

WHITE NOISE

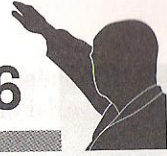


**inside the
international nazi skinhead scene**

edited by Nick Lowles and Steve Silver

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CHAPTER 6



Nazi Music in Poland by Rafał Pankowski of *Nigdy Wiecej* magazine

THE FIRST SKINHEADS appeared in Poland in the mid-1980s. The majority of them were former punk-rock fans who felt punk had become "too safe" for their taste. They sought a more brutal, tough and sharp image and they found it in skinhead subculture. Some sensational articles in the press helped spread the skinhead fashion.

Swastikas and open Hitler-worshipping as well as violence were then very much part and parcel of the cult. The British nazi band Skrewdriver had the most influence on the Polish skin scene from the very beginning, both musically and ideologically.

Skinhead music at that time was rare. It was difficult to obtain Western records and Polish bands with a skinhead following were few. Usually they could hardly play, and they had little opportunity to play live, not to mention record deals. The main bands with skinhead following in the late 1980s were Sexbomba, Ramzes & The Hooligans, Buty Doktora Martensa, Baranki Boze and BTM. These early bands did not advocate nazism but many of their songs had lyrics that were clearly xenophobic and racist and praised the anti-social hooligan way of life. Later some of them, such as Sexbomba, distanced themselves from the skinhead cult.

The only skinhead fanzine at the time was *Fajna Gazeta* published by another former punk-rocker, Jarosław Tomaszewicz, who later became a leading "intellectual" Third Positionist in the 1990s. *Fajna Gazeta* was largely devoted to articles about violence.

Since there were few skinhead gigs in those years, the skins concentrated on disrupting other concerts instead. The most publicised cases of skinheads attacking rock events were the Róbrege festival in Warsaw in 1987, 1988 and 1990 and the Metalmania festival in Katowice in 1990 when one skin was killed during the fight.

In the beginning the movement lacked organisation and was generally chaotic. Violence was its *raison d'être* and there was no serious political content. The first orchestrated attempt to use the skinheads for political aims came in the late 1980s. Poland was still a communist country, but the regime was visibly weakening and various political groups were emerging. Among them there were extreme-right and nationalist parties





Konkwista 88

such as Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski (National Revival of Poland, NOP). NOP was the first extreme right-wing organisation which had some success in recruiting skinheads. The band Legion, consisting of NOP sympathisers, also played a part in this venture. NOP and other radical nationalist groups discouraged skins from using symbols from the nazi era. It was

the beginning of a split between the openly nazi and the "national-Catholic" element within the skinhead subculture in Poland. New fanzines *Skinhead Sarmata* and *Czas Młodych* supported the "patriots" against the "nazis".

In the early 1990s, after the collapse of communism, the skinhead music scene developed, with bands such as Konkwista 88, Honor, Zadruga, Cyklon B, Szczerbiec, Sztorm 68, Biala Armia, Kiosk Ruchu, and many others. Festivals such as "Oi! dla Ojczyzny" (Oi! for the Fatherland) were organised and demo tapes were produced and distributed without difficulties. Many nazi gigs took place in state-owned cultural centres. The fascist Polish National Community-Polish National Party (Polska Wspólnota Narodowa-Polskie Stronnictwo Narodowe, PWN-PSN) supported this music scene and the 60-year-old party leader Boleslaw Tejkowski himself was seen attending gigs.

Numerous fanzines were launched at that time, including *Falanga*, *Odlam Skiny*, *Victory Oi*, *Skinhead Polski*, *Zwycięzimy*, and many others.

The city of Wrocław in western Poland had arguably the strongest skin scene in the country. It could boast Konkwista 88, the most notorious of Polish nazi rock bands. Konkwista 88 developed extensive international links and it has appeared on numerous international nazi compilations throughout the 1990s. Konkwista 88, Honor, and other openly national socialist bands formed the Aryan Survival Front (Aryjski Front Przetrwania, AFP). The AFP was modelled on the British organisation Blood and Honour. It was set up as an alternative to political parties and was meant to be a purely skinhead organisation. Among others, it organised the infamous Hitler Festival in 1992. The AFP was also responsible for a gig by the British nazi band No Remorse. A concert featuring Skrewdriver was planned too, but did not happen because of the death of Ian Stuart Donaldson, Skrewdriver's lead singer. On several occasions AFP members travelled to attend nazi gigs abroad. In the autumn of 1992 they were arrested by the Dutch police for causing trouble and wearing nazi insignia. The AFP was certainly the most extreme politically of all skinhead organisations in Poland.

Ironically, it disintegrated in 1994 when Robson, its founder and leader (who was also the manager of Konkwista 88 and editor of the AFP publication *Szturmowiec - The Stormtrooper*), became disillusioned with

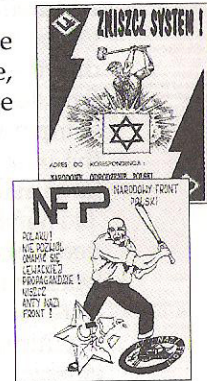
fascist ideas (see *Disarray among Poland's fascists*, *Searchlight*, October 1994). He was repeatedly threatened by his former friends who tried to punish "the traitor of the white race". However, he was not intimidated and made a brave decision to go public by giving a long and candid interview to *Nigdy Wiecej* (*Never Again*), Poland's main anti-fascist magazine, in which he revealed many details about the nazi movement (see *Former Polish nazi leader goes public*, *Searchlight*, April 1997). Today, Robson is a left-wing activist and an anti-fascist, an unusual example of an individual who has been able to acknowledge his past mistakes.

After the disintegration of the main group in Wrocław, some local branches were still using the name AFP for some time, while the organisation's rump in Wrocław called itself White Legion (Biały Grom).

Konkwista 88 was the first Polish skinhead band that released their own CDs. The records were produced in the Czech Republic and imported to Poland. Many of them were later sold to Western distributors or exchanged for Western nazi records. The first vinyl records were released in 1993. They were singles from Konkwista 88, BTM, and Zadruga. Soon afterwards the nazi skinhead music scene received a major boost thanks to Fan Records, the first fully professional record label with good distribution channels. Both national socialist bands such as Konkwista 88 and nationalist Catholic bands such as Legion appeared on Fan Records. A tape by Legion is said to have sold a massive 30,000 copies. Fan Records also released recordings by other bands such as Surowa Generacja, Odrodzenie, Szczerbiec, and numerous compilations, including *White Pride Worldwide*, an international compilation.

These tapes were sold openly in mainstream record shops all over the country without any apparent obstacles from the authorities. It was only because of the pressure from the emerging anti-fascist movement that nazi distributors have found it increasingly difficult to sell their hate products. In April 1996, after an anti-racist demonstration, a petition was addressed to the city authorities of Szczecin which called for a halt to nazi music being distributed in the city. The police subsequently raided one of the music shops and confiscated some nazi records. Unfortunately, charges against the owner of the shop were dropped, but to this day access to nazi rock music remains more difficult in Szczecin. In June 1998 the local prosecutor in Wrocław launched an investigation against the producers of a tape by Konkwista 88. The case is still pending.

Generally, the attitude of the authorities towards racist music has been lax. This situation continues despite the provisions of the penal code stating that it is forbidden to praise fascism, or to incite racial, ethnic, or religious





hatred (the penalty is six months to eight years in jail). It is a specific offence to distribute papers, recordings or films with such contents (article 273 of the penal code). A new code was passed through parliament and is expected to come into force by the end of 1998. It makes the penalties for hate crimes slightly less severe and introduces fines as an alternative to imprisonment.

After a period of growth the nazi music scene suffered a major setback in 1997 because of the demise of Fan Records. The business was probably not lucrative enough for the skinheads-turned-entrepreneurs who ran it and matters were made more difficult when public pressure caused the Office for the Protection of the State to issue a warning to the company for distributing racist material. The media took an interest in the activities of Fan Records too, among them *Nigdy Wiecej* which revealed the company's real address and published a photo of its office in Zabrze. At the moment Fan Records has moved out of its office and seems not to have made any new releases for over a year.

The short-lived Polish section of Blood and Honour, led by Pawel Bednarski in Olsztyn, has been temporarily inactive as well, after its headquarters were raided by the Office for the Protection of the State in October 1996. However, Polish Blood and Honour had never been significant. The Hammerskins do not have a serious Polish equivalent either. A Polish section of the US-based nazi NSDAP/A-O, composed of nazi skinheads, has been founded in Gdansk recently but has not yet developed. The growth of anti-racist and non-political currents within skinhead subculture also added to the confusion among the boneheads.

Another setback for the nazi music scene was the failure of a big event with an expected audience of 1,500. The gig was supposed to take place in Dzierzoniów on 14 December 1997 and bands from Poland, Germany and the Netherlands were expected to perform. However, after a last-minute intervention by the local Anti-Nazi Group and the *Nigdy Wiecej* Association, the owner of the venue cancelled the event.

National Rock Scene (Narodowa Scena Rockowa, NSR) is a new organisation trying to revive the right-wing music scene after the series of misfortunes. Mariusz Bechta, the founder of the NSR, is a history student at Warsaw University and he has links with the editors of *Reakcja* (formerly *Auditorium*), a conservative student broadsheet with a circulation of about 20,000. *Reakcja* has been noted for promoting extreme right-wing music on its pages. Bechta's idea is for racist music to move out of the current ghetto of the nazi-skin circle and to promote it using more mainstream channels, such as the large-circulation right-wing newspapers. The NSR has its own page in *Mysl Polska*, a nationalist weekly, and for some time it had its own column in the right-wing daily *Glos* until it was kicked out after publishing a nakedly racist interview with the American nazi band Bound for Glory.



The NSR also produces its own fanzine and it is starting to release tapes on its own. It strives to bring the fascist music scene closer to the nationalist right and tries to promote the Catholic rather than the nazi-pagan bands. It remains to be seen whether this attempt to restore the movement's vigour has a chance to succeed.

There have also been attempts to widen the range of music genres used to promote extreme-right politics. Most skinhead bands in Poland play primitive Oi! music, which is basically simple punk-rock with racist lyrics. Some bands who have been active for a longer time, such as Konkwista 88, moved musically towards mainstream hard rock with a number of kitsch ballads in their set. The acoustic bard Leszek Czajkowski, who is popular on the conservative right, plays some songs with antisemitic lyrics. He was featured on the cover of one of the issues of the NSR fanzine and he has been approached by Bechta for longer-term co-operation.

On the other hand fascism and antisemitism raised their ugly heads in the Black Metal music scene. The band Graveland has been the principal exponent of a mixture of nazism, paganism and satanism, copied from Norwegian nazis active in the Black Metal music scene who were responsible for arsons and murder. Its leader Rob Darken, aka Robert Fudali, formed his own nazi organisation called The Temple of the Fullmoon. Polish Black Metal fans who refused to accept the new creed were beaten up and intimidated. However, they consolidated their ranks, with a little help from the anti-fascist movement, and it now seems that Fudali's antics are no longer taken seriously among metal fans. Nazi metal music is still promoted, however, on the pages of *Rojalista*, a non-nazi but far-right magazine edited by the idiosyncratic monarchist Adrian Nikiel.

The rise of nazi music in Poland in the 1990s and the numerous acts of violence committed by nazi skinheads were the reasons for the campaign "Music Against Racism" which was launched by the Never Again Association in 1997. It has been supported by top rock artists in the country, including Kazik, Kult, Big Cyc, T. Love and many others. In November 1997 a compilation record was released in co-operation with an independent music label, QORYQ Productions, featuring songs with an anti-racist message. The record received enthusiastic reviews and was voted one of the main musical events of 1997 by readers of *Brum*, a popular music monthly. Concerts under the title "Music Against Racism" have been organised and the campaign logo has been put on record sleeves by many artists. Another anti-racist compilation record, featuring both Polish and foreign artists (including Chumbawamba and Zion Train), is scheduled for the autumn of 1998. Hopefully, the success of "Music Against Racism" indicates that the nazis stand little chance of winning over the hearts and ears of young Poles.