



Breaking the Silence:

Using Popular Culture to Engage Young People in Human Rights Reporting

By Rafał Pankowski

Edited by Liam Mahony



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Dear Friend,

Welcome to the New Tactics in Human Rights Tactical Notebook Series! In each notebook a human rights practitioner describes a tactical innovation that was successful in advancing human rights. The authors are part of the broad and diverse human rights movement, including educators, librarians, health care workers, law enforcement personnel, and women's rights advocates. They have developed tactics that not only have contributed to human rights in their home countries. In addition, they have utilized tactics that when adapted can be applied in other countries and other situations to address a variety of issues.

Each notebook contains detailed information on *how* the author and his or her organization achieved what they did. We want to inspire human rights practitioners to think *tactically* to reflect on the tactics they have chosen to implement their larger strategy and to broaden the realm of tactics considered to effectively advance human rights.

This notebook features several tactics used by a volunteer organization, Nigdy Wiecej (Never Again), in Poland. Like many organizations, Nigdy Wiecej uses a number of tactics to carry out its work. Two of the tactics explained in this notebook are the use of cultural resources in the community to recruit activists and the organization of activists into an information-gathering network. The experience highlighted here demonstrates how these tactics have been used to engage and involve young people, a segment of the population whose attention can be challenging to capture and even more difficult to hold onto. The author also illustrates how different tactics are combined to reinforce and strengthen each other. While Nigdy Wiecej used these tactics to fight racism and neo-fascism, one can imagine other ways they might be applied to broaden involvement in human rights, especially among youth.

The entire Tactical Notebook Series will be available online at www.newtactics.org. Additional notebooks will continue to be added over time. On our web site you will also find other tools, including a searchable database of tactics, a discussion forum for human rights practitioners, and information about our workshops and symposium. To subscribe to the New Tactics e-newsletter, please send an e-mail to newtactics@cvt.org.

The New Tactics in Human Rights Project is an international initiative led by a diverse group of organizations and practitioners from around the world. The project is coordinated by the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) and grew out of our experience as a creator of new tactics and a treatment center that also advocates for the protection of human rights from a unique position—one of healing and reclaiming civic leadership.

We hope that you will find these notebooks informational and thought provoking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kate Kelsch".

Kate Kelsch
New Tactics Project Manager

Rafał Pankowski

Rafał Pankowski has served as secretary of the Never Again Association (Stowarzyszenie 'Nigdy Wiecej') and deputy editor of *Never Again* magazine since 1996. His book *Neo-Fascism in Western Europe* was published by the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw in 1998.

Born in 1976 and a native of Warsaw, Pankowski has studied at Eton College and Oxford University. He earned his master's degree from the Institute of Political Science at Warsaw University in 1998 and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute of Applied Social Sciences at Warsaw University. His thesis focuses on racism in popular culture.

Nigdy Wiecej (Never Again)

Nigdy Wiecej (Never Again) is an anti-racist, anti-fascist organization that monitors and documents racist and fascist activities and conducts educational campaigns centered on music and sports. The organization publishes the magazine *Nigdy Wiecej*.

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Poland remains a society in which the issues of racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance are still relatively unacknowledged. ... The general attitude of society seems rather closed towards difference, and feelings of anti-semitism remain pervasive. There appears to be little concrete knowledge or monitoring of the extent and manifestations of racism and discrimination within society, which in turn means that specific measures to combat these phenomena are often lacking in various fields. ... [M]any cases of racist attacks and violence may not be considered as such by the authorities.

From a June 2000 report by the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), a Council of Europe body.

Editor's Preface

Never Again (Nigdy Wiecej) is an anti-racist network and publication in Poland. More importantly, it is part of a growing movement against racism in Europe. Rafał Pankowski describes here several tactics used by Never Again to break silence around racism and build a human rights culture among the youth population in Poland. The tactics described in this notebook include how Never Again uses cultural events such as concerts and football games to recruit young people to this movement. Through this recruitment, they have organized an extensive network of volunteer correspondents throughout Poland to report on and challenge the tolerance of extreme-right and racist groups and ideas in their society. These correspondents are taught to carefully and regularly report any and all incidents of racism and xenophobia in their districts. Never Again's organizers then process and synthesize this information, publishing it in a magazine that is distributed to thousands of readers, including many mainstream journalists throughout Poland and Europe.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been introduced to the concepts of human rights and anti-racism at Never Again's concerts. Thousands have signed up to join the organization. Of these, more than 150 have

been trained to serve as volunteer correspondents, each producing monthly reports. The result is the most exhaustive source of information on hate crimes and racism in Poland. The publication serves not only for general education, it has also provided important investigative reporting that has prompted coverage of these issues in the mainstream Polish media. This strategic combination of cultural recruitment, maintenance of a broad volunteer network, careful documentation and public education is Never Again's unique contribution to our tactical notebook series.

This notebook provides an overview of the creation and functions of Never Again's volunteer correspondents network. It includes some basic background information, describes how cultural mobilization is used as a recruiting method, discusses the way the network functions, both in the field of gathering and of distributing information, and explains difficulties involved in sustaining a network on a voluntary basis. Finally, some attention is given to possible applications of Never Again's experience in human rights struggles in other countries.

– Liam Mahony, notebook series editor

Breaking the Silence

There are no official statistics on hate crimes in Poland. The police do not keep records on ideologically motivated crimes and thus the issue of racist extremism is generally kept off the agenda and away from the eyes of the public. One may suspect that even if the state collected such statistics it would be limited to the most obvious cases of “racial” (i.e. white vs. black) violence and it would not include the extreme-right attacks on people who do not necessarily belong to ethnic minorities but are considered “anti-national” by the perpetrators. It is important to remember that in Poland the majority of the victims of extremist violence do not belong to ethnic minorities.



Polish and American neo-Nazis. Note the Polish national emblem in the top left

Recognizing a problem is a pre-condition for solving it. This is why Never Again has defined as its main goal breaking the silence surrounding the issue of extreme-right violence.

The voices of the targeted groups are weak and rarely heard in public debates. Ethnic minorities constitute only about two percent of the population and they are hardly visible in the media and in the corridors of power. Other victimized groups are socially marginalized as well: they belong to religious minorities (often labeled “sects,” e.g. Hare Krishnas), or dissident youth subcultures (e.g. punks) with little or no access to channels of mass communication. The role of Never Again is therefore to give a voice to the voiceless.

Never Again believes that gathering and publishing reliable information that demonstrates the perseverance and the relatively large scale of extreme-right activities (including violence) has to be the backbone of all serious anti-fascist initiatives aiming to contribute to social change. It is necessary to use concrete cases of racist and fascist violence in order to challenge the tolerance of extreme-right groups and ideas in society.

Being a relatively small organization, with very modest financial means at our disposal, we could not base our tactic on expensive investigating operations, mass advertising or costly legal battles. What we could count on, however, was the very real concern about the spread of violence shared by many people all over Poland and their willingness to help us raise awareness of this very real social problem.

The Rise of the Extreme Right and the Denial of Racism

After 1989, Poland along with other post-communist countries throughout the region underwent major political, economic and cultural changes resulting from the collapse of the authoritarian regime and a widely shared determination to join the Western bloc. The political breakthrough enabled various minority groups to preserve and develop their cultural heritage in a democratic environment. It also unleashed re-emerging extreme-right organizations promoting racist and chauvinistic ideologies.

Expectations for a democratic renewal were high and, undoubtedly, the country has changed for the better in many ways since 1989. At the same time, the 1990s witnessed a steady erosion of the moral fundamentals of Polish democracy, a growing cynicism and a brutalization of the language of social and political life. The new democratic culture has often proved superficial. The breakdown of solidarity and trust among social groups has been accompanied by a rising unemployment rate (20 percent of the work force in the spring of 2002). This context provided fertile ground for right-wing extremism. The rise of the far-right was enabled as a result of the weakening of state social and political control

over society, combined with the failure of the new system to replace this control with democratic ways of dealing with extremism.

Since the late 1980s racist political groupings have been growing slowly but visibly. The extreme right advocates a mono-ethnic state based on a single national culture and it questions the basic values of democracy. Over the past decade it has traveled from the margins of politics to the Sejm (Poland's parliament). Since October 2001 – and for the first time in Polish post-war history – the extreme right has had its own independent parliamentary representation with the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin, LPR), which won seven percent of the vote and 40 seats (out of 460) in the Sejm and counts as one of the several important political forces in the country.

Meanwhile, during the 1990s the far right extended its political-cultural base through numerous publications, discussion clubs and social events. A watershed moment was the creation of a Catholic-nationalist radio station under the name Radio Maryja, which has hundreds of thousands of listeners daily. It frequently allows members of extremist organizations to broadcast their political message and thus provides an important public space to xenophobic (and, especially, anti-semitic) ideas.

The influence of the extreme right among Polish youth stems largely from, and is reflected in, the development of the fascist skinhead subculture and its accompanying racist music scene as well as the closely related soccer hooligan scene. The first organized attempt to use the skinheads for political aims came in the late 1980s from National Rebirth of Poland (Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski, NOP). Festivals have been organized and records produced and distributed without difficulty. Many neo-nazi cultural events have taken place in state-owned cultural centers.

In general the attitude of the authorities to racist extremism has been conspicuously tolerant, despite a considerable wave of violence committed by neo-nazi skinheads and encouraged by extremist political groups. None of the racist organizations were banned

despite existing legal provisions, such as Article 13 of the new constitution enacted in 1997 which specifically forbids racist activities. The introduction of Article 13, similar to constitutional provisions in other European countries, was a result of a joint campaign by

Never Again and the Polish Union of Jewish Students. The Polish anti-fascist youth movement originated in the early 1990s in response to neo-fascist violence. Never Again started as an informal group in 1992 and registered as an association in 1996 as the only national anti-fascist organization.

One reason for this situation is the determination of the authorities to maintain Poland's self-image as a tolerant democratic country soon to be accepted in the European Union. The government vigorously rejected the report by ECRI and the official response included the following argument:

"Investigations generally indicate the hooligan nature of such offenses. ... A breeding ground for misdemeanors or felonies of the above-mentioned type are conflicts with local communities or incidental acts of a hooligan nature which may affect Polish citizens or white aliens to the same degree." ¹

Unfortunately, many in the Polish media also tend to follow the official line of denying racism, due either to apathy and a lack of a critical approach to social issues or, at times, to overt nationalist sympathies.



"Poland for the Polish" – neo-fascist graffiti in Sosnowiec.

¹ The official reaction of the Polish government to the "European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance" (Council of Europe) report on Poland adopted December 1999.

Mobilizing Youth Culture

The mobilization of cultural resources is the key component to Never Again's success in building its voluntary network of correspondents. By anchoring our activity in the field of youth culture, we have been able to recruit and sustain popular involvement. Popular culture is an important tool in building a social movement and it has played a major role in the construction of the Never Again correspondents network. Authentic and noncommercial youth culture forms the basis for the involvement of many Never Again members and sympathizers. Two campaigns in particular have made an impact on our ability to mobilize a youth constituency: Music Against Racism and Let's Kick Racism Out of the Stadiums. Both these campaigns stress the need for young people to involve themselves actively in the struggle against racism. The message of Never Again to young people is not just "Don't be racist," but also "Get involved!"

Music Against Racism

My first contact with Never Again was because of the Music Against Racism campaign. I had heard about other anti-racist initiatives before, but it was the Music Against Racism CD that sparked my active engagement in this field. I read the CD cover, took a pen, wrote a letter to the address given there and got in touch with Marcin [the network coordinator]. That's how it all started.

Arkadiusz Zacheja, a long-time Never Again correspondent

The Music Against Racism campaign in Poland was inspired by the British Rock Against Racism movement initiated by Tom Robinson in the late 1970s. As part of the Polish campaign, several compilation CDs have been released in cooperation with independent music labels, featuring well-known Polish and foreign rock bands, and Music Against Racism concerts have been organized. One such event, the environmentalist and anti-racist Przysanek Woodstock Festival in August 2000 organized by the charity Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy, gathered a massive

crowd of 250,000 young people who responded enthusiastically to the anti-racist message. Many musicians made anti-fascist statements from stage and the Never Again information booth was busy throughout the three-day festival. The event was repeated successfully in August 2002 with the strong presence of Never Again and its proactive anti-racist campaigning.

In addition, numerous artists have put the Music Against Racism campaign logo on the sleeves of their recording. Never Again's success in convincing many respected musicians to take a stand against racism was possible thanks to a wide range of personal contacts in the music scene, especially those of the association's chairman, Marcin Kornak. The musicians appeared very responsive to the campaign. "It is difficult for me to talk about specific reasons for my involvement in this campaign, because resistance against racism for me is as obvious and natural as blood in the veins," said Krzysztof Grabaz Grabowski, the singer of the Polish rock legend Pidzama Porno. Grabowski wrote a special song called "Antifa," which has become the anthem of the campaign.

The campaign uses data gathered by the correspondents network to illustrate the seriousness of the problem of racism and includes a call to action for all members of its audience. The "Jedna rasa ludzka rasa" ("One Race Human Race") compilation CD cover includes a list of victims of racist murders committed in Poland in recent years, while "Support, Help, Join Us" was the message repeated on all Music Against Racism compilations. The idea was to inspire listeners to become active agents of social change rather than passive consumers of the CDs and concerts.

More than 100 concerts were held under the banner of Music Against Racism all over Poland and many of the organizers were members of Never Again's information network. At numerous other concerts (of all musical styles!) anti-racist information desks were set up by activists encouraging young people to reflect on the issue of racism and intolerance.

In 1998 the Music Against Racism campaign was voted one of three major music events of the year by readers of *Brum*, a popular music monthly. The campaign was supposed to end in 2001, but it has been continued spontaneously by people all over the country.

Let's Kick Racism Out of the Stadium

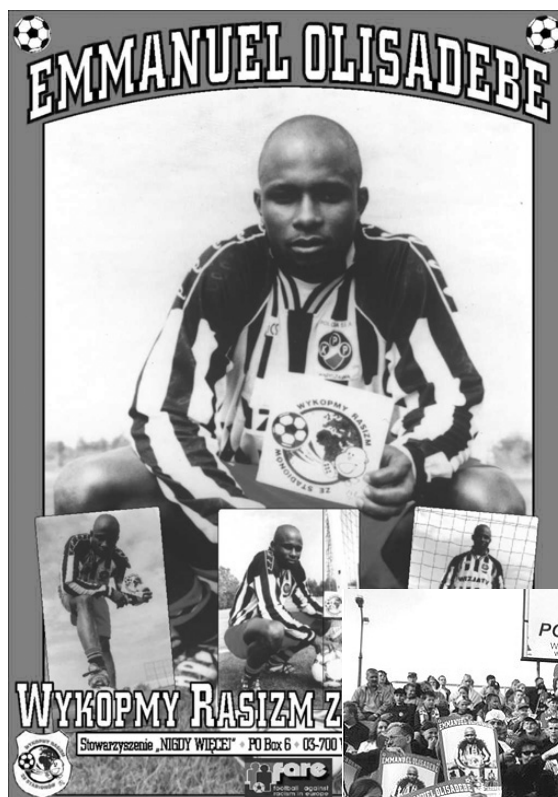
Never Again's other, more recent major campaign concentrates on sports, soccer in particular. It differs from the music campaign in that rather than primarily serving as a recruitment possibility, it is often more of a defensive attempt to combat the evidentracism in an influential cultural scene.

The sports campaign is considerably more difficult because soccer stadiums until now have been almost completely dominated by a xenophobic subculture. Let's Kick Racism Out of the Stadiums is the only anti-racist campaign in Poland aimed at soccer fans, but it is inspired by the success of similar campaigns in England, Germany, Italy and Austria. We publish *Stadion*, an anti-racist magazine for soccer fans, and usually run a sports column in the *Never Again* magazine itself. In April 2002, in the run-up to the World Cup, in cooperation with the Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) network we released the CD "Let's Kick Racism Out of the Stadiums" and printed a poster featuring Emmanuel

Olisadebe, Poland's first black international player, also a supporter of our campaign. Several amateur soccer tournaments have been organized as part of the campaign, most notably during the Przystanek Woodstock Festival. In addition, Never Again gives support to local anti-racist groups of soccer fans by providing leaflets, posters, banners, etc. Until now, the best results have been achieved at smaller clubs such as Orkan Sochaczew and Wkra Zuromin, which now have a strong anti-fascist following.

Many genuine soccer fans no longer go to matches because of the violent, xenophobic environment. It affects women and minorities in particular, but also many other fans who still love the game but are disgusted by the atmosphere which prevails at the stadiums. Other fans still attend but do not like the xenophobic culture there. Until recently such fans felt isolated from each other. These people have responded in increasing numbers to the anti-racist campaign and, in some

cases, they have volunteered to become correspondents for the network. The enormous popularity of the Nigerian-born Emmanuel Olisadebe, who became the best player on the Polish national team, added momentum to the anti-racist sports campaign. Emanuel has consistently supported Never Again in its attempts to highlight the problem of racism in the stadiums.



Let's Kick Racism Out of the Stadium poster featuring Polish soccer player Emmanuel Olisadebe, above. Kids displaying the poster during an international soccer match, right.



Building the Network

My name is Pawel. I am 18. I live in Szczecin and I am a fan of Pogon [a big soccer club]. I would like to receive more information about the Let's Kick Racism Out of the Stadiums campaign and to learn more about ways to fight neo-fascism in Polish stadiums. Along with my friends (34 people) we want to join the Never Again Association.

Letter from a Never Again supporter

As a direct result of the CDs, concerts, meetings and other popular culture events, Never Again has received many thousands of letters from young people expressing their willingness to become volunteers for the anti-racist movement. A majority of the current regular correspondents made their first contact with Never Again through the music and sport campaigns. Many of them, in addition to participating in information-gathering, have initiated campaigns and events on a local level. Thus, the correspondents network is also a living social movement.

And by linking itself to popular culture, Never Again has proven that social activism can be fun, too.

Of course it would not be realistic to expect every young person who expresses interest in Never Again's activities to become a regular correspondent. It is only natural that young people's interests are not always stable. All those who make their first contact by phone, e-mail or in person are asked to write a letter with their personal details. This is the first filter, since many people do not do even that much. In return they receive a standard package consisting of Never Again leaflets. At this step, again, many people do not respond. Those who respond a second time can be assumed to stand a chance of longer-term involvement as correspondents and they receive the one-page introductory information on the correspondent's duties.

All correspondents are required to provide personal details regarding their background that can be checked to establish their

credibility. We try to be very careful about who we work with. We learned the hard way that racists will try to infiltrate our network. Luckily we discovered quickly that people connected with the extreme right were trying to feed us false information by, for instance, sending us information about their own enemies within the extreme right. Fortunately, Never Again has accumulated enough experience to be able to detect such attempts early on. Never Again only uses information from proven reliable sources and often holds off on publishing information not confirmed by an independent source.

How the Network Works

Currently there are approximately 150 correspondents in the Never Again network nationally. The voluntary correspondents come from a variety of backgrounds and age groups. The majority, however, are young people. They need guidance about what kind of information has to be included and how it should be presented.

Every correspondent is provided with a simple one-page checklist to be used in the preparation of monthly reports. The list details the kinds of incidents that should be reported, as well as possible accompanying events that would give some context: extreme-right marches and demonstrations, the distribution of racist and fascist publications (including papers, pamphlets, books, records, tapes, etc.), racist and fascist graffiti, racist and nationalist statements in the media, etc. The correspondents are constantly reminded of the necessity to include all available details (what, where, when, etc.) so their reports will be as specific as possible. The work of the correspondent is entirely voluntary, but nevertheless they must be disciplined and responsible. Never Again stresses that all correspondents have the right to withdraw from the network at any moment for any reason – as long as they inform Never Again that they can no longer continue their reports. As long as they are serving as correspondents, though, they are obliged to send written reports every month on extreme-right activities in their local areas. It is important that the information flow is regular. Even if there is no news, it should be reported. In this field no news is indeed good

news, but if there is no report, we have cause to worry about the safety of the correspondent.

In return for regular reports, every correspondent receives a monthly internal bulletin produced by Marcin Kornak, the network coordinator. The bulletin includes an overview of the most important developments on the far-right and serves as a forum for advertising planned anti-racist and anti-fascist events, concerts and conferences. Through the bulletin the correspondents learn about each other's work and see that they are part of a wider social movement.

The correspondents use diverse information sources, varying according to local circumstances. Local media, for instance, may often publish some highly relevant information which does not make it into national headlines. The Piotr Wozniak murder case (see below) demonstrates how important monitoring the local media can be.

Correspondents frequently report incidents which they themselves witnessed. Many became involved in the network because the issue of racist and fascist violence related to their own (sometimes everyday) experience. In some small towns, the neo-nazi skinhead culture of violence is pervasive and observable on a daily basis and correspondents simply narrate their own experiences or those of their friends or other members of the community.

The correspondents are not limited by strict content guidelines: They may also report on the issues and incidents they consider important or relevant. In this way the network remains responsive to grassroots concerns and problems affecting various constituencies.

Because of funding constraints we have been unable to organize systematic, uniform training for correspondents or a large meeting of the whole national network. Undoubtedly this is a weakness of the organization. Nevertheless, members of the core Never Again team do try to arrange personal meetings with each correspondent. We talk to them informally and ensure that they are clear about what their role is. Usually

they understand the role quite well. We sometimes have to encourage them to include more detail in the reports. Continuous education of the correspondents (and of the core team, too!) is a permanent feature of the network, and a personal connection with the participants is important as well. Never Again, therefore, also feels like a group of friends, which is an important aspect of a living social movement comprised of young people.



Anti-fascist demonstration in Tarnobrzeg.

The safety of our correspondents is a primary concern. Members of the Never Again team have been threatened numerous times and attacked in the far-right press. The godfather of the Polish extreme right, Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, himself attacked Never Again in a broadcast on Radio Maryja in April 2002. He referred to members of the Never Again Association as "mongrel dogs who piss on everything." Several hit lists have circulated within the neo-nazi skinhead movement containing personal details and addresses of Never Again activists (fortunately, the neo-nazis got the addresses wrong). In light of such threats, every Never Again participant is informed about the risks involved. They are also assured of maximum solidarity from the whole network in case of any problems. A separate security instruction sheet is distributed to those network members who need it. All network correspondents are strongly advised not to give their home addresses to anybody who cannot be fully trusted.

On several occasions when the culprits could be identified, Never Again issued a warning

against continuing the threats. This certainly surprised the culprits who had, like cowards, expected to remain anonymous, and the threats ended.

In 1998 a correspondent of Never Again was severely beaten and threatened with a gun by a group of neo-nazis linked with the German fascist party NPD in the border city of Frankfurt am Oder. Never Again mobilized its extensive media contacts to alert the Polish and international public before the trial so that the authorities could not let them go unpunished.

My name is Lukasz. I am interested in the Let's Kick Racism Out of the Stadiums campaign. I sometimes go to the stadium of Lech [a big soccer club in Poland] but recently much less frequently. I am afraid I'll see a gang of bald idiots [skinheads] starting a riot or be stopped by a policeman who wants to find a scapegoat. ... I don't want the soccer fan's scarf to be associated with nazism or soccer games to be associated with riots. This is why I want to join you.

Letter from a Never Again supporter

In the spring of 2002 a female correspondent was beaten and threatened by a group of neo-nazis in the eastern city of Zamosc. Never Again initiated a national letter-writing campaign to give her support and encouragement. Her story was covered by the national media, too, and subsequently the threats ended.

Correspondents are strongly encouraged to establish working relationships with local social organizations and communities of potentially vulnerable groups such as ethnic and religious minorities, immigrant communities, gay and lesbian groups, disabled people's organizations, youth groups and others. These local groups are often willing to share information they themselves have gathered on issues of discrimination and violence. In some cases Never Again is the only channel for this data to be used outside of the victimized community itself. Of course, in each case it is important that the correspondents obtain as many verifiable details about the nature and the circumstances of the incidents as possible.

Many of the incidents documented by Never Again are not reported to the police. This is due to the general distrust of the police that is still widespread among many sections of Polish society, and especially among minorities and youth. Never Again encourages victims to report attacks to the police because the state has an obligation to combat hate crime and to protect its citizens. (Never Again does not have special expertise in dealing with legal issues, but it provides basic legal assistance to the victims whenever necessary.) Nevertheless, Never Again respects the decision of the victim if he or she declines to report the incident to the police and/or chooses to remain anonymous.

In some cases, Never Again correspondents provide other important assistance to victims such as basic psychological support when the victim feels isolated and intimidated. In June 2001, Never Again was contacted by a disabled people's organization in the city of Sosnowiec where a neo-nazi skinhead gang had been harassing a disabled couple. They were repeatedly abused and threatened by the young neo-nazis and fascist symbols were painted on the door to their flat. The police refused to protect the couple. A local correspondent of Never Again was asked to research the situation and she offered to stay in the couple's flat for a few days to help them overcome the stress of harassment. She helped connect the disabled people's group to community authorities, who in turn pledged their solidarity and assistance to the previously isolated and intimidated victims of harassment. Never Again issued a special letter asking the local institutions to provide all necessary assistance to the couple.

Never Again's network of correspondents is not a membership organization. We do not issue formal membership cards or anything like that. Sometimes the correspondents need a press card, and we do sometimes provide this. According to the Polish Press Law, authorities are especially required to assist journalists who produce a press card. Never Again press cards are therefore issued to those correspondents who have a record of reliability and who really need them in their activities.

Occasionally we have received information from sources inside the far right. In some cases it was a result of rivalry between extreme-right organizations and leaders trying to topple each other. Such information, while often very helpful, does not constitute a significant part of our work and cannot always be trusted. On several occasions we have received very good insights from former members (or indeed former leaders) of fascist groups who broke their ties with racist politics on moral grounds and felt they owed something to society to repay any wrong doing.

Thanks to the network, Never Again has been able to collect information about racist and extreme-right incidents, especially violent acts, from all over the country. With extensive contacts at the grassroots community level and in the youth scene, Never Again has access to information unavailable to the well-funded "establishment" NGOs, mainstream journalists or academics. No other organization or institution in Poland has this kind of data at its disposal. Because of this, Never Again has become an unrivaled source of information on racism and neo-fascism in contemporary Poland.

Example: Investigating the Murder of Piotr Wozniak

"The Nation comes first. If they don't understand it, we will kill them," says an angry young man with short hair wearing a bomber jacket with political symbols on his sleeve as he points to anti-fascist protesters during a nationalist skinhead rally in the center of Warsaw. The camera focuses on his face and the threatening words are repeated. The crowd of skinheads nods in approval.

Then Michal Warchala, a member of Never Again, appears on screen in a different setting. He explains that the angry young man is Damian Mikulski, a 21-year-old activist in the National Rebirth of Poland (NOP), the main neo-fascist organization in the country. Mikulski is also the leader of the White Legion, an NOP-infiltrated neo-Nazi skinhead gang active in the stadium of Legia Warszawa, a popular soccer club. Warchala explains that shortly after the video at the demonstration was shot, Mikulski was sentenced to nine years in prison for his part in a brutal killing of Piotr Wozniak, a 25-year-old student, in Wladyslawowo in northern Poland. The three culprits tried to drown their victim and when that was unsuccessful they took turns stomping on his head with their heavy boots.

The murder was briefly reported in a local paper as a case of hooliganism and the possible political or ideological background of

the attack was not mentioned. Because the murder and the trial took place in the north of the country, nobody knew about it in Warsaw and the national media kept silent, too.

Because of the existence of its national network of voluntary correspondents, Never Again was able to put together different pieces of the puzzle, uncover the ideological motivations behind the killing and hand the national media a critical story on a silver platter.

A Gdansk Never Again correspondent sent in the small note published in the local newspaper. A Warsaw correspondent reported that a local neo-Nazi skinhead had been arrested for something he had done in the north of Poland. Upon checking the information it became apparent both reports related to the same event. Then another network member noted that Mikulski had been present at an Independence Day NOP rally in Warsaw. Never Again had some video footage of this rally in its archive. The video was reinspected and members of Never Again discovered with horror that it had been Mikulski who had mentioned killing people as a possible way to affirm his political views.

The story was published in *Never Again* magazine and Radek Dunaszewski, a TV journalist, became interested. With the cooperation of the national television channel TVN, Mikulski's political ties were

exposed in a documentary using the video from the demonstration and an explanation by a Never Again expert.

Thus the ideological nature of the crime was brought to public attention: The murder was not simply random, but was a result of the culture of violence promoted by racist extreme-right organizations who target anybody who is deemed "alien" because of their race, religion or lifestyle. Piotr Wozniak was murdered because he had been classified as an "anti-national element" by the extreme-right thugs: They did not like his "alternative" clothes.

The murder of Piotr Wozniak was not an isolated incident. Since 1989 Never Again has registered 31 deaths resulting from xenophobic attacks, usually by neo-nazi skinheads who are members or sympathizers of extreme nationalist organizations. In 2001 alone, Never Again collected evidence of 228 hate crimes, acts of violence committed by nazi-skinheads against those who are considered "alien" on the basis primarily of race and ethnicity, but also of religion or lifestyle. But the issue of racist and fascist violence very rarely features on the national agenda and it is hardly reported in the mass media.

Using the Correspondents' Reports

Never Again does not aspire to be an academic institution. Our data-gathering and publishing activities can more appropriately be labeled "activist journalism." At the same time, *Never Again* magazine publishes articles offering an in-depth analysis of the problems and thus constitutes an important intellectual forum.

Of course, gathering all this data would be a waste if we couldn't use it effectively to promote political change. Never Again takes great pains to carefully decode and analyze information from its correspondents and produce reports that can maximize its impact on Polish society.

Decoding and Analyzing the Data

The first step is to understand and occasionally "decode" the information received. For this purpose it is necessary for the Never Again team to use their insight into the cultural characteristics of different youth scenes. For example, the meaning of various symbols can be essential to comprehending the nature of an incident.

One such symbol is the Celtic cross, also known as the "White Power" symbol. It originated in medieval Ireland and is still used

as part of an ancient Celtic identity. However, in the latter half of the 20th century it acquired a totally different meaning across Europe, becoming an international symbol of the neo-fascist movement. The Celtic cross has been used increasingly as a replacement for the swastika, both because of negative reactions from the public and for legal reasons. The use of the swastika as a political symbol is prohibited in many European countries. The Celtic cross, however, is less widely known and therefore more acceptable to the public and authorities alike. In recent years it, too, has been banned in Germany. The White Power symbol has now been adopted by the racist element in the soccer stadiums. The sight of Celtic crosses and other neo-nazi skinhead signs is commonplace in Poland's stadiums and the sports authorities generally choose not to intervene. This is partly due to their ignorance of the meanings of fascist symbols.

The knowledge of such symbols is necessary to establish the background of the culprits if they wear these signs on patches, badges, T-shirts, etc. Sometimes it is important to take into account whether fascist graffiti appeared in the area shortly before an incident took place. We then try to put different aspects of information together like pieces of a puzzle. Thus we can sometimes pinpoint the ideological connections of certain crimes, confronting the standard official argument that extremist violence is just harmless hooliganism.

In early December 2000, Roma families living in Zakonnic, Piastowska and Rybacka streets in the town of Brzeg were subjected to repeated harassment by gangs of neo-nazi skinheads who invaded the area under the cover of night, sprayed racist graffiti on the houses, tried to break in doors and broke windows. The police were called several times but failed to arrive in time to arrest the perpetrators. Speaking to the local press, police officers dismissed the attacks as bogus stories, made up by the Roma themselves. Stefan Gornicki, a deputy commander of the local police, claimed the Roma painted the racist graffiti themselves. Gornicki said the Roma were prepared to pay each other for false testimonies, and that they pretend to be persecuted in order to be able to go to Switzerland or England. After Never Again was asked for assistance by a Roma rights organization, a local correspondent undertook an independent investigation. It was discovered, among other things, that some of the racist graffiti had been made with special patterns, similar to those used by a fascist organization under the name the White Eagle Union – Polish National Party (ZBO-PPN). Shortly before the attack, a chapter of the ZBO-PPN had been opened in the nearby city of Opole.

Never Again Magazine and the Media

The uses of the data are manifold, but the most important means of communicating the cases of violence to the public is the *Never Again* magazine. Every issue of the magazine, edited by Marcin Kornak, includes a list of violent incidents with a racist or extreme-right background. The list is based on the correspondents' reports. In addition, the magazine carries analyses of the situation regarding racism and xenophobia in Poland and in Europe, interviews, reports from anti-racist events, legal documents, etc.

The magazine is distributed nationwide and currently has a circulation of 3,500 copies. This may not be a huge number in itself (although it is one of the highest-circulation anti-fascist

magazines in Europe), but to assess the impact the magazine has nationally, the number of copies needs to be

multiplied: many of the readers are journalists working for mass-circulation newspapers, radio and television. There have been numerous cases when they used stories first

published by us for their own articles and programs. Members of Never Again are not offended. They are always happy to see that their work is useful (of course we always ask the big media to mention Never Again as a source). In many cases we have helped journalists with their inquiries and investigations. Occasionally we have provided specific stories to trusted journalists in the mass media knowing they would make good use of them. As illustrated by the case of Piotr Wozniak, the cooperation between Never Again and the mainstream media can result in breaking the wall of silence around the issue of racist and fascist violence. Building up a network of mainstream media contacts has been a long and gradual process. Sometimes we identify a journalist who might be interested in our work on the basis of a related article on youth or human rights. More often, though, journalists have tended to approach us themselves for the information.

By the summer of 2002 the national and international print media had run 289 stories with assistance from Never Again. About 11 hours of TV programs and 26 hours of radio programs about the issue were broadcast nationally thanks to assistance from Never Again. We often act as consultants for such productions and quite frequently we have appeared in the programs as experts. On a few occasions we have provided special undercover video footage, too. A number of selected television programs with our input have been put together on a single video collection, which is used as an educational resource for schools, youth groups and other audiences.

Each issue of the magazine is accompanied by a press release. The magazine is sold in a national chain of newsstands as well as at concerts, meetings, events, university



bookshops, etc. A significant number of copies are distributed by the correspondents in our network who promote the magazine among their peers.

The readership of *Never Again* also includes ethnic and religious minority activists, educators, human rights NGOs, institutions such as the Ombudsman's Office, and members of parliament. On several occasions formal questions have been posed by members of different political parties to government ministers in both chambers of parliaments based on the data published on the pages of *Never Again* demanding explanations for the authorities' lack of action against organized racism and neo-fascism.

In addition to the national level, the information gathered by the correspondents network is used both locally and internationally.

The Local Level

On the local level, the news about cases of violence published in the nationally-distributed magazine can and often does play an important role. The list of incidents that includes hate crimes committed in the area can be photocopied and distributed in the local community. Sometimes the local media and institutions such as schools become interested after a local issue is publicized by *Never Again*. The publication of information on right-wing extremist attacks in an area can also serve as a deterrent for the perpetrators in the future. On one occasion members of *Never Again* running an information booth at a rock concert were approached by a skinhead leader who asked not to be mentioned on the pages of *Never Again* anymore and promised not to take part in any further anti-minority activities.

In some cases, *Never Again* issues press releases when an expected incident can be prevented, e.g. in March 1999 a violent anti-semitic NOP demonstration in front of a synagogue in Lodz was cancelled after *Never Again* publicized a statement warning against it. Similarly, a visit to the Sejm by French ultra-nationalist Jean-Marie Le Pen was canceled in May 2001 after *Never Again*

When I saw a review of the Music Against Racism CD in the January edition of Brum [a music magazine], I decided to write you. Congratulations on this wonderful idea. Music is a thing that unites people and educates them. The release of your record is in my opinion the event of the year. I am very interested in your anti-fascist activities. I believe that if many people unite against racism, it can be eradicated.

Letter from a Never Again supporter

issued a warning to the public about the possible scandal.

The International Level

On the international level, the information from the correspondents network has proven vital, too. *Never Again* constantly cooperates with anti-racist and anti-fascist organizations abroad, most notably Searchlight (the London-based international anti-fascist monthly), with the Amsterdam-based European anti-racist network UNITED for Intercultural Action and with the Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) network. There is a constant exchange of information among anti-fascists internationally, which is made necessary by the increasingly international nature of extreme-right activities.

In addition, *Never Again* has provided information about the extent of extreme-right activities to international institutions such as the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) set up by the Council of Europe, the EU Accession Monitoring Project of the Open Society Institute and the European Roma Rights Center. Each of these institutions has included information from *Never Again* in their reports and publications. The Brzeg case, for instance, was included in several high-level international reports thanks to assistance from *Never Again*. In July 2001, Jolanta Skubiszewska, the coordinator of *Never Again*'s sports campaign, addressed an Extraordinary Congress of the International Football Federation (FIFA) in Buenos Aires on the spread of racism in Poland's soccer culture.

In this way, information about racist extremism travels from the grassroots level to the international level despite the denial of racism by officials in the Polish government.

Impact

It is difficult to measure the impact of our activities on the level of xenophobia in Poland. Never Again conducts a wide range of activities in diverse fields such as research, education, awareness-raising, advocacy, lobbying, etc. The information-gathering network of correspondents is but one important part of these wide-ranging activities. Of course the level of xenophobia in society depends on many other factors, and the activities of one association cannot eradicate it. Nevertheless, Never Again has managed to raise awareness of the problem of racism at least in some sections of Polish society, especially among youth, but also to some extent among politicians. There is still much to be done.

Funding

A serious roadblock to publishing *Never Again* magazine is a persistent lack of financial resources (the magazine is intended

as a quarterly), resulting in delays in the publishing schedule. This is alleviated by the existence of a regularly updated Web site, <http://free.ngo.pl/nw>, managed by Bartłomiej Gutowski, a member of the Never Again team.

The possibilities for funding anti-racist work in the majority of Central and Eastern European countries are generally very limited. Support comes more often from outside rather than from inside the countries. Our work can be threatening to those inside the government because our very existence makes it impossible for them to deny the existence of racism. Funding Never Again would not be in their best political interest. Never Again survives on the enthusiasm of its volunteers. It has no paid staff and no regular office. And yet, it has managed to continue and to expand its activities for the past decade, the development and maintenance of the national correspondents network being its major achievement.

Applying the Tactics Elsewhere

The tactics used by Never Again can certainly be used by other groups focusing on human rights issues, particularly unacknowledged violations of rights, like racism and nationalism in Poland. What Never Again has done is combine a set of tactics into a campaign: a) cultural mobilization to recruit activists; b) organizing of activists into an information-gathering network; and c) production and dissemination of analyses and publications based on this network's work. Clearly all three of these tactics are applicable to other settings and other countries.

We will focus here on the first two, since publication and dissemination are methodologies that are already widely-understood and used in the grassroots human rights movement.

Mobilizing Cultural Resources

The tactic of mobilizing cultural resources to create a national network of voluntary correspondents to break the silence around difficult social issues can be used in other settings. The national context will determine what the underreported social problem might be, and what cultural resources can be mobilized to highlight the issue and to build a national network. In the case of Poland, music and sports were powerful mobilizing tools, especially for youth. In other cultures, this might also be true as music and sports are not always merely fields of entertainment, but also important defining features of the social landscape. It is not a coincidence that neo-nazi skinheads have been able to take advantage of the stadiums to mobilize their message. Never Again is a positive example of using the opportunity that these cultural gathering places represent to involve people with a strong human rights consciousness or

change people's opinions and commitments about injustice.

Youth culture mobilization can be particularly effective for anti-racist organizing in a setting where a young and violent skinhead movement is active. These movements create environments that can be very distasteful for the majority of young people. Thus in addition to an altruistic concern for justice, there will be people interested in rescuing a part of their own culture from deterioration. There is a constituency of people who are disgusted with their stadiums or concert halls being dominated by obnoxious groups, and this disgust may be an important resource from which an organizing campaign can draw. Sadly, racist and violent movements are spreading throughout youth culture in many parts of the world, so there are plenty of places where an effort to mobilize for justice and against racism and violence may be able to draw from this constituency.

The idea of using cultural resources for political mobilization to break the silence around some difficult social issue can be much more universal. A similar effort might be recruiting young people to take action about other social problems, such as a war affecting their country, the AIDS epidemic or gender violence. Amnesty International has used concerts to build membership all over the world. Comedians and musicians have often been recruited to build support for campaigns against hunger, homelessness, etc.

On a small-scale, an organization might start by trying to set up information tables and recruitment tables at cultural events, concerts, etc. Never Again's example shows that such a movement may also be able to build alliances among the artists themselves, and thus organize concerts with specific political agendas, and invite artists who are also building these political messages into their art. An organization considering such an effort may already have some connections to the world of cultural performers that can be taken advantage of, or it may be able to approach artists whose artistic message suggests an affinity to involving themselves with such a campaign. Thus, Never Again was able to ally with artists as well as record labels to help spread their message. The same is true

in other areas of culture – thus a major step forward for Never Again's stadium campaign was the involvement of a popular soccer star.

Organizing of Activists

For Never Again, it isn't enough to simply spread a message at cultural events. If you really want to take advantage of this tactic, you also need to organize a process to channel the positive interest your "culture" work sparks. You need to develop ways to recruit people who are inspired by your message into an organizational framework, and give them an ongoing role in the good work you are trying to promote. For Never Again this involved building a correspondents network. In another setting it might involve building local chapters for a movement or campaign to confront injustice, advocate or lobby.

Once the function of the network is defined, the network itself must be built up through recruitment. Never Again had such success with its concerts and CDs that it was able to build a network with a relatively passive recruitment process after that stage. From thousands of initial inquiries there was a process of self-selection wherein those who became network correspondents were those who showed persistent initiative to stay in touch with the organization. In another context this might not be sufficient, and the group might want to be more proactive in seeking out network members. It might produce materials about the problem being addressed and the objectives of the network, and take these out in a variety of settings, as well as presenting them at meetings of other similar minded organizations, with the explicit goal of recruiting network members. It might hold assemblies or trainings to excite and empower people to take on this commitment.

One thing that made this mobilization process effective for Never Again was that the organization's primary product – the *Never Again* magazine, was a regular effort and was a visible symbol and demonstration of the importance of the volunteers' work. Thus once volunteers were recruited, the magazine provided a steady momentum and reason for them to stay involved. This is very important.

In another type of campaign where cultural mobilization is used to recruit young people, the organization needs to have a concrete way to utilize members or volunteers on a regular basis. It cannot merely ask new recruits to show up at meetings or join a committee. New recruits have a great need to feel useful and to see value and outcome from their efforts. A regular process involving visible products or events can help maintain their spirit and commitment.

Beyond this, Never Again also learned that to keep a network alive, the connection needed to have a personal emotional element. Since each correspondent was facing a difficult, and perhaps lonely task in their little corner of Poland, it was essential to empower them and create a sense of togetherness, of family, of a *movement* that would make a positive change. Its internal newsletter helped correspondents to see the political importance of their efforts as well as to keep them in touch with the activities of their colleagues in other parts of Poland.

Any organization involving volunteers in confronting violence and human rights abuse would do well to learn from Never Again's careful concern for the security of its people.

Training must go into detail on this aspect, ensuring that those who join the effort are willing to accept the risks, and assuring them of the full support of the organization if they are ever under attack. Security procedures will vary from one context to the next, but the need to pay conscientious attention to the risk will not.

In conclusion, while these tactics are being used in Poland, they can be utilized in other countries and communities by adapting them and drawing upon resources available in local contexts. We hope that the explanation of the use of the tactics by Never Again will give you a good sense of how they were applied in one context and ideas for how you might tap into cultural resources in your own country to break the silence around unspoken human rights concerns arising in your country.

Appendix I

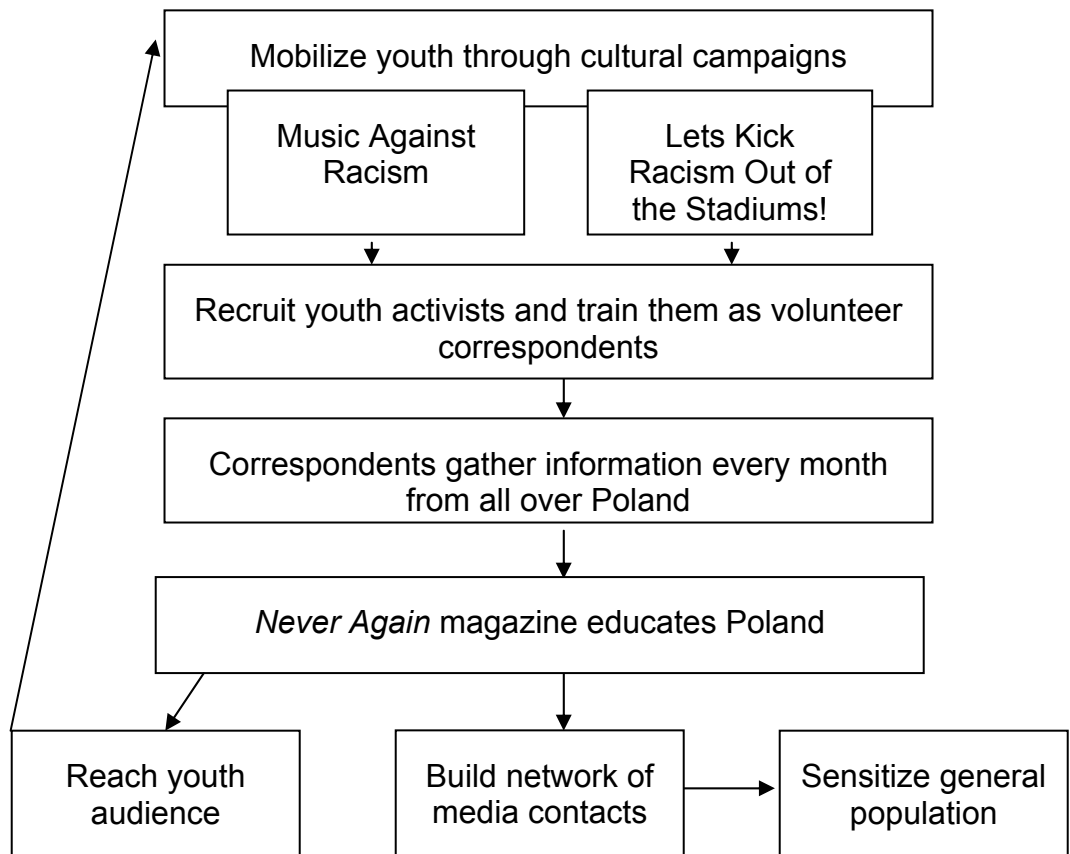
Useful Reading

- <http://free.ngo.pl/nw>. The Never Again Web site, includes information in English.
- <http://www.unitedagainstracism.org>. Web site of UNITED for Intercultural Action, includes information booklets such as "Resistance Against Intolerance."
- When Hate Comes to Town: Community Responses to Racism and Fascism: Searchlight Community Handbook. Searchlight Educational Trust, London 1995.
- <http://www.turnitdown.com>. Practical information on using music in campaigns against racism.
- <http://www.faren.net.org>. Football Against Racism in Europe: combating racism in and through soccer.

Appendix II

The Problem: The Rise of Right-Wing Hate Crimes

The Never Again Tactic:



Notes

**For a full list of publications available in the Tactical Notebook Series,
go to www.newtactics.org.**

Online you will also find a searchable database of tactics and
forums for discussion with other human rights practitioners.



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