

The Black International in Europe from 1945 to the late 1980s

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ABSTRACT

The subject of a European “Black International” of neo-fascist or neo-Nazi inspiration was very popular among journalists during the “Years of Lead” (1970-1980). Although the European radical Right tried after 1945 to establish a neo-fascist International, known as the European Social Movement, the attempt ended in failure. The absence of a structured organization did not however diminish the important international links present especially from the 1960s to the 1980s. From doctrines with common themes and references to publications in publishing houses, along with radio and press agencies, the European radical Right expressed itself through circulations, networks and transfers. This did not take the form of a “black orchestra” so dear to its detractors during the 1970s, but rather of an informal albeit active International.



The Venice conference's signatories: Jean Thiriart, Adolf von Thadden, Oswald Mosley, an unknown person, Giovanni Lanfre.

During the 1970s, a series of journalistic essays proclaimed the existence of a “neo-fascist” or “neo-Nazi” International, said to have been formed in the mold of the Organisation armée secrète (OAS) [Secret Army Organization], a terrorist organization that had fought to uphold French Algeria. Its history apparently extended to Europe and Latin America, where this “OAS International” allegedly found supporters and built support bases. Rejecting this vision fuelled on sensationalism does not prevent one from exploring the long-standing relations of

the European radical Right at the international level. The interwar period was characterized by an attempt to establish a fascist International (1934 Montreux fascist conference), and the Spanish Civil War saw the arrival of volunteer contingents to fight alongside the Francoists. During World War Two, mobilization took place in the name of anti-Bolshevism and a “New Europe,” which was to be defended, notably on the Eastern front.

The followers of the radical Right did not create an International in the likeness of the Comintern, although this absence did not end the historical debate over the existence of an International of the radical right, provided one does not consider an International exclusively as a hierarchical and structured organization but rather sees it from the perspective of a constellation connected through networks.

Attempts and failures to create institutionalized neo-Fascist Internationals

The former followers of l’Ordre nouveau [The New Order] were held in disgrace in the aftermath of World War Two and avowed followers of neo-fascism were rare, with the exception of a few publicists (Maurice Bardèche and René Binet in France, and Gaston-Armand Amaudruz in Switzerland). Their publications were infrequent and scant, their organizations meager, yet they all shared a reference based on Europe. *Le Drapeau noir* [The Black Flag], the “voice of Europe’s veterans,” was linked to the clandestine group Le Front noir international [The International Black Front]. It aimed at building a “New Europe” by working towards the birth of a “Fascist International,” seen in September 1946 as “an understanding [...] between all former fascist and fascist-leaning movements” for an “International of European defence bringing together programs, goals, efforts, and means of action.” Five years later, the radical Right denounced the European Community and opposed it with “the alliance of the National Workers’ States of Europe, respecting the independence of each people.”

A founding congress took place in Malmö in May 1951. The aim was to create a neo-fascist International and organize for future European elections, although a division emerged behind the appearance of unity: Bardèche sought to build a neo-fascist International while René Binet was a staunch supporter of the International of the White Race. Bardèche won out, and the European Social Movement (ESM) was created. Affirming the “fundamental principle of European independence” and a “united Europe with a European army under European command,” the MSE was violently anti-Soviet and anti-American. Binet called another congress for September 1951 in Zurich. Emphasizing the “kinship of Europe’s white peoples” and the need to “defend the European race,” he launched the New European Order (NEO).

The aim of those vanquished in 1945—the creation of an International—ended in a stinging defeat. In the late 1950s, the two “Internationals” tore themselves apart over the future of colonial empires. During the last ESM congress held in 1958, the Austrian Wilhelm Lantig, who spoke of “the white man” and the “coloured world,” called for “the immediate liquidation of the colonial system,” a position that was unacceptable for Bardèche, who was attached to the defence of French Algeria. The NEO was torn between supporters of Algerian independence (in the name of allying themselves with adversaries of Israel) and those against it (in the name of denouncing communist subversion). From Algeria and the Congo to Angola and Mozambique, the “defence of the West” mobilized numerous elements of the radical Right at the turn of the 1960s, although this federation operated outside of international organizations, which had theoretically been established to conduct transversal battles.

An informal International of the radical Right

After these failures, there were no new attempts to institutionalize an International of the radical European Right. Some organizations highlighted this goal, such as the Belgian Jean Thiriart’s Jeune Europe [Young Europe], although there was a big gap between declarations and results. Similarly, although the NEO sometimes played a relational role during the Years of Lead, due to its links with the most radical members of the Italian Far Right, it could not be considered as the nerve centre of a terrorist Black International.

This absence of an incorporated International should not minimize various signs of internationalization during the 1960s and 1970s. International contacts can be observed from three major viewpoints. The first is that of doctrinaires and popularizers, some of whom were particularly concerned with adopting foreign references and adapting them, thereby playing a role of transmitter or popularizer. The French have had an important role during this interconnected history. Alain de Benoist, the founder of La Nouvelle Droite [The New Right], was a doctrinaire who was read throughout Europe although those who transmitted and popularized (François Duprat and Jacques Ploncard d'Assac, or the Italian Franco G. Freda) were equally important. The mediums and conveyors of these discourses also played an essential role. Print was still king. It is important to note the openly "European" positioning of publishers, notably Italian ones (Editions d'Ar or Edizioni Europa). Various journals played the card of Europeanization by opening their columns to numerous foreign collaborations. *Ordine Nuovo* or *L'Italiano* were on the front line, although different Portuguese publications should also be mentioned (*Découvertes. La Revue française de Lisbon* [Discoveries: The French Review of Lisbon], *Tempo Presente*, *Política*). During the early 1970s, this diffusion informed and shaped militants on a European scale. However, these contacts did not materialize at the organizational and partisan level, despite the proven exchanges between the first Front national (1972) and the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI). The effects could be observed in the aftermath of the European elections of 1984, in which the Front national made its first breakthrough, and founded a parliamentary group with the MSI in Strasbourg. Despite its success in recent European elections, the FN has been unable to repeat this experience. This can be seen as an illustration of the radical Right's disunity on European level. More profoundly, the importance of the break marked by the 1990s, which reflected a change in context, should be noted. The situation was greatly disrupted by the collapse of communism, the intensification of the economic crisis, the role of immigration in public debate, new threats represented by radical Islam, and the emergence of new considerations linked to both the enlargement and deepening of the European issue. While these factors allowed the FN to prosper in France, this was not the case in Latin Europe from Italy to the Iberian peninsula; the central success of so-called "populist" movements has been observed in countries and organizations previously very far removed from the processes of internationalization identified.

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