



HATE SPEECH
INTERNATIONAL
INVESTIGATING EXTREMISM

NEO-NAZIS IN THE NORTH:
**THE NORDIC RESISTANCE
MOVEMENT IN FINLAND,
SWEDEN AND NORWAY**

A report by Hate Speech International

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■ INTRODUCTION

The self-declared Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) is currently the largest and most active neo-Nazi organization in Sweden, where it originated, as well as in Norway and in Finland. In total, the organization may have as many as 300 activists across the Nordic countries, as well as a broader network of sympathizers.

The Nordic Resistance Movement fights – in the words of its former leader Klas Lund – for “a Nordic national socialist republic including the Nordic countries of Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland and optionally the Baltic states”. It has also attempted to establish itself in Denmark, and its website includes a section in the Icelandic language.

More worrisome than its national socialist utopia vision are the organization's links to violence. While the organization claims to resort to violence only in self-defence, both its national socialist ideology, which is violent in itself, and the blood-stained history of the organization say otherwise.

HSI has followed the development of the Nordic Resistance Movement for years, and also assisted Esa Henrik Holappa – a co-founder and former leader of the Finnish branch – in leaving the organization and breaking with his past. In this report, we present the history of the group and an overview of its current activities. We have also included an article written by Marko Hietikko and published by the Finnish broadcaster YLE in connection with Holappa's defection.

It is our hope that the material will contribute to shedding light on the extreme right in the Nordic countries.

Kjetil Stormark
editor-in-chief

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THE HISTORY OF THE NORDIC RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

Founded in 1995, the Swedish Resistance Movement has grown from a group of young nationalists to a transnational neo-Nazi network. It is currently the largest neo-Nazi group in Sweden, Norway and Finland.

Øyvind Strømme

In 1995, a group of young people in Bromma – an upscale Stockholm suburb – founded an organization called Oberoende Unga Nationalister (Independent Young Nationalists).

At the time, racist skinheads and white power music dominated the extreme right in Sweden, or at least its public image. As Daniel Poohl of the Swedish anti-extremist magazine Expo writes, the young ultranationalists from Bromma wanted to be something different. They didn't allow drugs. They didn't welcome skinhead hooligans. They wanted to be more serious.



VAM poster, reconstructed from photograph.

In 1997, Erik Hägglund was chosen to lead the organization, which had already changed its name to Nationell Ungdom (National Youth). Hägglund had previously been active in a fascist group called Riksfronten¹ and under his leadership, Nationell Ungdom quickly radicalized. Ideas on “democratic nationalism” were replaced with revolutionary racism.² In its new magazine *Folktribunen* (People's Tribune), readers were introduced to the ideas of the American neo-Nazi leader William Luther Pierce and his infamous novel *The Turner Diaries*, an ultra-violent racist fable. The magazine also included material on Corneliu Codreanu, the founder and charismatic leader of the Iron Guard, an ultra-nationalistic and violently anti-Semitic organization established in Romania in 1927. In the very first issue of the magazine, its editor Klas Lund wrote: “As every officer knows, words are not enough when you need to stop a group of soldiers from fleeing. For the Swedish men to start fighting for their people, much more than

mere arguments are needed. In some cases, it is probably necessary to set examples, especially on the most cowardly and spineless individuals.”³ Lund was a former member of Vitt Ariskt Motstånd, which had taken its name from the American organization White Aryan Resistance, a group that carried out robberies, hoping to fund a “white revolution”. In this endeavour, VAM was inspired by another American group, The Order (Brüder Schweigen), known for committing robberies (and for the 1984 murder of Alan Berg). While amateurish, VAM was certainly violent.⁴ When Lund started editing *Folktribunen*, he had already served time in prison for bank robberies and in connection with a manslaughter case prior to VAM being founded.

Out of *Folktribunen*, a new organization was born that called itself Svenska Motståndsrörelsen, the Swedish Resistance Movement (SRM). It was meant to be an elitist organization, with a strong focus on loyalty, discipline and courage. The ethos was: “Weaklings and cowards have no place with us. No one shall avoid his manly duties.” Nationell Ungdom was to continue as the youth organization of the SRM.⁵

THE MURDER OF BJÖRN SÖDERBERG

In 1999, both Nationell Ungdom and the rest of the Swedish extreme right made headlines. On 12 October, the Swedish syndicalist Björn Söderberg was murdered. Söderberg tipped off the syndicalist newspaper *Arbetaren* about his colleague Robert Vesterlund, a member of the board of a local union, and also an active neo-Nazi. The newspaper story led to Vesterlund resigning from his job and being forced out of the union. Two men – Hampus Hellekant and Björn Lindberg-Hernlund – were later convicted of the murder, and a third man was convicted on weapon-related charges in connection with it. All three of them had close ties to Nationell Ungdom. Both Hellekant and Lindberg-Hernlund had contributed to *Folktribunen*.⁶

The murder of Söderberg, as well as a car bomb attack against two journalists covering the extreme right and the killing of two

1999: Björn Söderberg, a syndicalist, was murdered outside his Stockholm apartment. Two men, Hampus Hellekant and Björn Lindberg-Hernlund, are later convicted of the murder, while a third man is convicted on weapons charges and for aiding and abetting a criminal in connection with it. All three men had connections to the predecessor group of the Nordic Resistance Movement, Nationell Ungdom.

2003: A local leader in Nationell Ungdom was sentenced to two years in prison after being convicted of a series of offenses, including for a two instances of assault.

2005: The Swedish Resistance Movement spoke for the neo-Nazis vandalizing a LGBT-oriented restaurant in Stockholm, Torget, by publishing their manifesto, as well as their own photographs.⁷ Research carried out by Expo the same year connected SMR members to several violent attacks on gays, immigrants and political opponents.⁷

2006: The leader of the SRM in Dalarna was convicted on weapons charges. Another man, connected with both the SRM and Nationalsocialistisk Front was also convicted in the same case.

2007: The Swedish Resistance Movement published a press release on its website from a group of neo-Nazis who had violently attacked an anti-racist concert arranged by the left-wing political party youth wing Ung Vänster.⁹

¹ Riksfronten was the name of two different organizations in Swedish history. The first was a National Socialist group established in 1933 and existed for less than a year, while the latter came into existence in 1989, as Föreningen Sveriges Framtid (The Association for the Future of Sweden), and changed its name to Riksfronten in 1991. For more information on the latter variant of Riksfronten, see “Riksfronten läggs ned”, Expo, nr 4/5, 1997. Online: http://expo.se/2003/riksfronten-laggs-ned_202.html.

² Daniel Poohl, “Drömmen om revolutionen”, Expo, 2 March 2014; “Nationell ungdom och terrorism”, Expo/Svartvitt nr. 3 / 4, 1999. Online: http://expo.se/2003/nationell-ungdom-och-terrorism_204.html.

³ “Nationell Ungdom: Folktribunen”, Expo, nr. 3, 1997. The article by Lund has since been republished at the web site of the Nordic Resistance Movement.

⁴ For more on VAM, see Kenny Hjalte, “Den svenska terrorcellen”, Expo, nr. 3, 2011. Online version: http://expo.se/2012/den-svenska-terrorcellen_5196.html

⁵ Poohl, “Drömmen om revolutionen”.

⁶ “Hotet mot demokratin”, Dagens Nyheter, 11 December 1999. Online: <http://www.dn.se/arkiv/inrikes/dn-rattar-o-i-affonbladets-dagens-nyheter-expressens-och-svenska/>

⁷ “Det homosexuella hotet mot den vita rasen – nazistisk och rasistisk homofobi på Internet”, Stockholm: RFSL / Expo, 2005, p. 12. Online: <http://expo.se/www/download/det-homosexuella-hotet.pdf>

⁸ Ibid, p. 25.

⁹ Ivar Andersen, “Blodig nazistattack mot antirasistisk konsert”, Stockholms Fria, 27 August 2007. Online: <http://www.stockholmsfria.se/artikel/19779>

2007: SRM activists and militant anti-fascists got into a fight in the Slussen area of central Stockholm on 1 September. One of the anti-fascists was stabbed in the neck by an SMR activist. Niklas Frost was later sentenced to five years imprisonment for attempted murder.¹⁰

2008: While sitting on a Gothenburg bench, a young supporter of the Conservative party was attacked by five SRM activists. The neo-Nazis allegedly believed that the young man – who suffered a broken nose and reduced eyesight – was a left-wing activist. The five SRM activists were arrested and charged months later.¹¹

2008: Six people were arrested in a coordinated police action targeting members of the SRM. The police found weapons and explosives.

2010: SRM members demonstrated in connection with a music festival in Piteå, Sweden. When confronted by guards, they attacked. One of the SRM activists was found to be in possession of a knife.¹²

2010: Activists connected to the Finnish Resistance Movement used tear gas and pepper spray in an attack on Helsinki Pride.¹³

2012: A group of militant anti-racists with ties to the extreme left got into a confrontation with activists from the Norwegian branch of the NRM in Trondheim, Norway, in September 2012. Earlier the same year, a neo-Nazi demonstration in central

police officers in Malmö in May 1999, led four major Swedish newspapers, normally competitors, to cooperate. On 30 November 1999, *Aftonbladet*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Expressen* and *Svenska Dagbladet* published the story “The Nazis who threaten democracy”, identifying a number of neo-Nazi activists by name and picture.¹⁴



THE NAZI LINE

Meanwhile, inside the SRM, conflicts were brewing. While some members – led by Klas Lund – wanted ideologically pure National Socialism, others were inspired by the Italian Forza Nuova and the German NPD, political parties that had abandoned the most obvious ties to the 1930s. In 2001, the conflict led to a split, and to Klas Lund and the National Socialist wing gaining complete control of what remained the SRM.

In 2003, the organization started publishing a new magazine, *Nationellt Motstånd* (National Resistance). Cooperation with Norwegian neo-Nazis led to a Norwegian branch of the organization, called *Nasjonal Ungdom*, being established the same year.¹⁵ However, the Norwegian group faltered within a couple of years.

In an article in the new magazine *Nationellt Motstånd*, Klas Lund made it clear that the organization did not seek to recruit “as many as possible”, but rather wanted to build “an inner core of fanatic activists who can increasingly bring the national message out to the masses”.¹⁶

In 2006, *Nationell Ungdom* – for years little more than an alternative name for the SRM – was merged into the organization, and SRM adopted the former youth wing's logo – a combination of the Tyr and the Ingwaz runes – as their own,



describing it as the “riksruner” (a national rune).

Since 2003, the SRM has developed in accordance with Klas Lund's line, as an openly National Socialist organization following an 'elitist' approach to membership. In addition to a traditional anti-Semitic focus, the organization bases its ideology on openly racist anti-immigrant views, as summed up in the foreword to the Norwegian edition of their *Activist Guide* written by Haakon Forwald – a former death metal musician: “The Nordics and the Nordic race are in imminent danger. Through the use of their power positions and their influence, traitors,¹⁷ big finance and enemy media have for many years made sure that the gates to the Nordics are wide open, thus enabling the ongoing, racially alien invasion of our lands.” The foreword also specifically attacks the “decadent” Pride parades, described as hostile to both the people (*folk*) and the family.¹⁸

The organization also established its own publishing house and bookstore, originally called *Nationellt Motstånd förlag*, but later changing its name to *Nordfront förlag*. Based in the small rural village of Grängesberg, it sells various National Socialist and anti-Semitic literature via its online bookstore, including a Swedish translation of *The Turner Diaries*, plus books by Hermann Göring, Joseph Goebbels, as well as – for instance – a collection of letters written by Richard Scutari, a member of the US white supremacist terrorist group *The Order*.

SPREADING ABROAD

The Swedish Resistance Movement sought to spread to the

Trondheim was confronted by militant anti-racists, and a fight ensued, before police intervened and arrested 25 neo-Nazi activists.¹⁹

2012: Joakim Karlsson died after he was stabbed eight times in the chest outside an ICA grocery store in Vallentuna, Sweden. A CCTV recording showed how the victim was stabbed, kicked and trampled upon. Two teenagers, ages 17 and 18, were arrested, and the 17-year-old was later convicted of the murder. Another suspect, Simon Arnamo, then 21, remained at large and was still on Interpol's most wanted list.²⁰

2012: Dan Koivulaakso, a left-wing politician and author, was attacked with pepper spray during a gay rights event in Oulo, Finland. An activist in the Finnish Resistance Movement was later convicted of the attack.²¹

2013: Three activists, at least two of them connected to the FMR, attempted to enter a discussion event in the Finnish town of Jyväskylä on a book on extreme right-wing activities in Finland. A man guarding the event was stabbed. The main perpetrator was a fugitive for nearly two years after the attack, but was later convicted of both the stabbing and the pepper spray attack on Koivulaakso in 2012.²²

2013: An anti-racist demonstration in central Kärntorp, Sweden was attacked by 30 to 40 SMR activists. Militant left-wingers, who had been taking part in the demonstration, responded violently, and a fight ensued. Some 23 neo-Nazis were convicted in connection with the attack, while one anti-racist activist was convicted of

¹⁰ Anders Dalsbro, “Nazist dömd för försök till mord”, Expo, 25 October 2007. Online: http://expo.se/2007/nazist-domd-for-forsok-till-mord_2111.html

¹¹ “Nazister åtalas för misshandel”, Expressen.se, 20 June 2009. Online: <http://www.expressen.se/gt/nazister-atalas-for-misshandel/>

¹² “Nazistdemonstration urartade i Piteå”, TT/dn.se, 30 June 2010. Online: <http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/nazistdemonstration-urartade-i-pitea/>

¹³ Laura Halminen og Tommi Nieminen, “Uusnatsien sipäpiirissä – näin suomalaiset kanssaliissosialistit haluavat houkutella alaikäisiä”, hs.fi, 8 February 2015. Online: <http://www.hs.fi/sunnuntai/art-2000002798889.html>

¹⁴ “The Nazis who threaten democracy”, *Aftonbladet*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Expressen* and *Svenska Dagbladet*, 30 November 1999. Online: <http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/english/nazi1.html>

¹⁵ Espen Kragh og Per Lindberg, “Bygger opp nordisk nazi-union”, ba.no, 25 August 2003. Online: [https://www.ba.no/nyheter/bygger-opp-nordisk-nazi-union/s/1-41-731138; Svenska og norske nazister samarbeider”, Expo, 21 June 2003. Online: \[http://expo.se/2003/svenska-och-norska-nazister-samarbeider_618.html\]\(http://expo.se/2003/svenska-och-norska-nazister-samarbeider_618.html\)](https://www.ba.no/nyheter/bygger-opp-nordisk-nazi-union/s/1-41-731138; Svenska og norske nazister samarbeider”, Expo, 21 June 2003. Online: http://expo.se/2003/svenska-och-norska-nazister-samarbeider_618.html)

¹⁶ Quoted by Poohl, “Drömmen om revolutionen”.

¹⁷ The word used is *folkeforrædere*, the equivalent of the German *volksverräter*.

¹⁸ Haakon Forwald in *Håndbok for aktivister i motstandsbevegelsen*, Grängesberg: NF Forlag, 2016, pp. 8–9.

¹⁹ Kristoffer Furberg and Jonas Alsaker Vikan, “Antirasister havnet i slåsskamp med nazister”, adressa.no, 23 September 2012. Online: <http://www.adressa.no/nyheter/trondheim/article5677747.ece>

²⁰ Hannes Lundberg Andersson, “De flydde Sverige – är Europas mest jagade”, *expressen.se*, 7 January 2017.

²¹ “Suspended sentence for leader of far-right library attack”, yle.fi, 14 January 2015. Online: http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/suspended_sentence_for_leader_of_far-right_library_attack/7737938

²² Ibid.

stabbing an SMR activist with a knife.²³

2015: A neo-Nazi demonstration in Jyväskylä, Finland escalated into violence, with 22 members of the Finnish Resistance Movement later being charged with assault and rioting.²⁴

2016: Jimi Joonas Karttonen, age 28, died of a brain haemorrhage after having been attacked during a NRM demonstration in Helsinki, Finland. Jesse Tornainen, an SRM activist, was later convicted of aggravated assault. The organization itself had posted a video on its web site showing Karttonen lying on the ground and calling the violence a “disciplinary measure”.²⁵

2016: Pierre Esbjörnsson, a local politician in Skurup for the Social Democrats was the victim of arson when someone set fire to his car. The symbol of the NRM was sprayed on the garage door next to the car.²⁶ The organization denied any responsibility.

2017: Three men connected to the NRM were arrested, suspected of being behind two bombings and an attempted bombing in the Gothenburg, Sweden area.

other Nordic countries, and in 2008 a branch was founded in Finland, while a renewed Norwegian branch was established in 2011. In 2013, a Danish-language site, *nordfront.dk*, was established, and an attempt was made to set up a branch in Denmark, with Henrik Jarsbo – a former member of Danmarks Nationalsocialistiske Bevægelse (The Danish National Socialist Movement, DNSB) – being interviewed as a representative of the organization.²⁷ The attempt to found a Danish branch appears to have failed, since its website is no longer functional and the last tweet made on the Twitter account @NordfrontDK dates back to 9 September 2015. Although an Icelandic web site, *nordurvigi.is*, exists, and does contain some general information on the organization, the claim that the organization has a “growing number of fans (on Iceland)” is probably exaggerated.²⁸

INTERNATIONAL TIES

In 2015, “Nordic Days” – an event held by the NRM in an undisclosed location in Sweden, was visited by Stanislav Vorobyov, the leader of the so-called Russian Imperial Movement (Russkoe Imperskoe Dvizhenie, RID), a group that describes itself as representing “Christian Orthodox imperial nationalism”.²⁹ In a speech given in Sweden, a uniformed Vorobyov spoke of “a full-scale war” being waged “against the traditional values of Western civilization” and saying the uniform he was wearing was a symbol of the fight against “Jewish oligarchs in Ukraine”. The RID has actively recruited soldiers for the pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine.

Vorobyov offered a more global “analysis” and also claimed “the Zionist strategy in the Middle East in the future will be used to divide and rule the nations of Europe”, describing the Islamic State as an example of this in Europe.³⁰ According to the NRM itself, the RID also provided them with an unknown



Nästa talare var den ryske inbjudne gästen **Stanislav Vorobjev**, tillika ledaren för den Ryska Imperiska Rörelsen, som önskade Motståndsrörelsen framgång i sin frihetskamp. Vorobjev berättade att det var inte första gången som han och representanter för RIR hade varit på besök i Sverige och att man tidigare varit med på bland annat högtidlighållande av den fallne krigarkonungen **Karl XII** i Stockholm.

Han varnade för att det i nuläget pågår ett fullskaligt krig mot de traditionella värderingarna som kännetecknar den västerländska civilisationen och att anledningen till varför man dyker upp uniformerade är för att man för en kamp mot judiska oligarker i Ukraina genom att strida på de ryska separatisternas sida.

Vorobjev varnade också för att sionisternas taktik i Mellanöstern i framtiden kommer att användas i Europa för att söndra och härska över de europeiska

parliament, the Nouvelle Droite thinker Tomislav Suni, as well as representatives of a number of far right groups across Europe, including the Italian Blocco Studentesco, the Greek extreme right-wing party Xrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn) and the Slovak L'SNS.³² One year earlier, the web site of the Swedish Resistance Movement, *nordfront.se*, reported that an unidentified Swedish activist had visited Xrysi Avgi in Greece, the article being illustrated with a photograph of Xrysi Avgi activists holding up the Tyr rune flag of the Nordic Resistance Movement.³³

As recently as January 2017, the current leader of the NRM, Simon Lindberg, was interviewed on the website of Der Dritte Weg, a small neo-Nazi-oriented political party in Germany.³⁴

A POLITICAL PARTY AND NEW LEADERSHIP

In 2014, Pär Öberg – a central SMR activist³⁵ – was elected as a write-in candidate for the radical,

²³ Staffan Dickson and Viktor Mattsson, “Attack mot antirasister”, *aftonbladet.se*, 15 December 2013. Online: <http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article18026469.ab>

²⁴ “Charges for 22 over neo-Nazi riot in Jyväskylä”, *yle.fi*, 20 October 2016. Online: http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/charges_for_22_over_neo-nazi_riot_in_jyvaskyla/9243011

²⁵ Sylvia Bjon, “Misshandlad man dog efter våld på nazidemonstration”, *hbl.fi*, 17 September 2016. Online: <https://www.hbl.fi/artikel/slagen-av-nazister-mitt-i-helsingfors-offret-dog-av-sina-skador/>; “Neo-Nazi group members gets 2-year prison sentence for Helsinki Railway Station attack”, *yle.fi*, 30 December 2016. Online: http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/neo-nazi_group_member_gets_2-year_prison_sentence_for_helsinki_railway_station_attack/9379918

²⁶ Ossian Sandin, “Pierre Esbjörnsson (S) utsatt för mordbrand”, *skd.se*, 19 September 2016. Online: <http://www.skd.se/2016/09/19/pierre-esbjornsson-s-utsatt-for-mordbrand/>

²⁷ Simon Lindberg, “Intervju med en representant för Motståndsrörelsen i Danmark”, *nordfront.se*, 6 August 2013.

²⁸ The claim of growing support on Iceland is made on the front page of *nordurvigi.is*. The site also includes information on how to become a member and how to donate money to them.

²⁹ Anton Shekhovtsov, “Ekstreme allianser i Europa”, *VG*, 14 September 2015. Online: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/meninger/russland/ekstreme-allianser-i-europa/a/23524234/>. An English-language version has been posted at the blog of Shekhovtsov: <http://anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.no/2015/09/russian-politicians-building.html>

³⁰ “Nordendagarna 2015”, *nordfront.se*, 7 September 2015.

³¹ Ibid. Cf. Josefin Sköld and Mattias Carlsson, “NATO: Främlingshatet kan gödas av främmande makt”, *dn.se*, 27 October 2015.

³² Horst Frieres, “Europa-Kongress mit Rechtsrock”, *Blick nach Rechts*, 18 September 2015. Online: [https://www.bnr.de/artikel/aktuelle-meldungen/europa-kongress-mit-rechtsrock;Verfassungsschutzbericht\(Brandenburg\)2015,Pressefassung,p.42](https://www.bnr.de/artikel/aktuelle-meldungen/europa-kongress-mit-rechtsrock;Verfassungsschutzbericht(Brandenburg)2015,Pressefassung,p.42). Activists from Flanders, Finland, Italy, Croatia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Spain and the Czech Republic were all present at the conference.

³³ “Besök hos Gyllene Gryning”, *nordfront.se*, 11 May 2014.

³⁴ “Gespräch mit Simon Lindberg”, teil 1, *Der Dritte Weg*, 19 January 2017.

³⁵ Like Erik Häggglund, mentioned above, Pär Öberg has a past in the fascist organization called Riksfronten.

populist right-wing party Sverigedemokraterna in local elections for the Ludvika municipality.³⁶ This inspired the group to establish a political party, which was officially registered by Swedish authorities in July 2015.³⁷

In September 2015, Klas Lund – the long-time leader of the Swedish Resistance Movement – stepped down. Since then, the organization has been led by Simon Lindberg. Born in 1983, Lindberg is a former activist of National Socialist Front (National Socialist Front) in the Swedish region of Scania (Skåne), and has been convicted of vandalism, threats and aiding and abetting assault.³⁸ Lindberg is joined by a leadership group that includes Emil Hagberg (born 1984), Fredrik Vejdeland (born 1978) and the previously mentioned Öberg (born 1971). While Vejdeland has been convicted of hate speech-related crimes, Hagberg was also convicted on weapons-related charges and for rioting.³⁹

Since Svenskarnas parti (The Party of the Swedes)⁴⁰ was dissolved in May 2015, the NRM has been the most important neo-Nazi organization in Sweden. The Norwegian and Finnish branches of the organization are also central parts of the neo-Nazi environment in those countries. What started as a group of disgruntled young people in Bromma many years ago has grown into a transnational extremist network.

■ BEHIND THE NAZI FAÇADE

Esa Henrik Holappa helped found the Finnish Resistance Movement, served as its public face and belonged to the organization's inner core for years. In this article, originally published in May 2016, he speaks out against the group, knowing well that doing so makes him a mortal enemy of the organization across the Nordic region.

Marko Hietikko



The Finnish Resistance Movement (FRM) is the most militant Finnish Nazi organization. It has several features worrying to the authorities: good organizational skills, a long-term approach to developing its activities, and an ideology that embraces violence.

FRM is the Finnish branch of the Nordic Resistance Movement, a Swedish-led organization whose stated goal is to establish a National Socialist republic covering the Nordic and Baltic countries. The organization is also active in Norway and

Denmark, but the national organizations there are smaller than in Finland and Sweden.⁴¹

In Finland, the number of members has increased from 30-40 a few years ago to 60-70 activists, members and supporting members today.⁴² Members travel extensively throughout Finland and within the Nordic countries to take part in activities.

🌐 CLEAR LINES OF AUTHORITY

The Finnish Resistance Movement is strictly hierarchical, with clear manuals for its activism and group structure. There are rules on how group leaders are to act, how claims of treachery are to be handled and what punishments are to be given. Group leaders are under orders to encrypt all email communication. Clear directives have been issued for how often the group is to meet, what tasks are to be carried out, and how much supporting members, members, activists and "honour-bound members" are expected to pay in monthly membership fees.

FRM is working to build a subculture with social activities intended to draw in new members, including lectures, martial arts training, sports events, forest walks and outdoor survival training. Much of the activity takes place inside the clubhouse known as Koti, formerly situated in Turku, now in Kerava. The FRM also has its own online store and its own Internet radio broadcasts.

³⁶ Daniel Vergara, "Nazister bildar parti", Expo, 2 October 2014. Mats J. Larsson, "Kupp ger nazister SD-mandat", dn.se, 23 September 2014.

³⁷ See a list of registered political parties in Sweden at the election information site val.se: http://www.val.se/det_svenska_valsystemet/partier/lista_registrerade_partibeteckningar/kontaktuppgifter.html

³⁸ Mikael Färnbo, "De slöt upp til nazisternas demonstration i Borlänge", 2 May 2015. Online: http://expo.se/2016/de-slot-upp-till-nazisternas-demonstration-i-borlange_7085.html

³⁹ David Baas, "De leder den svenska nazist rörelsen", Expressen, 9 February 2015. Online: <http://www.expressen.se/nyheter/de-leder-den-svenska-nazist-rorelsen-1/>

⁴⁰ An extreme right-wing political party that grew out of the Nationalsocialistisk Front, Svenskarnas parti, received 0.07 per cent in the Swedish general election of 2014.

⁴¹ In Denmark, former members of the National Socialist Movement of Denmark, or Danmarks Nationalsocialistiske Bevægelse, joined in 2013, but the activity level has been very limited. When this report was being published, the Danish branch appeared to be defunct.

⁴² This article was originally published in May 2016. However, membership numbers in Finland are believed to remain at roughly the same level today.

As a result of the refugee crisis, there has been a surge of interest in racist and xenophobic organizations. To exploit the situation and boost recruitment, FRM has been attempting to soften its image somewhat. Members now often call themselves nationalists and patriots, and part of their work is carried out under the banner of *Suomalaisapu*, or Finnish Aid.

TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION

With just a few dozen members, FRM is no acute threat to society or democracy. However, the movement and its activists can be a real threat to those it sees as political opponents or unwelcome in the country – or to outsiders who just happen to be in the wrong place and have the wrong opinions. Most violent crimes attributed to FRM members have fallen into the category of street violence. At the same time, FRM is working to unite right-wing extremist, nationalist and racist groups in Finland. An example is the “612” nationalist torchlight procession, arranged 6 December (or “6/12”), which is the Finnish Independence Day. According to Esa Henrik Holappa, the first leader and former figurehead of the organization, FRM took the initiative to stage the event, and activists from the organization functioned as guards.⁴³

The website of the event was also created and maintained by FRM activists. Almost all the group's members and support members took part, albeit with a low public profile. The plan was for the Finnish Resistance Movement to become an invisible umbrella organization for the entire Finnish extreme right. According to Holappa, FRM's organizational role was downplayed to avoid scaring away potential participants. Publicly, the torchlight procession was apolitical.

“It was the first time I saw signs that the resistance movement had started opening up to outside partners,” Holappa says. “Until then, the FRM had been a very closed organization.”

Holappa says he himself was part of the reason for that. He had been the public leader of the Finnish Resistance Movement, but was disliked by other extreme right-wing organizations in Finland.

“I think it was a result of so few people knowing me from before,” he says. “They saw me as someone who suddenly appeared out of thin air, and were suspicious. I have heard rumours that I was an infiltrator for the security police, or that I worked for various political opponents!”

VIGILANTE PATROLS

While the Finnish Resistance Movement is now more open and cooperative, there has been little success in unifying the extreme right. Other nationalist organizations are still put off by FRM's Nazi ideology. However, there are contacts between the organization and the rest of the Finnish far right, particularly in Turku.

The indirect influence of the organization has never been larger. In 2014, FRM latched onto news about a multi-ethnic, suburban gang assaulting other youth in Helsinki, and organized vigilantes to patrol the city. FRM's vigilantism followed the model of Swedish right-wing extremists and football

hooligans who, in response to riots in Stockholm's Husby district, had joined together to patrol a variety of suburbs, prompting several assault reports.

The police kept a close eye on the first patrols in Finland, and the patrols themselves were attacked by antifascists. However, FRM vigilante marches have continued sporadically throughout the country.

When the refugee crisis started, one FRM member, Kemi resident Mika Ranta, decided to set up a separate vigilante group. Ranta is a self-declared neo-Nazi who has been convicted of violent crimes. He chose to call his organization Soldiers of Odin (SOO), but the new group was designed in line with the FRM model and Ranta sought FRM's permission to start it. Lately, the Finnish Resistance Movement and Soldiers of Odin have openly referenced each other. On its website, FRM describes SOO as a patriotic organization. SOO for its part displays the FRM's Tyr rune logo several times in its own PR video. The connection is overt.

“FIGHT DIPLOMA”

From its inception in 2008 until he stepped down in 2012, Holappa was the official leader of the Finnish Resistance Movement, and one of the few members who operated openly under his own name from the beginning. Yet he says he never really had any real power in the organization, and that – strictly speaking – he did not found it.

In an interview, Holappa described his involvement from the start: “I contacted the Swedish Resistance Movement in December 2007. In the summer of 2008, Mikko* – whom I knew from the forum *kansallissosialismi.com* (a Finnish-language Nazi-oriented web forum) – and I were invited to the SMR demonstration *Folkets Marsch* (March of the People).”

Holappa decided ultimately not to go. Mikko took part in the demonstration on his own, fought against counter-demonstrators and was arrested by the police.

In recognition of his efforts during the demonstration, Mikko returned to Finland with a “fight

SOLDIERS OF ODIN. The street patrol group Soldiers of Odin (SOO) was founded in Kemi, Finland in October 2015. Mika Ranta – a member of the Finnish resistance movement and a self-declared nationalist socialist – has been described as the founder of the group.

“We woke up to a situation where different cultures met. It caused fear and concern in the community,” he told the local newspaper *Aamulehti*. “The biggest issue was when we learned from Facebook that new asylum seekers were hanging around primary schools, taking pictures of young girls.”⁴⁴ The stated goal of SOO is to patrol the streets to prevent crime. However, the group has been closely connected to the extreme right. In March 2016, for instance, the Finnish broadcaster YLE reported on contents in a secret Facebook group for Soldiers of Odin “officers”. The group included not only racist jokes, but also a picture of female members making a Nazi salute, several pictures of men in the black hooded sweaters of SOO brandishing weapons and pictures from a clubhouse in Tampere, where an SS flag was prominently displayed on the wall.⁴⁵

The relative success of Soldiers of Odin, at least in getting attention for their street patrolling, led to the group spreading to other countries; internal Facebook messages at one time claiming that it was present in 18 countries. Street patrols did take place in several countries, notably Sweden, Norway, Canada and Australia. Outside of Finland, the group largely remained an Internet phenomenon, however, and today activities are at a low level.



Soldiers of Odin logo, here with the Swedish flag.

⁴³ The so-called 612 marches have been taking place since 2014. For more information, see: Laura Halminen and Joonas Lahtinen, “Poliisi epäilee yli 30 ihmistä rikoksista itsenäisyyspäivän mielenosoituksissa – kaikki kiinniotetut vapautettu”, *hs.fi*, 6. December 2015. Online: <http://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000002871091.html>; Fanny Fröman, “Motdemonstranterna stoppades av polis”, *hbl.fi*, 6 December 2015. Online: <http://gamla.hbl.fi/nyheter/2015-12-06/781334/motdemonstranterna-stoppades-av-polis>. The largest march to date was held in December 2016, with what police estimated was 3,000 participants, an estimate that was probably high. This included activists and supporters of the Nordic Resistance Movement, including visiting Swedes. However, activists and supporters of the far-right group *Suomi Ensin* (Finland First) and the nationalist organization *Suomen Sisu* (Finnish *sisu*) also took part. See: Eva-Maria Koskinen, “Tusentals tågade på Helsingfors gator – polisen är nöjd, inga stora bråk”, *Svenska YLE*, 6 December 2016. Online: <https://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2016/12/06/tusentals-tagade-pa-helsingfors-gator-polisen-ar-nojd-inga-stora-brak>

⁴⁴ Jussi Rosendahl and Tuomas Forsell, “Anti-immigrant ‘Soldiers of Odin’ raise concern in Finland”, *Reuters*, 13 January 2016. Online: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-finland-idUSKCN0UR20G20160113>; “Soldiers of Odin’: Finnish anti-migrant group with ‘extremist features’ takes on patrolling streets”, *RT.com*, 14 January 2016. Online: <https://www.rt.com/news/328851-finland-soldiers-odin-migrant-patrol/>

⁴⁵ “Soldiers of Odin’s secret Facebook group: Weapons, Nazi symbols and links to MV Lehti”, *yle.fi*, 16 March 2016.

diploma” from the Swedish Resistance Movement. He has succeeded in convincing the Swedish Nazis that the Finns were serious. The contact continued, and Holappa was invited to an SRM midsummer party held at the home of Klas Lund, the founder and, until 2015, leader of SRM. Holappa describes the feeling at the meeting as somewhat reluctant and aloof, but he was at least able to meet the leader and other SRM activists. No promises were given of a permission to establish a branch in Finland.

FLEEING TO THE US

Back in Finland, Holappa landed in trouble, under investigation by the police for alleged crimes related to hate speech. Holappa became increasingly convinced that he would be convicted. When his American neo-Nazi contacts heard about his problems, they encouraged him to travel to the United States. In August 2008, he followed their recommendation.⁴⁶

Consequently, it was Mikko who continued contact with the Swedes. Eventually the Swedes informed him that they had received a membership application from Finland, and they asked Mikko to contact the applicant. In this way, Mikko got to know Mika*, who shared his Nazi sympathies. Members of SRM came to visit Mikko and Mika that same fall, and both travelled to Stockholm to take part in SRM street activism. A few months later, the message arrived.

Mikko and Mika informed Holappa that Pär Öberg – No. 2 in the Swedish Resistance Movement at the time – had given the signal: the Finnish Resistance Movement could be founded. This led to a discussion of who was to lead it. Holappa assumed the leader would be either Mikko or Mika. Mika opined that all three could be leaders, while Mikko said there should not be more than one. He suggested Holappa. That did not please Mika, who soon left the organization he had co-founded. Mika would later make a comeback, however, and has been active on occasion since.

THE KNIFE ATTACK

For the first few years, FRM members lay low. Their activities mostly involved putting up racist stickers and handing out leaflets. They became nationally known after a knife attack in the library of Jyväskylä in January 2013. (Three members of the movement tried to enter a book-release event on right-wing extremism held at the library, and when they were refused entry, a brawl ensued in which a volunteer security guard was wounded.) Since then the organization has stayed in the limelight. Its members have posed for a picture with members of parliament, for example, and taken part in demonstrations that turned violent. Holappa believes more violence can be expected.

“In the beginning,” he recalls, “the Finnish Resistance Movement planned their demonstrations and their street activism in such a way that they would not draw too much attention. The members trained to be able to defend themselves against counter-demonstrators. At the same time, they wanted to avoid conflict. This changed with the knife attack in Jyväskylä.”⁴⁷

From the beginning, FRM has said its members should avoid violence except in self-defence. But the cases that have come to public attention lately do not seem to be about self-defence. When

⁴⁶ While in the United States, Holappa stayed with the writer John de Nugent, a white supremacist notorious for his rabid anti-Semitism. Holappa also gave a speech at the so-called Euro Conference of 2008. In 2009, he was arrested for having overstayed his visa, and later deported. Supporters of Holappa tried to prevent the deportation through an Internet campaign, freehenrik.com. In 2011, Holappa published the book *Wrongfully Accused: Three Hundred and Twenty-Eight Days in America*, detailing his time in the United States.

⁴⁷ Cf “Researcher: Jyväskylä knife attack no surprise”, yle.fi, 31 January 2013. Online: http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/researcher_jyvaskyla_knife_attack_no_surprise/6474410

FRM has met opposition or become provoked, Holappa says, it has used violence to silence opponents.

“In the beginning, our line was to overlook them,” he says. “If anyone started yelling, they were to be ignored. We were not to respond in the same manner. Now, it seems like the FRM has taken a more hard-core approach. That means that the more the FRM is seen on the streets, the more fights we will see. It could be about political opponents, or just regular people being at the wrong place. The resistance movement wants to show what they’re all about.”

“HONOUR”

FRM members are expected to exercise at least weekly to keep in shape, preferably through martial arts or other fighting sports. Training sessions are set up by the organization itself, and there have even been organized camps where members are trained to fight.

“It has been going on for a few years, so there are probably members that are quite good in martial arts now,” says Holappa. “The goal is for every activist to be able to defend himself and his comrades, and thus the honour of the resistance movement, if they are attacked during their street activism.”

If the activists encounter political opponents, and the situation appears likely to escalate, they are supposed to attack first, he adds. Sometimes not much provocation is needed before the Nazis act violently, he says; other times they have landed in trouble themselves.

HARD CORE

Internally, he says, many members speak about assaulting specific people or using violence in FRM activities, but the hard core – which is prepared to do more than talk – only consists of five to six people. They are situated around the country, and are in contact with each other. These individuals are often seen in news media photos and in videos released by the FRM itself, illustrating fights or conflicts in the wake of FRM street activism. At least a couple of them are also said to be active football hooligans. When needed, this hard core is assisted by others in the members' own circles.

Holappa discusses the knife attack in the Jyväskylä library in January 2013. “The three people that took part planned to show up at the book launch, but it seems like the leadership of the FRM was also aware of the plans,” he says.

Material leaked from the internal discussion forum of the organization suggests that at least Ali Kaurila – then the leader of the Turku activist group – was aware of the plans and had discussed them with one of the three activists that took part in the attempt to crash the book release. If Kaurila knew about it in advance, it is likely that the rest of the leadership was also aware, according to Holappa.

The Jyväskylä incident led to internal debate within the organization, and at least one member left the movement because of the violence employed. Since the responsible activist stayed hidden for two years, however, the debate gradually blew over.

“The FRM tried to make it look like the activists had been acting on their own, in their free time, and like the organization was not behind the attack,” says Holappa. “Therefore the debate on the internal forum went silent. Ali Kaurila encouraged the members not to write about the incident, only to post links to news stories about the case. If anyone wrote a post about the knife attack, it



was taken away.”

The knife attack received an epilogue in the summer of 2015. About 40 Finnish and Swedish activists demonstrated in Jyväskylä, and assaulted three people. One was the same anarchist who had been a volunteer security guard at the book release. The assault was said to have been carried out on the command of one of the Finnish Nazis. While two or three FRM activists attacked, others tried to prevent the police from intervening. One of the Nazis filmed the incident. According to the authorities, the Swedish Nazis kept away from the fight, clearly viewing it as a matter between the Finns.⁴⁸

MORE VIOLENCE SEEN AHEAD

Since the violence in Jyväskylä, the Finnish Resistance Movement has lowered its profile, but that does not mean it has become less violent. Holappa believes more violence will come:

“If they see a chance, they will take it. The movement exploits disturbances and fights in their own propaganda, using it to draw attention in the ‘enemy media’. When FRM vigilantes were attacked by anti-fascists in the fall of 2014, for instance, the evening newspapers wrote about it. The organization received 40 new membership applications that week.”

In spite of the Finnish incidents, the movement in Sweden appears to be more dangerous than its Finnish counterpart. SRM has a longer and larger history of violent crimes, and appears much more likely to employ violence in a variety of situations. Holappa confirms the impression.

“The SMR has a reputation to cling to,” he says. “They view themselves as strong Nazis, and they have to prove it to both their comrades and their sympathizers. That means that SRM activists often attack immediately, for instance if anti-fascists show up during their street activism. Not attacking would be a sign of weakness.”

SRM members often show up at street activities wielding empty bottles and SRM flags, says Holappa. Empty bottles may be thrown, and flagpoles may be used as weapons.

“The first time I took part in a demonstration in Sweden, I wondered why they were carrying crates of empty bottles,” he recalls. “Since my Swedish is poor, I did not hand out leaflets, and I was given the job as flask boy. After a while, I realized that the bottles were meant to be used as weapons against potential enemies. And the flagpoles, too. They can cause a lot of damage if you hit someone in the face or neck.”

GENERATION SHIFT

Meanwhile, a new generation has been trying to establish itself in the organization, and is seeking to prove its reliability. “The older generation within the SRM have a reputation of being dangerous, largely built upon the crimes carried out by Vitt Ariskt Motstånd (White Aryan Resistance) in the 1990s, everything from violence to bank robberies and weapon thefts,” says Holappa. “Klas Lund was a central member in VAM. Now, younger activists in SRM want to show that they are in the same league.”

He adds: “The internal rules say that unwarranted violence is not accepted. You could be thrown

out of the movement. If the perpetrator is someone who is well liked and a good activist, however, most things will be accepted, even murder. It becomes a kind of anarchy where the members do whatever they want to without any consequence.

“The Nordic Resistance Movement wants to come across as a strong, well-organised, disciplined, militant organization. But that image isn't entirely true.”

“BEST SATURDAY EVER”

“During my Nazi career, I learnt that a white lie is never a problem. If you don't tell the whole story, it's easier to claim that National Socialism is an ideology for strong people. Whatever the leaders or activists do, it is always portrayed as a success. In their own material, the activists are always unbeatable, and the organization is a tough organization, one not to be challenged without consequences.”

A fight between Nazis and anti-fascists in Tampere in October 2012 may serve as an example. The activists from FRM who were involved told their Nordic comrades and the outside world that it had been the best Saturday ever for them. In this version the FRM activists won the fight, and the anti-fascists had to run. In reality, the Nazis were soundly beaten, and at least one of them – Juuso Tahvanainen, the leader at the time – had to go to hospital. According to Holappa, Tahvanainen tried to downplay his injuries when the fight was discussed later.

The fight in Tampere caused quite a bit of internal discussion. The Swedish leadership eventually found out what had actually happened, and leaked information from the internal forum of the movement shows that eyebrows were raised in Sweden. It was an embarrassment for the Finns, but the Swedes let the matter go. Finland is too important for the Nordic Resistance Movement to afford conflicts between the branches.

“Klas Lund has told me that the Nordic Resistance Movement wouldn't manage without the FRM. Therefore, they overlook what's going on with the Finns. ‘The best Saturday ever’ is just one example,” Holappa says.

AMPHETAMINES

The Nazis in the Nordic Resistance Movement also want to portray themselves as living healthy, upright lives. That's not entirely true, either, according to Holappa.

“I have heard stories about drug use, mainly amphetamines, and about criminal activities carried out in the Stockholm region. NRM members have carried out robberies, burglaries, assaults, et cetera. This also fits with my own impression, having met Stockholm activists. I have asked Lund about how the movement looks at drugs, and at amphetamine specifically. He said that he did not accept amphetamine as a party drug, but that it could be useful for fights,” Holappa says.

Holappa says that he does not have any evidence of steroid use, but that he has seen activists becoming large and strong in strikingly little time.

IDEOLOGICAL SPLITS

While the Finnish branch is important to the Nordic Resistance Movement, ideological differences between the two branches exist and occasionally cause friction. While the Swedish branch is representative of a Hitlerian, old-fashioned variant of neo-Nazism, the Finnish branch is more

⁴⁸ “National socialist group riots in Jyväskylä – dozens arrested”, yle.fi, 1 August 2015. Online: http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/national_socialist_group_riots_in_jyvaskyla__dozens_arrested/8197496; “Polisen: Jyväskylämässhandeln var planerad”, yle.fi, 2 August 2015. Online: <https://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2015/08/02/polisen-jyvaskylamasshandeln-var-planerad>

diverse. Some members support a Third Positionist neo-fascism, and have contacts with the Italian movement Casa Pound. In the eyes of the Swedish traditionalists, this is Strasserism or left-wing Nazism, seen as an inner enemy. Within Finland, the Oulu branch is Nazi-oriented, while the fascist phalanx is stronger in the south, particularly in Turku and Helsinki. The Turku activists – led by Ali Kaurila – has attempted to tone down Nazism from the start.

“They did have plans to found their own organization, but chose to enter the FRM instead,” Holappa says. “This led to a group following its own course within the movement. Within the Swedish Resistance Movement, anyone seen as a left-wing Nazi has been thrown out, but within the FRM, this variant is strong enough to have been accepted reluctantly. In the beginning, I was very sceptical towards the fascist influence, myself, but there was not much I could do.”

He says that several central activists responsible for propaganda, websites and videos threatened to leave the group if FRM chose a more old-fashioned Nazi-oriented course. This would have meant the end to FRM.

Consequently, a “controlled opposition” has grown within the movement. Ali Kaurila has founded the Musta Sydän-network, which runs its own website. Publicly, the two are differentiated, but the same people run both groups. The motivation for creating Musta Sydän was the emergence of so-called Autonomous Nationalists in Finland. The FRM needed a tool to reach them. “I am not entirely sure whether there were actually any groups of Autonomous Nationalists, or whether Musta Sydän was created merely to give Kaurila and his group their own channel,” Holappa says.

TOO IMPORTANT TO FIGHT

In 2011, a meeting was held in Helsinki to which Casa Pound, German Autonomous Nationalists (from Frei Nationale Strukturen) and more “conservative” SMR neo-Nazis were all invited. Ideologically, it was an odd mix. The Swedes would never have allowed their own members to arrange something similar, but the Finnish branch was seen as too important to the movement for them to pick a fight. As long as the Finnish organization remained active, and publicly supported National Socialism, internal differences were not seen as too much of a problem.

“There are as many ideologies within the FRM as there are members, Holappa says. “The only thing holding the movement together is activism. There is no common ideology. Officially, one says that the movement works for a National Socialist Nordic Republic. In reality, quite few members really believe in this. They believe in and trust an organization offering them various forms of activities, and the possibility to travel to other countries to meet like-minded people. FRM is well underway to develop into a Casa Pound-styled organization.”

Holappa says he believes the Finns will take more and more ideological liberties as the organization grows.

MILITANT ANTI-FASCISM ON THE RISE

Following the growth of the Finnish Resistance Movement, anti-fascists have also become organized. For many years, there was no formal militant anti-fascist movement in Finland. Now there is a network calling itself Varisverkosto. Until today, most battles between the organizations have taken place in writing on the Internet. However, there have been fights in connection with the FRM street patrols. The authorities and researchers alike say there is a risk that the two movements will radicalize each other, since every fight leads to some sort of counteraction.

Holappa, too, believes that there will be more violent episodes involving neo-Nazis and militant

anti-fascists. Both sides have been sizing up their opponents, and both see their own violence as self-defence while actively seeking confrontation. “They want to show both their own supporters and their opponents that they are a force to be reckoned with,” Holappa says.

There have been incidents, he says, in which FRM activists have sought out and attacked people they view as their opponents, through “home visits”. According to Holappa these are not discussed aloud within the movement; however, he says, he has heard of an episode in which an anarchist in Tampere was attacked at home. “As far as I know, it had been planned, but I do not know why that person specifically was attacked. It could have to do with a personal conflict, or it could be that the victim had a high profile as an anarchist,” Holappa says.

Militant anti-fascists have also sought out an FRM activist at home. “They broke the windows of an activist living in the capital region, and spray painted ‘A Nazi lives here’ on the walls,” says Holappa. “They also handed out leaflets with his personal information and the text ‘Keep an eye on the neighbourhood Nazi’. We were going to write about the attack on our website, but reconsidered. It would only lead to negative attention, and – in the worst case – to more attacks of the same kind.”

YOUTH ALIENATION

Esa Holappa believes that FRM's future depends on how society develops as a whole. “If the economy turns worse, and there is an increase in unemployment and alienation amongst youth, it will strengthen their positions,” he says. “In Sweden, everything depends on whether they will succeed in establishing a political party. If they don't, the SRM may splinter. But the future of the Finnish branch is not entirely dependent on the Swedes.”

Holappa believes that FRM has the ability to recruit new members and grow if it continues its policy of arranging social activities. Today, the organization is small but tight-knit, and its goal is not primarily to get more members, but to develop its work. Amongst other activities, it has started to perform relief work, following the example of the Greek Golden Dawn.

“With more poverty and unemployment in Finland, general discontent may push more people into the arms of the FRM,” Esa Holappa concludes.

** YLE/Spotlight has not been able to reach Mikko or Mika for comment, and neither of them has publicly spoken on behalf of FRM. Consequently, their surnames are not included.*

This is a translation of an article originally published in Swedish and Finnish by YLE/Spotlight, which cooperated with Hate Speech International on the project. The article remains under copyright.



IN HIS OWN WORDS

In the summer of 2016, Esa Henrik Holappa, published his memoirs, *Minä perustin uusnatsijärjestön* (I founded a neo-Nazi organization), telling the story of how an insecure young man from Oulu became a convinced National Socialist.

■ “MORE THAN WORDS”

National Socialist ideology is inherently violent and the NRM has often been connected with violence. Now, the organization appears to attempt at widening its appeal. That may lead hardliners to abandon it for an even more violent approach.

Øyvind Strømmen

In April 2016, Viktor Melin and Simon Engelin, two activists of the Nordic Resistance Movement in Gothenburg, Sweden, were interviewed by the Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten. “How far are you willing to go to reach your goals?” they were asked. “As far as necessary,” they replied. “Does that include violence?” asked the newspaper. “How far would you go to protect your family?” they answered.⁴⁹

For those familiar with the organization, these words are no surprise. The organization has a past full of connections to violence, but perhaps a knife which the group once sold online can serve as an even more striking illustration. Inscribed in Swedish on its handle were the words: “The battle demands more than words.”⁵⁰



Photo: Swedish police.

In January 2017, Melin was arrested, suspected of having used more than words. Police believe he was involved in the 11 November 2016 bombing of a cafeteria in Gothenburg run by the radical left-wing group Syndikalistiskt Forum, an incident that only led to material damage. As this report was being completed, Melin

remained in custody, and the bombing was linked to two further cases in Gothenburg: the attempted bombing of a campground in Torslanda used to house refugees, and the bombing of a refugee centre in Järnbrott, in which one person was seriously injured. Two others were also arrested, and all three suspects are reported to have ties to the Nordic Resistance Movement.⁵¹ They have denied any involvement with the bombs.⁵²

So has the NRM, which says it is a political organization “not involved in this kind of activity”. Furthermore, the group published an article on its website claiming that the bomb at the refugee centre in Järnbrott “came from inside the refugee centre”.⁵³

A few days after the arrests in Sweden, the Interior Ministry in the neighbouring country of Finland

released a report on extremism and radicalization, in which the Nordic Resistance Movement is specifically mentioned. The report pointed to an incident in September 2016, when a member of the NRM assaulted a man during a demonstration in Helsinki. The victim died of a brain haemorrhage several days later. The ministry report also underscored the potential for violence inherent to National Socialist ideology, a potential the NRM has already turned into practice.⁵⁴

MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS

This is true for the Finnish branch of the organization. It is also true for the main branch, based in Sweden. Late last year, the Swedish anti-fascist magazine Expo published an overview based on its identification of 159 people active within the NRM in Sweden during 2015. Some 56 per cent of them had convictions, 26 per cent were charged or convicted on weapons or violence-related charges in 2015.⁵⁵

Expo's research also gives an indication of the organization's size. In Sweden, the 159 activists identified by Expo belong to seven different regional branches, or “nests”. Thus 42 of them belong to the regional branch in the greater Stockholm area, 39 in the greater Gothenburg area, 24 live in Scania (Skåne) province, 16 in southern Norrland, 13 in northern Norrland and only four belong to the largely inactive näste 7, covering parts of south-eastern Sweden.⁵⁶ HSI has also reviewed a data set on alleged NRM members released on to the Internet by a militant left-wing organization, and which indicate slightly higher numbers than those included in Expo's count.

Another indication of the NRM's size was the 2016 May Day demonstration held by the organization in the Swedish town of Borlänge. About 330 people took part in this event, 120 of them in uniform white shirts and black ties. However, the May Day demonstration included both sympathizers and activists travelling from Finland and Norway.⁵⁷ While the organization likely has little more than a couple of dozen activists in Norway, including several Swedes residing in the country, it may have as many 70 members in Finland.⁵⁸ In total, the neo-Nazi organization may have somewhere in the area of 250 to 300 active members across the Nordic countries. A clear majority of them – about four of five – are men. Most of them are born in the 1980s or 1990s.

The Nordic Resistance Movement is now the numerically strongest neo-Nazi organization in Sweden, Norway and Finland, which helped make it more attractive to new recruits.

ADAPTING FOR GROWTH?

At the same time, the organization appears to have adapted its strategy somewhat, softening membership requirements, announcing its intention to start a political party, and welcoming sympathizers to join its demonstrations, as was the case for a demonstration in Stockholm on 12 November 2016, where as many as 600 people took part.⁵⁹

This could lead to further growth, especially in Sweden, with its combination of a neo-Nazi

⁴⁹ Frode Sætran, “Høyre radikale i Göteborg: - Vi går så langt som nødvendig”, Aftenposten, 25 April 2016. Online: <http://www.aftenposten.no/verden/Hoyreradikale-i-Goteborg---Vi-gar-sa-langt-som-nodvendig-57779b.html>

⁵⁰ Anders Dalsbro and Mikael Färnbo, “Så våldsamma är nazisterna i Nordiska Motståndsrörelsen”, Expo, 9 December 2016. Online: http://expo.se/2016/sa-valdsamma-ar-nazisterna-i-nordiska-motstandsrörelsen_7198.html

⁵¹ For details, see Anders Dalsbro, “Samtliga häktade för bombdåd kopplade till nazistorganisation”, Expo, 3 February 2017. Online: http://expo.se/2017/samtliga-haktade-for-bombdad-kopplade-till-nazistorganisation_7241.html

⁵² Jonathan Berntsson, Daniel Olsson and Maya Dahlén Persson, “Tre nazister har häktats för bombdåd i Göteborg”, Expressen, 3 February 2017. Online: <http://www.expressen.se/gt/tre-nazister-har-haktats-for-bombdad-i-goteborg/>

⁵³ “Nordfront avslöjar: Bomb mot asylboende kom inifrån boendets lokaler”, nordfront.se, 1 February 2017.

⁵⁴ Väktvältaisen ekstremismien tilannekatsaus 1/2017, Sisäministeriön julkaisu 3/2017, Helsinki: Sisäministeriö, 2017, s. 14.

⁵⁵ Anders Dalsbro, Mikael Ekman and Jonathan Leman, “Våldsam nazistgrupp lockar nya anhängare”, Expo, nr. 4, 2016, s. 23.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 24.

⁵⁷ Mikael Färnbo, “De slöt upp till nazisternas demonstration i Borlänge”, Expo, 2 May 2016. Online: http://expo.se/2016/de-slot-upp-till-nazisternas-demonstration-i-borlange_7085.html

⁵⁸ The estimate for Norway has been made by HSI, based on our own research, as well as information from other sources. The estimate for Finland was given by Tommi Kotonen to STV, cf. “Grafik: Här finns Nordiska

⁵⁹ Cecilia Vaccari and Madeleine Garteus, “600 nazister demonstrerar i Stockholm”, TT, 12 November 2016. Online: <http://www.gp.se/nyheter/sverige/600-nazister-demonstrerar-i-stockholm-1.3952100>



subculture decades in the making and the growth of radical right-wing news sources. It is also worth noting that Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden Democrats), a parliamentary party on the radical right, has been growing rapidly in recent years, entering parliament for the first time in 2010, with 5.7 per cent of the vote, growing to 12.9 per cent in 2014, and pulling nearly 20 per cent of the vote on average in January 2017 opinion polls. While the party itself, with some of its roots in the extreme right, has gone through a moderation process since the mid-1990s, its growth has contributed to a highly-polarized debate on immigration and integration. The temperature of the debate has also been fuelled by an influx of refugees, by crime problems in several Swedish cities and by the challenge posed by extreme Islamism across Europe. All of this is something the Nordic Resistance Movement and other neo-Nazi groups have been trying to benefit from, adapting their rhetoric, and giving more focus to anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim views, while not abandoning anti-Semitism.

The Nordic Resistance Movement's style makeover – an effort to broaden its recruiting base – may lead to conflicts within the organization, or even to splits, because some of the hardest-line neo-Nazis may regard the changes as a watering down of National Socialist ideology. Such development may lead some members to abandon the organization and possibly adapt even more confrontational and violent methods.

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NRM, IN THEIR OWN WORDS



The Nordic Resistance Movement sees itself as an elite activist organization, and carries out a number of activities. In its internal activist handbook, the group outlines various forms of propaganda and activism. The stated goal of these activities is, on one hand, “to educate the people” about National Socialism, and, on the other hand, “to recruit new members and create fanatical National Socialist activists”.

The methods discussed in the handbook include:

- Uniformed marches, with specific guidelines for the uniforms to be worn by both men and women.
- Leafleting. The activists are urged to hand out leaflets in mailboxes. Targeted leafleting, for instance in connection with the establishment of refugee centres, is also mentioned.
- Hanging up posters, spray painting (this should be “tasteful” and done with the use of approved stencils, the handbook notes)
- Use of confetti as propaganda
- Use of plastic bands with the NRM logo to cordon off buildings or “for instance tying parts of it onto the bike of a hostile person”.
- Hanging up banners
- Carrying out “sensational actions”, which the handbook also dubs “Skorzeny actions” – a reference to the SS officer Otto Skorzeny. This includes, the handbook notes, the use of violence (“involuntarily”), creativity, size and “good will”. Variants of the latter include handing out food and “patrolling (crime) prone areas”.

The handbook also notes that activities should be reported on the group's own web site, and

that this is “as important as the activity itself”. These reports are described as kamprapporter, or “battle reports”, a name which is even used for putting leaflets in mailboxes.

The handbook also discusses how to promote the National Socialist cause online, ranging from helping with maintaining the websites of the organization to “taking part in debate forums and comments sections”, including under pseudonyms.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ The information here is taken from the Norwegian-language edition of the activist handbook, Håndbok for aktivister i motstandsbevegelsen, pp. 30–43.

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