



Far right hijacks anti-capitalist group

From Rafal Pankowski in Warsaw

THE CONCEPTS OF the fatherland, the state, the nation, and first of all patriotism, are under threat. ... We declare that defending the economic and political sovereignty of Poland is a necessary condition for membership in our Association. ... We stress that ATTAC is a Polish association, which seeks first of all to defend Polish interests, the sovereignty of decisions of the Polish society, Polish culture and tradition as well as Polish property.

This statement does not originate from a far-right nationalist propaganda outlet but is taken from a recent pronouncement by the Polish branch of ATTAC, the supposedly progressive anti-globalisation movement. Internationalism is supposed to be a cornerstone of ATTAC. What this statement shows is that the organisation's name in Poland has been hijacked by a group of far-right activists.

The Polish branch of ATTAC was established last spring and it was not long before right-wing infiltration forced some progressive campaigners, such as the intellectuals Stefan Zgliczynski and Zbigniew Kowalewski, to withdraw their participation.

The founding members of ATTAC-Poland included people with a long record of collaboration with publications and organisations of the extreme right. Members of ATTAC-Poland's leadership also became editors or regular contributors to Obywatel (Citizen), a magazine with a clearly extreme right-wing slant.

One of these is Jaroslaw Tomaszewicz. A few years ago, he was active in fascist organisations such as Przelom Narodowy (National Breakthrough) and among nazi skinheads. He has also published articles in the virulently antisemitic magazine Mysl Narodowa Polska (Polish National Idea), published by Boleslaw Tejkowski, Poland's most notorious Polish antisemite. Tejkowski is the leader of the fascist Polish National Community (PWN), which has been responsible for numerous acts of racist violence in the streets of Polish cities.

Tomaszewicz has written for other fascist publications such as the hardline Krzyzowiec (Crusader) but most recently his writings have appeared in a new magazine, Templum, linked to Poland's most active fascist group, National Rebirth of Poland (NOP). The NOP is a part of the International Third Position (ITP), run by the Italian terrorist Roberto Fiore.

Tomaszewicz has also collaborated with extreme-right publications abroad, for example, Perspectives, a magazine founded by former members of the National Front in Britain, and the German extremist bulletin DESG-Inform. A prolific author, he dedicates his writings to spreading ideas inspired by the so-called Third Position and by the West European New Right. Under the guise of building an "anti-system opposition" based on an "alliance of the extreme right and of the extreme left", he has undertaken ideological and political penetration of left-wing, especially anarchist and ecologist, circles. In an attempt to increase his credibility he has succeeded in getting his articles published across the wider political spectrum.

Currently, he is a co-editor of ZaKORZENIE (Rootedness), which poses as a forum for the promotion of minority cultures. In fact it promotes the concept of "ethnopluralism", a term coined by the French New Right around Alain de Benoist and his GRECE think-tank. Ethno pluralism assumes that each political territory must be "pure", that is ethnically homogenous. According to ZaKORZENIE's policy statement, an individual does not have the right to change his ethnic or cultural identity without the consent of the ethno-cultural community to which he belongs.

Tomasiewicz is a regular contributor to Obywatel, whose editorial board includes Maciej Muskat, the chairman of ATTAC-Poland, and Stefan J Adamski, deputy chairman of ATTAC's Programming Board. The strong ATTAC involvement in Obywatel suggests that the magazine is a semi-official mouthpiece of the association.

Many people who write for and read Obywatel appear genuinely interested in issues like globalisation and the environment. Nevertheless, side by side with material on these issues, Obywatel regularly publishes articles that have a clearly fascist, racist and antisemitic content.

The cover of the first issue of Obywatel, published in 2000, bore a motto by Jozef Mackiewicz, a Polish writer and wartime Nazi collaborator, who was sentenced to death by the Home Army, the mainstream resistance organisation in wartime Poland. Mackiewicz also crops up as a moral and political authority in later editions of Obywatel in articles by Olaf Swolkien, a co-editor of the magazine and chairman of the Jozef Mackiewicz Political Club.

The first issue of Obywatel also included a favourable review of Szczerbiec (The Sword) by Tomaszewicz's close aide Remigiusz Okraska, a former anarchist. Szczerbiec is an official publication of the NOP, renowned for denying the Holocaust. Successive issues of Obywatel carried sympathetic reviews of other extreme-right and antisemitic magazines such as Odala (published by Polish supporters of the British nazi Satanist David Myatt). Rojalista and Templum.

In one of his articles, Okraska defends Jean Marie Le Pen, claiming that the French Front National leader has only been labelled a fascist because "he wants to remove the governing establishment from power".

In another issue of Obywatel, a new idol is introduced to the readers in the form of Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber. "Until the very end," says the magazine, "he conducted himself with dignity, unlike the families of the so-called innocent victims. In this so-called democracy, there are no innocent victims because the people govern or, at least, they bear responsibility for the government and its representatives."

Obywatel number 2/2001 contains advertisements for books published by the National Rock Scene (NSR), Poland's main producer of nazi skinhead records. One of NSR's publications touted there is Bunt (Revolt) with the subtitle "A book not only for fascists". The book, written by Tomasz Szczepanski, alias Barnim Regalica, a former leftist turned nationalist-pagan activist, is a compilation of political fiction short stories, often likened to William Pierce's Turner Diaries.

In July 2000, Szczepanski was captured on the cover of the weekly Wprost with a group of his supporters giving the Hitler salute. A few months later, a Warsaw court declared that the anti-fascist journalist Marcin Kornak was right to describe Szczepanski's politics as "chauvinist and antisemitic".

Obywatel 2/2001 also includes an interview with Andrzej Gwiazda. Gwiazda, a former deputy leader of the Solidarnosc trade union, is the president of ATTAC-Poland's Programme Board. In the interview, he makes a typically antisemitic statement suggesting that Jews rule Poland: "When people ask me if there is antisemitism in Poland, I ask them: 'Just imagine that I go to Israel and I want to be a Minister'.

The burst of laughter that follows this question is the best answer." The same issue publishes a "Declaration" by Obywatel's editors demanding a repressive penal policy in Poland, including the reintroduction of death penalty.

This article is followed with a piece by Tomasz Gabis, editor of the extreme-right publication Stanczyk. In his own magazine Gabis regularly rants against "the rotten mechanism of parliamentary democracy", "unmasks" what he calls "the Holocaust religion" and promotes Holocaust denial by quoting the likes of David Irving, Robert Faurisson, and Fred Leuchter. Stanczyk is well known for eulogising fascists such as Franco, Pinochet and Le Pen.

On the pages of Obywatel, Gabis promotes the political philosophy of the German "conservative-revolutionary" thinker Carl Schmitt. The same issue includes an article by Marek Glogoczowski, a member of the board of the magazine Wspolnota (Community), another magazine published by Tejkowski.

It is difficult to grasp how this kind of material can be condoned or accepted by a respected international democratic movement for social justice. In December 2001 a letter was written to the Polish and French leadership of ATTAC asking for clarification of their position regarding extreme-right infiltration. It was co-signed by representatives of the anti-fascist Never Again Association as well as by editors of the national trade union weekly Nowy Tygodnik Popularny and the leading left-wing intellectual review Lewa Noga. The letter has never received a reply, apart from personal attacks on its authors on the Polish ATTAC website. Curiously, the authors of the letter were accused of being "Stalinists" and "Trotskyists" at the same time.

In the aftermath of the letter, Okraska resigned his membership of ATTAC, but the overall policy of the association and its link with Obywatel have remained virtually unchanged, while Okraska has been promoted to Obywatel's editor-in-chief. If anything the nationalist stance of ATTAC-Poland seems to have hardened, as illustrated by the unequivocal declaration at the beginning of this article.

ATTAC-Poland still has some members from the left, for example, activists of Workers' Democracy, the Polish sister organisation of the British Socialist Workers Party, but any remaining opposition to far-right influence within the movement seems to have been sidelined.

The French leadership of ATTAC not only has never responded to criticisms for allowing right-wing extremists to hijack the ATTAC label in Poland but has continued to pump money into its Polish sister organisation, including paying for a trip to the World Social Forum in Brazil in February 2002.

It remains to be seen how long this unholy alliance will last.

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