

British Youth's Latest Turn: The Skinhead

By GLORIA EMERSON

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LONDON, Dec. 9—"People call us skinheads," Paul Thompson, 19 years old, said. "But we don't call ourselves anything." He keeps his hair cut so short that a pinkish scalp shows.

He does not mind the word "skinhead" at all, or the slightly menacing overtone that it has for many Britons. There are large number of adults who fear, or disapprove of, Britain's newest adolescent cult.

It is mainly made up of working-class youngsters in blue collar jobs. They seem confused by hippies, suspicious of immigrants, fanatic about soccer, and fond of dancing to a music with a simple West Indian beat. The skinheads have been accused in the British press of being bigots, bullies and puritans.

Because of their scalped heads, their swagger, their military-looking boots and their eagerness to brawl, the skinheads attract national attention.

Wilson Coins a Phrase

Prime Minister Wilson recently used the phrase "skinheads of Surbiton" to attack a group that sympathized with Enoch Powell's racist speeches.

The skinheads became well known in September when a group of them sought to evict squatters from an elegant Piccadilly mansion. The police prevented it.

Most of the young people in Britain have been influenced, sometimes superficially and sometimes subtly, by the hippies. It shows in their clothes, their hair styles and some of their points of view, however vague. The skinheads—who are only a tiny minority—will probably never feel this influence. They are too stern and too conventional and hold views that, oddly enough, are more in step with their parents' generation than their own.

In a city swarming with long-haired young men wrapped in passivity, the sight of skinheads in brutally short haircuts and big boots often startles passers-by.

"I started wearing boots four or five years ago," Paul said. He was a mod in 1960, when the world consisted of hostile mod and rocker camps. The rockers, the motorcycle youngsters who wore black leather, are now called the greasers. They are still the enemy to Paul.

As are most of the skinheads, Paul is a fussy consumer. The boots he wears must be an American style called Dr. Martins. His shirts have button-down collars and a Ben Sherman label. He wears Levis Sta-Prest jeans and keeps them



Peter Boyce for The New York Times

Skinheads are proud of their working-class origins and are generally fed up with hippies

up with suspenders because he says it looks smart. He does wear a ring: it is aluminum and cost 36 cents. When he goes dancing with his best girl, Susan, in a London dance hall, he wears wing-tip leather shoes.

The hippies bore him, as they tend to bore many average Britons.

"I am fed-up with 'go-away-I-am-meditating-people,'" he said. "When I am with me mates, and one goes by, we shout 'hairy, hairy,' but I'm a moral anarchist, I guess. If that's what they want to do, let 'em do it."

He speaks and behaves gently but it rather annoys him to be told this. He likes to brag he was fighting motorcycle gangs when he was 10 and a mod.

"People are afraid of us because of the newspapers," he said. "In London there is always fighting. To us, this is part of everyday life. Yesterday, me and me mates were in Woolworth's at lunchtime and a bloke bumped into one of us." Paul said that his friend hit the other man by cracking his own head against the head of the stranger. The skinhead kept his hands in his pockets while doing it, too.

The antics of the skinheads are peculiar, considered shocking and un-British. Forms of

gang warfare or skirmishes with the police are common, but there have been no reports of widespread violence instigated by the skinheads.

Skinheads are proud of their working-class origins. The idea of not having a job and living on relief payments arouses scorn and disgust. They want secure jobs, not ones with a chance of promotion and possible risk. They like girls and want to marry young and raise families. Looking clean is important.

In Britain, where surprisingly few people openly talk about class distinctions, the skinheads are no exception. They rarely put it into words.

"We are most Londoners who come from working class families and the worse homes," Paul said. "The most crowded conditions, the worse schools. Half of us slip into the worse jobs. Not many blokes like me get into college. But we are not campaigners."

Class differences, and prejudices, never bothered him until he became a student at Goldsmith College in Southeast London.

"I wasn't aware of any difference at first between the others and me," Paul said. "It sort of up and humped at me."

Britain's famous private schools, such as Eton and Har-

row, are not quite real to him but the principle bothers him.

"It's a bit rough giving private education to people just because they have money," Paul said. He works in a bowling alley and earns \$24 a week. He lives in a London hostel with 150 other young men.

Paul has just started to edit a page for skinheads in the underground newspaper called It. The page is called Yell. There is also a skinhead pop music group in Britain, a sign of their growing impact.

"The skinheads are very ordinary, apart from the fact that we are very special," Paul said.

U.S. Farm Workers in Cuba Visited by a Vietcong Group

HAVANA, Dec. 15 (Agence France-Presse)—The 216 young Americans working on the sugar harvest were visited in their camp last night by 10 Vietcong fighters who arrived recently to help in the harvest. The Vietcong delegation, headed by Ambassador Nguyen Minh, was welcomed at the camp, which is near Aguacate in Havana Province.

The young Americans, some of whom had fought in South Vietnam wore Vietcong colors on their shirts.

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