1.3. Boots and braces don't make me racist: Antiracist skinheads in the Czech Republic

Jan Charvát[1]

Abstract
This paper will focus both on the historical and actual development of the anti-racist skinheads in the Czech Republic and also their importance within the skinhead subculture generally. Special attention will be given to the relationship of antiracism and leftist political ideologies (communism, anarchism). The ideology of the political left is generally perceived negatively in the post-socialist societies, which also reflects on the subcultural development. So for most Czech anti-racist skinheads, being distinctly anti-communist is an integral part of their political identity. Many of them also consider their anti-racism as a moral attitude rather than political, to avoid accusations of politicization of the subculture. This dual tension (to the left and toward politics in general) is what I will try to identify.
Keywords: Subculture, skinhead, anti-racism, SHARP, RASH, Czech Republic.

1. Introduction

There is a long-term lack of attention to subculture issues in the Czech context. Although the skinhead subculture (which tends to be rather perceived as a movement, mainly with regard to its extreme-right branch) became established in the late 1980s and won a relatively negative reputation during the 1990s (again due to its extreme-right branch), few works have focused on its subcultural framework. There have been even fewer works centred upon other than racist forms of the subculture; and practically a single title (Bastl, 2001a) has dealt explicitly with its antiracist part, while Heřmanský and Novotná (2014, 2013, 2008) have paid at least partial attention to this branch of the subculture. There is also a cursory mention in a pioneering publication on radicalism and extremism in the Czech Republic generally (Mazel, 1998). For that reason, I am going to concentrate in the following text just on that part of the subculture, with a view to somewhat improving the situation.

2. The skinhead subculture

Formed in late 1960s England, the skinhead subculture was especially attractive for young men from working-class suburbs (Marshall, 1996). The early form of the subculture was neither racist nor, in the strict sense of the term, political. However, it exhibited elements of nationalism as well as social protest and class self-identification (Moore, 1993).

The movement peaked at the end of the 1960s (Marshall, 1996) and later was faced with declining interest in the British society (while it had practically not yet expanded internationally). A comeback was enjoyed at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s in the context of a punk revolt in which skinhead groups were involved. Soon, however, conflicts between both groups broke out because many skinheads came to perceive punk negatively for its openness to drugs, its rather leftist political orientation and finally its antisocial image, something that an orderly skinhead would find despicable. The subculture as such underwent some changes at that time (Hebdige, 2012), with declining relevance of first-generation reggae and ska music bands (as many Afro-Caribbean

[1] Institute of Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Czech Republic. E-mail: charvatj|at|centrum|dot|cz.

musicians became affiliated to Rastafarianism — Hebdige, 2012). Instead, a growing popularity was enjoyed by a more vigorous style referred to as Oi! (basically, a simpler and more aggressive variant of punk music). What also changed in a way was skinheads' appearance, as they started wearing the now typical bomber jackets and generally became more inclined to a quasi-military style. At the same time, there was growing support for the hitherto rather latent racism among some skinheads, which stimulated their contacts with extreme-right groups. Soon, the deformation of a part of the subculture towards open racism elicited an antiracist response in other parts. By the end of the 1970s and early 1980s, these tensions caused a split in the skinhead subculture (Moore, 1993), with three main branches emerging: a racist one, a non-racist one and an antiracist one. When the skinhead subculture expanded outside Great Britain, it was its racist branch that became the most famous in the world. Despite that, practically every place to which the skinheads came now has members of all three branches of the subculture. In my text, I am going to focus on the antiracist part of the skinhead subculture in the Czech Republic after 1989.

3. Research design

The present text is based on the project, "Sources and forms of subculture politicization in post-socialism", implemented by the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, in the years 2014–2016. The underlying data on which I rely in this text (apart from scholarly literature) come from three sources. First, 30 interviews (20 with members of the antiracist skinhead scene and 10 with members of the non-racist music scene) were conducted under the project. Second, I undertook a content analysis of antiracist skinhead music lyrics, interviews and texts published in fanzines, web pages and social networking sites. Finally, the third source of data consists of participant observation at music events of the subculture of interest conducted by the author over the course of the past decade.

4. Skinheads in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic

The skinhead subculture in the Czechoslovak context emerged during the second half of the 1980s (Mazel, 1998) and it was associated with the punk subculture from the very beginning. Despite its relatively specific form, given the Iron Curtain and the political situation in communist Czechoslovakia, it shared with its sister subculture generally anti-regime, anti-communist attitudes which, however, were not especially accentuated in the extreme right direction, albeit there was some awareness even in communist Czechoslovakia about the orientation of at least a part of Western European skinheads. After 1989, the skinhead subculture experienced a dynamic development, especially in its racist branch which exploited general societal sentiments that were anti-communist and mostly hostile to the political left as such, including negative views on attributes of the former communist regime (especially internationalism or a friendly immigration policy towards socialist countries of the third world such as Cuba, Vietnam and Angola), and including growing animosity towards the Roma minority (Charvát, 2007). In this atmosphere, nationalist and racist ideas enjoyed societal tolerance or even acceptance for a short time in the Czechoslovak society. This made room in the society for the dynamically developing racist skinhead subculture. Although this transitional period of social acceptance lasted for a relatively short period of time, the racist branch of the skinhead subculture managed to secure a relatively strong position in the Czechoslovak and Czech societies. The racist branch became an important actor in the Czech extreme right, with direct influence until the year 2005 and indirect influence until about 2010. However, since the early 1990s, there was also a skinhead community in the Czech territory that refused racism and identified, to some extent, with the original roots of the subculture.

5. History of the antiracist skinhead scene

5.1. 1990–1992

Although the racist branch overwhelmingly dominated the skinhead subculture of 1990s Czechoslovakia, antiracist groups can be traced back to the beginning of the decade as well. Two groups were formed in 1990 in Prague. One was entitled simply "SHARP" (Mazel 1998, p. 182) and the other, localized more specifically in Prague's district of Braník, referred to itself as "Antinazi Redskins Front". Both groups shared contempt for racist skinheads and identified themselves as parts of the anarchist spectrum. At the same time, there were some differences between them. SHARP followed a German example and the appearance of its members (uniform-like black bomber jackets and green cargo trousers stuck into high boots) was more related to the scene of German *Militant Autonome* (Bastl, 2001, p. 43) than to the traditional skinhead image. Some of its members never even strived to model the orthodox skinhead appearance because they considered political activism to be more important. Their activism covered a relatively broad field. In addition to the normal activities of the anarchist movement (concerts, demonstrations), a large part of the early SHARP skins also actively contributed to the growth of Czech squatting and promoted Straight Edge (SxE) ideas, which reflected their combined inspiration by the skinhead scene and by hardcore punk (HC) (Mazel, 1998, p. 174). Czech SHARP skins listened to HC music as well, whereas a greater role than traditional skinhead bands (albeit well-known and respected) was played by early SxE HC bands. The other branch, the Antinazi Redskins Front, differed in some aspects from that model. The image of its members complied with the skinhead orthodoxy (jeans, Dr. Martens boots etc.) and while they identified themselves with the anarchist movement, they placed much greater emphasis on militant activities aimed against racist skinheads (Mazel, 1998, pp.181-182), Stejskalová 2012, p. 184). Their very name, Redskins, was relatively atypical in the first half of the 1990s because the term "red" was associated with the extreme left and communism in the Czech society, and as such had fallen very much out of favour. Being a Redskin in the early 1990s posed dual hazards: given their relatively authentic skinhead image, they were often mistaken for neo-Nazis by the general public, while they were always identified as Redskins by actual neo-Nazis. A classical Redskin at that time wore a relatively traditional skinhead uniform (bomber jacket, jeans) but at the same time made sure to display red or black-and-red clothing items (Stejskalová, 2012, p. 162). As the early 1990s media coverage basically associated the term skinhead with neo-Nazism, it was clear that the black-and-red attire was intended just for neo-Nazi skinheads, not for the general public (which would have been unable to distinguish such nuances — most of the Czechoslovak population in the early 1990s were not even able to tell members of the skinhead and punk subcultures apart). The very image of a Redskin contained a clear political message which can be interpreted as unconscious cultural resistance in terms of the Birmingham school or Dick Hebdige. Such resistance was only not aimed against society's hegemonic culture but against a different subcultural group (and secondarily against the hegemonic perception of skinheads as neo-Nazis) which competed with the Redskins at both the political and the subcultural levels. Thus, to members of the Antinazi Redskins Front, the term "red" meant absolute opposition to being a neo-Nazi skinhead and the name "Redskin" was effectively a slap in the face of those they hated the most; it did not signify an inclination to communism or Marxism.

The actual membership of the two groups was very low and did not exceed approximately 10–15 people in each group. Despite that, the terms "SHARP" and "Redskins" resonated in both the left-wing and the right-wing scenes at that time, and especially extreme-right skinheads tended to strongly overstate the importance and membership of both groups (Bastl, 2001, p. 43).

During the first two to three years after 1989, the country saw a dynamic growth of political subcultures (skinheads, punk, HC) but also a high level of street violence. On one hand, the emerging skinhead subculture (then overwhelmingly racist) rather took the form of a political movement at that time and thematised general societal sentiments, including aggressive anticommunism (including rejection of the ideals promoted by the communist regime such as

internationalism and antiracism) and generally anti-leftist attitudes. At the same time, it embodied an authentic fear in a part of Czech society of the impending social and, in particular, economic changes. On the other hand, the anarchist movement attracted many young people, especially secondary school students, many of whom had taken part in the 1989 revolution, still viewed the regime change as an opportunity to effect far-reaching social change, and carried radicalized versions of the pre-revolutionary dissent — advocating human rights and environmental issues, but also questioning the party system and calling for alternatives based on cooperation among members of diverse social groups. The third actor influencing the situation, law enforcement, did not know how to respond to new phenomena such as racist violence by the skinhead subculture in the wake of the revolution. A whole series of attacks that were perpetrated at the time, especially by the racist branch of the skinheads, were effectively ignored by the police. Thus, violence became a part of everyday experience for most people involved in the emerging subcultures (Novotná, 2013, p. 255). Certain locations in Prague (typically subway stations with connecting bus service to large housing estates) had a reputation as racist skinheads' meeting spots and posed real danger of immediate assault to members of other subcultures (especially punk). Some rallies held by anarchist groups and attended mostly by the subculture crowd were assaulted as well. More importantly, several racially motivated murders were perpetrated during that time. Thus, being a member of certain subcultures was quite a risky business. In a way, this era peaked with a rally on May 1, 1992[2], which saw a clash between several hundred anarchist demonstrators on one side and racist skinheads on the other side. SHARP and Redskins members took active part in the conflict and arguably, it was them who won the battle for the anarchists (a kind of unexpected result at the time). The considerable decline in racist skinheads' public appearances and violent activities that occurred in the following years, especially in Prague, came to be viewed by members of the subcultural scene in the context of that very clash.

5.2. Mid-1990s

The recession (yet definitely not elimination) of the activity of racist skinheads, including violent crime, was accompanied by an evolution of antiracist skinheads. At that time, SHARP and Redskins members gradually gave up their subcultural image; some abandoned the anarchist scene completely while others opted for a more civilian appearance but remained active. Simultaneously, a new generation of skinheads was maturing who were little affected by the violence of the early 1990s transition period and for whom image was the primary signifier of the skinhead subculture (Stejskalová, 2012, p. 170). Whereas the first generation of antiracist skinheads in Czechoslovakia did not pay much attention to their appearance and how it followed foreign examples, the skinheads who came to the Czech scene in the mid-1990s complied with skinhead fashion attire and music style with precision. As one of the informants put it concisely: "First everyone listened to hardcore and attended fights with the Nazis. Then suddenly they were listening to Ska and started attending dance clubs" (Viktor, 43). While it remains questionable whether the change that the skinhead subculture underwent in the mid-1990s can truly be described in this way, the quote does seem to be a relatively accurate account of how that change is viewed by the first generation of SHARP skins.

In 1992, "Bulldog" (Mazel, 1998, p. 182) emerged, a fanzine for this branch of the skinhead subculture which was key in shaping one form of Czech antiracist skinhead identity (it continued until 2003 and was later accompanied by a "Bulldog shop" which still exists today). The skinhead crew formed around the zine, Bulldog Boot Boys (BBB), became perhaps the largest and best-known skinhead group that directly identified as SHARP at that time. However, the label gradually

[2] As early as in 1990, the anarchist movement attempted to revive a tradition of May Day celebrations at the Střelecký Island in Prague, which dated back to 1890. After the Střelecký Island rally in 1992, there was a march through the city which ended at the Letná hill, a regular meeting point for racist skinheads, who were holding their own rally there on the same day.

came to signify a different meaning than in the early 1990s. While first-generation SHARP skins perceived antiracism as part of a broader political stance, those around BBB approached antiracism apolitically, an attitude which distinguished them clearly from neo-Nazis but which was not meant to embrace additional political opinions. This is well documented on BBB's declaration that came out in the Messenger skinhead fanzine:

> We, skinheads from Prague who are S.H.A.R.P., are 100% apolitical, and REDSKINS are equally our enemy as WHITE POWER BONEHEADS!!! We are committed to protecting the skinhead cult because this is our life, our pride, boots, braces, beer, girls (…) This is our life on the street, which is never going to belong to Nazis or communists (Messenger No. 1, p. 15).

As noted by Bastl (2001a), the BBB basically undertook to push politics outside the realm of the skinhead movement. They understood the idea of SHARP skins as an apolitical one and considered antiracism to be merely a moral stance, not a political affair. This approach included resistance to neo-Nazism as well as communism, both as political ideologies (clearly a reflection of the general social climate in the post-communist country, where communism was sharply rejected) and as subcultures (hence their contempt for the Redskins).

At the same time, this approach was faced with certain discrepancies from the very beginning. The Bulldog fanzine published declarations of SHARP apoliticism, on one hand, and from the very first issue it offered room for the promotion of *Vlastenecká liga* (Patriotic League), the main representative of a specifically Czech stream of skinheads, so-called *Kališníci* (Calixtines), who — just like Bulldog — stood against Nazism and communism but simultaneously relied on nationalism and political conservatism. In addition to anti-Nazism and anti-communism, patriotism was the common denominator that Bulldog identified with, following the example of traditional skinheads. As I am going to demonstrate below, this connection was not a mere coincidence.

In the mid-1990s, the antiracist skinhead subculture in Bohemia finally settled down. In addition to fanzines and the different crews, the first explicitly skinhead band emerged (1995, *The Protest,* with links to the BBB crew) and the *Propast* club was established in Prague in 1994 (operational until 1998) as a meeting place for most of Prague's SHARP skins. The *Bohemians Praha* football club (later renamed to *Bohemians 1905*) became an important integrating element with a reputation for anti-fascist fans (whereas a racist or even neo-Nazi orientation was exhibited by an overwhelming majority of football rowdies and especially hooligans at that time) (Bastl, 2001b, p. 56). Although anti-racism had by then become an inherent part of the subcultural identity of anti-racist skinheads, it ceased to be manifested as a political stance which used to align anti-racist skinheads with anarchist groups in the early 1990s; it came to represent a wall raised against neo-Nazi skinheads, on one side, and against communists, on the other side.

5.3. Turn of the millennium

The situation in the extreme right scene changed after 1998. The older generation of neo-Nazi skinheads was primarily inspired by Anglo-Saxon models (the Hammerskin Nation in the US and Blood & Honour in the UK) and was more inclined to subcultural activities (concerts, parties, fashion, music). In contrast, the *Národní odpor* (National Resistance) organization which was formed at the turn of 1998/1999 followed the example of Germany's *Nationaler Widerstand* (Charvát, 2007, pp. 151-153). It brought together a new generation of neo-Nazis oriented on political activities, which was accompanied by increased levels of violence. After some delay, a generation of radical anti-fascists followed suit and organized a Czech branch of the Anti-Fascist Action (AFA). A part of these skinheads identified with AFA's positions while the rest tended to reject AFA and emphasize their apoliticism (Stejskalová, 2012, p. 168). In a simultaneous reverse trend, a part of AFA activists transformed their image more towards the skinhead subculture (a similar process was described by the French documentary, "Antifa: Chasseurs de Skins"). As a result, a part of the people who joined the ranks of AFA also identified with the antiracist skinhead subculture. An interesting fact is that

this part of the skinheads ceased to call themselves SHARP, arguing that it was a relic of the early 1990s, and typically used the label "antifascist skinheads".

In this way, what used to be a relatively broad group of antiracist skinheads started to diversify into a radical antiracist branch and an apolitical branch. The latter referred to themselves as "non-racists" more and more often to differentiate themselves both from racists and from active antiracists (as they viewed antiracism as a political stance which contradicted their declared apoliticism) (Stejskalová, 2012, p.184).

At that time, the non-racist skinhead scene became oriented on the Bulldog fanzine and bands such as *Operace Artaban* ("Operation Artaban", Brno), *The Riot* (Vyškov) and *Pilsner Oiquell* (Plzeň). This group, too, openly rejected the SHARP label, which it viewed as too political or as synonymous of a "leftist deviance" within the skinhead subculture. This again was a response to the alignment of some skinheads with the AFA (albeit, as mentioned above, most skinheads who identified with radical antifascist politics did not use the SHARP label). AFA as such came to be referred to as "red fascists" or communists by this part of the subculture (even if the Czech AFA consistently and clearly declared an anarchist orientation and strict rejection of the authoritarian left to the point of physically clashing with members of Trotskyist groups, among others). While both scenes kept meeting in the same places, the tension between them was growing.

The situation is somewhat simplified by the fact that whereas non-racist skinheads tended to form local groups or crews (*Rabiát Gang* in Brno, the *Street Knights* in Hradec Králové, *Armáda Zkázy* or the "Ruination Army" and later the *Nord Bohemia Gang* in North Bohemia), antiracist skinheads did not form such groups (Stejskalová, 2012, p. 162) and instead emphasized the ideological dimension of antiracism, building rather broader networks based on personal friendship and shared antiracism. As a result, the non-racist branch of skinheads concentrated in the regions while the trend of antiracist skinheads slowly rose to dominance in Prague (which had always been a centre of subcultural and activist life of sorts). As both scenes tended to form territorially separated wholes, the frequency of personal contacts between them decreased.

5.4. 2005–2010

The level of street violence subsided once again around 2005 in the context of a second wave of temporary marginalization of the neo-Nazi scene. Despite that, the developments in this part of the skinhead subculture continued to affect the evolution of other branches. A part of the neo-Nazi scene responded to the stagnation by attempts to modernize, rejecting the skinhead image (again partly under German influence) as stigmatizing and detrimental to political activism (Charvát, 2007, p. 155). This resulted in the establishment of Autonomous Nationalism, which gave up on skinhead appearance in favour of a more civilian one and, over time, grew into a scene per se (some authors refer to it explicitly as a subculture per se, see Vejvodová). Largely inspired by the extreme left, the Autonomous Nationalists strived to incorporate some of its external manifestations (black bloc, graffiti, hip hop etc.) This was met with a strong backlash among traditionalist skinheads in the neo-Nazi scene, headed by older members of the subculture (thus, Autonomous Nationalism can be viewed as a clash of generations in the extreme-right skinhead scene). Another part of them responded to the new situation by reemphasizing their subcultural appearance and the traditional skinhead fashion (shirts became more commonplace, neo-Nazi items receded) and somewhat distancing themselves from explicit neo-Nazi ideology (while keeping their racist, ultraconservative and anti-communist positions). Thus, they attempted to model the 1980s wave of British skinheads which had often mixed neo-Nazism with British nationalism and racism without necessarily relying on a solid ideological foundation.

This trend gradually facilitated contacts between extreme-right skinheads, as defined above, and a part of apolitical non-racist skinheads. The latter increasingly combined anti-communism (a generally accepted and widespread stance in the Czech society) with nationalism. This included latent racism in general and Czech antiziganism in particular (which solidified its positions in Czech society around 2008–2009 following a series of antiziganist rallies, primarily in North Bohemia, held

by the Workers' Party, then a key part of the Czech extreme right). In short, both scenes shared both their image and the emphasis on anti-communism and nationalism.

The apolitical skinhead scene in Prague started concentrating around *Motorái,* a motorcycle club where young members of both the non-racist and the antiracist branches of the skinhead movement mingled at concerts. *Motorái* was not a skinhead club but merely an establishment that allowed even some controversial bands to play on its premises. This was not a classical subcultural meeting point, in contrast to *Resort Pub* which was established in 2005 and became a meeting point for the antiracist skinhead scene. Located in the very centre of Prague, *Resort Pub* was not only a convenient place to have beer with friends but also screened movies, organized live performances, and even sold clothing for some time. The club became a true central for this branch of the subculture and, in a way, served to mobilize its members. In the interviews, several informants put it as follows: "The Resort shut down — activism shut down". The interviews also revealed that the club would refuse to admit individuals deemed by the owners to have good relations with racist skinheads or with the extreme right in general (albeit the term was perceived in somewhat different ways by each side of the conflict, namely non-racist and antiracist skinheads). These moments, too, led to a relatively apparent distinction between both scenes. Additional regional centres of antiracist skinheads started emerging at that time. Otrokovice, a town with long-term reputation for an active anarchist scene, saw the formation of the *Last Strike* skinhead band in 2006. It performed until 2009 and presented itself as an antiracist left-wing skinhead band (practically the only Czech band that might be referred to as RASH). In addition, several other skinhead bands emerged at that time (*Muerti* in 2005, *Crossczech* came back in 2008, *Punto d'Honore* in 2009) that began to comprise a skinhead antiracist scene per se. Although the scene never became as coherent and, as a result, as influential as the apolitical skinhead scene (and, of course, as that of racist skinheads), it did function as another uniting element that strengthened the antiracist skinhead scene. The *Bohemians* football club continued to play its unifying role during this time period as well, when most antiracist skinhead bands were associated with it.

The antiracist skinhead scene was strongly mobilized by the murder of Jan Kučera, an 18-year-old antiracist skinhead from the town of Příbram who died of fatal injuries in January 2008. He was killed by neo-Nazi skinhead Jiří Fous following a fight between antiracist and neo-Nazi skinheads in the town of Příbram, a climax of a long-term conflict between both groups. The event obtained intensive media coverage and Jan Kučera's funeral was attended by several hundred people from subcultures as well as antifascist organizations (Novotná, 2013, p. 257). A website was created as an homage to Jan Kučera, concerts and rallies were repeatedly held at the anniversary of his death, and his name has been mentioned internationally side-by-side with numerous other activists murdered by the neo-Nazis.

5.5. After 2010

2010 was the year when the antiracist and non-racist branches of the skinhead subculture in Bohemia parted their ways definitively. This was triggered by a series of concerts featuring key bands of the non-racist scene with those from the RAC (Rock against Communism) and WP (White Power) scenes (Mareš, 2012, p. 81). Organized by people from the non-racist/apolitical skinhead scene, the concerts were considered by antiracist skinheads as a proof of the former's inclination to neo-Nazism. In contrast, non-racist skinheads argued they had sought to create an authentic skinhead experience and accused the antiracists of pursuing a communist-like open campaign to suppress their attitudes. The scenes drew a clear boundary between them. In doing so, the antiracist scene deployed the almost forgotten label, SHARP, this time to differentiate itself from apolitical skinheads rather than from neo-Nazis (in the interviews, most informants admitted that they had not seen a neo-Nazi skinhead for several years). However, some bands from the apolitical scene, too, were reluctant to perform at events organized in cooperation with RAC or WP bands. As a result, the apolitical scene divided between a part inclined to accept extreme-right attitudes and one that strived to stay away from politics. The latter part distanced itself from sharing events with

the extreme right scene but, at the same time, it fiercely rejected SHARP skins and radical antifascist groups such as AFA, calling them communists. In this way, it symmetrised its resistance to Nazism and communism (see the popular apolitical slogan, "Good Night Any Side" as an ironic response to the antiracist "Good Night White Pride" campaign). However, the division of the apolitical scene contributed to its marginalization and to SHARP's dominance, at least in Prague.

Thus, a new generation of SHARP skins grew up in Prague who had several things in common. First, they were all fans of Bohemians 1905, which became almost a flagship of antiracist skinheads across the country at that time.

Second, they shared an affiliation to *Acuelos,* a newly (in 2013) established skinhead band that promoted SHARP ideas and associated the skinhead identity with not only active antiracism but also with radical-left activism more generally — cf. songs such as *Obsaď a žij* ("Occupy and Live") in support of the Klinika Autonomous Social Centre in Prague. The third unifying moment was the establishment (in 2013) of *Buben,* a new mostly skinhead club which replaced the abandoned *Resort* as a meeting point for the subculture (*Buben*'s importance can be illustrated on comparison with the apolitical skinhead scene, which had not had have any "home" club in Prague for a long time and relies entirely on the willingness of other music clubs to admit their bands, which is often not the case). This new generation of SHARP skins has been politically active beyond rejecting racism, also embracing the modern trends of veganism and squatting. In this way, the situation slightly resembles the early 1990s.

6. Interview results

Although the informants differed in many respects (age, social status, existing relation to the subculture), a few points emerged that were basically shared by everyone.

For example, all the informants stated that they had experienced their first contact with the world of subcultures around the age of 12–14 years. Everyone stated that punk was the first subculture they got acquainted with and only then did they transfer to the skinhead subculture, mostly for very similar reasons. It was personal experience of neo-Nazi violence that typically threw them into the open arms of the skinhead subculture. Whether this happened in the early 1990s or at the turn of the millennium, the immediate danger of neo-Nazi skinhead attacks was perceived as omnipresent by the subculture youth. While the most part of the punk subculture viewed such attacks as a necessary evil, a minority chose to fend for themselves. However, they did not consider their punk image particularly useful for that purpose, and preferred the skinhead uniformity that elicited at least an impression of discipline, unity and operational responsiveness. The informants also labelled skinheads as "strong" and "militant" — exactly the qualities they needed in their fight against neo-Nazis but had lacked in the punk context. Thus, from the beginning, violence was clearly associated with their perception of what it means to be a skinhead — just like resistance to racism, which they all understood as a completely natural attitude that does not or need not have political connotations but is primarily a moral imperative.

The interviews also revealed that a working-class identity did not play an important role for most of the informants, although it had defined the skinhead subculture in its old days (and its iconography continues to refer to that identity). Most of the antiracist skinheads interviewed were categorized as "college students" or "college graduates working administrative jobs".

The final connection between all informants consisted of a very strict rejection of communism as an ideology and an historical-political practice. Communism was equally rejected by those who identified as left-wing skinheads (which was not the case of all the antiracist skinheads I had the opportunity to interview — and which is supported by additional findings based on observation and analysis of texts produced by the antiracist skinhead subculture).

When asked about differences from the original skinhead subculture, one of the informants put it concisely: "There were never black skinheads in our country. All the antiracists have always been white" (Viktor, 43 years old).

7. Conclusion

The antiracist branch of the skinhead subculture in the Czech context has been evolving since the early 1990s, although it has always been overshadowed by the racist branch which is stronger in numbers and better covered by the media. Personal experience with neo-Nazi violence (typically as a victim) and the desire to stand up against that violence has been mentioned in all the interviews as the deciding moment that triggered the formation of an antiracist skinhead identity. Although the real danger of clashing with a racist skinhead for members of Czech subcultures is much lower today than it was in the early 1990s, the experience became part of the collective memory. For most antiracist skinheads, the question of violence continues to be framed as protection from neo-Nazi violence. This has implications for the inner dynamic of the entire antiracist branch of the subculture. At times when pressure by the extreme right grows, a part of the subculture tends to radicalize and mobilize, typically assuming clear antiracist attitudes and more often adopting a political framework. In contrast, at times when the pressure subsides, they shift from SHARP principles to apoliticism. It also seems that the more important one finds the subcultural style the less attention he pays to politics, and vice versa. The aspects shared by and strengthening antiracist skinheads in the Czech Republic undoubtedly consist of music, skinhead clubs, and the *Bohemians 1905* football club.

Funding: This work was supported by the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR) under grant number 14-19324S, "Sources and forms of subculture politicization in post-socialism".

References

Antifa: Chasseurs de Skins (2008). Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfDbTqb6uyc

Bastl, M. (2001a). *S.H.A.R.P.* - Skinheadi proti rasovým předsudkům, *Středoevropské politické studie*, (3). Retrieved from: http://www.cepsr.com/clanek.php?ID=74

Bastl, M (2001b). *Radikální levice v České republice: Devadesátá léta dvacátého století.* Brno: Masarykova univerzita v Brně, MPÚ.

Hall, S., Jefferson T. (1993). *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain*. London: Routledge.

Hebdige, D. (2012). *Subkultura a styl*. Praha: Volvox globator.

Charvát, J. (2007). Současný politický extremismus a radikalismus. Praha: Portál.

Kolářová, M. (eds). (2012). *Revolta stylem*. Praha: Slon.

Mareš, M. (2003). *Pravicový extremismus a radikalismus v ČR*. Brno: Barrister & Principal.

Mareš M., Smolík J., Suchánek M. (2004). *Fotbaloví chuligáni*. Brno: Barrister & Principal.

Mareš M., Smolík J. (2012) White Power Music and Interconnected Issues in the Czech Republic 1999-2001. In A., Shekhovtsov, P., Jackson (Eds.), *White Power Muisc: Scenes of Extreme-Right Cultural Resistance*. Northampton: RNM Publications.

Marshall, G. (1993). Spirit Of 69: A Skinhead Bible. Donoon: ST Publishing.

Marshall, G. (1996). *Skinhead Nation*. Donoon: ST Publishing.

Mazel M. (1998). Radikální a extremistické politické organizace v České republice. In P., Fiala (Ed.) *Politický extremismus a radikalismus v České republice* (pp. 117-277). Brno: Masarykova univerzita.

Messenger, (1), 15.

Moore, J. (1993). *Skinheads: Shaved for battle*. Ohio: Popular press 3.

Novotná, H., Dvořák J. (2008). Punks vs. skinheads — historie jednoho vztahu. In D. Bittnerová, M. Heřmanský (Eds.). *Kultura českého prostoru, prostor české kultury* (pp. 261- 288). Praha: Ermat.

Novotná, H. (2013). Punks and skins united? Souvislosti proměn vztahů punkové a skinheadské subkultury v Československu, respektive České republice. In O., Daniel, T., Kavka, J. a kol., Machek J*., Populární kultura v českém prostoru* (pp. 249-26). Praha: Karolinum.

Novotná, H., Heřmanský M. (2013) Shared enemies, shared friends:the relations charakter of subcultural ideology in the case of Czech punks and skinheads. In The Subculture Network (ed.). *Fight back: Punk, Politics and Resistance* (pp. 170-185). Manchester, Manchester University Press.

Pilkington, H., Garifzianova A., Omel'chenko E. (2010). *Russia's Skinheads: Exploring and Rethinking subcultural Lives*. London: Routledge.

Stejskalová, P. (2012). *Subkultura skinheads: kam až došly těžké boty.* In M., Kolářová (Ed.). Revolta stylem (pp. 159-199). Praha: Slon.

The Subculture Network (ed.) (2014). *Fight back: Punk, Politics and Resistance*. Manchester, Manchester University Press.

Travi,s A. T., Hardy, P. (2012). *Skinheads: A guide to an American subculture*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood.

Vejvodová, P. (2008). *Autonomní nacionalismus*. Rexter, *2*. Retrieved from http://www.rexter.cz/autonomni-nacionalismus/2008/11/01/

Worley M. (2013). *Oi! Oi! Oi!: Class, Locality, and British Punk*. Twentieth Century British History, 1-31. Retrieved from: http://tcbh.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2013/03/20/tcbh.hwt001.full