

# The beautiful

A special report into racism and antisemitism in Polish football



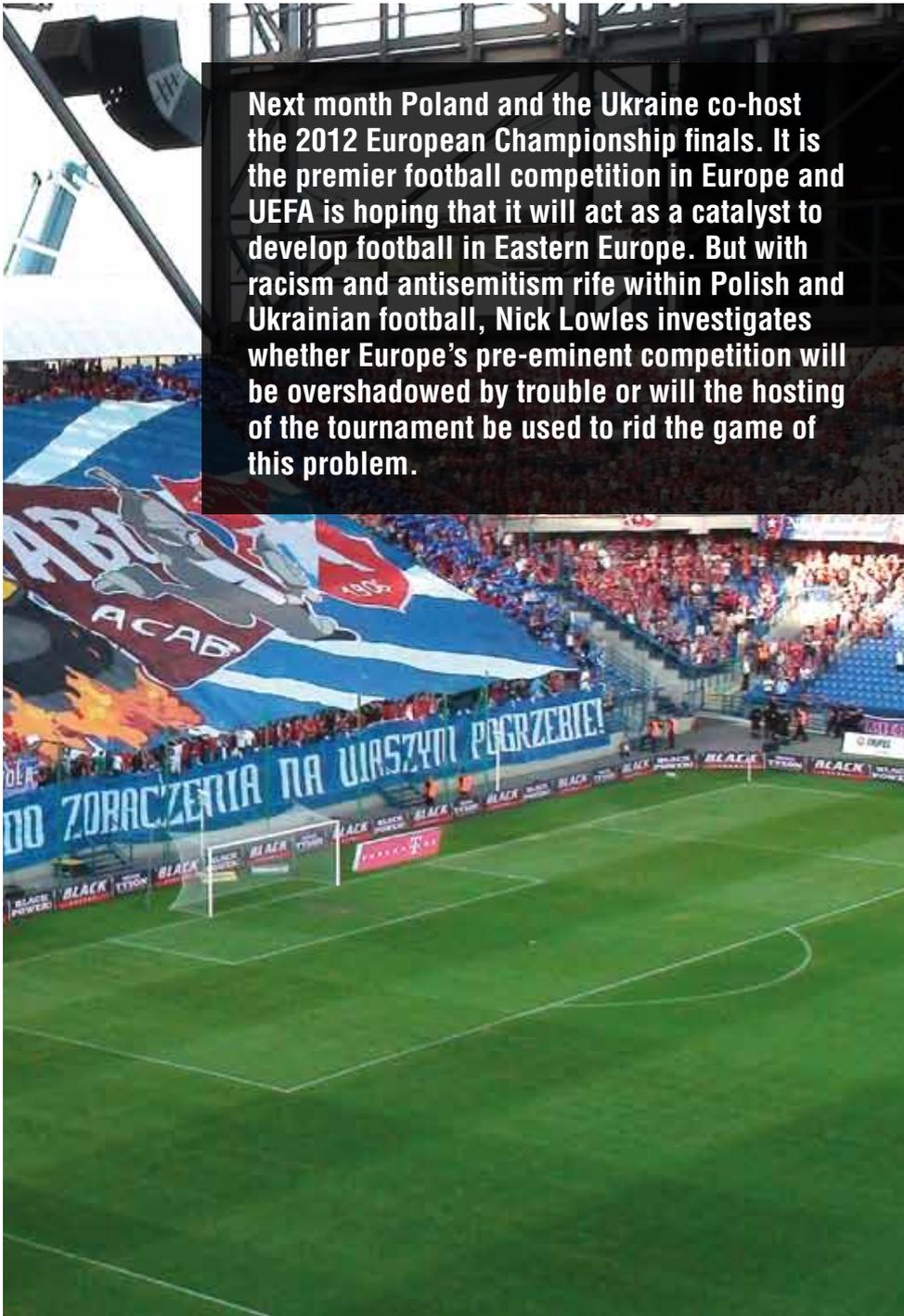
Wisla Krakow display a violent banner at the start of their local derby against Cracovia

# game?

## and Ukrainian football



Next month Poland and the Ukraine co-host the 2012 European Championship finals. It is the premier football competition in Europe and UEFA is hoping that it will act as a catalyst to develop football in Eastern Europe. But with racism and antisemitism rife within Polish and Ukrainian football, Nick Lowles investigates whether Europe's pre-eminent competition will be overshadowed by trouble or will the hosting of the tournament be used to rid the game of this problem.



There was still over four hours to kick-off but already the away supporters were out in force. Men with red and white striped shirts filled the main square in Krakow, enjoying the sun and chatting amicably. There was not a sip of alcohol in sight but rather a determination of what lay ahead.

All around the square riot police, backed by dogs and a water cannon, watched on.

At 3pm, with the game still many hours away, the Cracovia fans began to group together. The threat of violence meant that they had only been allocated 1,000 tickets and all of those lucky recipients appeared to be here.

Suddenly, out of the crowd, people emerged carrying large black binbags out of which they distributed free scarves to everyone. This would form part of their display within the ground. Their leader began to talk through a megaphone. The flares were light, bangers exploded and off they march, menacingly towards the ground of their fierce local rivals, Wisla Krakow.

There are few football derbies in the world which share the intensity, and indeed violence, of the Krakow derby. Hardly a game goes by between Wisla Krakow and their close neighbours Cracovia without football hooliganism and outbursts of racism and antisemitism.

Cracovia was founded in 1906 and before the Second World War was financed and supported by many local Jews. Of course that connection is long gone but it remains a reason for antisemitic abuse by the Wisla fans, whose hooligans are known as the Sharks. Wisla was historically linked to the Communist militia. This means, of course, there is a strong anti-Communist theme to the Cracovia hooligans, known

simply as Anty Wisla, but they also identify themselves as Jude Gang – Jude being a Polish word for Jew.

The intensity of the hatred is such that the match is known as the ‘Holy War’.

The term ‘Holy War’ was originally used to describe the rivalry of Krakow’s Jewish teams, Makkabi and Jutrzenka. A defender from the latter club later joined Cracovia and during the derby game against Wisla he is supposed to have told his teammates, “Come on guys, let’s win this holy war.” The phrase quickly became adopted by the fans.

The rival gangs fight at football and in the community, with graffiti adorning tower blocks and street walls throughout the city to mark territory. People are regularly killed in fights between the two gangs, both of whom refuse to adopt the “Poznan agreement”, a no knives policy accepted by most other football hooligan groups in the country.

The two stadiums are divided by a 500 metre park but still the police wanted to bus the away fans in, but they refused and insisted on marching in from the city centre. They were held in a tight cordon outside the ground for over an hour

before being allowed in shortly before kick-off.

And then the aggressive chants began.

### Unpleasant chanting

Violence, racism and antisemitism is common place in Polish football. According to research gathered by HOPE not hate’s sister organisation in Poland, Never Again, there were at least 120 incidents of racism and antisemitism last year in the top two divisions. And that was just what was reported to them and it is often believed that open displays of racism and antisemitism are more common in the lower divisions.

Many of these incidents are displays of White Power banners or racist chanting towards black players of opposing teams. But there have also been many more extreme incidents. At a Europa league game against the Israeli team Hapoel Tel Aviv on 29 September 2011, fans of Legia Warszawa, arguably the most racist and antisemitic in the country, displayed a huge *Jihad* banner behind the goal in what clearly had antisemitic overtones. This banner stretched the full length of one end of the ground and, with the

accompanying cards which were held up by fans, involved thousands of people.

A couple of weeks later the same fans chanted “Hamas, Hamas, Jews off to the gas,” at Łódź fans. Lodz, a city whose population was a third Jewish before the war, often bears the brunt of antisemitic abuse. Legia Warszawa fans chanted “Your home is Auschwitz, whole Poland knows that the entire Jewish army is going to the gas chamber” at Łódź fans last season. Łódź fans have also faced antisemitic chanting from supporters of Slask Wrocław, Lech Poznan and OKS 1945 Olsztyn.

Not that the fans of ŁKS Łódź are immune from antisemitism themselves. At a game last March, hundreds of ŁKS Łódź fans danced to antisemitic chanting. Last June they displayed an antisemitic banner and in September ŁKS Łódź directed antisemitic abuse at Ruch Chorzów fans.

Last May, Resovia fans displayed a banner at the home game against their local rivals Stal depicting a Jewish man in an Auschwitz uniform with a no entry sign across his face and the slogan *Death to those with curved noses*.



(above) Resovia Rzeszow fans display an antisemitic banner during a match against local rivals Stala Rzeszow  
(below) Raków Cz stochowa fans give nazi salutes during a home match against Elana Toru  
(right) Lviv soccer fans at a game vs. Donetsk. The banner reads “Bandera – our hero” Photo: Pavlo Friend



The most infamous antisemitic incident was the huge banner depicting a caricature of a Jewish face with a separate banner, stretching across the back of the stand, reading *Death to the Big Nose*.

Racism, antisemitism and violence are often intertwined and together they create a very intimidating atmosphere inside the ground. "A lot of ordinary people have been discouraged from going to football matches because of the unpleasant culture," says Rafal Pankowski, one of the leaders of Never Again, HOPE not hate's sister organisation in Poland.

And it is not just the fans who are racist. Jan Tomaszewski will be known to some England fans as the man who thwarted England reaching the 1974 World Cup finals. The former Polish international goalkeeper, Tomaszewski has turned to politics and a right-wing version too. He has been an outspoken critic of immigration and foreigners playing in and for Poland.

"This hotchpotch lacks only a cannibal from Africa, who once ate a Polish missionary", Tomaszewski said last August. "This is not a Polish team. There are

Columbian and German stray dogs."

In another outburst, he said: "Well, let's face it – it's shit what we have and we are as primitive as the Negroes." He also said: "This shirt (of the Polish team) is now being profaned, sold, given away to traitors. The traitors of the German nation."

On both occasions he refused to apologise.

Players, managers and even a referee have been accused of racism. In 2008 ŁKS Łódź player Arkadiusz wore a shirt which read *Death to the Widzew-Jewish whore* after a match. He later claimed that the shirt had been given to him by a fan and he had not read it before putting it on.

#### Paltry fines

Officially, the football authorities take a harsh view of racism and antisemitism but others are less convinced. The *Death to the Big Nose* banner led to a paltry 5,000 Zloty (£1,000) fine for the club. The fans seemed unconcerned and the banner was back a few games later.

In most instances little is done against the hooligans and the ultra



groups. Only last month it was revealed that antisemitic t-shirts were being sold outside the ŁKS Łódź ground. In fact, at the Krakow derby, a fan with media accreditation stood up and gave a minute-long nazi salute without any complaints from those around. Antisemitic t-shirts were being worn by home supporters, which they said were bought from the fan club shop which is housed inside the ground.

The situation appears to be worse in the Ukraine, if not somewhat more complex. In addition to displays of racism and antisemitism, Ukrainian football plays host to more general Russian and Ukrainian nationalism. Supporters of clubs in the western part of the country tend espouse Ukrainian ultra-nationalism, while those in the east tend to display Russian nationalist symbols.

Arsenal Kyiv is one club whose supporters are proudly anti-racist but with their ultra group numbering no more than 100 they are vastly outnumbered by all their opponents and targeted for violence.

The Lviv teams are probably the worst, with open displays of support for Stefan Bandera, the pre-war leader of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), an ultra-right nationalist party which collaborated with the Germans at the beginning of the Second World War. The support for the Banderites amongst the fans even persuaded Karpaty Lviv to change the colour of their away strip to the red and black of the OUN.

Further east, the problem is from more traditional neo-Nazi groups.

#### A catalyst for change

Euro 2012 appears to have been a catalyst for a more pro-active stance from the football authorities. Determined to portray their country in a more positive light, the Polish authorities have begun to crack down on some of the more extreme displays of racism and antisemitism. Over the last few months there have been fewer banners displayed within stadiums and the clubs and officials have been more proactive to remove them when they have appeared.

The Polish FA, supported by the





Legia Warszawa fans display a 'Jihad' banner to intimidate and abuse team Hapoel Tel Aviv players and fans during a Europa league game in September 2011

personal intervention of the Prime Minister, has brought in Never Again to help change the climate.

The European Championships provide a great opportunity to deal with some of the more unpleasant aspects of Polish football, says Rafal Pankowski. "This is an opportunity for us to get our anti-racist message across," he told HOPE not hate. "Not just to football fans but to the wider population at large."

Never Again has produced an anti-racist toolkit for clubs and has already trained 7,000 stewards to identify and deal with racism and antisemitism. Pankowski is quick to point out that while the impetus for this was Euro 2012 the legacy of this work will continue after the Championships.

Last autumn Never Again held its biggest anti-racist action week to date, with activities at most grounds around

the country. Footballers spoke out against racism, leaflets were distributed and work done in local schools and communities.

Some clubs have been reluctant to acknowledge a problem. "A few clubs have even claimed we have exaggerated or even invented the problem," he says. However, improvements are being seen, even at Legia Warszawa whose fans have perhaps the worst reputation. "We have been getting some positive reaction from some Legia fans."

Precautions are being taken for the 2012 European Championships themselves. Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE), of which Never Again is an affiliate, is planning to have anti-racist monitors at every game. More locally, Never Again will be holding positive fan activities in local communities to help generate a more positive atmosphere.

In reality there are unlikely to be overt racism or antisemitism within grounds. The ultra groups will not have the dominance within stadiums, even at Poland matches, and the police are likely to be uncompromising in their approach knowing that the world's attention will be on them.

The more difficult question is whether this reduction in overt racism will continue after the Championships finish. The clubs and Polish FA might not put as much emphasis on this issue afterwards and stewards might not be as willing to intervene without pressure from above.

Rafal Pankowski is keen to remind us that the racism in football is simply a reflection of a more general problem within society and that it cannot be solved by football alone.

Certainly there was no disguising the intimidatory atmosphere at the Krakow

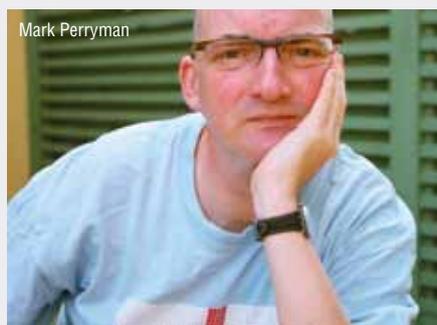
THE DAY BEFORE England play Sweden in Kiev on 15 June a group of English fans will be holding a ceremony and football match to remember a game back in 1942 which became known as the 'Death Match'.

Mark Perryman, of London England Fans, explains:

"The story of the 'Death Match' is best known to most England fans via the movie *Escape to Victory*, with Sylvester Stallone in goal, Bobby Moore bossing it in midfield and Michael Caine in the technical area!

What few would realise is that it is based on a true story.

The precise details have become hazy



in the process of acquiring legendary status. But what is undeniable is that a team of Ukrainians played and beat a

representing the Nazi-occupying military force during the Second World War.

The Ukrainians, who had all been imprisoned by the Germans were promised all kinds of privileges if they would throw the match. But in an act of defiance that inspired their countrymen they played, won, were sent back to imprisonment and a number were executed for their bravery.

When England play in Kiev on 15 June some England fans plan to visit both the statue to the executed players and leave a wreath to their memory and visit the ground where the 'Death Match' took place and play a game to promote fan-friendship with Ukrainian fans".



Anti-racism action organised by FARE's partner organisation Never Again in Poland, at this Ekstraklasa match between Lech Poznan and Korona Kielce. Photo: FARE network

derby. The match began with the home Wisla Krakow fans displaying a huge banner behind the goal depicting a Wisla Shark stirring a boiling cauldron which clearly contained the body of a rival Cracovia fan.

It might just have been a coincidence, but the Cracovia fan slumped over the side of the cauldron appeared to have a black head.

The Cracovia fans responded to their team going one-nil down, a goal which condemned them to relegation, by ripping up seats and attacking police in an attempt to get at rival fans. There must have been at least 100 bangers and rockets going off during the game and the police responded to the violence by a very liberal use of tear gas.

Last year a Cracovia fan was literally



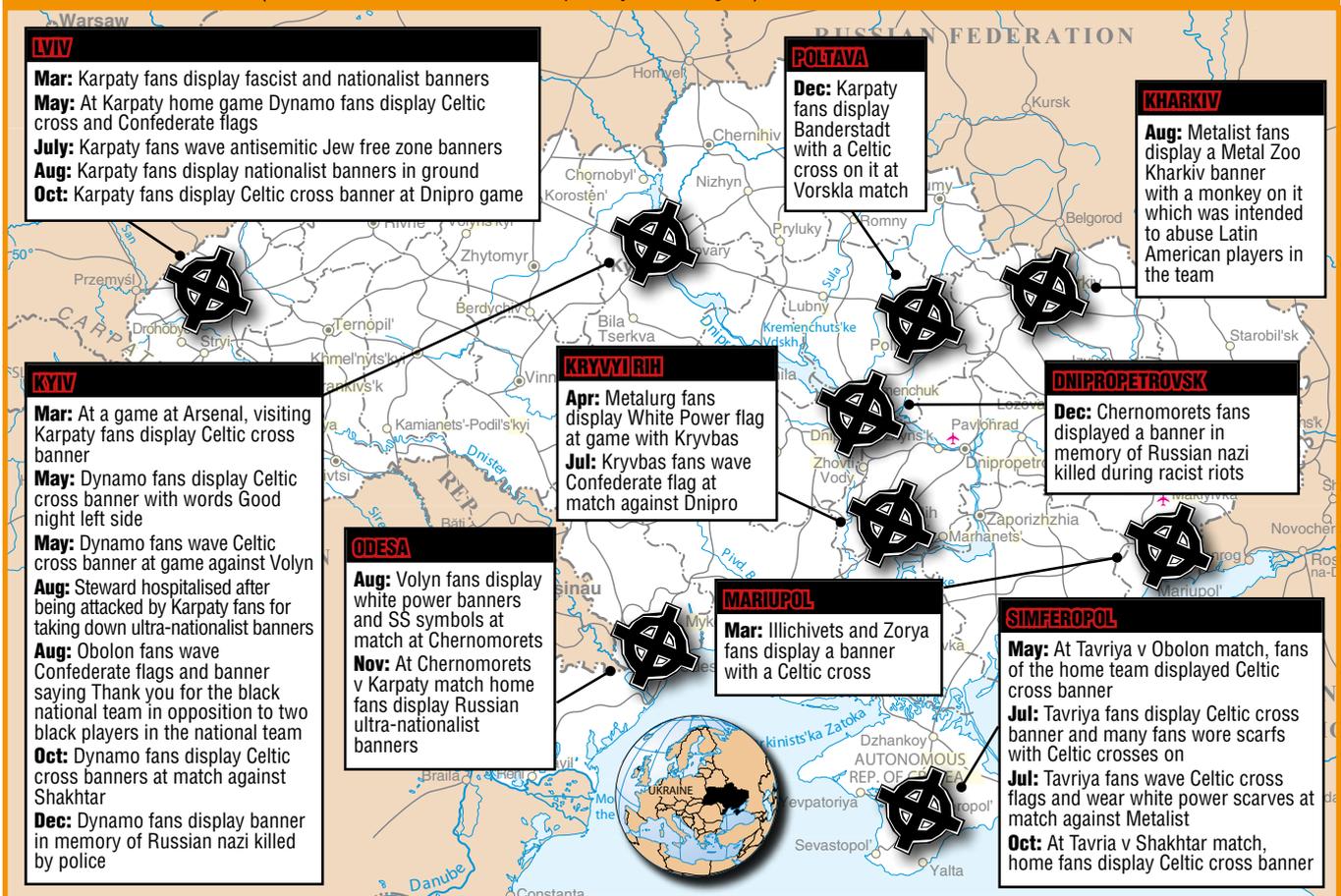
butchered to death after being chased through the streets by rival Wisla hooligans. He was the latest to die in violent clashes involving machetes, axes and knives. As violence ensued during their latest encounter, Wisla fans taunted their opponents about this death. Later that night, after everyone else was probably home in bed, the two rival gangs clashed in a wood outside the city.

### Hope for future

The team at Never Again are excited about the forthcoming European Championships but they are realistic about the problems they face. "We hope the change will continue" says Rafal. "I think the direction is good.

"It is up to us to make sure the change is for the long term."

### UKRAINE INCIDENT MAP (Research based on the 2011 report by Never Again)



**POLAND INCIDENT MAP** (Research based on the 2011 report by Never Again)

**GDYNIA**  
**Feb:** Arka Gdynia fans display a hooligan banner with the 'Chrobry's sword', a symbol used by the pre-war Polish fascists,  
**Aug:** Arka Gdynia fans display ultra-nationalist banner with nazi symbol on  
**Oct:** Arka Gdynia fans display White Power banner  
**Nov:** Bałtyk Gdynia is fined after their fans chant racist abuse at black Tur Turek players

**SŁUPSK**  
**Apr:** Gryf Słupsk fans imitate monkey noises at opposing Drutex-Bytovia Bytów player. They also chant "You Coon."

**WIEKOWO**  
**Mar:** Away fans at Wiekowianka Wiekowo and Sława Stawno match chant racist abuse

**CHOJNICE**  
**Mar:** Chojniczanka Chojnice fans display violent nazi flags  
**Jul:** Chojniczanka Chojnice fans racially abuse opposing black player

**BYDGOSZCZ**  
**May:** Fans of Legia Warszawa display Rock Against Communism banner at Polish Cup Final

**POZNAN**  
**Feb:** 'Wiara Lecha' Fan Association organised March of Victory on the occasion of 92nd anniversary of Greater Poland Uprising. 1,000 attend.  
**Feb:** In a match between Lech Poznan and Widzew Łódź, home fans chanted: "We will win, we will win, we will defeat Jews"  
**Sep:** Fans of Lech Poznan join far right march through city  
**Nov:** Lech Poznan hooligans join far right in attacking Equality march

**SZCZECIN**  
**Jul:** Polonia Bytom fans racially abuse black Pogon Szczecin player

**STARGARD SZCZECIŃSKI**  
**Mar:** Kluczewia Stargard fans create a sign, using the disability logo, aimed at fans of local rivals Błękitni Stargard

**WAGROWIEC**  
**Jul:** Elana Torun fans imitate monkey noises at black Nielba Wagrowiec players  
**Aug:** Nielba Wagrowiec fans racially abuse Calisia Kalisz player

**LUBLIN**  
**Sep:** Visiting fans display fascist banner at Motor Lublin v Wisła Puławy match  
**Sep:** Stal Stalowa Wola removed from pitchside after racist outburst at opposing player  
**Oct:** Motor Lublin fans put up banner advertising far right march



**GŁOGÓW**  
**Mar:** Chrobry Głogów fans display White Power banners



**WROCLAW**  
**Mar:** "Fans" of Slask Wrocław and Sparta Wrocław join a far right march  
**Mar:** Fans of Slask Wrocław and Sparta Wrocław are among 150 who march in support of arrested neo-Nazis  
**Apr:** Far right leaflets handed out before Slask Wrocław and Wisła Kraków match  
**May:** Fans of Slask Wrocław and Sparta Wrocław join far right demonstration  
**May:** Fans of Slask Wrocław display Polish nationalist banner  
**May:** Slask Wrocław fans put up fascist stickers  
**Aug:** Slask Wrocław fans direct antisemitic abuse at Widzew Łódź fans. They also display nazi banner  
**Sep:** Fans of Slask Wrocław, Sparta Wrocław and Promień Zary join far right demonstration  
**Oct:** Slask Wrocław fans display 10 metre banner advertising far right rally  
**Nov:** Hooligans from several clubs join far right demonstration and are involved in violence  
**Dec:** Fans of five clubs join far right demonstration

**LEGNICA**  
**Apr:** Raków Częstochowa fans chant 'Legnica - city of Gypsies' at Miedz Legnica fans



**OPOLE**  
**Apr:** A banner on the pitch fence with an inscription Opolo Silesia always Polish at home game  
**May:** Fans of Odra Opole join far right demonstration  
**Dec:** Odra Opole and MKS Kluczbork fans join far right demonstration

**CZESTOCHOWA**  
**Mar:** During Raków Częstochowa v Elana Torun match dozens of home fans give nazi salutes  
**Aug:** Raków Częstochowa fans display White Power banner  
**Sep:** 100+ home fans greet teams with nazi salutes during Raków Częstochowa v Elana Torun match



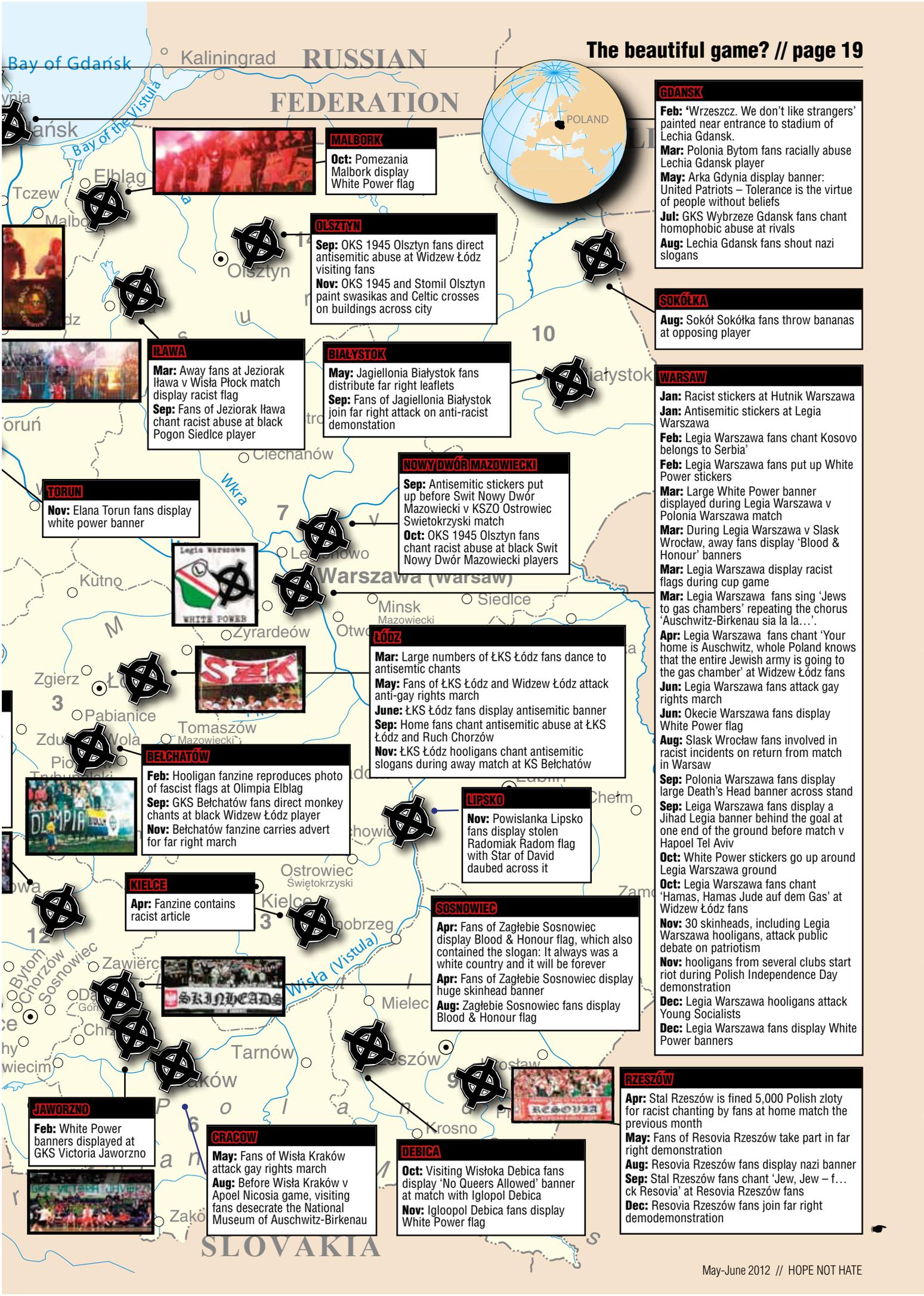
**PIOTRÓWKA**  
**Mar:** 50 fans of Energetyk ROW Rybnik chant racist abuse at LZS Piotrówka player

**CHORZÓW**  
**May:** Ruch Chorzów fans chant racist abuse at black Zagłębie Lubin players  
**Nov:** Ruch Chorzów fans chant 'Jude, Jude, Cracovia' at Cracovia fans



Warsaw: 11 November Polish Independence Day





**GDANSK**  
**Feb:** 'Wrzeszcz. We don't like strangers' painted near entrance to stadium of Lechia Gdansk.  
**Mar:** Polonia Bytom fans racially abuse Lechia Gdansk player  
**May:** Arka Gdynia display banner: United Patriots – Tolerance is the virtue of people without beliefs  
**Jul:** GKS Wyrzeże Gdansk fans chant homophobic abuse at rivals  
**Aug:** Lechia Gdansk fans shout nazi slogans

**SOKÓŁKA**  
**Aug:** Sokół Sokółka fans throw bananas at opposing player

**WARSAW**  
**Jan:** Racist stickers at Hutnik Warszawa  
**Jan:** Antisemitic stickers at Legia Warszawa  
**Feb:** Legia Warszawa fans chant Kosovo belongs to Serbia  
**Feb:** Legia Warszawa fans put up White Power stickers  
**Mar:** Large White Power banner displayed during Legia Warszawa v Polonia Warszawa match  
**Mar:** During Legia Warszawa v Slask Wrocław, away fans display 'Blood & Honour' banners  
**Mar:** Legia Warszawa display racist flags during cup game  
**Mar:** Legia Warszawa fans sing 'Jews to gas chambers' repeating the chorus 'Auschwitz-Birkenau sia la la...'  
**Apr:** Legia Warszawa fans chant 'Your home is Auschwitz, whole Poland knows that the entire Jewish army is going to the gas chamber' at Widzew Łódź fans  
**Jun:** Legia Warszawa fans attack gay rights march  
**Jun:** Okęcie Warszawa fans display White Power flag  
**Aug:** Slask Wrocław fans involved in racist incidents on return from match in Warsaw  
**Sep:** Polonia Warszawa fans display large Death's Head banner across stand  
**Sep:** Legia Warszawa fans display a Jihad Legia banner behind the goal at one end of the ground before match v Hapoel Tel Aviv  
**Oct:** White Power stickers go up around Legia Warszawa ground  
**Oct:** Legia Warszawa fans chant 'Hamas, Hamas Jude auf dem Gas' at Widzew Łódź fans  
**Nov:** 30 skinheads, including Legia Warszawa hooligans, attack public debate on patriotism  
**Nov:** hooligans from several clubs start riot during Polish Independence Day demonstration  
**Dec:** Legia Warszawa hooligans attack Young Socialists  
**Dec:** Legia Warszawa fans display White Power banners

**MAŁBORK**  
**Oct:** Pomezania Malbork display White Power flag

**OLSZTYN**  
**Sep:** OKS 1945 Olsztyn fans direct antisemitic abuse at Widzew Łódź visiting fans  
**Nov:** OKS 1945 and Stomil Olsztyn paint swastikas and Celtic crosses on buildings across city

**BIALYSTOK**  
**May:** Jagiellonia Białystok fans distribute far right leaflets  
**Sep:** Fans of Jagiellonia Białystok join far right attack on anti-racist demonstration

**NOWY DWÓR MAZOWIECKI**  
**Sep:** Antisemitic stickers put up before Swit Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki v KSZO Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski match  
**Oct:** OKS 1945 Olsztyn fans chant racist abuse at black Swit Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki players

**ŁAWA**  
**Mar:** Away fans at Jeziorak Ława v Wisła Płock match display racist flag  
**Sep:** Fans of Jeziorak Ława chant racist abuse at black Pogon Siedlce player

**TORUŃ**  
**Nov:** Elana Toruń fans display white power banner

**ŁÓDŹ**  
**Mar:** Large numbers of ŁKS Łódź fans dance to antisemitic chants  
**May:** Fans of ŁKS Łódź and Widzew Łódź attack anti-gay rights march  
**June:** ŁKS Łódź fans display antisemitic banner  
**Sep:** Home fans chant antisemitic abuse at ŁKS Łódź and Ruch Chorzów  
**Nov:** ŁKS Łódź hooligans chant antisemitic slogans during away match at KS Bełchatów

**BELCHATÓW**  
**Feb:** Hooligan fanzine reproduces photo of fascist flags at Olimpia Elbląg  
**Sep:** GKS Bełchatów fans direct monkey chants at black Widzew Łódź player  
**Nov:** Bełchatów fanzine carries advert for far right march

**LIPSKO**  
**Nov:** Powislanka Lipsko fans display stolen Radomiak Radom flag with Star of David daubed across it

**KIELCE**  
**Apr:** Fanzine contains racist article

**SOSNOWIEC**  
**Apr:** Fans of Zagłębie Sosnowiec display Blood & Honour flag, which also contained the slogan: It always was a white country and it will be forever  
**Apr:** Fans of Zagłębie Sosnowiec display huge skinhead banner  
**Aug:** Zagłębie Sosnowiec fans display Blood & Honour flag

**JAWORZNO**  
**Feb:** White Power banners displayed at GKS Victoria Jaworzno

**CRACÓW**  
**May:** Fans of Wisła Kraków attack gay rights march  
**Aug:** Before Wisła Kraków v Apoel Nicosia game, visiting fans desecrate the National Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau

**DEBICA**  
**Oct:** Visiting Wisłoka Debica fans display 'No Queers Allowed' banner at match with Igloopol Debica  
**Nov:** Igloopol Debica fans display White Power flag

**RZESZÓW**  
**Apr:** Stal Rzeszów is fined 5,000 Polish zloty for racist chanting by fans at home match the previous month  
**May:** Fans of Resovia Rzeszów take part in far right demonstration  
**Aug:** Resovia Rzeszów fans display nazi banner  
**Sep:** Stal Rzeszów fans chant 'Jew, Jew – f... ck Resovia' at Resovia Rzeszów fans  
**Dec:** Resovia Rzeszów fans join far right demodemonstration