



THE WAY
OUT OF

RACISM AND NAZISM

By Katja Wahlström

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Save the Children
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**THE WAY
OUT OF RACISM
AND NAZISM**



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The worst of all evils

Nothing arouses quite the same abhorrence and scorn in society today as Nazism and neo-Nazis. If we could simply detest away Nazism, it would have been wiped out long ago. But it is not that simple. In an age where ever increasing numbers of young people are being lost to racist and neo-Nazi groups, it is high time we learnt about what counter measures actually work.

This article is all about this learning process and what you, I and everyone else can do to stop our children, school students, friends and siblings from becoming entangled in these groups. The first thing we have to do is to understand that no one is born a Nazi and that there are rational reasons why these young people have ended up where they are. In order to find solutions we must first find out the causes.

This booklet also contains information about the organisation Exit in Sweden. As the name implies, Exit helps young people "exit" racist groups. Exit can provide you with further information; and remember, never give up as there IS hope!

How do I know that someone is a neo-Nazi?

What we usually see as a sign that someone may be harbouring Nazi sympathies is when a young person (predominantly boys and young men) shaves his head or cuts his hair very short, and starts to wear black clothes and boots. But not all so-called skinheads are neo-Nazis, and not all neo-Nazis look like skinheads. However when a young person also shows an exaggerated interest in the Second World War, Adolf Hitler, white power music and nationalism, then there are reasons for concern. If he or she for example suddenly mixes with a whole new group of friends, starts drinking heavily, avoids being at home, or surrounds themselves with Nazi symbols - such as emblems and badges adorning their bedroom or clothing, or even tattoos - then there are reasons to take this very seriously.

It is advisable to monitor the Internet sites being visited. The Internet is an important avenue for neo-Nazi recruitment and propaganda. Messages are spread, music is distributed and meetings are organised through these racist and neo-Nazi web sites. You can read more about this in the booklet entitled "How to fight racism on the Internet" by Save the Children Sweden.

A young person who has not yet been dragged seriously into a racist organisation can still be helped by a friend, parent or teacher taking a firm and unambiguous stand.

- Distance yourself clearly from xenophobic views, hostility to foreigners, racism and Nazism. Get involved! Do not permit Nazi symbols to adorn your home. Make it clear that you do not accept criminal activity. As a parent, it is important that you maintain contact with schools and other parents. Talk to you children about the sorts of consequences that racist and neo-Nazi activities can have - for example on the possibility of obtaining a driving licence, on national service, and obtaining work - as well as the menace that they are exposing themselves, family and friends to.

- Provide an alternative!

At the end of this article you will find a short list of commonly used racist and neo-Nazi symbols, along with some web addresses for finding help and support.

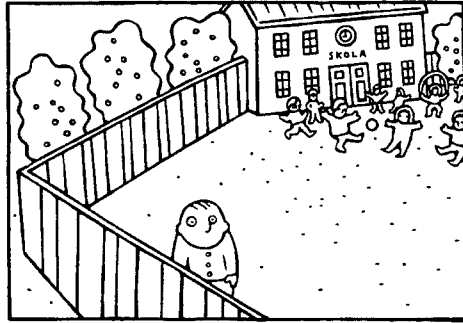
Who turns to Nazism?

There are no simple answers to why someone becomes a Nazi, though there are some common tendencies shared by those ending up there. Political views do not seem to be the main reason, and many of them have been wronged in some way early on in life. They have often been made to feel unwanted or pushed aside by either "friends" or teachers, or by others of the same age from immigrant backgrounds, and sometimes by their own parents. Being bullied and having low peer status is not uncommon. Nazism fulfils a need for many longing for revenge, comradeship, "respect", identity and control in an existence that feels chaotic and degrading. Interestingly, it is pretty well the same things that also drive some young immigrants into criminal gangs.

By joining a group of skinheads, neo-Nazis or even a gang of "head kickers" from the housing estates on the outskirts of town, mistreated youths feel they can deal with their disappointment and marginalization.

Many racists maintain that they have experienced frequent conflicts with immigrant youths. Others admit that they have hardly had any contact with immigrants at all! The way other ethnic groups are viewed seems to vary greatly from individual to individual. While a small number say that they "feel ill" at the sight of immigrants, others point out that they have nothing against other ethnic groups. They don't see Swedes as being superior to immigrants.

On the other hand, they dislike racial mixing - every ethnic group should stick to themselves, and Sweden is a Swedish country.



Niklas Mattsson, 18 years old, turned his back on Nazism and today works for Exit helping others in similar situations. His story about his journey in and out of Nazism is typical of how it happens.

"As a child I had some friends sometimes - but was frequently shunned. I was beaten both at home and by older students at school. And always heard that I was dumb in the head. When I was 11, I began to idolise my stepbrother who was 18 and a skinhead. He looked after me; he cared. Once when I'd been given a beating by five guys (three Swedes and two immigrants), my stepbrother began to rant and rave about "those bloody immigrants". I was only 11 and didn't have any racist views then, but I was influenced by what he said. When I walked around with him I could suddenly get revenge for everything I'd gone through. Everything that I'd been afraid of suddenly became scared of me. It felt fantastic. My stepbrother began to give me Ultima Thule records, a shirt with a nationalistic hit song on the chest and then a bomber jacket. I went straight from listening to country-dance bands like Arvingarna, to Ultima Thule. One of my teachers reacted by telling the whole class that Ultima Thule were Nazis. Everyone barraged me with constant arguments.

They all got behind the fight against Nazism but no one supported me.

When I was 14, I came into contact with a pensioner who said that he was a national socialist, not a Nazi, though that's exactly

what he was. But he got totally involved. He always had time to chat and listen. His house was always open. He gave me a summer job and loads of information about National Socialism, newspapers and provocative badges, stickers and transfers. At the same time I drifted further and further apart from all the others. They all asked, "Why do you hate people?". It didn't feel like I did, but they kept at me, so I felt even more hated. After a while I got the number to the white power 'firm' Nordland from a guy in a parallel class. I began to get deeper and deeper into it, further from what was accepted. I bought white power music and clothes, started to carry knives and above all started to drink copious amounts. Despite all that, I had a girlfriend who was an anti-racist. She went to her demonstrations against racism, then I'd come and meet her and we'd go home together hand in hand. Sick really. But it didn't last very long. As soon as I drank, it all went wrong, and I got into fights, and of course she dumped me. I sank even deeper into neo-Nazi circles. My mother gave me an ultimatum, "Change your views or move out", she said. At that point I'd begun to feel a strong bond of kinship with the other neo-Nazis, the only company I had. So the last thing I wanted to do was to give up my views. I moved to my father's place where I ended up with too much freedom instead. He was away regularly with his job, so I could run riot.

Everything got worse and worse - the boozing, the crime and the violence. My schooling went down the tubes. As a fighter I began to get a reputation for being dangerous. But it was an immense task living up to my reputation. I was arrested a number of times but wasn't charged - I managed to talk my way out of everything. My grandmother, though she wasn't Jewish, had spent time in Auschwitz and survived the holocaust, became terrified.

She thought I was going to kill her. As far as politics are concerned, I read more and more and became increasingly convinced. Your mates were the only ones you could trust. We hated together and when I look back on it now, I can say that those who said I hated, were right. I carried inside me hate from the start, beaten into me during my childhood. The very first time I began to doubt Nazism was when two mates and I were on the run. We'd stolen two cars and gone on

a vandalising spree. We were arrested and it ended up that the two others that I trusted most in the whole world put all the blame onto me. I protected them, but they didn't protect me. That really makes one start to wonder. When I was released I drank away an entire weekend, totally alone. On Saturday an ex-Nazi knocked on the door. He said something that made me think even more. He said, "You usually say that immigrants can't tell the difference between what's yours and mine, but can you - who steals?" I threw him out, but started to feel guilty and see that none of us practised what we preached. The decision to get out began to grow slowly. After a while I did the 'unthinkable', I rang Kent at Exit, the place I'd always called the "state brainwashing institute". Kent listened calmly and when I talked to him about getting out, he said, 'Well it's not like getting out of a stamp collectors' club'. He was right. When I had decided, I looked up all my old mates and said that I had decided to get out. It took a little while first, but then the threats began. Exit helped me move and obtain a whole new identity. I was given an assault alarm and slept with a meat cleaver beside my bed for half a year. But then they started on my little brother instead, leaning on him about my whereabouts. Luckily nothing serious happened but the worry was enormous. I was hysterical. After a while I got into community service in a hospital and had normal workmates. What was interesting was that immigrants there were friendly and easy going, while the Swedes looked down at me and thought that I hadn't changed; and that I was really racist deep down inside anyway.

After Christmas that year things quietened down a bit for me.

One of my old acquaintances died from an overdose, another went to prison - those two had been the ringleaders in the hunt for me. I began to go to a psychologist for getting to the bottom of my violent behaviour. Then I started to remember everything I'd done and broke down. I lay on the floor in my apartment, and for several hours my brain exploded with pictures of how I'd jumped and kicked a guy. I heard him screaming the whole time. I rang Kent, day and night, but couldn't handle talking to people from home, not even my relatives. Everyone kept having a go at me politically, giving me lectures on Nazism. I wasn't welcome

anywhere. Early on in the picture, I started to conduct talks for Exit. This was a good way for me to work through my own issues. First I wanted to retain my views despite my getting out.

But my views changed more and more the longer I worked with myself. I don't blame anyone else, it was my choice to be a Nazi and I have to acknowledge that. But I had hoped that more people would have understood that one can change. Some did understand. Once I was in Trelleborg and spoke to a whole congregation. Afterwards I received a letter from a girl who was there. She was 12 years old, and wrote that she had two idols.

One was me, and the other was the dance band Friends. She asked me for my autograph. Ever since then I have always thought about never letting her down. She has kept me going many times."

A number of reasons

As illustrated by Niklas' story, there are often many reasons why young people are drawn into Nazism and racism. It can involve negative experiences as a child and adolescent and the inability of adults to handle these situations, or the influence of older racists, and of course like all young people, it involves the search for identity within a group - where music, rituals, clothes and codes affirm a sense of belonging.

Marginalization, bullying and failure

Many young racist have felt excluded "marginalized" early in life. It is therefore not so strange that they seek to belong to groups that also exist on the fringe of society later in their lives. They know this role very well and at the same time they can seek revenge, as these groups are feared by society.

Many of them have also underachieved in school in many ways. One of those who has managed to get out related the following:

*"It became generally known that you could hit me without getting hit back. And my parents thought that I should be passive. I didn't get the support I should have. They didn't do anything. And they (teachers and headmaster) have always maintained that bullying doesn't occur at their school!" **

* "SMÅKA KÄNGA – VÄGEN TILLBAKA" A REPORT BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH EX-NAZIS BY KARL-OLOF ARNSTBERG AND JONAS HÄLLÉN. FOR EXIT/FRYSHUSET IN CO-OPERATION WITH SKANDIA, JUNE 2000.

Meeting older racists

Young people aged 12 to 15 are greatly influenced by role models in the age group just a little older than their own. A close relative, older brother or friend can often have a deciding influence, "guiding" them into extreme groups. The opposite is also true, that an unexpected meeting with the right person at the right moment can make a dedicated neo-Nazi suddenly start to think again.

*"After that I started to follow my cousin to meet his older skinhead friends, drink beer and listen to Thule. Everything just rolled on from there. The music got harder and harder. You just sat there without knowing that you were racist. I began to buy boots, bomber jackets and shave off my hair." **

Unresolved conflicts and adults' inabilities

Many young racists maintain that while they were growing up they had conflicts with immigrants and that the adults neither let them defend themselves, nor did anything to resolve these conflicts. They met young immigrants with uneasy leniency and Swedes with admonishment, praising a multicultural society. Neither of these sounded like a solution to a real conflict. Many adults seemed to be too scared to even get involved in such conflicts - maybe out of fear of being called racist, or because of confusion or lack of knowledge. Instead these adults just let things go on as they were. In hindsight, this may have inevitably led to a worsening of the conflicts they were trying so hard to resolve. Young people who often feel brushed aside, form the impression that adults always take the side of the immigrants - no matter what they get up to.

In their eyes Nazism can - strange as it may sound - be a way to get around this "fairness" and finally speak out about it. If instead we got involved and tried to actually resolve these conflicts, forthrightly seeing to it that all those involved - regardless of background - got their fair share of reprimanding and consideration, then the issues would more often be resolved.

Adults ought to follow up and see that conflicts do not recur. If for example, there is conflict about who should be on the football field and when, then adults ought to see that everyone gets their turn. Conflicts in the schoolyard or recreation centre should be resolved by constructive mediation, where the same demands for fair play and fair mindedness apply to everyone. A conflict between young people cannot be resolved by a few well-chosen words about tolerance. Not even we adults solve our own conflicts that way - we go through what has occurred and then try to find fair solutions.

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"In another town two small boys ended up in a fight with each other. On the one side stood "svartskallar" , on the other side stood "svennar" (slang for typically Swedish-looking people - can also be derogatory). The conflict developed into a constant and ongoing battle, on the football field and the recreation centre yard. The school's reaction was to shift the focus of the Swedish-language classes onto the multicultural society, with essay topics and study visits to the local refugee centre. But the classes never took up the fundamental conflict, which began in the housing area several years earlier. The young "svartskallar" continued their reign of theft, robbery and assault. The crimes created an increasing resentment toward immigrants. Many of the "svennar" organised themselves into racist organisations and participated in a wave of serious violent attacks that received a lot of attention. There are plenty of intellectual arguments against young neo-Nazis' views, but in their eagerness to put everything right the good forces often forget an important component in the Swedish racism, the emotional conviction. Those who have been beaten, threatened and robbed are not going to listen to facts and figures. The only thing that can break the emotional conviction is concrete action. Those who at an early stage can summon the courage to confront conflicts in their own residential area, school or recreational centre - without being immediately judgemental or abhorred - will also be given the respect required for getting these aggressive young people to listen to a message about co-operation and reconciliation." ***

A sense of belonging - finding one's "flock"

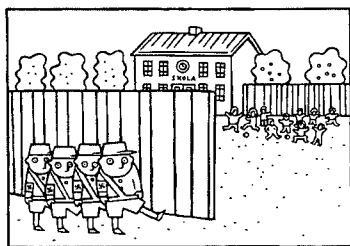
Wanting to belonging to a group is normal for all young people trying out a new identity of their own. The individual's views are formed by the group, and external attributes (such as clothes and hairstyles) and common interests (for example music) reinforce the bonds holding them together.

"When you enter puberty it's like you have to choose a branch. You have to choose between being a Nazi, anti-Nazi, punk or hip-hopper - in today's society you just can't choose to be

* DEROGATORY SLANG SWEDISH TERM FOR PEOPLE WITH DARKER COMPLEXIONS THAN THE SWEDISH NORM.

** "OLÖSTA KONFLIKTER ORSAK TILL RASISM", A COLUMN ABOUT HOW UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS CAN LEAD TO RACISM, BY JONAS HÄLLÉN, APPEARING IN METRO, NOVEMBER 30, 2000.

*neutral. There has to be something to make a stand for, something to fight for. I felt that when I got out, 'Well, what am I going to do now?' I wasn't a proud Nazi any more; I had nothing to fight for. I became a pathetic loser and thought, 'should I become a punk or what should I do now?' Then I thought, I can turn it all around and be an anti-racist instead." **



In the case of Nazis and racists, the group often follows a destructive spiral, where the individuals' frustrations and aggressions are heightened. What begins as pranks and simplistic views, often leads into a maze of violence, substance abuse and total isolation. The music plays a large role in welding together and inciting the group. Here they find the inspiration and material for both an ideological position and a male role that glorifies strength and violence. White power music is actually the most important path into Nazism today. One ex-Nazi related the following:

"When the Thule wave came I listened to a whole lot of Thule. Not because I was racist but because I thought it was good music. They were Vikings. It was great when they just wasted everything. Because I had a Thor's Hammer and listened to Thule, I was automatically branded a racist - even if I didn't have any racist views at all. From Ultima Thule I then got into white power music and thought that the message agreed pretty well with me then. They sing about immigrants fighting you; that you'll be called a racist and that you're not allowed to put up any resistance and all that. They took up the very points that I thought I wasn't allowed to. I can't say this without being branded a racist."

Alcohol is another interest that thrives in neo-Nazi groups. Very few of them would describe themselves as alcoholics, but many have undergone personality changes after drinking alcohol. It is usual for young neo-Nazis to consume large amounts of alcohol together, while working each other up into a frenzy with the help of white power music. Many have even committed serious violent crimes that they can't even remember. The combination of violence and drunkenness leads to serious dulling of the senses. In order to cope with the post-fight anxiety, the memory gaps and everything else that goes along with the destructive lifestyle, they maintain a fast pace day to day, and only mix with their own kind and drink even more alcohol. In the end this destructive spiral leads to their "shutting off", leaving them devoid of empathy and able to commit very serious violent crimes without even reflecting over the injuries and damage they cause. In stark contrast to this, is their widespread ideological praise of order and purity. Pure air, pure water, a pure race, no pornography, tight regulation of capitalism, exemplary order in state affairs, and a strong male role as the defender of the family and fatherland are what many young neo-Nazis want. A probable reason for this is, that these insecure young people dream about a mechanical substitute for real security - discipline and order. In their lack of self-confidence, muscles and rules are aspired to and glorified. Exactly like the ideals of Nazi Germany. The following quotation comes from two ex-Nazis and illustrates the deep conflict between myth and reality:

"There is a very strong double standard; you should look after your body, not drink, and live soundly, but then you live like a pig anyway. I think this was a major reason why I distanced myself from it. When I stopped all the drunken parties, I then distanced myself from the whole thing."

"If we said that National Socialism took over today, then they (the skinheads) would be gassed straight away."

* "SMAKA KÄNGA - VÄGEN TILLBAKA" A REPORT BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH EX-NAZIS BY KARLOLOV ARNSTBERG AND JONAS HÄLLÉN, FOR EXIT/FRYSHUSET IN CO-OPERATION WITH SKANDIA, JUNE 2000.

What can I do about it?

Information campaigns and TV galas against racism are certainly good for bolstering a sense of "togetherness" amongst already converted anti-racists, but you can't get rid of racism and Nazism with information. These young people are not easy to reach with intellectual argument. The basis of their conviction is emotional. This doesn't mean that you should stop putting your foot down - you have to say where you stand. We should distance ourselves from racist views - but not from the racist. Many of these young people already live a life of isolation and marginalization. Distancing them only reinforces their behaviour. We who work with neo-Nazis know today that the exact opposite helps - an early, clear and long-lasting interest in these young people. It is all about caring without accepting their views. Some good advice is provided below for those of you who meet these young people and others in the risk zone.

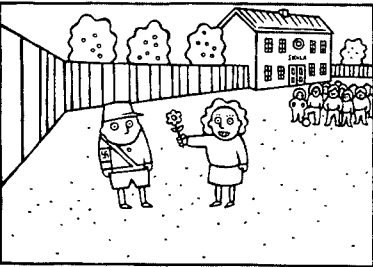
A few words from Kent Lindahl, founder of Exit

Condemnation and contempt don't help. Even young people with "uncomfortable views" deserve to be taken seriously. Listen to them and disagree. Take their arguments seriously and meet them with concrete counter argument without moralising, but above all stand firm and be there. What's needed is to reach out and pick them up, make contact and provide meaningful activities for them. Create a common place where they can come and be a part of. Leaders of extreme groups are more than well aware of this. They mingle with young people and provide the distinct role models that many of them are seeking.

They know the art of creating a sense of belonging and

purpose. On the other hand, authorities ought to react faster and more decisively to combat criminal activity and substance abuse.

A few visits to the social services half a year after committing assault doesn't help at all. The limits for what is permissible have to be clear. It's also important to be able to readily recognise the signs of a growing interest in neo-Nazism in young people. These can be almost anything from an interest in

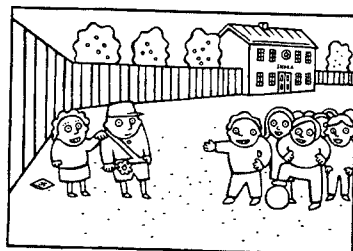


Nazi emblems and symbols, to shaving or cutting their hair in a distinct short style. It can be wearing certain clothes, getting tattooed with Viking or Nazi symbols, listening to racist music, looking for Nazi sites on the Internet, showing a strong interest in Hitler and the Second World War, or the Æsir cult and the Viking Age, reading Nazi periodicals and propaganda, or suddenly finding new mates and losing interest in old friends. Parents should certainly set limits, for example on who their children mix with, see that they aren't out late at night, the sort of music they listen to and so on. But always hold the door open and provide real alternatives. Without alternatives setting limits is meaningless. Love the Nazi but not the views.

A few words from Niklas Mattsson, an ex-Nazi now working for Exit

Do concrete things with young people; provide them with something different. Go fishing, take a trip somewhere, see something else, think about something else, break the isolation.

One single weekend when a friend of the family took me out fishing meant everything to me. Oppose Nazism and set limits, but don't labour the point about it all the time. It just ends up going around and around. Find meaningful things to do instead, look ahead.



A few words from Jonas Hållén

Jonas Hållén works as a freelance journalist in Stockholm. Jonas specialises in social journalism and writes regular columns in papers such as Metro, Dagens Arbete and Lärarnas Tidning. The following excerpt comes from Metro, November 30, 2000.

"The only thing that can break down the emotional conviction is concrete action. Those who can at an early stage summon the courage to confront conflicts in their own residential area, school or recreational centre - without being immediately judgemental or abhorred - are also the ones who are going to be given the respect required for getting these young, aggressive people to listen to a message about co-operation and reconciliation."

Making the "exit" easier

Comforting to anxious relatives, it is important to emphasize here that most young people tire of Nazism sooner or later. The main reason for leaving is personal maturity. Young people who have devoted years to Nazism, sooner or later take a good look around them and no longer like their political kinsmen. Some ex-Nazis related the following:

" 'And what about John Hron', screamed some of them at a demonstration, 'John Hron can go take a swim'. Then you feel really ashamed. That was something that makes you feel really lousy about. Now matter what you do, people are always going to associate you with that type of murder and other things that you just can't defend. And you have to take so much shit for what others have done. When all the while you want to be part of disciplined movement. Then you see that it's not going to happen, because there are so many idiots and nutters. We had one here who attacked a handicapped guy with a knife. It's totally insane."*

"It got too much for me. I couldn't keep going. I had such a bad conscience about all the trouble I'd caused. I wanted to do something else. It wasn't this chaos I was looking for."

*"Today I'm a democrat you know. I am interested in everyone's equality. If an immigrant is pleasant to me, then naturally I'm pleasant back. If a Swede is unpleasant to me, then I tell him to go to hell. When I quit, I wanted to change my life radically. I really wanted to get out of all that stuff, as I was so bloody tired of it all. At the start I thought I wanted to retain my views, but they just disappeared the more I worked with myself." ***

It is also very important to be aware that getting out often involves a very real danger. Here Nazism shows its strongest sect-like nature. One is simply not allowed to leave the "family". The former friends of most ex-Nazis have turned against them. A traitor is worse than all the rest. He deserves to be beaten or die. In order to make it easier to get out, over the last few years Exit has been working together with the relevant authorities to protect ex-Nazis from harassment. It is however just as important for relatives and friends to provide

* JOHN HRON, A SWEDISH TEENAGER, WAS BRUTALLY MURDERED AND DUMPED IN A LAKE BY FOUR YOUNG NAZIS AFTER INTERVENING IN THE ASSAULT OF A YOUNG IMMIGRANT.

** "SMÅKA KÅNGA – VÅGEN TILLBAKA" REPORT BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH EX-NAZIS BY KARL-OLOF ARNSTBERG AND JONAS HÄLLÉN FOR EXIT/FRYSHUSET IN CO-OPERATION WITH SKANDIA, JUNE 2000.

as much psychological support as they possibly can. What is important here, as mentioned before is to keep the door open. Those who want to get back to living a normal life should not be shut out. Some ex-Nazis have related the following:

"They were everywhere. Once when I was going to get a glass of water in the kitchen at my mum's place, I looked out the window and saw a car full of shorthaired guys there. At the same time this is going on you are trying to work on yourself."

*"It got so serious that I had to go into hiding for five months. I couldn't even go out in case I would be seen. A price was put on my head. They were all out looking for me and were going to kill me. They drove around in cars looking for me. They interrogated the local townsfolk about where I was. I hid in Stockholm for two weeks as well. The more I hid the more they wanted to get me, as then they knew I was scared of them."**

To condemn or forgive

Naturally it can feel difficult to forgive a Nazi. Getting out can even be a real test for all those in the immediate surroundings. Has he really changed? Can we believe that he has left all that? And how should the ex-Nazi deal with all the betrayal and disappointment that he or she has experienced? Niklas Mattson, an ex-Nazi, says the following:

"I did what I did to pay my debt to society but I can't forgive myself."

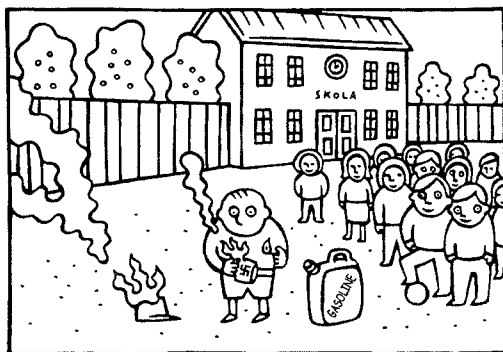
One way to find balance with these new emotions is to turn to the relatives of others, such as the parents' group Föräldrgruppen i Klippan** - who can organise a meeting - or discuss them with your own relatives, or both. After some time has passed you can start to talk directly to the young person about it. It is important that you don't heap guilt onto him or her too early in the process, and it's not good to talk about it all the time, over and over again. Many ex-Nazis are already suffering enough from their own feelings of guilt. Nazism as "a sin of one's youth" can mark a person for life, while others who have managed to turn around their lives are often praised for it. Several years

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** "FÖRÄLDRGRUPPEN I KLIPPAN" IS AN ORGANISATION IN THE SWEDISH TOWN OF KLIPPAN, AVAILABLE TO PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE RACIST OR NAZI VIEWS.

after his exit Niklas Mattsson is still plagued daily by guilt. But he takes full responsibility and says that it was his own choice to become a neo-Nazi.

Getting out was also his choice, and the least we can do is to welcome him back. Everyone deserves a second chance.



Exit in Sweden

Exit in Sweden is an organisation that helps young people leave neo-Nazi and racist groups. The people working at Exit have broad expertise in these issues, some of them have a past of their own in the Nazi movement, while others have been trained and gained lengthy hands-on experience, and include for example a qualified social worker and a therapist.

Exit was started in 1998 by Kent Lindahl, an ex-Nazi who managed to "get out" and who today uses his experiences to help others in the same situation. His usually sums up his view about "getting out" by the following:

"Anyone with the courage to change their lives deserves to succeed."

The initiative for starting Exit originally came from Norway where a similar operation was in operation. Since commencing, over 100 young people have turned to Exit looking for help. Even relatives, authorities, politicians and schools have approached Exit - the need is enormous. Exit's Stockholm office is located in Fryshuset and currently has a staff of five. Local offices have also opened in Helsingborg and Motala, and with Exit's help, similar operations

have also started up in Germany and Finland. At all of these locations Exit works in the following key areas:

- helping young people who want to leave Nazi and racist environments;
- preventing recruitment to these groups;
- educating and guiding professional groups, authorities and organisations already working with these young people; and
- supervising and informing relatives.

Contact and trust

Contact and trust are the first things Exit wants to give the young people contacting them looking for help. Many of them have been struggling for quite a while with the idea of getting out, but haven't thought they could or had the strength to do it. Exit usually begins with an initial meeting where the young person can talk about his or her situation to someone with a similar background. This helps them feel more at ease; the quality of the contact is better and it makes the "leap" easier being met this way. They aren't met with unnecessary questions, misunderstanding or condemnation - those listening have gone through the same thing themselves.

Work then continues through the personal contact that forms. It is important to get to the bottom of why each particular young person has chosen to belong to an extreme group and to then proceed from there. The support is tailored to the individual's needs. It can be anything from "just listening" to helping them start a whole new life. In many cases it is necessary to help them obtain a whole new identity, new accommodation in a secret place, establish contacts with the authorities such as police and social services, help find psychological help or treatment for alcohol problems, help them find work or training, and so on.

Programme to break down "hate dependence"

In order to clarify the approach to working with these young people, Exit has created a "five step programme" for ex-racists who want to come back to a democratic society. The programme is based on the same principles and methods as other well-known self-help programmes such as Alcoholics Anonymous. The major difference being that Exit is a place for helping get over "hate dependence".

From first-hand experience, Exit knows that starting with moral

preaching about ideologies and human dignity doesn't help. This only leads to a locking of positions, a stalemate. These young people are way too used to being constantly condemned. In Exit's five-step programme, views come into the picture first in the fourth phase, when the ex-racist has been able to create some distance from the recent past and a little peace and calm in their new life.

For some of these young people it is possible to begin by pointing out the negative consequences of a life in racist groups - such as trouble with the police and authorities, jail, fines, damages, problems with jobs and accommodation, registration by the security police and so on. Some of them already know about that from personal experience but surprisingly many have been oblivious to the risks.

Most of those who have been deeply involved already suffer from some degree of post-traumatic stress. After years of hate, violence and counter violence from militant anti-racist and other protest groups, interrogations and courtrooms, the constant anxiety about personal safety and a lack of contact with normal people, most of them have developed a personality state that resembles that of a soldier during war; characterised by extreme suspicion, drastic mood swings, a persecution complex and a tendency to use violence when cornered. Such a person will not suddenly feel calm and secure just because he or she has decided to "get out". Getting out is no simple step, but a long and rocky road.



Finding a new life

All the young people that exit extreme groups first experience a vacuum in their lives as they lose their only existing social network. No matter what you think about neo-Nazi groups they still offer a sense of belonging and an identity that has to be replaced by something else. The feeling of no longer belonging to something can otherwise make young people return to where they've just left, or to not leave in the first place. That's why they have to be provided with support and alternatives that can make the leap easier.

One of the most important things for Exit is therefore providing ex-racists with the chance of finding new surroundings and new social contacts. Many of them find themselves in a no-man's-land, blacklisted by their former ideological peers and despised by normal people. Exit's personnel are often rung in the middle of the night by ex-racists suffering from anxiety who need someone to talk to. What's needed is to be on hand for these young people, there and then, in their reality.

Exit organises camps and activities where young people can make new contacts, not only with other ex-racists but also with "ordinary" people of their own age and adults. They can ventilate their previous experiences and participate in activities like sport, outdoor recreation, co-operation sessions, discussions and seminars. The activities usually follow certain themes that are common to all the meetings, such as "Prejudice - where does it come from?", "Social hierarchies - how are they decided?", "Group pressure - how much can it influence me?" and so on.

Exit also functions as a knowledge base for those wanting to begin a local project or prevention work elsewhere in the country. They often travel around to various municipalities, schools, authorities and organisations throughout the country. They hold seminars and supervise adults and young people who have to confront these issues. Exit tries to tailor solutions to fit each specific problem and the resources available in the local area.

In efforts aimed at prevention, it is also necessary to meet young people with for example xenophobic views, who do not necessarily sympathise with Nazism but who can easily end up there. What is needed here is the capacity to conduct discussions with those who claim that they have negative experiences with immigrants, and to take their experiences seriously but at the same time to have the courage to say clearly what are lies and generalisations.

Unfortunately there seems to be a fear of conducting these discussions, which leaves the field free for Nazi and racist groups to spread their messages.

Exit receives financial assistance from the government.

Symbols, insignia and other forms of expression for racism and Nazism

What can be seen as being a symbol of racism or Nazism can vary from country to country. In Sweden for example, the national flag can in certain situations signal that someone is a racist, while the flag in other countries does not arouse these associations at all. The following section presents some symbols that can be found internationally.

Some typical racist, Nazi and neo-Nazi symbols*

There are a lot of racist, Nazi and neo-Nazi symbols in use. But what do they look like? Where do they come from? And what do they mean? NST has compiled a list of some of the most common ones.

Ever since the beginning of the Nazi movement between the two world wars, Nazis have been using symbols like the Swastika, the Sun wheel, the Odal rune and the Wolf cross - probably some of the better known ones. There are also hundreds of other symbols in existence.

Some Nazi symbols are much more common than others. There is a basic range of elements that seem to recur in many different compositions and variations. Some movements, parties, organisations and music groups choose to create their own symbols from these basic elements. These symbols are generally characterised by their harshness and angularity.

Recently many parents and schools, including Klippan, have requested a compilation of common racist, Nazi and neo-Nazi symbols. Many parents don't know what the symbols and emblems that adorn their children's clothes signify. The following are some of the most common racist and Nazi symbols.



The classic Swastika has been used by various cultures around the world for time immemorial. Hitler's Nazi party adopted the symbol in Germany in the beginning of the 1920s.

The Celtic cross has its origins in Celtic culture in ancient Western Europe and was adopted during the early Middle Ages by the Christian Celtic church, mainly in Scotland and Ireland. It was used between the world wars by Nazis in England, Belgium and France.



The Triskelion, which is Greek for "three legs" and the symbol "777" is a recent creation, and is based on the classic Swastika. The

South African extremist movement that fought to uphold the racist apartheid system created and used the symbol.

*NORDVÄSTRA SKÅNES TIDNINGAR-A SOUTHERN SWEDISH NEWSPAPER BASED IN ÄNGELHOLM, SWEDEN.



A modified Swastika was used by the Wiking (Viking) Division of Hitler's Waffen SS" during the Second World War. All the Waffen divisions had their own symbols. Most of the Swedish volunteers served in the Wiking Division.

The Wolf cross is an Old Norse symbol. Between the world wars it was used by Lindholmspartiet NSAP/SSS (National Socialist Workers' Party/Swedish Socialist Coalition) and their youth organisation Nordisk Ungdom (Nordic Youth). During the 1990s the Wolf cross has been resurrected by Vit Ariskt Motstånd or VAM (White Aryan Resistance).



The Sun wheel, like the Swastika, is a commonly recurring symbol in most cultures. In post-war Sweden the Sun wheel has mainly been used by the political party Nordiska Rikspartiet (NRP), but was already in use between the world wars.

The Odal rune is the letter "o" in the old Rune alphabet and symbolises the people - the farmers. The Odal rune was also used between the wars. It has resurfaced in the 1990s and is used by groups such as Riksfronten (The State Front).



The SS symbol was created by the leader of the SS, Heinrich Himmler. The Rune letters were used to remind the German people of their Germanic heritage.

The seger or S rune, known as the Victory rune in English and "Sieg" in German, is often used in racist texts instead of the normal "s".



The symbol for the Klu Klux Klan arose in the southern states of the USA in connection with the founding of the organisation in the 1880s. The Klu Klux Klan wages a war against non-white, Jewish and Catholic individuals and groups, as well as the women's and workers' movements.

The white power fist is a new skinhead symbol from England that is based on the original communist clenched fist. The fist began to appear in the beginning of the 1980s and is today common amongst skinhead groups.



Thor's hammer has its roots in the Viking period and is common in Nazi and racist circles.

The eagle is an age-old German symbol that has been intimately connected with the Swastika since between the world wars.



Number codes used by neo-Nazis

14 words A quote from the American Nazi leader David Lane: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children."

88 The eighth letter in the alphabet is H. "HH" stands for the salute "Heil Hitler".

18 1 stands for A and 8 for H; 18 = AH, i.e. it stands for Adolf Hitler.

311 Taking the 11th letter "K" three times makes KKK, the Ku Klux Klan.

666 This was the mark of the beast in the Book of Revelations in the Old Testament, indicating Satan, and Nazis describe the Jews as being Satan's people.

Letter codes used by Nazis

B&H Read as "Blood & Honour", alludes to "Our blood is our honour", which was a motto in the older times of Nazism. Blood & Honour is also a neo-Nazi organisation that exists in different countries.

KKK Stands for the Ku Klux Klan.

RAHOWA Short for Racial Holy War.

ZOG Zionist Occupation Government, a name alluding to the assumed Zionist conspiracy to take over the white world.

SS Short for Waffen SS.

SA Sturm Abteilung, the storm troops in former Nazi Germany.

NS Short for National Socialism.

WAR Short for White Aryan Resistance, an American Nazi organisation.

Web addresses

Nazi web sites are constantly changing their addresses, and so there's not much point in publishing them. It can be difficult sometimes to determine whether a site is coloured by racist ideology or not. Some of them can look deviously presentable. Read more about it in Save the Children's publication "How to fight racism on the Internet".

There are of course an unlimited number of web sites containing anti-racist information. You can find some large international ones here. You can also find information about, and links to organisations and institutions that work to combat racism in various countries.

www.icare.to

www.unitedagainstracism.org

www.inhope.org

If you understand Swedish you can also find information at:

www.quickresponse.nu

www.levandehistoria.org

www.fryshuset.se

You can find help here

For those of you who wish to learn more about Nazism and Exit, or require assistance or someone to talk to, feel free to contact:

Exit in Sweden
Fryshuset
Box 920 22
SE 120 06 Stockholm
Sweden
Tel. 08-462 22 00
E-mail: exit@fryshuset.se

You can also use the following international addresses to contact Exit:

Finland: Exit Finland/Joensuu
<http://media.joensuu.fi/exit/>
Exit-projekti, Merimiehenkatu 32,
80100 Joensuu, Finland

Germany: Exit Deutschland
<http://www.exit-deutschland.de/>

"Föräldragruppen i Klippan" is an organisation in the Swedish town of Klippan, available to parents of children who have racist or Nazi views. You can also contact them if you require any assistance or information:

Föräldragruppen i Klippan
Tel. 070-276 26 98

The parent group was formed in 1997. The need for support for parents had become obvious in the wake of the murder of Gerhard Gbeye in 1995. Many parents were deeply shocked by the realisation that their children were involved in neo-Nazi groups. Besides parents, the group consists of representatives from schools, the local social services and police. The foremost objective is to provide parents with support so that they can go on loving their children at the same time that they fight the racist views that their children advocate.

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THE WAY OUT OF RACISM AND NAZISM

This booklet is for those of you who in various ways come in contact with young people with racist or Nazi views. Here you'll find explanations why racist messages attract young people who have become lost in their surroundings, how they have been caught up in Nazism and how they exist there. Young people's own words illustrate in a true-to-life way how they find themselves in a Nazi group and how difficult it can be to find a way out. This booklet is a guide not only for those of you who want to help, but for those who need help.

You will also find information here about EXIT in Sweden, an organisation that helps young people return to a democratic society. "The way out of Racism and Nazism" is a source of hope and knowledge.

This booklet is free and can be obtained from Save the Children Sweden.

You can also read our information material "How to fight racism on the Internet", for acquainting yourself further about how Nazi and racist views are spread via digital media.

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