



Neo-Fascist Fashion: Emblems of the New

By Steven Heller

The downfall of communism in Eastern Europe left a vacuum that a virulent nationalism is filling, replete with the old Nazi iconology.

For 75 years, the bannered emblems and icons of communism that waved in parades and draped public buildings in Moscow were inviolable. Their desecration was a criminal offense. Then, virtually overnight, they disappeared. With the startling collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the hammer-and-sickle, dominant symbol of Bolshevik revolution and communist rule, was replaced throughout the Soviet sphere by flags and coats-of-arms dating back to pre-communist monarchies. In the absence of new images, these older ones provided a strong, if not archaic, alternative to the visual trappings of communist totalitarianism. Although some of the old symbols were as abhorrent in their day as the hammer-and-sickle had become, for a generation born under the Red Star it was better to identify with the vagaries of the old nationalism than the realities of decayed communism.

Other of the former Warsaw Pact countries replaced fealty to communism with nationalism, the latter synonymous with patriotism. Nationalism was a predictable refuge and a convenient way to channel decades' worth of seething resentments, allowing those who felt oppressed by the state to redirect their pent-up passions inward toward personal renewal. Yet, as the French writer André Gide once noted, "the nationalist has a broad hatred and a narrow love." And as the communist bloc fell apart, these components of nationalism soon evidenced themselves. The breakup of the Soviet republics, the partitioning of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and the reunification of East and West Germany demonstrated that communism had only temporarily muted the concentrated tribal/nationalistic loyalties and prejudices that were naively believed to have been eradicated by World War II. Perhaps because of communism's stern measures to suppress ethnic and religious identification, the current revived nationalism exhibits the fierceness of a wild animal too long caged, suddenly let loose. The consequences can be deadly, as the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina attests.

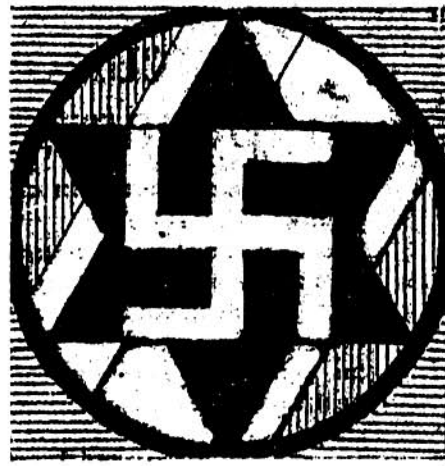
Ironically, the same extreme nationalist rhetoric that helped propel the Nazis to power in the 1930s is a key ingredient of the nationalism of the 1990s. In this spirit, the swastika, and the emblems inspired by it, are being recycled in many former communist countries. In some, they have even been given legitimacy. Where the dismantling of communist apparatus has left chaos, the promise of a new order (a term associated with fascism) has great appeal. This resurgence of Nazi-inspired sym-

1. Front page of The Russian New Order, a Pamyat ("memory") newspaper that supports the military overthrow of the Yeltsin government. The newspaper's emblem is that of the Russian National Unity Party and is a variation on the Nazi swastika.
2. This swastika emblem illustrated an anti-Semitic article in The New Russian Order.
3. Symbol on cover of anti-Semitic Pamyat pamphlet. Title of pamphlet translates roughly as "Yid."
- 4, 5. Front pages of Pamyat publications. In Fig. 5, Boris Yeltsin is represented as a "Yid."



ols and regalia in Russia, Germany, and Eastern Europe is astonishing, given their historical connotations. That most of the groups, movements, and paramilitary militias adopting these images are on the radical fringe does not mean that they are ineffectual. As we have seen, they

Nationalism



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В А ВУК ПАТРИ И ОБЕЩАЮЩИ

ПАТРИОТЫ ВСЕГО МИРА, ОБЪЕДИНЯЙТЕСЬ!

ПАМЯТЬ

ИЗДАНИЕ НАЦИОНАЛЬНО-ПАТРИОТИЧЕСКОГО ФРОНТА «ПАМЯТЬ»

№1 Москва декабрь 1991 года

ВЫХОДИТ КАЖДЫЙ ПЯТЫЙ В МЕСЯЦ

С РОЖДЕСТВОМ ХРИСТОВЫМ!

Христианская Церковь ежегодно празднует великое событие: Рождества Христова 25-го декабря (ст. ст.). Къ достойному его празднованию ввиду непростых обстоятельств постоем, съ 15 ноября по 24 декабря, известным под именем Рождественского или Филиппова. Канун или день накануне праздника проводится в особо строгом постѣ. Этотъ день называется сочельникомъ, такъ какъ въ этотъ день по уставу церковному, подается употребить въ пищу сочиво, или пшеницу съ медомъ.

Въ наекеріе, если только оно не случится въ субботу и воскресенье, совершаются Церкве Часы и, около полуночи, Литургія Василия Великого съ Вечернею. Въ самый же праздникъ совершается Литургія Златоустаго.

Часы, совершаемые въ наекеріе Рождества Христова, отличаются тѣмъ, что на нихъ читаются евангеліе, Апостолъ и Евангеліе, Послукъ, въ отличие отъ обычныхъ часовъ, они называются Царскими. Это название они носятъ также и потому, что въ Гречин, при совершеніи ихъ, обязательно присутствовали императоры.

Послѣ Литургіи поставалась истерия итима съѣла и каириня поотъ тропаре праздника: «Рождество Твое, Христе Боже нашъ, возсіа миру свѣтъ разумъ: въ нѣтъ бо обрѣтася сужащія злозоду учавася Тебѣ: названіе Сомну правды и Тебѣ вѣдѣти съ высотъ востока: Господи, слава Тебѣ!» А потомъ кончась праздникомъ: «Дѣла днесь Пресущественнаго рамазаетъ, и земля вертепъ Неприступному приноситъ, Ангели съ пастырями савословятъ, вожди не со злѣзоду пугаистинныи: насъ бо ради рождася Огрозѣ малоду, иречивый Боже».

Слѣдъ наекеріе быдася въ субботу и воскресенье, то Царскіе Часы читаются въ пятницу. Въ самый же канунъ быдася въ свое время Литургія савослѣа Златоуста, а послѣ Литургіи — Вечерня. Савослѣа Христа совершается уже послѣ вечерни. Поста, говоривши въ Уставѣ, въ этотъ день не быдася. Это значить, что постѣ Обдана до вечерни дозволяется вкушатъ ивннго хлѣба.

Восточные Обдана начинаются Псаломъ Поверженіе, на которомъ постое торжественная пѣснь Исаи: «Съ именъ Боже, разумѣйте, вожди, и повараются, ино съ именъ Боже!» Чистое поучение въ себѣ пѣснь съ именъ Боже!» свѣдѣтася о духовной радости вѣрующахъ, соизвѣщая средѣ себя Бога-Еммануила. Содержаніе прочня пѣсней можно выразить начальнойю пѣснью канона: «Христосъ рамазаетъ, савослѣа: Христосъ съ небесъ, сришаше (встрѣчалъ); Христосъ на землѣ, возвестилъ: Повеи Господни вси землѣ, и вселеннѣ вопіюше амаде, ино проразсѣа».

Торжество Праздника Рождества Христова усугубляется для Русской Церкви воспоминаніемъ объ избавленіи нашего общества отъ галловъ и съ инии дванадцати вѣтковъ въ 1812 году.

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Борьба за Россию и победить!

НАШЕ ОТЕЧЕСТВО

ОППОЗИЦИОННАЯ РУССКАЯ ПАТРИОТИЧЕСКАЯ ГАЗЕТА

ПРАВДА СЕГОДНЯШНЕЙ РОССИИ ЗАКЛЮЧЕНА В ТОМ, ЧТО БОРЬБА КЛАССОВ И ПАРТИЙ — ЭТО ЛИШЬ МАСКИРОВКА, ТУМАН, НАГОНЕМЫЙ ПРОПРАВительственными средствами МАССОВОЙ ИНФОРМАЦИИ. РЕАЛИИ РОССИИ — ЭТО СМЕРТЕЛЬНАЯ СХВАТКА СИОНО-МАСОНСКОГО КЛАНА, ЗАХВАТИВШЕГО ВЛАСТЬ В СТРАНЕ, С РУССКИМ НАРОДОМ.

В НОМЕРЕ

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2. Къ...
3. Къ...
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КЛАН

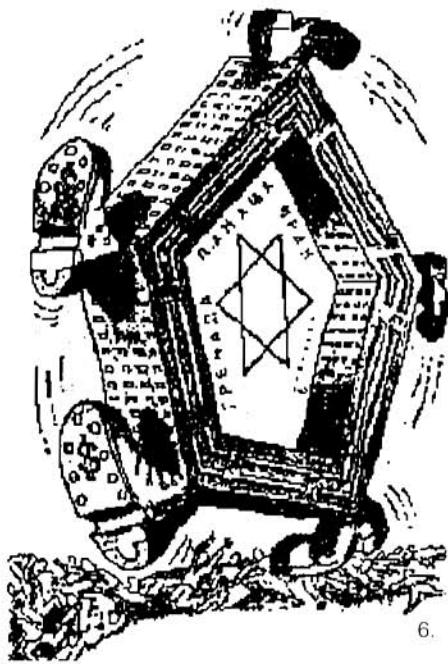
Въ настоящее время в России господствует клан сионимасонскихъ элементовъ, который захватилъ власть в странѣ, с русскимъ народомъ. Этотъ кланъ, состоящий изъ представителей различныхъ иностранныхъ государствъ, стремится къ захвату всей власти в странѣ, къ уничтоженію русской культуры и традицій. Для борьбы съ этимъ кланомъ необходимо объединить русскій народъ, вернуть ему его истинную историю и культуру. Только такъ можно добиться освобожденія России отъ чуждой власти и построить справедливое общество.

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can be quite successful at fanning public resentment toward targeted minorities like foreigners and Jews.

Scapegoats are indigenous to nationalism, which feeds on grievance. While the Soviet Union, like Czarist Russia before it, was rife with anti-

Semitism, there has emerged a new virulent strain among ultra-right-wing groups, who openly call for pogroms and ethnic cleansing. This well-organized mélange of monarchist, neo-fascist, and Pamyat ("memory") organizations openly hawked their ideology on the street until



Boris Yeltsin's October 1993 emergency decrees banned their activities. Polemical newspapers with the titles *Russia Arise*, *The Russian New Order*, and *People's Business* featuring heroic drawings of blackshirted Russian stormtroopers, anti-Semitic caricatures, and Adolf Hitler himself were prominently displayed at sidewalk tables throughout Moscow and St. Petersburg. Various iterations of the swastika, sometimes combined with historic Russian iconography, were also in full view. An American visitor to Moscow last summer reported that it was impossible to walk a block without running into at least one of these displays.

While the long-term political objectives of Russian fascist groups is unclear, their immediate mission is stated in their literature: They are massing their forces and training their bodies for "when the power comes." The largest, though most factionalized, right-wing group is the Pamyat organization dedicated to preserving and recalling a past that it claims the communists have rewritten. While some of its factions deny fascist leanings, and rather than the swastika have adopted the double-headed Czarist eagle as their symbol, others are visibly tied to the Nazis through their regalia, including black shirt, leather shoulder strap and belt, combat boots, and swastika armband. The Pamyat swastika combines an ancient Russian design with the hooked cross, similar to that used by their antecedents, the Russian fascists, who emerged in 1939 after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact and were purged by Stalin only after the Nazis invaded Russia in 1941. Today's Pamyat membership includes former members of a youth gang known as the *lyubery* (named for a dangerous low-rent suburb of Moscow), whose mission, in the words of one, is "ridding Russia of the Jews, the Chechens, the Georgians, the Tatars, the Armenians and the other black asses." In an interview in the *Moscow Guardian*, another member admitted, "I became a fascist to help revive Great Russia. It's been turned into an American colony by the Yids and the Masons. We'd never have allowed the Americans to meddle in our lives—and we'll make the Yankee go home!"

The most militant of the Pamyat factions have adopted many Nazi slogans and icons. "He who puts on a black shirt today pledges allegiance to the homeland and the nation with the words Russia or Death," states an anonymous Pamyat member in an article titled "About Russian Nationalism, or Why We Wear Black Shirts" that appeared in a 1992 pamphlet. In their appropriation of the black shirt (originally adopted in 1922 as the uniform of the Italian fascists) and the red, white, and black swastika armband, they are returning to the 1930s when shirt colors delineated fascist groups in Germany (brown), Ireland (blue), and the U.S. (gold). They are also recalling the period when graphic emblems were considered powerful weapons and variations of blood-and-iron symbols like the Nazi swastika and Italian *faces* were adopted in Rumania (the iron cross), Croatia (the *U* for Ustashi), and even Switzerland (a nazified variation of the Swiss cross). Russian fascist graphics are further modeled on the heroic realism of the Third Reich.

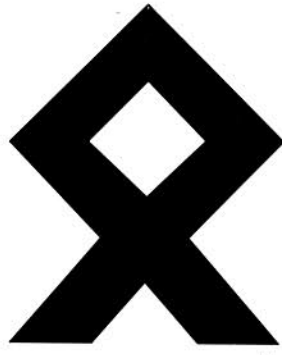
Other Russian right-wing "liberation movements" have adopted kindred images. Some have revived Czarist and pre-Czarist symbols; others combine the Nazi swastika with the Russian Orthodox cross. The St. Petersburg Men's Club, which publishes *People's Business*, uses the Imperial double-headed eagle in which is inset a hooked cross resembling a Nautilus scepter. The Russian National Unity organization, which publishes an anti-Semitic newspaper titled *Family* (referring to the family of Russia), uses a twisted variation of the letter *Y*, akin to a distorted swastika.

Russia is hardly alone in its fascist resurgence. Since its reunification, Germany has been the scene of neo-Nazi violence against foreigners (mostly Turkish immigrants, but also citizens from Eastern bloc countries who had fled before the fall of communism). The perpetrators of





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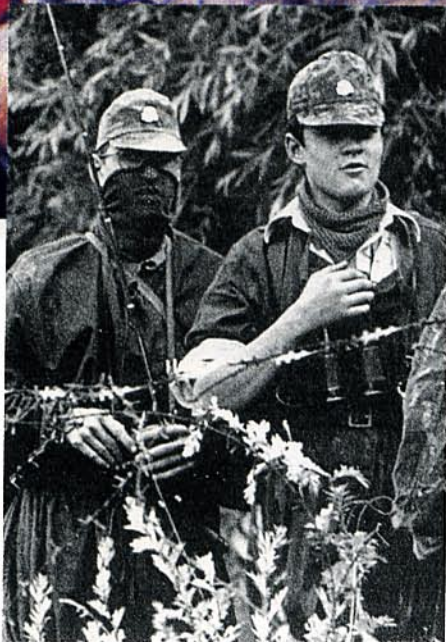
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6. Anti-American cartoon from Pamyat pamphlet asserts that U.S. military is dominated by Israel.

7. Masthead of People's Business, a fascist newspaper that employs the Czarist double-headed eagle as its logo.

8. Masthead of Russia Arise, a fascist newspaper that incorporates both the Nazi swastika and the Russian Orthodox cross.

9. Front page of Family, with swastika-inspired emblem. The headline over the Jewish caricatures reads: "Invitation to the Sale of Russia."

10. This variant of the swastika is worn by members of outlawed German group Aktionsfront Nationaler Sozialisten.

11. Symbol of the neo-Nazi German student group Bundes Nationaler Studenten.

12. This symbol used by the Aktionsfront Nationaler Sozialisten/ Nationaler Aktivisten adapts the lightning-bolt S of the Hitler Youth.

13. Members of the Bundes Nationaler Studenten and the allied workers' party, Freiheitlichen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei, at a rally outside Munich, 1992. Their emblems include the Odalrune shoulder patch and the gearworks similar to that of the Nazi worker brigades.

14. Members of the neo-Nazi Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann wearing the SS death's-head insignia on their caps (not clearly seen here) during military exercises in 1978 on the property of their leader and financial backer, Karl-Heinz Hoffmann. The group was banned in 1980. Photo: UPI.



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these assaults, called skinheads, are typically disaffected young working-class men primarily from the former East Germany. Their terrorist actions are not unlike those of their brown-shirted forebears in the early days of the Nazi party, and are supported by organized neo-Nazi groups. Before reunification, small, well-armed, right-wing paramilitary groups posing as sports and hunting clubs existed in West Germany in defiance of federal law. The leaders of the new generation of storm troopers, many of whom seem to have no sense of what National Socialism was, come from these older outlawed political groups. In a public show of solidarity, the American Ku Klux Klan announced it was providing “advisers” in the art of street brawling to their German fascist counterparts.

Since 1946, when the swastika was outlawed by German constitutional law, fascist groups have had to adopt new symbols and regalia. Black shirts have been replaced by light blue or gray ones, worn over black pants. The National Front marches under the Imperial flag last used during World War I; members wear shoulder patches with a symbol that looks more like the AIDS ribbon than a swastika. This diamond with feet, called an Odalrune, is also the mark of the Bundes Nationaler Studenten (BNS), a neo-fascist organization based on the Hitler Youth. Other outlawed groups that echo Nazi Germany are Volkssozialistischen Bewegung Deutschlands/Partei der Arbeit, whose symbol resembles a gun sight, and Aktionsfront Nationaler Sozialisten/Nationaler Aktivisten and Jungen Front, both of which sport symbols that resemble the lightning bolt or S used by the SS.

The German government, which had been accused of treating right-wing violence too lightly, has banned neo-Nazi organizations from demonstrating publicly. Three groups—The National Front, The Deutscher Alternativ, and The New Front—who together were blamed for over 1800 criminal acts against foreigners in 1992 alone, have been placed under surveillance by Germany’s Federal Office for Protection of the Constitution. “Whoever thinks that they can change our land with a climate of intimidation and fear, they are fooling themselves,” said German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. And yet, according to observers, before The Deutscher Alternativ party was banned, it had gained considerable power at the local level, particularly in eastern German towns near the Polish border, where widespread unemployment has been exacerbated by the illegal entry of foreigners.

Because neo-Nazis are prohibited from exhibiting inflammatory iconography, the propagation of their faith often comes through music, which is protected under the constitution. The driving, pounding discordances of German hate-rock songs have moved fans of neo-Nazi rock, known as “Oi musik,” into the streets to vent their resentments. A band called Böhse Onkelz (Evil Uncles) had one of its songs reach number five on the German pop charts. Störkraft (Destructive Force), a Düsseldorf-based skinhead band, has made television appearances, although it is careful not to air its most popular lyrics, which advocate violence against Turks and others. According to the New York Times, “Oi music’s allure appears strongest in formerly Communist lands of East Europe, where the economic and social structures that young people grew up with collapsed almost overnight. . . .” The Times also reports that some East European bands make the German groups seem benign. In Hungary, which does not appear to have suffered as much transitional turmoil as other Eastern bloc countries, a band called Cigany Pusztító Garda (Gypsy Destroyers Guard Regiment) openly displays Hungary’s World War II fascist emblem and plays to packed houses with songs like “Gypsy-Free Zone,” whose lyrics are:

*The flame-thrower is the only weapon
With which I can triumph.
Exterminate the Gypsies,
Whether child, woman, or man.*

In war-ravaged Yugoslavia, the Croatian fascist paramilitary group known as Ustashi (meaning “stand up,” as for the cause) is a government-sanctioned combatant. During World War II, Ustashi was a black-shirted Croatian fascist party whose leader, Dr. Ante Pavelić, ran the country as a puppet regime for the Nazis. Since the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1992, and the recognition of Croatia (first by Bonn) as an independent nation, the U symbolizing Ustashi has also re-emerged as a semi-official emblem for military irregulars. Photographic stickers of Dr. Pavelić’s official portrait have also been “unofficially” pasted onto government vehicles and army weapons. In addition, swastikas, which were never outlawed in Yugoslavia, have appeared on walls in combat areas and on uniforms of paramilitary combatants. In Zagreb, the Croatian capital, black-shirted auxiliary police help patrol the streets and occupy a headquarters building (commandeered from the local society of graphic artists) in the center of the city.

The upsurge of nationalism in Eastern Europe, with its consequent turmoil, can be seen as inevitable, given the sudden disappearance, almost into thin air, of the all-controlling ideology that for many years had held the region in its grip. Vacuums, after all, are meant to be filled. The fact that a heavy dose of fascist ideology has accompanied the nationalist revival may also be seen as inevitable—which makes it no less disturbing a development. The Nazi-inspired emblems and icons now being defiantly displayed in public in Russia, Germany, Croatia, and other countries of the region, suggest that the new fascist acolytes enthusiastically accept the tenets and philosophy of a regime that embraced racism and genocide as viable instruments of policy. Members of these organizations flaunt their graphic symbols under the eyes of authorities who may be either hostile to their purposes or sympathetic. In either case, the symbols are meant to intimidate and terrorize. Just like in the 1930s.

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15. Croatian military policeman poses with his Argentine assault rifle, on which is a sticker portrait (lower left) of Dr. Ante Pavelić, head of the country's puppet regime under the Nazis. Photo: W. Betsch, June 1992.

16. Croatian combatant sports a swastika armband. Photo: W. Betsch, June 1992.
17, 18. Members of Ustashi, the Croatian paramilitary group that has adopted the Nazi-era U as its emblem. Photos: W. Betsch, March 1992.



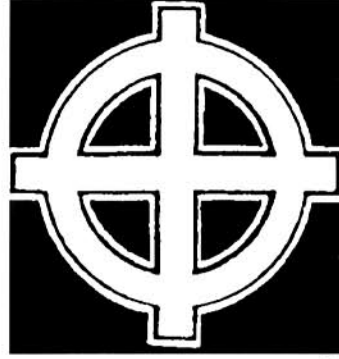
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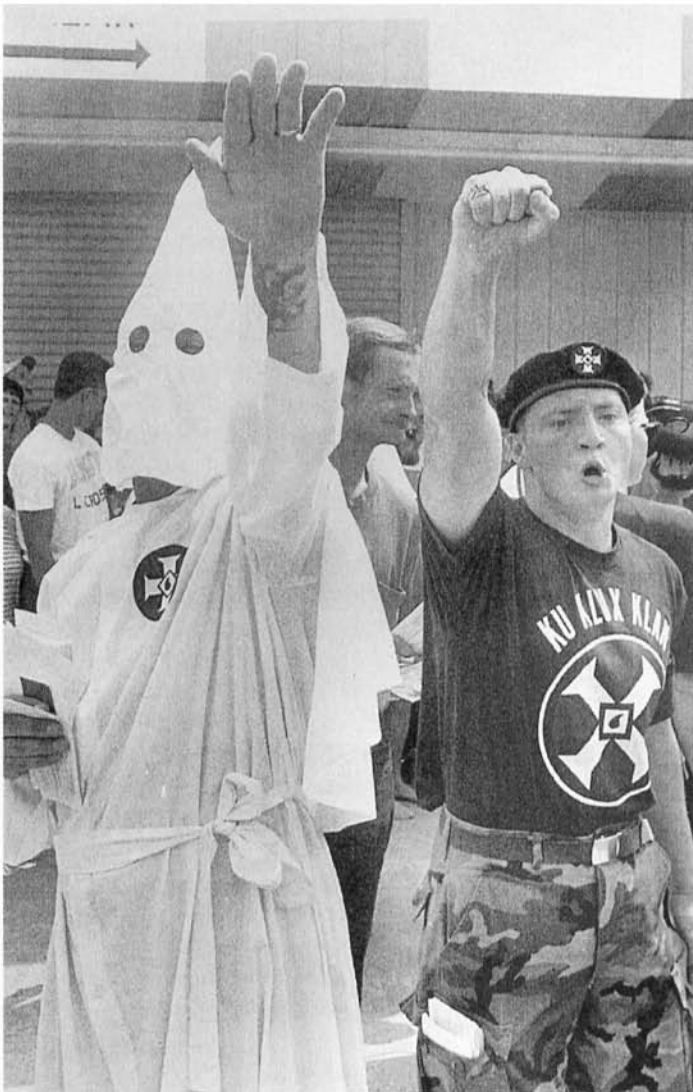
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of a bloodthirsty regime; today, it has apparently been co-opted by a segment of the American ultra-right as a badge of honor.

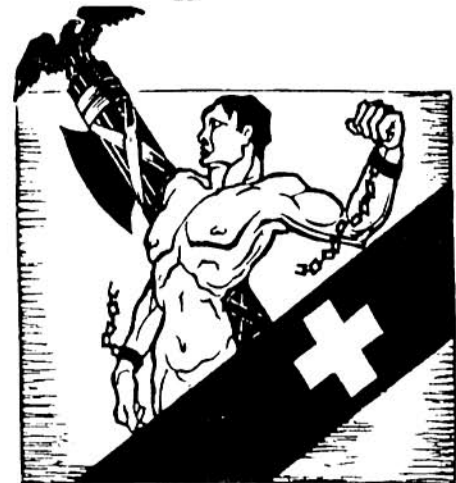
It might come as a surprise to learn that even Switzerland—benign, pacific, perpetually neutral Switzerland—harbors a neo-fascist movement. During World War II, a small political party called the Federation Fasciste Suisse was allied with Italy's fascists. Its symbol, a nazified variation of the national Swiss cross, is currently used by the Front Patriotique, an organization with ties to national fronts in England, France, and Belgium.—SH



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