

The White Nationalist Skinhead Movement

UK & USA 1979-1993

BY ROBERT FORBES
AND EDDIE STAMPTON

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Feral House
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This book is dedicated to the two women in my life

INTRODUCTION

Colin was on his way to see his girlfriend in East London after a night out at a gig. It was late and he was very much alone. He clocked a group of four blacks and a white guy in front of him. He had seen a couple of them around before and thought nothing more of it. The white guy unexpectedly asked him: 'Are you Colin?' Fearing trouble, he instinctively answered no. Quickly surrounded, he could not get away and was hit over the head with an iron bar. As he went forward the white guy punched him in the face. Under a deluge of kicks and punches he fell to the ground, where he was repeatedly kicked in the head, soon losing consciousness. Two friends later found him on the floor in a pool of blood and called an ambulance. He was hospitalised for one week; the violent attack left him with a fractured skull, fractured nose, fractured cheek bones, two missing teeth, not to mention the extensive cuts and bruises to his arms, legs and torso. He was interviewed by the police, who reckoned his attackers were going to kill him. He knew this was no ordinary mugging because they never took his money and he had a week's wages on him. The police actually blamed him for the attack: 'Walking about the way you dress you made yourself a target.' They even advised him to grow his hair and drop his politics. He thought: 'Bollocks to you.' Even though the police knew who his attackers were they took no action. However, once he was discharged, he made sure the score was settled. The attack and the attitude of the police made him all the more stubborn to dress and live his life as a nationalist skinhead. Weeks later, his cousin was mugged by blacks in Sheffield. This book is the story of Colin and like-minded nationalists who were involved with Rock Against Communism between the years of 1979 and 1993, the story of those who played in the bands, the story of those who produced fanzines and, last but not least, the story of those who went to the concerts. This is their story, which is a controversial one, but one that needs to be told. This book is for you. Some of the photographs and images included therein are of fairly dubious quality, but they have been included all the same because of their historical interest and importance. This is not a photo book and was never intended to be. That might be one for the future.

Rest in Peace:

Clive Sharp, Albert Mariner, Peter 'Geordie' Mathewson, Violent Storm,
Andy Nunn, Nicky Crane, Mick McAndrew, Ian Stuart
and 'Chubby' Chris Henderson.

CHAPTER ONE

1977-1979

National Front

By the mid-1970s Britain was polarised like never before. The reason for this was the emergence of the National Front. Founded in 1967, the National Front [NF], a right-wing political party, campaigned for an end to 'coloured' immigration, the humane repatriation of immigrants living in Britain, withdrawal from the European community, and the reintroduction of capital punishment.

Even though the NF regarded 'International Communism as the number one enemy of civilization' and 'International Monopoly Capitalism' as dangerous an enemy as communism, only one issue was ever likely to arouse the feelings of the masses and that was race. And racial tension was running high because of the large influx of immigrants from the Commonwealth, which the NF exploited to the full. Indeed, the expulsion of all Asians with British passports from Uganda by General Idi Amin and their arrival in Britain had ignited widespread popular protests. If ever the political climate was favourable for the growth of an openly racist right-wing party the time was now.

The 1973 West Bromwich by-election shocked many when the NF candidate, Martin Webster, managed to poll 16.2 percent of the votes, coming in third and saving his deposit for the first time in the NF's history. This was a danger sign to the major parties that NF support was on the increase in certain areas, particularly those badly hit by the recession with considerable social problems.

In the general election of February 1974, the NF fielded 54 candidates, polling only 74,000 votes. Eight months later and another general election its candidates attracted over 113,000 votes. In some Greater London constituencies the NF share of the vote was as much as 9.4 percent. Nevertheless, with every one of their candidates losing their deposit, the NF still remained a long way from winning even one parliamentary seat.

As the recession deepened the NF made considerable improvement in its electoral showing. In the local elections of 1976 48 NF candidates in Leicester received some 44,000 votes, a staggering 18 percent of the total vote. In the Greater London Council elections of May 1977 the NF polled over 119,000 votes, beating the Liberals into third place in 33 of 92 constituencies and winning 19 percent of votes cast in Hackney South and Shoreditch. This time it seemed as though the National Front was on the verge of an electoral breakthrough and poised to become Britain's third political party. The left looked on with real concern, if not alarm.

Pogo on a Communist

Arguably, the story of 'Rock Against Communism' starts with Eddy Morrison, the National Front Leeds District organiser, who had a taste for punk music, attending many early punk gigs. Notably, he saw the Sex Pistols at the Manchester Lesser Free Trade Hall and again on the Anarchy tour at Leeds Poly, supported by the Clash. And if that were not enough to tell the grandchildren, at the Leeds gig he met a Pistols groupie by the name of Sid Vicious: 'He had a ripped swastika T-shirt on and was skint so I bought him a bottle of Pils lager. He noticed my sunwheel badge and muttered his approval, a bit blurry as he was well out of it.'

Eddy Morrison recognised that punk rock, which was fast becoming the dominant youth cult, would be a 'powerful weapon for anyone who could turn it politically.' However, the left had already stolen a march on the National Front by forming in late 1976 an organization called Rock Against Racism [RAR], which embraced the new sounds of punk, and later the Anti-Nazi League [ANL] to promote action against the National Front. For Eddy Morrison, this situation could not continue. He explained:¹

We either had to condemn Punk or use it. I chose the latter option and started a spoof fanzine called Punk Front which featured a NF logo with a safety pin in it. To my great surprise, *Punk Front* was a huge success and soon, especially in Leeds, NF members and supporters were going to the biggest Punk club around — the infamous F Club. I started to regularly go to the club and NF Punks were recruiting other punks.

In a few months, the NF was the dominant political force on the big punk scene in Leeds. Music papers such as *Sounds* and the *New Musical Express* were taking an interest in us. Gary Bushell was sent up to look into the phenomenon. We had pro-NF letters published in many music papers and other punks started bringing out pro-NF fanzines. We even started two bands — the Vents and the Dentists. Both these bands were to feature later on in the start of 'Rock Against Communism.'

His local branch was very supportive of his activity. Admittedly, some of the older members were shocked by the punk appearance of the new recruits, but they were very happy when they saw the numbers being recruited. By 1978, Leeds NF had some four hundred members. Indeed, such was the NF stranglehold on the punk scene in Leeds that Eddy Morrison could claim:

We controlled the F Club basically. The F Club actually started in a room at Leeds Poly, then to Brannigans, then to Chapeltown, then back to Brannigans. The club in Chapeltown was actually called 'The Continental Club' and downstairs was a black-only gambling club. Upstairs was all White. Weird and actually quite hairy! We also held a weekly *Friday Bowie/Roxy night at the Adelphi pub* in Leeds city centre with some nationalist stuff in between — strictly 'All-White Music Night' we billed it. Those Friday night events were 100% NF whereas at the F Club, although we dominated, a lot of normal punks came along too. The reds attacked the pub three times, but the landlord was very pro-NF and we kicked them out of it each time.

1. *Memoirs of a Street Soldier*, Eddy Morrison.

The Adelphi, the Prince of Wales and the Scarborough Taps were all NF/RAC pubs. The Prince of Wales was basically 100% NF customers. Alan the manager was totally reliant on our customers to the extent that once when John Tyndall came up and we had lost the main city centre venue, we went to the Prince and put the pool table out into the street to give room inside for John Tyndall to speak! We had three punk discos there.

The red bands, in particular the Mekons from Leeds, stopped playing the F Club because we brought every one of their gigs to a halt. We ghettoed them back to the student areas and out of the city centre pubs and clubs. It kicked off big-time when 999 played the F Club. 999 weren't left — they weren't nationalists either — but with them being a big band at the time they attracted a lot of non-NF punks and quite a few were RAR. Well, we started 'removing' their badges. That's what started the bother. West Yorkshire NF members had an unofficial 'league' for how many ANL/RAR/Commie badges a unit could rip off in a month. That's rip off a red in broad daylight. Leeds won and at our unofficial HQ (some of the lads had a sort of high-class squat in Headingley) we had a nicked SWP banner where you came and attached your badge haul. In the end it was covered in hundreds! I remember Darren in Hull walking up to a red who was talking to a copper (I kid you not) and ripping his badge then walking away and not getting nicked!

Reporting for the *New Musical Express*, journalists John Hamblett and Phil McNeill wrote a piece called 'NF prints punkzine'²:

LATEST ENTRANT to the wonderful world of literature is a creepy little leaflet called *The Punk Front*, which has been spotted in the Leeds/Bradford area. Adorned prominently with the National Front symbol, it sets out the attitudes that are expected of the NF-supporting punk about town. See the picture of Tom Robinson! See the speech bubble. "I'm against the Front coz they'll ban Vaseline." What wit! See Paul Simonon! "I hate the National Front because they don't like me turning the new wave into commie propaganda." Quite a new twist, huh? The NF as defenders of the new wave...

In the middle of the sheet is a cartoon of a Jewish-looking guy with long hair, glasses and a moustache. His talk bubble: "We in the Anti-Nazi League tell you the NF eat black babies for breakfast and gas their own mothers — we haf pictures, already." In the corner, a cut-out picture of four men carrying Anti-Nazi banners: three black, one white with a huge nose drawn on and glasses again (why do they think all Jews wear spex?) — and underneath, the caption: "'British' people stand against the National Front." Opposite them, a couple of young punks are positioned to gaze malevolently at the picture of the demonstrators. "If that lot's against the National Front," says one, "then me and my mates are joining." Which, believe it or not, is what a few Leeds punks — a very few Leeds punks — are actually doing.

Apart from the outbreak of fighting at a recent Buzzcocks gig in Bradford — reported in *Thrills* three weeks ago — they've also been known to dance the

2. *New Musical Express*, 17 June 1978.

goose-step at the 'F' Club, much to the disgust of the left-wing local bands who supplied the backing — the Gang of Four and the Mekons. Both bands, in fact, have decided not to play the club again until it changes its current 'apolitical' stance and bans the NF aggravators. 'F' Club promoter John Keenan, however, dismisses them as "basically yobboes. There's never more than half a dozen of them. I'm doing my best to keep politics out of the club." The latest incident involving these guys — who claimed to be supporters of the ultra-right-wing British National Party until that folded recently — came on May 24, when Sham 69 were due to play the 'F' Club but had to pull out to record a *Top of the Pops* appearance. Keenan turned a bunch of people away, and later that evening they turned up in the Fenton pub, where members of both the Mekons and Gang of Four were drinking, and began singing "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" as performed by the Hitler Youth in *Cabaret*. Inevitably, a fight broke out. One student received a badly cut eye which required immediate surgery, and among other injured parties was a girl student who took a serious kicking in the head. Police arrested students and Front supporters..."

Photocopied, *Punk Front* ran for five issues. As well as the *Punk Front* fanzine, *British News*, the Leeds-based newsletter of the National Front edited by Eddy Morrison,³ started to devote a surprising amount of space to punk and new wave. Anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* reported:⁴ 'In August Morrison wrote a page about David Bowie in *British News* describing him as a 'force to be reckoned with' and an influential star who was moving youth away from the left and therefore deserving close attention from nationalists. This was because Bowie had made public statements like 'Hitler was the first rock star — he really got it together' and 'Britain needs an extreme right-wing government' which, as Morrison correctly points out, along with one or two other such comments from rock heroes, led to the formation of RAR.'

The September issue of *British News* contained an interview with the lead singer of a band called the Vents, who stated that they were 'definitely' anti-communist. He explained that they had been forced to come out and support Rock Against Communism by 'lefty groups such as Tom Robinson Band, pushing homosexuality and all that trash.' He talked bravely of the future: "There is a lot of things to be done. We would really like to make a record with a straight Rock Against Communism message — but of course we need some backing for a big project like that.'

The existence of Leeds right-wing band the Dentists made it into the pages of *Sounds* following a piece about the formation of Skins Against the Nazis. Eddy Morrison and his friends wrote in supporting the Dentists and the Vents, and a couple of their letters were printed. *Searchlight* investigated, but could not come up with much, other than 'both groups consist of the same small circle of Morrison's friends' and 'their support was limited to a small following of ex-BNP and YNF people in Leeds.'⁵ This was true, but there is much more to the story of the Dentists.

3. *British News* had actually started life in 1974 in support of the British National Party. When Morrison wound up the BNP in late 1977 *British News* continued as an 'independent paper which gives its support to the National Front — the biggest White Nationalist movement in the world.'

4. *Searchlight* #44, February 1979.

5. *Ibid.*

The Dentists comprised Mick Redshaw on vocals, Howard on guitar and Chink on bass, who was a member of the British Movement. Eddy Morrison knew Mick Redshaw from the F Club where he had also met Julie, his soon-to-be second wife, and Denise, Mick's then girlfriend. Julie and Denise were 'best mates.' When Mick Redshaw first started to think about forming a band, just a straight punk band which was not going to be overtly political, Eddy Morrison 'intervened.' Mick Redshaw did not take much talking round and joined the Punk Front the following week. Eddy Morrison and Mick Redshaw soon became the best of friends. Indeed, Mick was Eddy's best man at his second wedding in September 1979.

Eddy Morrison liked the Dentists, 'although they were a rough back-to-basics punk band.' He was there when the Dentists played for the first time. They were amazingly shambolic. Eddy remembers Mick asking him how they went down as they hadn't practiced much before their first night and him thinking to himself, 'It shows!' He missed the Dentists live just the once when they played Viva's wine bar: 'We used to go into Viva's fairly regularly. One of the lads was going out with one of the barmaids called Linda and she persuaded the manager to let us have a music night which the Dentists played at. I was speaking at an NF meeting in Manchester that night so didn't go. It was a one-off venue.' One of his abiding memories of the Dentists is the time they played a hotel in Leeds [the name of the hotel is not known to the author]: 'It was Mick's 21st birthday party. We had about one hundred there, stacks of NF turned up and most of the Punk Front. Mick nearly choked me by mistake when we were pogoing and he grabbed hold of my dog collar. The Dentists also played that night. Mick was wearing a Clockwork Orange white bib and braces. I had a marathon hangover so I'm surprised I can remember anything.'

Sometimes 'over-punk in their dress sense,' Eddy Morrison regarded the Dentists as 'quite the fashion setters,' although they normally wore a uniform of bib and brace overalls.

The Ventz had started life as the Expelairs and changed their name when lead singer Algie reformed them. The Ventz were not as outspoken as the Dentists and explains how they were able to play regular music venues relatively unmolested. For example, on Thursday, 20 April 1978 and again on 4 August 1978, the Ventz played the F Club in Chapeltown, Leeds. Somewhat ironically, on the first of those two dates, they supported the Front, an anti-fascist band from London! The Ventz later changed their name to Tragic Minds because, according to Eddy Morrison, 'they were getting into the New Romantic/New Wave scene and thought it was more appropriate.'

And then for the Leeds NF and the Punk Front, things suddenly took a turn for the worse as Eddy Morrison explained:

On a very warm night in August 1978, I was at the head of around 40 NF members, all from Leeds, who gate-crashed a Sham 69 concert at the F Club — we had been banned. The F Club was still situated in Chapeltown, the Afro-Caribbean area of the city. We halted the concert which escalated into a mini-street battle with some rastas outside the venue. Stacks of police arrived and we scattered, meeting up again at a pub called the Fenton in the student area. Unbeknownst to us, the ANL were having a gay/lesbian social in the Fenton that night. The evening turned into a really bloody fight with 29 injured. I was arrested the following day. The *Yorkshire*

Evening Post reported the brawl under a banner headline of 'All hell breaks loose in City pub.' Refused bail, I spent the next three months in Armley jail. Eventually I got bail under stringent restrictions — I could not go in any city centre pub; I was on a curfew from nine at night to eight next morning. I also had to sign bail at a police station everyday. I had to reside in one address and inform the police if I left the city. I had pleaded not guilty along with a handful of others. One year later, after being on curfew for 12 months, I was brought to trial and found not guilty, thank goodness, but a lot of those who pleaded guilty went down for three, six and nine months. I pleaded not guilty — my brief told me I was looking at four to six years as the ringleader and I was charged with aggravated affray. The fallout from this brawl took much of the dynamism out of the Punk Front and the Leeds RAC. Most of the lads were on bail, in jail or were on curfew — and the cops were on us big style — we couldn't move. As I was also banned from all Leeds pubs whilst awaiting trial I couldn't organise anything so that didn't help.

Despite the police clampdown, the Dentists gate-crashed a RAR concert at the F Club that Xmas,⁶ much to the displeasure of Paul Furness who wrote:⁷

The 'F' Club, centre of the punk industry in Leeds. Fascists crawl around the place every now and then. Christmas is no exception. Xmas party, 'Butlins style' the posters announced. Great! Five RAR bands on the bill. So we go along. But for a few weeks previous a nasty rumour flies around about the Dentists playing. Or are they? Recently they'd put pen to paper and survived in the letters columns of *Sounds* for three weeks. Kev from the Jerks wrote 'em a great letter from York. Leeds has more RAR gigs than any place he knows. Then someone slaps *Sounds*' wrists writing that the Dentists can't even fart in tune. We arrived and there they were, blasting into 'White Power' & 'We Are the Master Race.' Fucking hell about 30 fascists sieg-heiling & jackbooting (after all the 'F' club is in a beer Keller) at the front of the stage. The Nazis wearing 'Hitler was right' badges, Union Jacks, Pogo on a communist. Not a RAR badge in sight. The Dentists are evil bastards. Martin Webster's favourite sing-along band are out-and-out Nazis. Intimidation is going on throughout the audience. The atmosphere is electric. I buy a round and this RAR girl tells me there's going to be violence. Perfectly obvious, I'd have thought. The fascists following us around beer glasses in hand. A few quick phone calls & a quick bus ride and we fetch down some RAR people. The Dentists get unplugged and from then on it's fuck the managers and the promoter, RAR's doing the stewarding...

Also among the Dentists' repertoire of 'heartwarming ditties' was 'Kill the Reds.'⁸

As the new year of 1979 dawned, *British News* edited by Eddy Morrison started to feature news from an apolitical organization calling itself Rock Against Communism, RAC for short, which had formed in Leeds to 'combat Rock Against Racism' and 'show up Rock Against Racism for what it is — a puppet of the extreme left.' The Dentists'

6. The date of this gig is not known for certain, but five local bands did play the 'F' Club on 21 December 1978. The Ventz may have also played.

7. *Temporary Hoardings* no. 8, article by Paul Furness, 1979.

8. *Rock Against Cretinism*, article by Gary Bushell, 1979.

vocalist Mick Redshaw was once quoted on the subject of Rock Against Communism: 'It is necessary because people need to be given an alternative to RAR.'⁹

Rock Against Communism booked the Dentists, the Crap, Column 44 and two other bands to play a gig in Yorkshire in March 1979. Speaking out against the gig, Leeds punk Steve Eccles complained to a local newspaper, *The Leeds Other Paper*:

I read with great interest A.G. Holder's letter about the Nazi band the Dentists. However this is nothing new to some of us anti-racist punks, who support the Anti-Nazi League. We watched them do a gig at Viva's wine bar about six months ago. We were appalled by what we saw. What is even more distressing is for us to find out that they are not alone. A certain other band who call themselves appropriately Tragic Minds are also National Front members but whereas the Dentists openly admit they are Nazis Tragic Minds are a little more discreet — they don't shout about it in public. This does not mean to say they don't admit to be fascists. When Eddy Morrison had his local British National Party Tragic Minds who were then called the Ventz performed at B.N.P. discos to try to raise funds. Us punks in the A.N.L. are now amused to find that these two bands have said that they will do a Rock Against Communism gig which should be good for a laugh. I wonder what would happen if any anti-communist black people should try to attend it or need I ask?

Contrary to what Steve Eccles wrote, Tragic Minds were not billed to play. The concert did not go ahead as planned. The only RAC activity remained in Leeds with a spillover to Bradford.

Meanwhile, and similarly, NF punk band White Boss were making a nuisance of themselves in their hometown of Coventry. The lead singer, Rob Morton, was a builder's apprentice and explains how the band actually came to be named after Boss White, a well-known pipe joint sealant. The band sometimes borrowed the services of Fred Waite, the bassist of fellow Coventry punk band Criminal Class. The band rehearsed at Caludon Castle School in Coventry. Gigs were hard to come by, but somehow they managed to play. Local left-wing magazine *Alternative Sounds* angrily reported on the time White Boss supported Flackoff from Leamington:

Flackoff don't appear to have any deep-seated prejudices about colour, sex politics or money, but they have recently been linked with the NF because they let White Boss have a support slot at a recent gig. White Boss were booked through Flackoff's ex-vocalist Alison (who can only be described as misguided). She convinced Flackoff that they were just another bunch of misunderstood kids struggling for recognition, lying about their bigoted lyrics and self-righteous fascist supporters. She was also supposed to collect money on the door but arriving late spent the rest of the evening testing her womanly wiles on some unsuspecting homosexual, so out of the 100-plus crowd only about 25 paid. The gig was wrecked (and a lot of equipment) by this hip clique who dragged themselves away from their mirrors for the evening to pose and fight and act like moronic animals that the Sunday papers always claimed they were. The total cost of the evening to Flackoff was approximately

9. RAC News, *Bulldog* no. 14.

£75 in replacing equipment which they had borrowed and in repairing damages. (This does not include replacing their own equipment or record collection which was stolen.) As White Boss were prepared to share any profit made perhaps they would share any losses too?

Vocalist Stu Knapper of Coventry band Riot Act said of their 'association' with White Boss:¹⁰

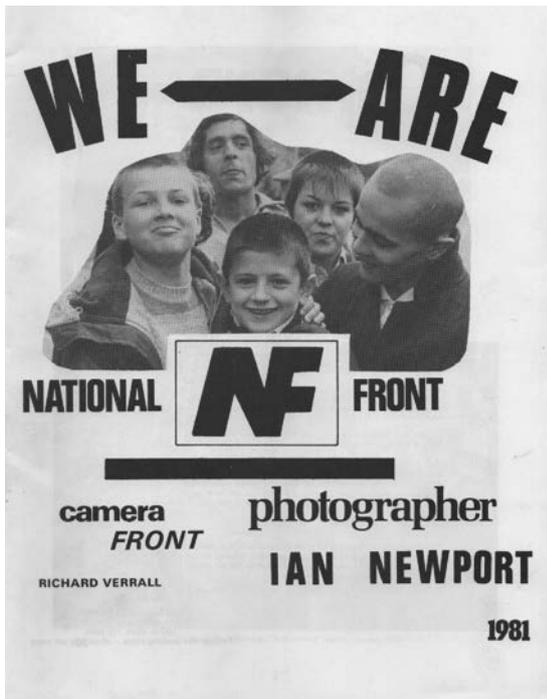
There were a couple of right-wing NF bands doing the rounds in Coventry at the time. Without much support I might add! One of the bands was called White Boss, and had approached us to play a gig with them at some venue or other. We had of course declined their very kind invitation with a very firm "Fuck Off." However, they went ahead and played the gig without incident. But to my surprise I walked into Virgin Records one afternoon and was confronted by John "Brad" Bradbury (Specials drummer) and some other faces on the scene at the time and questioned about my political beliefs. As you can understand I was very taken aback and before answering any questions I asked the reasoning for the questions. I was then shown a NF/right-wing magazine article claiming that the Riot Act 'riot' at the Heath Hotel had in fact happened at the White Boss gig, but the most galling thing of all was that they claimed that we had played and the riot had been between black and white youths. I was fucking furious!! When we had started the band we honestly had no political vision, we just wanted to write songs and play to anyone who would listen to us. We now had an issue that we had to resolve as none of us wanted the band tagged with an NF image.

White Boss produced one issue of a fanzine that 'made an art form of photostatting.'

Like *British News*, *Bulldog*, the self-styled 'Paper of the Young National Front,' also started to carry a Rock Against Communism supplement, which was called *RAC News*. The Young National Front had been established in August 1977 and *Bulldog* had first appeared the following month as a duplicated news-sheet with Joe Pearce as the editor. The first supplement of *RAC News*, which appeared in issue number 14 of *Bulldog*, reads:

For years White, British youths have had to put up with left-wing filth in rock music. They have had to put up with the anti-NF lies in the music papers. They have had commie organizations like Rock Against Racism trying to brainwash them. But now there is an anti-commie backlash! RAC is going to fight back against left-wingers and anti-British traitors in the music press. We hate the poseurs in RAR who are just using music to brainwash real rock fans. Rock Against Communism consists of skins, mods, punks and Teds, and not long-haired lefty poseurs. Over the next few months we are going to hold concerts, roadshows and tours. The message to the commie scum is clear. Rock Against Communism has arrived and Rock Against Communism is here to stay.

10. Interview with Stu Knapper of Riot Act on website sites.google.com/site/bandsfromcoventry/home



We Are NF booklet: Note the young skinheads.



National Front Ted with White Power badge, London 1980.
(from the 'We Are NF' booklet)

RAC News also featured RAC bands (the Dentists from Leeds were the first to appear), an RAC track which could range from the alleged anti-communist poetry of 'Red Is a Mean, Mean Colour' by Steve Harley & Cockney Rebel to 'Original Sin' by Theatre of Hate, and the light-hearted RAC Bird. To be a RAC Bird, girls were encouraged to send in a photo along with their personal details. Joe Pearce got the idea from a picture of Julie, Eddy Morrison's soon-to-be second wife, in the 'We Are NF' booklet. She also graced the pages of *Bulldog* as one of the first RAC birds. Rock Against Communism launched through *Bulldog* an official membership club and members received [or were due to receive] a free RAC badge and a quarterly magazine called *Rocking the Reds*, which was not available elsewhere.

'Violence in our minds'

By now, left-wing and punk gigs in and around the capital often descended into violence at the hands of NF and BM skinheads. One punk fanzine even wrote of a 'right-wing backlash against punks.' Most notably, in October 1978, BM skinheads disrupted the Lurkers when they played Woolwich Polytechnic. Skinheads also disrupted a gig by Penetration [date unknown].

The violence continued into the following year. On 1st June, skinheads smashed up a gig by Crass and the Satellites at Ealing Technical College, causing it to be aborted. One review of this gig concluded: 'In 1977 we posed with swastikas to piss off the Second World War generation, and dabbled with violent shock-imagery. Now the swastikas are real and so is the violence.'

On 29 June, a RAR concert featuring Crisis and Beggar at West London's Acklam Hall ended in chaos when skinheads stormed the venue.¹¹ The Jobs For Youth concert organised by the Socialist Youth with Misty In Roots and the Ruts in Gladstone Park, Brent was abandoned after one hundred skinheads stormed the stage and sieg-heiled at the crowd. Arguably, the violence came to a head at Sham 69's 'Last Stand' at the Rainbow on Saturday 28 July. Val Hennessey, a reporter with *The Guardian*, went along to the gig with her teenage daughter and later wrote:¹²

Perhaps it was an unforgivable intrusion into her world but, being curious to obtain a wimp's-eye view of gig-going, I chose SHAM 69's farewell concert for my initiation.

In the ticket queue outside the Rainbow Theatre I was jostled by hundreds of bristle-headed, braces-wearing boys and girls whose ebullience boiled over spasmodically into jungle chants and a pounding of fists. Standing there in my T-shirt dress I felt more conspicuous than a hairy-legged woman in a Miss World contest.

A girl with a pink crew-cut nudged her friend on the shin with a laced-up boot and hissed: "What's that nosey old bag staring at?" Feigning mateyness I offered them cigarettes. "Bit old, entcha?" observed pink crew-cut. Ankle-deep in beer cans, an army of thuggish youths, tattooed with swastikas, chanted: "There's only one Hitler." The girls explained: "That's the British Movement mob. They've had it in for Sham ever since Jimmy joined Rock Against Racism." I was feeling sick and definitely jumpy.

Jimmy Pursey leaps through swirls of dry ice and, in a voice like a pneumatic drill, howls about dead-end jobs and being united, until the fillings in your teeth rattle. A faction of BM toughs (exclusively male) form a procession, chanting, thumping and shouting Sieg Heil. By Sham's fifth song they had clambered on stage and halted the show. In the ensuing imbroglio beer cans were hurled and bottles flung. A girl got a cigarette end in her eye, another had her glasses smashed. After 20 minutes the thugs caused Sham's Last Stand to end and I felt sad for Jimmy Pursey, who attempted, in vain, to calm things down.

RAR issued a letter to everyone in the music business demanding action against the BM/NF. They even recommended the vetting of audiences at gigs! The exact timing of this letter is not known, but may have been issued in response to the first RAC concert in London.

The first London RAC concert

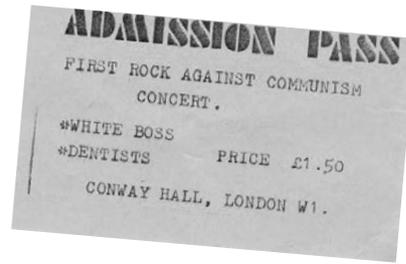
Rock Against Communism now started to turn its grandiose words into reality by holding a concert in the capital. On 11 August, *Sounds* reported: 'BAD NEWS: Disgusting leaflet circulating London gigs suggesting that Skrewdriver have reformed to play gigs for Rock Against Communism — believed to be a National Front organisation. The first will be on August 18 'somewhere in London' with the infamous Dentists and a band called White Boss. Meanwhile closer to home we hear that the Mods' own Waterloo Wellington is in danger of becoming a British Movement venue with Leatherhead band

11. The NF also attempted to disrupt a RAR gig by Crisis in High Wycombe, date unknown.

12. *The Guardian*, 21 September 1979.

The Head playing this Friday performing amusing ditties like "Hitler Was Right".

And so it came to pass that on Saturday, 18 August, with a helping hand from the Young National Front, Rock Against Communism managed to stage its first concert in London at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holburn. The Dentists supplied by the Punk Front, and White Boss, who Joe Pearce had contacted direct and travelled to Coventry to audition for the concert, both played. Rugby band Column 88, who stressed they were a 'totally non-political band' although their name would suggest quite the opposite, had signed up to play the gig, but had pulled out after learning that they would be playing 'for the cause.'¹³ Skrewdriver, the defunct punk band which had turned skinhead, failed to show. White Boss provided the drum kit for the night. The back wall of the stage was adorned with a huge Rock Against Communism banner produced especially for the night. Paid for by the NF, the banner also carried a blue, white and red roundel, the RAC logo.



The Punk Front was well represented at the gig by the likes of Eddy Morrison, Weasel and the Ventz/Tragic Minds, who had all made the long journey from Leeds to be there. Also in the audience were small firms of Chelsea and Leeds hooligans, who put away their football club rivalry for the night. The British Movement, whose agenda was openly national socialist, also made an appearance to support this purely NF venture. Only a handful of the 20 or so British Movement present were young skinheads, among them 19-year-old Paul 'Charlie' Sargent, Gary Hitchcock and Tony 'Panther' Cummins.¹⁴ Hoxton Tom, the future bass player for the 4-Skins, was also at the concert but he was not a nationalist. Charlie Sargent liked punk music, which he got into years before at the age of 16 or 17. At the concert, the young BM skinheads drank with Weasel and his mate Plum of the Leeds Punk Front, who they had met at the nationalist rally at Diksmuide in Belgium. Weasel and Plum were a little older than the BM skinheads, but they got on quite well.

Eddy Morrison's overriding memory of the concert was the 'sheer novelty of it all.' One person who went along out of interest recalls: 'White Boss were the best received of the two bands, having the most original songs.' Fred Waite would later claim that he played with White Boss. This is not true. He was not in White Boss at the time and never even went to the concert. Charlie Sargent thought the Dentists and White Boss were not very good, but acknowledges the fact that this was the first time anything like this had been done before. He recalls the sight of carrier bags of smashed Skrewdriver records left outside the venue as a protest against the concert.¹⁵

The following week, *New Musical Express* covered the concert and the RAR demo against it, but had very little to say about the actual concert after their reporter was recognised and 'told to leave':¹⁶

13. Interview with Column 88, *Alternative Sounds* #14, 1980. Column 88 was the name of a small and shadowy neo-Nazi paramilitary group.

14. Steve Powers may have also been present.

15. Ibid.

16. Mark Ellen, *New Musical Express*, 25 August 1979.



The Dentists at the first RAC concert (from the 'We Are NF' booklet)

THE RAR demo against the National Front's 'Rock Against Communism' gig at Conway Hall on Saturday turned out to be a very temperate affair, due mainly to the strict precautions taken by the police.

Over 200 RAR supporters assembled at Russell Square tube station, to be met by two coaches containing at least 60 police. The march was led by a rented 3-ton truck flying the banner "We're all your 'Alien' Kulture," with the rock band Charge playing a short set on the back.¹⁷ A brief meeting was held before the demonstrators dispersed. In his speech at the meeting, RAR picket organiser John Dennis claimed that when the NF issued leaflets a week ago advertising the gig, they never mentioned the venue as they were "shit-scared of RAR opposition. The NF," continued Dennis, "are against rock music, in fact against everything we represent, and although we've only had three days warning, this demo has shown that the RAR will take a positive stand against further gig violence."

Your reporter, and photographer 'Fearless' Mike Laye, later attempted to gain entry to the Conway Hall gig and were actually halfway in before being recognised by NF organisers as members of the RAR rally. To the tune of "Oy, Red — Fuck Off!", and various less subtle threats, we were forced to make a swift exit.

17. RAR asked anarcho-punk Crass to play on a truck outside the RAC gig, but they refused to do so, explaining 'if RAR feel that they have the right to promote their political ideology, they have no right to prevent others from promoting theirs.'

Those who did manage to get inside reported that there were upwards of 200 NF supporters and two bands — Homicide and White Boss — and that the atmosphere was ‘Manic,’ ‘utterly horrible,’ and that there was much chanting of ‘Right Wing pop songs.’ Later, a spokesman for the NF told Thrills that “the two Young NF organisers connected with that concert” (one of whom was Joe Pearce) “had no wish to talk to the *New Musical Express*.”

Homicide from Coventry did not play and were not a RAC band. There was no apology from *New Musical Express* though¹⁸:

Homicide, the group who were supposed to have played the Rock Against Communism tea party the other weekend, would like it to be known that they didn’t actually play, and had absolutely no intentions of doing so anyway. They were asked to play by NF organiser Joe Pearce, but refused when they discovered what the gig was promoting, though their names nonetheless appeared on the bill. “None of our lyrics have anything to do with right-wing politics,” complained guitarist Ian Marchant, to *T-zers*, “and we certainly didn’t play that gig.” Our reporter, unable to gain access, was led to assume they had played by various witnesses, who obviously haven’t learned to identify one white supremacist band from another yet...

And yet, months later, when anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* reported on RAC and the Conway Hall concert, Homicide were once again tagged as a RAC band:¹⁹

Rock Against Communism, the NF’s attempts to make fascism seem like fun (see *Searchlight* No. 44) had its first event in Conway Hall, London, on August 18th. A journalist from *Sounds* music paper described what she saw inside.

“There were about 150 youths — I say youths specifically because there were only about five women including a couple of skins and a punkette in a Ramones T-shirt.

“The lads were mostly skins with steel toe-caps and braces fresh from seeing Chelsea draw 0–0 or burly-looking characters in NF T-shirts like mercenaries gone AWOL.”

She then got into conversation with Tony Williams, organiser of Ipswich NF branch, who told her, “The first time British men have ever been able to get together and enjoy themselves like this! It’s different from anything I’ve ever seen!” He explained that women were frightened of coming out politically because of social pressure to be feminine. “We do have some nice girls in the NF, but not enough,” he said. “I mean, look at that one (pointing to a skinhead girl), isn’t that the ugliest thing you’ve ever seen?” Outside there was an RAR picket and demonstration, led by a band on a lorry, and accompanied by large numbers of police. Joe Pearce, hand-picked YNF entrepreneur and editor of *Bulldog*, apparently has plans to set up the NF’s own record label and recording studio and to recruit bands to play the RAC circuit. Apart from the Dentists and White Boss, other groups known to be involved are Damaged, Phase One, Beyond the Implod, Homicide, the Raw Boys and Skrewdriver.

18. *New Musical Express*, 1 September 1979.

19. ‘Head-banging for Hitler,’ *Searchlight* no. 51, October 1979.

The Conway Hall concert was a stunning success for the far right, which had never held anything like it before. It brought RAC and the NF a lot of publicity. Under the headline 'First RAC Concert — Huge success,' *British News* reviewed the concert as follows²⁰:

On August 18th over 300 youngsters packed a central London hall to hear the first Rock Against Communism concert. Two all-NF bands were playing — The Dentists from Leeds, and the Coventry-based band White Boss. Against a big Rock Against Communism backdrop hundreds of anti-communist youngsters danced, clapped and cheered as the bands exhorted them to free music from the domination of the left. Outside a Rock Against Racism flat wagon, full of SWP garbage, toured the area, blaring out its anti-British message until it had to stop at some traffic lights when local NF youths made them see the error of their ways in a straightforward sort of way!

The same issue of *British News* added: 'A big expansion of the RAC is now planned — with another concert in October, backup leaflets, badges and stickers. *British News* also plans to launch a Rock Against Communism magazine, *Fallout*, as a subsidiary backup.' Their big plans would come to nothing.

Elsewhere, reporting the concert as a major coup which hit the reds 'right between the eyes,' *RAC News* also proclaimed: 'The first RAC concert, which was held in London recently, really rocked the music establishment. The music papers went mad when they realised that an anti-communist rock concert had been held... Rock Against Communism has really got the music establishment worried. They know that RAC is a movement of ordinary White rock fans, and they know that it is growing in support all the time!'

In reply, *RAC News* was definitely being economical with the truth. 'Rock Against Communism' was not yet a movement by the wildest stretch of the imagination. The Dentists and White Boss had nailed their colours to the mast of RAC, not so Homicide or DIY punk band Beyond the Implode (incorrectly named Beyond the Implod by *Searchlight*). Told of being named as a RAC band, Ian, the bassist in BTI, responded²¹:

This is the first time I've heard any mention of a connection between BTI and any racist (or even non-racist) groups! Mike [BTI lead guitarist] had a friend called Tony Tobin whom he worked with who was a BNP supporter, but their friendship didn't last long mainly because of his political beliefs — but it wouldn't surprise me if Tobin was responsible in some way, he hated me cos I beat him up when I was nine (he was 11!).

Kev [BTI keyboardist] had a tendency towards violence and would start a fight just cos he didn't like the look of someone, that's all I mean when I say he was a bit of a fascist; he had no political connections that I knew of.

I hope I'm not getting drawn into any kind of political debate because I personally have no interest in politics and I am not by any means a racist — I'm OK with everyone that's OK with me! There are a damn sight more white people I

20. *British News* no. 51, September 1979.

21. Research provided by CB.

dislike than any other colours and my best friend is the child of Yugoslavian immigrants. So I think this is another classic example of don't believe everything you read!

'Violence grows' and the end of RAC

On 8 September, violence erupted when Crass, Poison Girls and Dutch band the Rondos played Conway Hall in London's Red Lion Square. *The Guardian* blamed the BM for starting the violence. The left blamed the NF. Crass blamed the SWP. Many eyewitness accounts exist of that confused and bloody night, but not one is from the NF/BM present. That is, until now. Mark from Leicester sets the record straight:

Between 1976 and 1980 I used to go down from Leicester to London for meetings and marches with the NF and BM. I'd heard there was going to be trouble at the Conway Hall gig and travelled down to London from Leicester with several others. We didn't have tickets and I was the only one who was really into the punk scene so our plan was to try and get into the gig or stay outside on the fringes and see what mischief we could get up to. Pubs around Conway Hall were filled and there was an atmosphere. You could smell the commies and they knew who we were. There were a hardcore of SWP who could and would fight but by and large the commie only fought when they heavily outnumbered the opposition and that night was no exception. We had a few scuffles but never got into the hall, we met some people, passed on some details but to be honest the real punks didn't want to know politics. I was 16, always mixing with people older than me, but most of them were never into the music scene, just the politics, so we ended up going from pub to pub to find friends and hit commies and had a good night. Much you hear about the Conway Hall gig has been exaggerated. A few NF/BM did get into the hall and there were some skirmishes inside. If you have ever fought in a packed indoor venue then you know how hard it is to hit and be hit, as the crowd takes over, and sways and blocks. The commies got a kicking outside the gig by either the NF/BM or the punks mainly because they didn't want to get recruited. If anything we were considered more anti-establishment than the reds. They were right.

Not long after, Poison Girls had a gig in Stratford stopped by the BM. Crass complained: 'It's hard to understand why as Poison Girls have always, as we have, remained in a position of refusing to take sides in the present atmosphere of politics in music. They believe as we do that both the left and the right has exploited and misused the energy of music and made it into a political battlefield.'

Crass need not have worried about the threat posed by RAC which soon petered out, after failing to attract any kind of universal punk support. For White Boss, the Conway Hall concert was pretty much their last shout. The drummer left immediately afterwards, followed by the guitarist. The Dentists broke up some six months after the Conway Hall concert. Lead singer Mick Redshaw, who 'was getting a lot of grief at work and under a lot of red pressure,' suddenly stopped contacting Eddy Morrison and his fellow comrades in arms. Eddy Morrison has not seen Mick Redshaw since, even though they were once the best of friends. The Dentists had played no more than a

total of ten gigs. If truth be told, Eddy Morrison was a bit relieved when the Punk Front quietly faded away: 'It had been fun while it lasted, but punk was on its last legs with the Pistols breaking up and Sid dying plus I was weighed down with legal problems and still having to run the Front. By that time I had become Yorkshire Regional Organiser so it was a relief. It never formally ended, just fizzled out — like punk — in with a bang and out with a whimper (to quote John Cooper Clarke).'

Asked how he would like Punk Front to be remembered, Eddy Morrison replied: 'As a child of its time and as a victory against the ANL and Rock Against Racism in that we recruited youngsters who might have otherwise gone to them and they were livid about it.' Lastly, as for Skrewdriver who failed to show at the RAR concert in Holborn, a journalist from *Melody Maker* was told that the band had been forced to pull out 'due to record company pressure.' Skrewdriver vocalist Ian Stuart would later complain to *Melody Maker*, although he was not quite telling the whole truth: 'The biased information that appeared recently in your paper, and which RAR seem to be responsible for, is false. The news that Skrewdriver is reforming to do NF gigs is complete and utter bullshit. I have no interest in politics and never have. I've also been told that RAR has solid links with the Anti-Nazi League, an organization who, it seems, are backed heavily by the Communist and Marxist parties, who in their own way are just as much of a threat to this country as the NF or BM. I'm at present forming a new band which is not called Skrewdriver, and don't intend doing gigs for the RAR, NF or any other political organizations.'

Skrewdriver

The story of Skrewdriver is the story of Ian Stuart. Ian Stuart Donaldson was born on Sunday, 11 August 1957 in Victoria Hospital, Blackpool. His parents lived in a three-bedroom semi in Hawthorne Grove in the affluent market town of Poulton-le-Fylde, some ten kilometers from Blackpool town centre. His childhood was a happy one. In 1968 he attended Baines' Grammar School in Poulton. Like most teenage boys, he was interested in girls, music and sports. One girl who caught his eye was Carol. The attraction proved to be mutual:

I first met Don as most of us called him (or Stu as some people at the time called him) when I was 12 at Poulton Fair. He was with mutual acquaintances and even then he made a big impression on me as a large, well-padded, 'comely' youth with brown eyes. I remember him as doing most of the talking then too (later he was always 'holding forth' over one thing or another).

I was nearly 14 when I met him again. (I knew him longer than my first husband, Kevin McKay, the bass player for Skrewdriver, who I didn't meet until I was 17.) He sent someone over to ask me out, which looking back was quite typical of him. I obviously said yes, and we met the evening after. I remember going to Preston shopping with him on our second 'date.' I went out with him six times in all and he finished with me all those six times, which doesn't say much for my own pride or self-respect, I know, but I adored him, as lots of other people did. I scratched his name all over the library wooden table and my own school desk at Elmslie Girls School in Blackpool and many other places, I'm sure! The very last

time I saw him, before he left for London again, he begged me to go back out with him and to leave Kevin, but by then I'd fallen for Kevin, though I do remember the pull he exerted.

He definitely had an aura about him — I remember just looking at him — I think I just liked to watch his lips move — I knew he was very opinionated on most things but he was so amusing and to me, attractive, that I didn't care! Then later, when I was 17 and met Kevin, I remember that every time I saw Don (or Stu) he always seemed to have a group of youths with him who looked up to him and hung literally on his every word. He was also a hygiene fetishist — on our dates, sometimes he used to go home and brush his teeth (or so he said) and come back again. Though this sounds strange now, it didn't seem so strange at the time as there were a number of lads (he probably influenced them, in retrospect) who were the same, including my sister's ex and my ex, Kevin, who himself was a bit like Lady Macbeth, washing his hands all the time. The doctor told him he must stop!

Growing up, Ian Stuart was captivated by the music of his generation. An avid fan of rock music, he listened to the likes of the Who, Led Zeppelin, Free and especially the Rolling Stones, whose spirit of rebellion would later define Ian Stuart as a musician and also as a person.

Ian Stuart had a life-changing moment one Saturday while watching local rock band Warlock play live. Thereafter, he knew he wanted to be in a band. Phil Walmsley, who played guitar for Warlock, recalls:

'While the Warlock thing was falling apart I started knocking around with Don. He'd always wanted to be in a band but couldn't find anybody to make it happen for him. Maybe that's why he got friendly with me. I'm pretty sure it was his idea. He'd never been onstage, he was pretty shy, but he knew this was what he wanted to do.'

John 'Grinny' Grinton drummed for Warlock. Ian and Grinny had been friends since childhood. Ian asked Grinny to ask Phil Walmsley if he would teach him guitar. Phil Walmsley said of this: 'I showed him a few simple chords on the guitar but it wasn't really his thing.' The demise of Warlock in late 1975 presented Ian Stuart with the perfect opportunity to get a band together. It was an opportunity he seized with both hands, recruiting Grinny, Phil Walmsley and the McKay twins. The band, which was named *Tumbling Dice* after a Rolling Stones song, started to rehearse at Ian's dad's factory every Saturday and Sunday afternoon. Grinny and Phil Walmsley were the only ones who had any experience. Walmsley remarked: 'The McKay twins needed plenty of coaching on bass and guitar.' By the end of 1975, with a line-up of Ian on vocals, Phil Walmsley on lead guitar, Sean McKay on guitar, Kevin McKay on bass and Grinny on drums, *Tumbling Dice* felt confident enough to perform in front of a crowd.

Belting out cover versions by their rock heroes, *Tumbling Dice* started to gig relentlessly, playing anywhere they possibly could: holiday camps, discos, talent competitions and social clubs. The band would eventually incorporate a number of their own songs into their set list of cover versions. Grinny, who was proving more and more

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