourse and fundamentalist religious beliefs. The common profile is a young male, under the influence of extreme right-wing ideology or inclined to such influence. Radical football supporters form a substantial part of this group, and sports venues are a popular recruiting ground for violent extremist organizations. Their hatred towards certain ethnic or racial groups is often correlated with the notion of being a "true Pole" and their hostility towards anything deemed as "foreign". This attitude is heavily influenced by extremist ideology and groups. Such individuals have little regard for state and civil service bodies such as the police, which is perceived as their enemy. They openly manifest their beliefs and convictions and do not hesitate to resort to physical violence. Therefore, the main goal of the Association is to minimise the influence of these far-right groups on the youth.

Education and awareness-raising form a major part of the Association's work. The Association has adopted an extensive approach in this field and strives to work with and give training to various target groups, including teachers and law enforcement officials. Its goal is to provide them with relevant information, practical knowledge and tools that will allow them to be more efficient in their work. Such training sessions help them understand

and recognise various radical ideologies and groups inclined towards them, as well as provide information on the best approach. This basic knowledge forms a strong core on which they can rely in their work. Teachers, as the first line workers, continue to draw from the knowledge acquired during the Association's seminars and thus spread its message further on. They are also better equipped to recognise and deal with displays of extremism and students prone to such behaviours. Similarly, police officers learn to understand the nature of radicalisation and of the processes that may lead towards it, which helps them identify radical nationalist hooligans and to approach them accordingly. Such approach allows the Association to reach a remarkable number of final recipients, as each teacher/police officer works with a vast group of people. Educational initiatives are supported by constant monitoring of racist incidents, which also contributes to raising awareness of the issues at hand. 'Never Again' publishes *The Brown Book* – an extensive register of racist incidents committed all over Poland.

The Association tackles the problem of racism and xenophobia from different angles in order to deal with it most effectively. Its main projects in this fight are summarised below.

“MUSIC AGAINST RACISM”

The “Music Against Racism” campaign in Poland was inspired by the British Rock Against Racism movement initiated by Tom Robinson in the late 1970s. As a part of the Polish campaign, several compilation CDs were released in cooperation with independent music labels, featuring well-known Polish and foreign rock bands. Moreover, numerous concerts were organised under its patronage. One of such events, the environmentalist and anti-racist “Polish Woodstock” Festival, organised by the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity (WOŚP) in August 2000, gathered a massive crowd of 250,000 young people, who responded enthusiastically to the anti-racist message. Many musicians made anti-fascist statements from the stage and the ‘Never Again’ information booth was constantly occupied throughout the three-day festival. Since then, the event was successfully repeated each year with strong presence of ‘Never Again’ and its proactive anti-racist campaigns. In addition, numerous artists put the “Music Against Racism” logo on the sleeves of their records. The success of the Association in convincing many respected musicians to take a stand against racism was possible thanks to a wide range of personal contacts in the music environment, especially those of the Association's late chairman, Marcin Kornak. Musicians appeared to be very responsive to the campaign. “It is difficult for me to talk about specific reasons for my involvement in this campaign, because resistance against racism for me is as obvious and natural as blood in the veins,”

said Krzysztof Grabaż Grabowski, the singer of the Polish rock legend Pidżama Porno. Grabowski wrote a special song called “Antifa”, which has become the anthem of the campaign. The campaign used data gathered by the correspondents’ network to illustrate the seriousness of the problem of racism and reached out to all members of its audience with a call to action. The “One Race Human Race” compilation CD cover included a list of victims of racism-motivated murders committed in Poland in the recent years, while “Support, Help, Join Us” was the message repeated on all “Music Against Racism” compilations. The idea was to inspire listeners to become active agents of social change rather than passive music consumers. More than 100 concerts were held under the banner of “Music Against Racism” all over Poland and many of the organisers were members of the Association’s information network. At numerous other concerts (of all music styles!) anti-racist information desks were set up by activists encouraging young people to reflect on the issue of racism and intolerance. In 1998, the “Music Against Racism” campaign was voted one of three major music events of the year by readers of *Brum*, a popular music monthly. The campaign was initially intended to end in 2001, but it has been continued spontaneously by the people all over the country.

“LET’S KICK RACISM OUT OF THE STADIUMS”

The Association’s other, more recent, major campaign concentrates on sports – football in particular. It differs from the music campaign in that it is more of a defensive attempt to combat the evident racism in an influential cultural scene, namely a recruitment possibility. The sports campaign is considerably more difficult because football stadiums until now have been almost completely dominated by the xenophobic subculture. “Let’s Kick Racism out of the Stadiums” is the only anti-racist campaign in Poland aimed at football fans, but it has been inspired by the success of similar campaigns in England, Germany, Italy and Austria. The Association publishes *Stadion*, an anti-racist magazine for football fans, and usually runs a sports column in the *Nigdy Więcej* magazine itself. In April 2002, in the run-up to the World Cup, in cooperation with the Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) network, the Association released the CD “Let’s Kick Racism out of the Stadiums” and printed a poster featuring Emmanuel Olisadebe, Poland’s first black international player and a fervent supporter of the Association’s campaign. Several amateur football tournaments have been organised as part of the campaign, most notably during the “PolishWoodstock” Festival, the already mentioned largest free open-air music event in Europe. In addition, ‘Never Again’ gives support to local anti-racist groups of football fans by providing them with leaflets, posters, banners, etc. Until now, the best results

have been achieved at several small clubs, which now have a strong anti-fascist following. Many genuine football fans no longer go to football games because of the violent, xenophobic environment. It affects women and various minorities in particular, but also many other fans who still love the game but are disgusted by the atmosphere which prevails at the stadiums. Other fans still attend but do not like the display of xenophobic culture. Until recently, such fans felt isolated from each other. These people have increasingly responded to the anti-racist campaign and, in several cases, volunteered to become correspondents for the network. The enormous popularity of Nigerian-born Emmanuel Olisadebe, who became the best player in the Polish national team, added momentum to the anti-racist campaign in sports. Emanuel has consistently supported 'NEVER AGAIN' in its attempts to highlight the problem of racism at the stadiums.



Picture 1. Training of the Polish National Team supported by the "Let's kick racism out of stadiums" campaign. Photo: Never Again Association

"UEFA EURO 2012 RESPECT DIVERSITY CAMPAIGN"

Prior to the UEFA EURO 2012, in 2009 'Never Again' established the East Europe Monitoring Centre, in cooperation with UEFA and the FARE network, which documents racism and xenophobia across the region. In 2012, this network implemented the "Respect Diversity – Football Unites"

social responsibility project, accompanying the European Football Championships in Poland and Ukraine. In this project, the 'NEVER AGAIN' Association took a leading role in carrying out the following activities:

- Setting up an educational programme concentrating on increasing teachers' understanding of anti-racist education and supporting pedagogical approaches in this area. Similar workshops and training sessions were organised for the police, helping them to understand the nature of hate crimes and identify radical individuals prone to commit them.
- To help address concerns about the possibility of increased far right activity and discriminatory behaviour during Euro 2012, a full monitoring programme was put in place by FARE and UEFA. A minimum of two independent monitors recruited by FARE attended all 31 tournament matches. The role of the monitors was to report back to UEFA officials on far right activities in run-ups to each match and to report on any incidents which occurred during the game. FARE also put together a booklet called *Monitoring offensive and discriminatory signs in European football*, which was provided to all FARE monitors and UEFA security officials. In total, 13 incidents were reported to UEFA by FARE during Euro 2012. Five of them related to racist or homophobic comments or chanting and 8 concerned the display of racist and/or far right banners. Using evidence provided by FARE, UEFA imposed fines in seven of those cases.
- Arranging Inclusive Zones helped create a positive and welcoming environment across Poland and Ukraine. FARE and 'Never Again' established a series of Inclusive Zones, i.e. spaces which were open and welcoming to all. The original aim had been to set 200 spaces as Inclusive Zones, but by the end of Euro 2012 a total of 2,462 sites were designated as such. These included shops, cafes, schools, sports centres and government buildings. All zones were provided with promotional information such as posters and stickers featuring the "Respect Diversity – Football Unites" message to indicate that they were a part of the initiative.

"RACISM DELETE"

'Never Again' launched the "Racism Delete" project in 2004 to combat racism and anti-Semitism on the Internet. "Racism Delete" is primarily concerned with the fight against online hate speech and is actively monitoring the World Wide Web in order to detect such incidents and report them. The main ways in which this campaign works are through the creation of the 'Never Again' Association website, internet monitoring, and blocking Polish-language neo-fascist sites. Apart from this monitoring function, the project is also actively lobbying in favour of laws which restrict cybercrime.

As this is still a fairly new topic, and not yet fully defined by the law, it is important to push motions forward in order to have a better legal basis to grasp it. One of these actions involved lobbying for the ratification of the European Convention on Cybercrime with the Add. Protocol on Combating Racism (finally signed by the President at the end of 2014).



Picture 2. Paul Elliott – former player of Chelsea London supports the Never Again Association and RESPECT Diversity – Football Unites. Photo: Never Again Association

“THE BROWN BOOK”

The Brown Book is a publication that records various statements that are racist, anti-Semitic, or nationalist, hostile and aggressive in nature. Through the Association’s national network of voluntary correspondents and regular grass-roots contacts with various minority communities, ‘Never Again’ has built the most extensive register of racist incidents and other xenophobic crimes committed in Poland. So far, the published volumes of *The Brown Book* cover the years 1989-2014.

NIGDY WIĘCEJ, THE “NEVER AGAIN” MAGAZINE

Since 1994, an important part of the Association’s activity is the *Nigdy Więcej* magazine, the most serious periodical in Poland dealing with and standing in opposition to neo-fascism. It provides reliable information and in-depth analysis of hate crime as well as extremist and racist groups oper-

ating in Poland and in the rest of Europe. The Association's magazine is highly regarded and eagerly read by a highly diverse group. It is easily accessible and distributed through Empik, Poland's largest bookstore chain.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

At present, 'Never Again' is approaching the field of prison work and has already become a source of reference for those involved in de-radicalisation work. The Association provides help with regard to carrying out first-line work, as well as advice on how to approach and deal with extremists and hate crime offenders. The Association also broadly promotes the implementation of the best practices regarding both combating racism and hate crime, as well as promoting a positive, inclusive public discourse on multiculturalism and diversity.

The Association's work over the years has contributed to its strong position and nation-wide recognition among various groups. On several occasions, 'Never Again' was approached by former neo-Nazi extremists who wished to change their lives and leave their subculture's structures. The Association provided support and guided them through the process of rehabilitation. Such experiences formed the basis of case studies presented in the *Nigdy Więcej* magazine, and undoubtedly serve as an educational resource and inspiration.

Moreover, 'Never Again' has participated in important initiatives to commemorate the Holocaust and to combat the attempts to deny it. This work is highly valued by the Jewish community in Poland and in 2011 it earned the Medal of Honour of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

The Association also provides information directly to journalists and researchers interested in the problem of racism and xenophobia. 'Never Again' has been consulted by numerous programmes on the national and foreign television (including BBC, CNN, Euronews, ARTE), as well as assisted in writing many articles for the national and international press (including *The Guardian*, *USA Today*, *Le Monde*, *Die Tageszeitung*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*). More than 3,000 press articles, books, TV and radio broadcasts have been prepared in cooperation with the 'Never Again' Association.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The most remarkable achievements of the 'Never Again' Association so far are:

- Several editions of *The Brown Book* including over 1000 incidents of racism and discrimination documented and published
- The *Nigdy Więcej* magazine: 21 issues distributed in Poland

- › Decline in the number of racist incidents in football stadiums as a result of educational programmes
- › Successful, peaceful and non-racist UEFA EURO 2012 in Poland and Ukraine
- › Hundreds of CDs and concerts under the “Music Against Racism” logo
- › Over 300 Websites closed due to their racist contents
- › Inclusion of Article 13 in the Polish Constitution (prohibition of racist/fascist parties) in 1997
- › Raising public awareness and recognition of racism and discrimination through education
- › Over 1000 press articles, in national and international TV, Radio and Web publications
- › Approximately 10 000 followers on social media (FB, Twitter, Youtube, etc.)
- › Awards, including the medal “Distinguished for Tolerance” (2006), European Football Supporters Award (2010).

‘Never Again’ has provided expertise to institutions such as the Parliamentary Committee on National and Ethnic Minorities and was consulted about legislation on issues of racism and xenophobia. It campaigned for a ban on racist and neo-Nazi activities to be included in the Constitution of Poland. It has been consulted by the National Action Plan against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and many other key documents.

‘Never Again’ has cooperated with international organisations, including the Council of Europe, the United Nations, the European Union, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It has actively participated in international networks, including Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE), UNITED for Intercultural Action, the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly (hCa), and the Anti-fascist Network for Research and Education (Antifanet).