

Skinhead Movement

AT A GLANCE

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OVERVIEW

The Skinhead Movement is a broad movement of various Far Right, neo-Nazi, and White Supremacist groups spanning a variety of countries in Europe and North America. The movement is inherently decentralized, with membership and organization revolving around local chapters of different groups that use common imagery, ideology, and behaviors, particularly racism and antisemitism. While the movement started without racial prejudice as a working class style culture in the United Kingdom, overtime it became increasingly dominated by neo-Nazi and White Supremacists.

A. SUMMARY

Formed: 1960s¹

Disbanded: Group is active.

First Attack: 1960s²

Last Attack: 2021³

B. NARRATIVE SUMMARY

The 1960s: Origins of the Movement in Britain

The skinhead movement originated in Britain in the 1960s. The movement itself did not necessarily form with racist intentions in mind. Instead, the original “skinheads” were working-class youth in urban areas of London, England.⁴ Skinheads emerged as a response to British cultural movements such as mod and hippie culture. Scholar Timothy S. Brown refers to the aesthetic appeal of the early skinhead movement as “proletarian”. Original skinheads heavily

revered Jamaican culture.⁵ Skinheads of the 1960s embraced the well-kept appearance of Jamaican immigrants in London.⁶ Early skinheads also held a particular affinity for reggae music; the music brought to England by Jamaican immigrants was an essential feature of original skinhead culture.⁷

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, original members of the British skinhead movement may have conducted acts of “petty criminality”, including the incitement of riots at local football stadiums. Violence conducted by skinheads was contained within the movement itself. Early skinheads may have embraced aspects of British patriotism. The early movement itself, however, was not rooted in racial violence or white supremacy.⁸

This profile will focus specifically on the racist skinhead movement that emerged in England during the late 1970s and later spread throughout the United States and Europe.

Racist Schism of the 1970s

The skinhead movement underwent a period of revival in the 1970s and became mainstream across all of Britain. Political divisions within the skinhead movement became evident in the 1970s. The early 1970s were notably marked by a violent phenomena known as “Paki bashing”, or attacks on South Asian immigrants by London skinheads. According to some skinheads, these attacks involved brutally beating individuals of Pakistani descent before robbing them of valuables. The attacks markedly represented a diversion of certain racist skinheads from the early movement, which celebrated Black culture in England. Additionally, the attacks on Pakistani individuals in England also precipitated the formation of skinhead groups rooted heavily in white supremacy.⁹

Skinhead youth were particularly prone to radicalization in the late seventies at the hands of right-wing British politicians.¹⁰ Working-class youth of the skinhead movement were particularly drawn to fascist political parties such as the National Front and British movement, amidst an economic recession and a simultaneous increase in an immigrant population from less-developed countries.¹¹ In 1979, the National Front began organizing a concert series known as Rock Against Communism with the intent of appealing to a youth audience. The series featured overtly racist punk bands, the most popular of which was known as Skrewdriver. The National Front eventually established White Noise, its own record label, to promote white supremacist punk music.¹²

Racist Skinhead Activity in the 1980s

British racist skinhead subculture spread to the United States throughout the 1980s during the movement’s second revival. British punk music was an especially powerful method for mobilizing American young people.¹³ American skinheads didn’t necessarily form political organizations like those of the British fascists. Racist skinheads in the United States, however, began to adopt the cultural elements of the British movement- notably, the punk music of bands like Skrewdriver.¹⁴

Chicago Area Skinheads (CASH): Chicago Area Skinheads, abbreviated to CASH, was a group of fifteen to twenty racist skinheads that carried out a violent crime spree in 1987 and 1988.¹⁵ CASH officially organized in 1986 and is recognized as one of the first racist skinhead organizations in the United States.¹⁶ CASH was headed by Clark Martell, a Chicago neo-Nazi.¹⁷

Martell became involved with the American Nazi Party as a twenty-three-year-old in 1983, the same year he discovered Skrewdriver's music. Martell initiated gatherings with other young people in Chicago's Nazi scene centered around listening and discussing racist punk music. In 1984, these small gatherings transformed into the political organization CASH. Martell and members of his organization engaged in efforts to spread racist, neo-Nazi propaganda, effectively establishing Chicago as the frontier of a growing racist American skinhead movement. Martell is called "an American pioneer of racist music" by Ryan Shaffer. In 1985, he established a record label known as Romantic Violence in order to sell illegal records of racist punk music from Britain.¹⁸

Aside from propaganda efforts CASH is known for perpetuating a series of incidents involving vandalism and violent attacks throughout the late 1980s. In November 1987, CASH observed the anniversary of Kristallnacht by vandalizing Jewish business in Chicago, defacing buildings with spray-painted swastikas.¹⁹ Additionally, the group assaulted six Hispanic women.²⁰

In April 1987, CASH members broke into the house of former member Amy Strickland.²¹ Strickland was targeted after disaffiliating from CASH. Members of the gang also suspected her of having Black friends.²² Martell and other CASH members violently assaulted her and used blood to paint a swastika on the wall of her apartment.

Southern Poverty Law Center credits anti-racist skinhead organizations in Chicago for CASH's decline. Martell and other CASH members were later arrested for the April 1987 attack.²³ In 1989, Martell received an eleven year prison sentence for the assault on Strickland. Following Martell's imprisonment, CASH leadership was inherited by Christian Picciolini, an early member of Martell's original group. Picciolini and CASH continued to carry out skinhead activity in Chicago while also attempting to cultivate the movement around the United States.²⁴

White Aryan Resistance (WAR): Tom Metzger founded the White American Political Association in the early 1980s. Metzger later changed the name of the organization to White Aryan Resistance. WAR's original intention was to advance the interests of white supremacy in politics. Metzger began publishing a racist newspaper that would serve as a tool to organize the racist skinhead movement of the 1980s.²⁵

Metzger appeared on television shows and broadcasts in order to promote his agenda of white supremacy. His own show, "Race and Reason", was easily accessible on public access cable stations throughout the United States. In 1988, the Anti-Defamation League referred to Metzger as "the most visible hater in the United States".²⁶

In 1988, Metzger organized Aryan Fest, a festival that showcased racist music.²⁷

Metzger was also an infamous mentor of other members of the racist skinhead movement. Metzger served as an advisor to Dave Mazella, who traveled to Portland, Oregon, in 1988 for the purpose of organizing another skinhead group known as East Side White Pride. Metzger wrote a letter to the organizers of the group and spoke to them by phone.²⁸

While Mazella was still in Portland, multiple members of ESWP brutally murdered Mulugeta Seraw, an Ethiopian national studying in the United States at the time. Metzger said that the murderers had performed their “civic duty” via Seraw’s murder. Metzger and WAR later faced a lawsuit from the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League for their roles in inciting the murder.²⁹

Hammerskin Nation (HSN): In 1987, a group of youth in Dallas, Texas, formed the Confederate Hammerskins. Taking inspiration from CASH and British skinhead culture, the Confederate Hammerskins began engaging in drinking-based brawls and rowdiness in Dallas.³⁰

The first major instance of racially motivated violence at the hands of the Confederate Hammerskins came in summer 1988. Multiple members of the group violently harassed non-white individuals in Dallas in order to prevent them from entering a park named after civil war General Robert E. Lee. The Confederate Hammerskins also spent fall 1988 vandalizing Jewish gathering places. Like other skinhead groups, they spray-painted Nazi symbols on the destroyed property.³¹

From origins in Dallas, new regionally-affiliated Hammerskin chapters began emerging around the United States throughout the late 1980s.³² In 1988, the Confederate Hammerskins met with the group SHAM (Skinhead Army of Milwaukee) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. SHAM was later invited to rebrand and effectively join the new Hammerskin organization. SHAM had already cultivated a reputation for carrying out assaults against minorities and non-racist skinhead groups.³³

In June 1991, three members of the Confederate Hammerskins murdered Donald Thomas, a Black teenager, in a drive-by shooting in Arlington, Texas.³⁴

Other Hammerskin groups were involved in acts of violence throughout the 1990s. In 1991, a member of the Arizona Hammerskins was convicted of firebombing a residence he believed rival skinheads inhabited. The same member also vandalized a synagogue. In December 1991, Hammerskins in Alabama beat and killed a Black homeless man in Birmingham. In 1993, members of the New Dawn Hammerskins chapter in Massachusetts perpetrated harassment against Black individuals, defaced synagogues, and violently assaulted multiple Black young women. Only one of the individuals in the New Dawn group that committed the attack was an adult.³⁵

Hammerskin Nation faced a civil suit at the end of the 1990s due to a racist attack committed by members of the Western Hammerskins in California. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of Randy Bowen, a Black man who was the victim of the 1999 attack in California. During this time, internal conflict purportedly heightened within the Hammerskin Nation. Regardless of internal

struggles, releases from Hammerskin Press demonstrated the desire of leadership to remain undeterred.³⁶

In July 2002, Tom Metzger declared that Hammerskin Nation had formally dissolved after the disappearance of its website.³⁷ Later in 2002, the Hammerskin Nation website reappeared, and By 2003, Hammerskin Nation reemerged and began to dominate the racist skinhead scene within the United States.³⁸

In August 2012, Hammerskin member Wade Michael killed six people and wounded three others at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin.³⁹ In 2015, Ryan Giroux was arrested in Arizona after shooting six people, resulting in one fatality. He was affiliated with Hammerskin Nation as well as the white supremacist prison organization the Aryan Brotherhood.⁴⁰ As of 2016, the Hammerskins claimed six United States chapters, as well as international branches throughout Europe. International chapters are located in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and much of Western Europe.⁴¹

In 2016, 20 members of the Hammerskin Nation were arrested by authorities in Portugal. The individuals arrested had been suspected of carrying out several violent crimes since early in 2013.⁴² In 2018, four Hammerskin-affiliated men physically assaulted a Black man at a bar in Washington state. They were indicted by a jury for federal hate crimes in December 2020.⁴³

Blood & Honour in the United States: Following Blood & Honour's ideological schism in England, established chapters of Blood & Honour in the United States followed a similar path of separation into two opposing groups. Blood & Honour America Division is composed of skinhead groups Volksfront and Troops of Tomorrow, as well as multiple neo-Nazi and Christian identity groups. Until 2009, Blood & Honour American Division considered Hammerskin Nation a sanctioned affiliate. After 2009, Blood & Honour American Division severed ties with Hammerskin Nation. The group Volksfront maintains a headquarters in Missouri for themselves and Blood & Honour American Division, where they hosted national meetings in 2008 and 2009.⁴⁴

Blood & Honour USA is the second offshoot of the group's original United States chapter. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, Blood & Honour USA organized to advocate a militant approach to skinhead culture. Blood & Honour USA is part of Council 28, an alliance of skinhead, neo-Nazi groups, and Klan members that came together for the purpose of opposing the widespread influence of Hammerskin Nation within the United States. Council 28, then assembled of Blood & Honour USA as well as multiple skinhead groups out of Pennsylvania and the United States, first met in 2003. Council 28 meetings later began to include Christian identity groups as well as the neo-Nazi National Socialist Movement. Council 28 is an unusual organization in that certain gatherings may have been attended by members of the Imperial Klans of America.⁴⁵ The Imperial Klans of America was the second largest Klan organization within the United States until 2008.⁴⁶

The Vinlanders Social Club was a prominent member of Council 28.⁴⁷ The group formed in 2003 in response to the widespread influence of the Hammerskin Nation as a coalition of various skinhead groups throughout the American Midwest.⁴⁸ In 2005, the Vinlanders hosted a summit

in conjunction with the Ohio State Skinheads under the name the Blood and Honour Council. The meeting, which was attended by over twelve skinhead organizations from eight states, effectively established an effort to counter Hammerskin Nation's monopoly on the racist skinhead movement within the United States. The October 2005 meeting also demonstrated a concerted effort from racist skinheads to reach out to the further network of white supremacists within the United States. Along with skinhead groups, the neo-Nazi group National Alliance and Imperial Klans of America also attended the meeting.⁴⁹

In 2006, Council 28, along with the Vinlanders, met at a hate-rock festival organized by the Imperial Klans of America. At this event, the Vinlanders notably assaulted a speaker belonging to the National Socialist Movement for inflammatory comments they perceived were directed at their organization. Two months after this event, the Vinlanders attempted to openly challenge Hammerskin Nation to physical combat in order to determine who would become the "leaders" of the racist North American skinhead movement.⁵⁰

In 2007, three group members, including co-founder Eric Fairburn, were arrested in Indianapolis after a verbal-turned-violent physical incident that involved the skinheads spewing racist remarks and later beating a Black man. By September of 2007, following the sentencing of the three skinheads and the public denouncement of the Vinlanders by Fairburn, the group's other co-founder announced that an agreement had been reached between the Vinlanders and Hammerskin Nation. Hammerskin Nation denied this allegation.⁵¹

1980s and 1990s skinhead culture in the United Kingdom

Blood & Honour: Blood & Honour was founded in 1987 by Ian Stuart Donaldson in England. The group organized in response to Stuart and others' perceived threats of increased racial tolerance from the British far-right, specifically, the National Front party that originally triggered the emergence of a racist skinhead movement in Britain. The name Blood & Honour refers to the slogan of the Hitler youth movement. Blood & Honour united racist bands and political parties within the skinhead movement that, prior to the group's formation, had not previously demonstrated solidarity with one another.⁵²

After leader Stuart's death in a 1993 car accident, Blood & Honour leadership was overtaken by members of Combat 18 (C-18). C-18, as a collective, espoused Neo-Nazi ideology and had previously acted as the armed and violent wing of Blood & Honour. By 1996, C-18's control over Blood & Honour in England was controversial enough that the group split into two ideologically-opposing factions.⁵³

Blood & Honour maintains existing chapters globally. The group has a presence across Europe, Canada, the United States, and Australia.⁵⁴

1980s and 1990s skinhead culture in Germany

The punk aesthetic of 1970s British skinhead culture reached West Germany in the late 1970s. In both England and Germany, certain musicians within the punk rock scene began adopting aspects of right-wing ideology and rose to dominate the skinhead pop-cultural scene. This

culminated in a unique genre of skinhead punk rock known as “Oi!” music.⁵⁵ Ian Stuart Donaldson, founder of a white-nationalist record label in England, began releasing music from bands he’d signed to German record labels. Donaldson’s organization *Blood and Honour* established a German chapter that would later aid in promoting the skinhead concerts series prevalent throughout the 1990s.⁵⁶

The fall of East Germany’s communist regime in 1989 also precipitated a rise in the readoption of Nazi-esque ideology in the country. Young working-class German men began to organize in order to display their solidarity with right-wing politics, openly utilizing symbols reminiscent of Nazi Germany. The right-wing skinhead ideology that emerged in Germany was primarily concerned with the growing presence of foreign ethnic groups within the country. Throughout the 1990s, German skinheads engaged in violence against foreign workers from Vietnam, countries in Africa, and members of the Roma ethnic group. Turkish immigrants and their descendants also faced brutality from skinheads throughout the 1990s.⁵⁷

Combat-18, the violent wing of British-born skinhead group Blood & Honour has a German presence. Since the early 2000s, the group has been under scrutiny from the German government. In January 2020, Germany’s interior ministry officially banned C-18 following police raids in six German states.⁵⁸

In June 2019, German politician Walter Lübcke was the victim of a political assassination.⁵⁹ Stephen Ernst, who shot and killed Lübcke, notably maintained close personal connections to members of C-18 in Germany.⁶⁰ Lübcke was known to support increased migration and refugee intake in Germany. Attorneys prosecuting Ernst said that he had likely been spurred to carry out the attack by racist and xenophobic views. Ernst had previously attempted to murder a refugee from Iraq in 2016.⁶¹

Racist skinheads in Russia

Youth in Russia first adopted skinhead culture in the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The subculture strengthened its grasp in Russian youth culture throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s.⁶² Consistent with the global racist skinhead movement, racist skinheads in Russia scapegoat violence against foreigners and non-ethnically Russian citizens by claiming a nationalist agenda. Skinheads in Russia have also targeted members of the LGBT+ community.⁶³

A history of xenophobic attitudes in Russia as well as post-Soviet political turmoil are generally accepted as the major catalysts for the rise of skinhead culture in Russia. Tensions between ethnic Russians and members of former Soviet territories, as well as the continued targeting of Russian ethnic minorities by police in Moscow increased throughout the 1990s.⁶⁴ Additionally, a general rise in Russian nationalism throughout the post-Soviet period may also be seen as contributing to the ideological foundation behind the Russian skinhead movement.⁶⁵

Skinhead activity and violence has trended toward nationalist ideologies. The first mass displays of Russian skinhead violence occurred in the mid 1990s when right-wing extremists, mostly members of the racist skinhead movement, began attacking foreign students that attended the

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. The university, located in Moscow, was known for hosting foreign and mainly non-European students during previous Soviet rule.⁶⁶

Into the 2000s, skinheads were implicated as members of organized mass riots in the streets of Russian cities that resulted in the destruction of markets, vehicles, and clashes with police.⁶⁷

Targeted violence and murder at the hands of Russia's extreme right saw a notable increase between the years 2003 and 2010.⁶⁸

By the late 2000s, the number of skinheads in Russia reached, at the highest of estimates, almost 100,000 individuals.⁶⁹ During this period, multiple skinhead gangs in Russia stood accused of perpetrating racially motivated murders against foreign workers from Central Asia and Caucasasia. In 2008 alone, the Moscow Human Rights Bureau reported that almost seventy racially motivated murders had occurred in Russia.⁷⁰

There has been speculation that the Russian skinhead movement has in part been supported by the Russian state itself. Human rights groups have specifically condemned Russian law enforcement for what they see as an inability to properly suppress far-right extremist groups.⁷¹ Throughout the late 2000s, the tendency of Russian enforcement was to categorize race-related violence as related to the phenomena of youth hooliganism.⁷²

Moscow authorities began to more heavily prosecute far-right extremism in 2008 after the establishment of new anti-extremism units within the Ministry of Public Affairs, although activist groups still condemned the supposed inefficiency of the Russian government in prosecuting such extremism.⁷³

In 2021, multiple neo-Nazi skinhead youth in Moscow were arrested after a physical altercation broke out between them and ethnic Caucasians.⁷⁴

National Socialist Organization: The National Socialist Organization, henceforth referred to by the acronym NSO, was a skinhead gang that appears to have organized in 2004.⁷⁵ The NSO was responsible for carrying out what some saw as terrorist activity within Russia. In August 2007, the group live streamed the execution of two men. Both of the victims were non-ethnic Russians; one man belonged to the Dagestani ethnic group and another was Tajik.⁷⁶

Dmitry Rumyantsev is cited as a former leader of the NSO and its original founder. In 2008, Rumyantsev was essentially ousted by other NSO members due to ideological differences. While Rumyantsev had originally intended for the NSO to exist primarily as a political faction, other radical individuals involved in the NSO embraced a para militaristic attitude. Maksim Bazilev, also known by the alias "Adolph", proceeded to become the group's new leader.⁷⁷

According to journalist Charles Clover, the NSO was structured as a cell-based terrorist organization, with each cell having its own "handler."⁷⁸ Following the group's dissolution at the hands of Russian law enforcement, members of the NSO were found to possess considerable financial resources. Leader Bazilev, at the time of NSO's trial, had an estimated 200 million roubles, or over 3 million American dollars, in his bank account.⁷⁹ It was also unearthed that

other members of the group had been paid 25,000 roubles monthly. The source of Bazilev and the NSO's finances have yet to be determined.⁸⁰

Bazilev died in March 2009 of an apparent suicide. The veracity of this cause of death has been debated due to the circumstances of the NSO's financial situation and the situation in which he died. At the time of his death, Bazilev was residing in a holding cell in the Moscow Headquarters of the Interior Ministry, a known secure and well-monitored location.⁸¹

13 members of the NSO faced trial in 2010 for a total of 27 murders. Most of the murders consisted of foreign workers, while at least one of the video-taped murders involved the brutal-killing of a former member for not subscribing sufficiently to the group's ideology. By 2010, the group was referred to by Clover as "defunct".⁸²

The Ryno Gang: The Ryno gang was a student-led racist skinhead gang that operated throughout the late 2000s.⁸³ The gang appeared to have primarily committed opportunity-based murders in Moscow.⁸⁴ The gang operated ideologically on the basis of ultranationalism and included aspects of neo-Nazism. Ryno and Skachevski allegedly belonged to the neo-Nazi Slavic Union.⁸⁵ Their modus operandi involved choosing victims that, phenotypically, appeared not to be ethnically Slavic or Russian. In April 2007, the group's then 18-year-old leaders Pavel Skachevski and Artur Ryno, were arrested after from the murder scene of an Armenian businessman.⁸⁶ In 2008, the Russian government charged nine skinheads, including Ryno and Skachevski, for the murder of over twenty foreign workers. A leader of the group claimed to have carried out over double the number of murders the gang was alleged to have perpetrated. Additionally, the group's attacks were allegedly videotaped by members of the gang.⁸⁷ Ryno and Skachevski later received ten year prison sentences, while five other members of the gang received sentences of various lengths. The other two members of the gang did not receive sentences.⁸⁸

Slavic Union: The Slavic Union is a Russian neo-Nazi organization that has been implicated in numerous violent acts in Russia. The Slavic Union, although not directly encouraging its members to conduct violence, is a paramilitary group that is known for training its members in military practices. Multiple members of the Slavic Union, including individuals in leadership positions have been implicated or suspected in attacks targeting religious and ethnic minorities.⁸⁹

In March 2010, skinhead members of the Slavic Union were photographed with Russian police at a rally. These skinheads were later accused of violence against protestors at the rally. Dmitry Dyumushkin, the group's founder, stated in 2010 that the Slavic Union had "sympathizers" in Russian law enforcement and the Russian military, but refuted the claim that state agencies formally supported the Slavic Union.⁹⁰

In 2010, the Slavic Union was formally outlawed. Dyumushkin said the group would transition from an organized political assembly to underground, leaderless street gangs.⁹¹

Skinhead culture in Czechoslovakia

The rise of the racist skinhead movement in Czechoslovakia during the late 1980s is attributed to anti-immigrant and anti-communist sentiment within Czechoslovakian youth.⁹² Similar to other post-Soviet states, anti-communist ideology spurred the development of polarized right-wing extremism.⁹³ Like other growing skinhead movements in Europe and the United States, Czechoslovakian skinhead culture is linked to the punk-rock subculture of the late twentieth century. Punk bands, most notably Orlík, gained significant traction at the end of the 1990s at the same time that the popularity of the skinhead movement skyrocketed.⁹⁴

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and amidst the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, bands such as Krátky Proces are credited with promoting clear ideological tenets of skinhead culture in Slovak youth. The skinhead music scene in Czechoslovakia continued to develop throughout the 1990s as punk music began to become associated with anarchism and leftist ideology. Conflict occurred between skinheads and anarchists, most prevalent in the 1990s, and included the 1993 murder of a punk band member as well as the 1994 murder of the member of an anarchist organization.⁹⁵

Throughout the 1990s, the skinhead movement solidified its extremism and connections to overtly nationalist, racist ideology.⁹⁶ By 1998, the Czech Human Rights Documentation Center reported an estimated 5,000 skinheads were active in the Czech Republic. Racist skinheads in the Czech Republic adopted a neo-Nazi ideology and while embracing anti-Semitism, primarily targeted ethnic minorities, specifically the Roma people, as well as non-white immigrants.⁹⁷

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. LEADERSHIP

Tom Metzger (WAR, 1983-1989): Metzger founded the group White Aryan Resistance, or WAR, in 1983. WAR's original intention was to advance the interests of white supremacy in politics. Metzger began publishing a racist newspaper that would serve as a tool to organize the racist skinhead movement of the 1980s.⁹⁸

Metzger appeared on television shows and broadcasts in order to promote his agenda of white supremacy. His own show, "Race and Reason", was easily accessible on public access cable stations throughout the United States. In 1988, the Anti-Defamation League referred to Metzger as "the most visible hater in the United States".⁹⁹ Metzger and WAR later faced a lawsuit from the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League for their roles in inciting the murder of Mulugeta Seraw, an Ethiopian immigrant. The early 1990s lawsuit effectively debilitated WAR and Metzger.¹⁰⁰

Eric Fairburn (Vinlanders Social Club, 2003-2009): In 2003, long-time skinhead Eric Fairburn co-founded the Vinlanders Social Club in a move intended to oppose Hammerskin Nation's domination of the United States racist skinhead movement. In 2008, he received a prison sentence for participating in the physical assault of a Black man in Indianapolis. After his release in 2009, Fairburn distanced himself from the skinhead movement and later confessed for a murder he carried out in 2004. Fairburn is currently serving a life sentence.¹⁰¹

Brien James (Vinlanders Social Club, 2003-present): James, a lifelong skinhead since youth, is another co-founder of the Vinlanders, and an original member of the Outlaw Hammerkins, a rogue skinhead crew that directly opposed the influence of the Hammerskin Nation. Jones was also instrumental in organizing the Blood & Honour alliance of skinhead groups in 2005. James has been implicated in numerous violent attacks against fellow white supremacists.¹⁰²

Maksim Bazilev (National Socialist Organization, 2008-2009): Maksim Bazilev briefly served as the leader of the Russian organization known as the National Socialist Organization after founder Dmitry Rumyantsev was ousted by the organization. Under Bazilev, the aim of the organization transformed from political to militaristic as members of the group committed brutal murders, usually aimed at ethnic minorities. In 2009, Bazilev was found dead of an alleged suicide in a Moscow prison cell. The veracity of the suicide claim is still under question, as the NSO had been on the receiving end of considerable funds from a still-unknown source.¹⁰³

Ian Stuart (Blood & Honour, 1987-1993): Ian Stuart Donaldson, later known simply as Ian Stuart, was a prominent member of the white power punk-rock music scene in 1980s Britain and founder of the later international organization known as Blood & Honour. The group organized in response to Stuart and others' perceived threats of increased racial tolerance from the British far-right, specifically, the National Front party that originally triggered the emergence of a racist skinhead movement in Britain. The name Blood & Honour refers to the slogan of the Hitler youth movement. Blood & Honour united racist bands and political parties within the skinhead movement that, prior to the group's formation, had not previously demonstrated solidarity with one another. Stuart died unexpectedly in a car crash in 1993.¹⁰⁴

B. NAME CHANGES

There are no recorded name changes for this group

C. SIZE ESTIMATES

Size estimates for the skinhead movement vary over time given the duration of the movement's existence and geographic variation. Additionally, not all skinheads belong to organized groups; thus, size estimates are widely variable and may be sparse.

By 1995, data based on estimates by researchers observing skinhead rallies and gatherings placed the global skinhead population at around 70,000 individuals worldwide. The same study showed that skinheads were found in 33 countries.¹⁰⁵

In Russia, the racist skinhead population peaked at an estimated 100,000 in 2007.¹⁰⁶ From 2019 to 2021, the Southern Poverty Law Center reports that the amount of skinhead chapters in the United States decreased from 48 to 17.¹⁰⁷

D. RESOURCES

Tracking resources for the skinhead movement, which more often than not is composed of loosely affiliated individuals who commit violence with their own weapons or via brute physical

force, may prove difficult. Rather than attempting to describe the ways in which the white supremacist movement as a whole acquires or attempts to seek funding, this section of the profile describes instances in which skinhead groups or individuals are known to possess monetary resources.

A member of the prominent white supremacist group known as The Order alleged, at one point, that the skinhead group WAR received funding in the 1980s from Robert Matthews.¹⁰⁸ Under leader Matthews, The Order perpetrated an armed robbery in 1984 against a Brinks armored car in California.¹⁰⁹ Bruce Carroll Pierce, a member of The Order, initially alleged that up to \$200,000 of the \$3.6 million dollars stolen from the robbery had been allotted to WAR. Pierce later recanted this statement.¹¹⁰

Skinheads have also historically accrued funding from the hate-music business. Some skinhead leaders have even established their own record labels.¹¹¹

During the 2010 trial of a Russian skinhead group known as the National Socialist Organization, authorities discovered approximately 3 million American dollars in the bank account of leader Maksim Bazilev. The source of said funds still remains unclear, although many have speculated that the group was funded by an external source such as Russian oligarchs.¹¹²

E. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

The racist skinhead movement originated in England before spreading throughout the United States in the 1980s.¹¹³ By 1988, skinheads within the United States were located throughout 21 states. During this time, racist skinhead gangs were operative on the West Coast, the Southwest, the Southeast, and the Midwest.¹¹⁴

By 1995, the global skinhead population was dispersed throughout 33 countries across six continents.¹¹⁵

As of 2022, Blood & Honour, an international skinhead organization with British origins has a purported presence across Europe, Canada, the United States, and Australia.¹¹⁶

STRATEGY

A. IDEOLOGY AND GOALS

The number of racist skinheads present throughout history and in different locations throughout the world means that the racist skinhead movement does not necessarily encompass one singular ideology. The section below will summarize the most prevalent ideologies that motivate individual skinheads or groups.

Traditionalism: Racist skinheads throughout the world have embraced a traditionalist stance that seeks to reject what they see as the corruption of traditional ideals by modern society. Such areas of apparent corruption include homosexuality, abortion, and drugs. Skinhead groups, however, like Hammerskin chapters, have notably engaged in substantial social drinking.¹¹⁷

While certain scholars have found evidence of female skinheads engaging in physical violence and disorderly conduct to the level of their counterparts, misogyny and the expectation of traditional, family-oriented gender roles are nonetheless prevalent throughout the racist skinhead scene.¹¹⁸

The goal of racist skinheads may ultimately culminate in the overarching desire to “save” and defend the white race through violence. Racist skinheads notoriously engage in attacks against individuals they deem as threatening to this cause. Some racist skinheads may even escalate this desire for racial violence into the notion of provoking full-blown race war.¹¹⁹

Neo-Nazism: The racist skinhead movement in the United States and Europe has adopted, in some cases heavily, aspects of Neo-Nazism. Skinheads have been known to adorn themselves Nazi symbols via clothing and permanent tattoos. Music originating from the racist skinhead movement contain references, often overt, to Nazi Germany. Skinheads have even been observed at gatherings mimicking the salute prominent at Nazi rallies during the 1940s.¹²⁰ German skinheads in the 1990s, for example, began re-adopting aspects of Nazi symbolism but did not necessarily organize to participate in politics under the banner of Nazi ideology.¹²¹

Nationalistic tendencies: Skinheads in Russia have, throughout history, embraced a strain of nationalism that rejects all Western and non-Russian individuals, while simultaneously criticizing the actions of the Russian state.¹²²

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

B. TARGETS AND TACTICS

The first instances of violence perpetrated by racist skinheads occurred in 1970s Britain, when skinhead youth beat and robbed Pakistani immigrants.¹²³

The skinhead movement began to rely on white power punk rock music for its spread throughout Britain and the United States.¹²⁴ While British skinheads were more prone to organized political involvement, the movement in the United States notably consisted of individuals with similar racist ideologies that banded to perpetrate small-scale, but nonetheless brutal, acts of violence.¹²⁵ Since the 1980s, targets of racist skinhead violence throughout the world have generally included non-white individuals. Racist skinheads generally perpetrated violence against non-white individuals with the overarching goal of “defending” the white race.¹²⁶

Skinheads in Germany and Eastern Europe have generally chosen to target non-white foreign workers who immigrate to Europe for the purpose of seeking employment.¹²⁷ In Germany and the Czech Republic, the Romani people, a nomadic ethnic minority in Europe, have been targets of racial violence.¹²⁸ Both countries have also seen Jewish individuals and property targeted by skinheads with staunch neo-Nazi views.¹²⁹

Consistent with the global racist skinhead movement, racist skinheads in Russia scapegoat violence against foreigners and non-ethnically Russian citizens by claiming a nationalist agenda.

Russian skinheads have also engaged in numerous acts of violence, including dozens of targeted murders, against foreign-workers from Central Asia and the Caucasus.¹³⁰ Skinheads in Russia have also targeted members of the LGBT+ community.¹³¹ While there have been historical reports of Russian skinheads clashing with police and agents of the state, there also exists evidence of cooperation between the two.¹³²

Throughout the world, murders and violent attacks perpetrated by individual skinheads or gangs have generally taken an opportunistic or spontaneous approach. For example, the 1988 murder of Ethiopian immigrant Mulugeta Seraw in the United States occurred after skinheads affiliated with Eastside White Pride jumped him in the streets of Portland, Oregon.¹³³ Members of the Hammerskin Nation in the United States conducted a shooting of a Black teenager during the 1990s after intoxicated skinheads cruised around Arlington, Texas with the intention of murdering a Black individual. In 1999, Hammerskins in California spontaneously attacked another Black teenager at a gathering due to nothing other than his race.¹³⁴

In Russia, a youth skinhead gang was accused of carrying out brutal murders, mostly of foreign laborers, by choosing victims at random that simply appeared to be non-white or non-ethnic Russians.¹³⁵

Racist skinhead violence has, however, notably included planned and organized attacks. In August 2012, Hammerskin member Wade Michael killed six people and wounded three others at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin.¹³⁶

Skinhead groups and their leaders have also perpetrated the circulation of mass media designed to promote the white supremacist movement. Tom Metzger, the founder of WAR and prominent figure throughout the United States white supremacist movement notoriously hosted his own television show on local networks throughout the 1990s.¹³⁷ Hammerskin Nation, the largest network of skinhead organizations in the United States, has notably circulated propaganda, including social media, to recruit and boost membership.¹³⁸ Other skinhead groups, notably the organization Blood & Honour, organize concerts featuring white power rock music in order to boost their ideological reach.¹³⁹

In Britain, the right-wing political party National Front established its own record label known as White Noise with the intention of funding and producing white power music.¹⁴⁰ Such music was heavily responsible for the spread of the skinhead movement throughout the United States.¹⁴¹ Skinhead punk rock was also instrumental in the spread of the movement through Europe, especially in Germany.¹⁴²

In Russia, a skinhead gang known as the National Socialist Organization utilized a tactic similar to that of Islamic extremist groups when it began live streaming the murders it carried out and circulating the videos online.¹⁴³

MAJOR ATTACKS

Disclaimer: These are some selected major attacks in the militant organization's history. It is not a comprehensive listing but captures some of the most famous attacks or turning points during the campaign.

April 1987: Members of the Midwest-based Chicago Area Skinheads gang brutally assaulted former member Amy Strickland and defaced her apartment (Zero Killed, One Wounded).¹⁴⁴

November 1988: Members of the gang East Side White Pride, an affiliate group of Tom Metzger's WAR, beat and murdered Ethiopian immigrant Mulugeta Seraw in Portland, Oregon.¹⁴⁵ (1 Killed, Unknown Wounded)¹⁴⁶

April 2007: Russian students Pavel Skachevski and Artur Ryno murdered an Armenian business-man in Moscow. Skachevski and Ryno were arrested after fleeing the scene and were later linked to approximately 20 further murders.¹⁴⁷

August 2012: Hammerskin Wade Michael perpetrated a mass shooting at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin.¹⁴⁸ (Six Killed, Three Wounded)

June 2019: In June 2019, German politician Walter Lübcke was the victim of a political assassination.¹⁴⁹ Stephen Ernst, who shot and killed Lübcke, notably maintained close personal connections to members of C-18 in Germany.¹⁵⁰ (One Killed, Zero Wounded)

INTERACTIONS

A. DESIGNATED/LISTED

In 2019, Canada designated Blood & Honour, along with its violent faction Combat 18, as terrorist groups. Blood & Honour is also banned in Germany, Russia, and Spain.¹⁵¹

The Slavic Union, a neo-Nazi organization in Russia, was formally outlawed in 2010. Members of the gang have included individuals involved with the skinhead movement.¹⁵²

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

In the late 1980s, neo-Nazi groups prioritized recruiting skinhead youth from the punk rock subculture, as well as intentionally attempting to recruit young white men that appeared to be "isolated" or "loners".¹⁵³ Skinheads within the United States have engaged in the attempted recruitment of military personnel through internet postings, according to a 2008 FBI report.¹⁵⁴ Other groups, like the international organization Blood & Honour, use rallies and concerts in attempts to recruit new skinheads.¹⁵⁵ Hammerskin Nation, which also maintains an international presence, have also hosted concert series in the United States and Europe since 1999.¹⁵⁶

C. RELATIONS WITH OTHER GROUPS

Because the skinhead movement usually exists under the general umbrella of racist extremism, individual skinheads may also participate in the greater white supremacist movement. In the late 1980s, some skinheads in the United States participated in activities or even counted themselves as members of the Ku Klux Klan. American skinheads also attended meetings organized by the notorious white supremacist group Aryan Nations.¹⁵⁷

Organizations within the larger white supremacist movement in the United States may be composed partially of skinhead groups. Blood & Honour America Division is composed of skinhead groups Volksfront and Troops of Tomorrow, as well as multiple neo-Nazi and Christian identity groups. Blood & Honour USA is a skinhead organization in the United States that participates in activities with Council 28, an alliance of skinhead, neo-Nazi, and Klan groups.¹⁵⁸

Skinheads in Russia have participated in demonstrations with the neo-Nazi organization the Slavic Union as recently as 2010.¹⁵⁹

D. STATE SPONSORS AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

There has been speculation that the Russian skinhead movement has in part been supported by the Russian state itself. Such speculation, however, has yet to be corroborated by substantial evidence.¹⁶⁰

MAPS

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