

The rise of the Euro-nazis

By Jim Taylor

SINCE the British National Party won a council by-election in Tower Hamlets, East London, in 1993, fascism has slid out of the headlines in Britain. But the alarming rise of fascist and far-right groups elsewhere in Europe shows that groups like the BNP can grow very quickly when the mainstream right is in disarray and social-democrats offer no answers to economic chaos.

Across Europe the spectrum ranges from sieg-heiling skinheads burning refugees alive in Hoyerswerda and Rostock to the "respectable" Vlaams Blok in Belgium; from the hideous reincarnation of the pre-war and wartime Iron Guard to the millionaire nazi heir Jorg Haider in Austria; from the vicious little Centrumdemokraten Partei of Holland to those nostalgic for Ustashi terror in Croatia. Often the "respectable" and the open Nazis work together.

In France meetings of the Front National (FN) of Jean Marie Le Pen have been stewarded by thugs of openly nazi groups. Attacks on immigrant hostels, mosques, synagogues, meetings of socialists, on individual socialists, trade unionists, Catholic priests, north Africans and Jews, instigated by the FN or in which they have a hand, are "plausibly denied".

In 1986 mass disillusion with the French Socialist Party government elected in 1981, and the disarray of France's mainstream right, enabled the FN to consolidate. The FN had 32 deputies in Parliament and a thousand councillors. Although it lost its MPs when France scrapped proportional representation, it recently won control of the city council in Toulon, and has consistently scored between 10% and 15% of the vote.

In the late 1980s the German Republikaner Party, inspired by the FN and using the same tactics, seemed poised to make the same breakthrough, enjoying major electoral successes in West Berlin, Bavaria, North Rhine Westphalia and Baden-Wuerttemberg. In Frankfurt the neo-nazi NPD gained seven seats in the City Parliament, re-establishing itself there for the first time in over twenty years. This was accompanied by a massive upsurge of racist violence, petrol bomb attacks on refugee hostels and a spate of more than 70 racist and political murders by the nazis.

Since then, however, the Republikaner have gone into decline. The NPD

has also suffered reverses, as has the third main far-right group, the Deutsche Volkunion (DVU) led by millionaire press magnate Gerhard Frey.

There remain more than seventy openly nazi organisations in Germany. The two main ones, the GdNF of Christian Worch and the FAP, have been responsible for a horrendous catalogue of violence.

In Italy the MSI, under the new leadership of Gianfranco Fini, entered the Government in 1994 in coalition with multi-millionaire media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi. Fini changed the party's name to the Alleanza Nazionale (AN), proclaiming it was not fascist but "post-fascist", and with Berlusconi's help built a new media-friendly image.

THE MSI praised the statelet created by Mussolini with German military help in September 1943, which was the most vicious, brutal and degenerate episode of Mussolini's tyranny. Ideologically it was closer to nazism, with its concepts of racial hierarchy and genocide, than the pre-1938 Mussolinian fascism. MSI propaganda boasted Salo was "the zenith of Italian political achievement."

The largest and most powerful nazi organisation in Belgium is the Vlaams Blok (VB). A virulently racist party whose election slogan is "our people first", the VB has received up to one third of the vote in certain areas. Its origins lie in the pre-war Rexist movement which collaborated with the nazis during the German occupation. It persistently demands "amnesty" for those who assisted the nazi invaders. VB is closely linked to the extremely violent Voorpost (Vanguard) Organisation, which often acts as the VB's strong arm squad.

In Austria, the FPO of Jorg Haider, the yuppie nazi who inherited millions from property confiscated from Jews by the nazis during the Anschluss and who is hailed by his fans as "Hitler's adopted son", has won a third of the vote in Carinthia, historically the stronghold of Austrian nazism. In the last elections Haider won 22% of the vote nationally.

The main openly nazi organi-

sation in Austria is VAPO, led, until his imprisonment, by Gottfried Kussel. In 1993 VAPO conducted a vicious letter bomb campaign in which several people were badly injured. VAPO is closely linked with the German FAP and GdNF, and with Gerhard Lauck's NSDAP-OA.

Rumania has witnessed the formation of the sinister Vatra Romanasca (VR), the successor organisation to the pre-war and wartime Iron Guard, a nazi death cult. The VR proclaims its intention of waging a "bloody struggle" against the Hungarian, German and Gypsy minorities. VR was instrumental in the pogroms in March 1990 in which several Hungarians were killed, and has been involved in the racist murder of Gypsies and violence against Jews.

In the September 1992 Parliamentary elections PUNR, the political wing of VR, won 14 seats in the Senate and 30 in the Chamber of Deputies. VR leader Gheorghe Funar was elected mayor of Cluj, capital of Transylvania.

Throughout Europe the nazis are on the rise and on the march. They are better funded, better organised and have greater credibility than at any time since the war, and are well coordinated, with a series of international networks in place.

At a time when we are remembering Cable Street we must also understand what is happening in Europe. An international fightback is long overdue.

TRADE UNION POLITICS AMERICAN UNIONS & ECONOMIC CHANGE 1960S-90S

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Trade unions constitute one of the most distinctive and important expressions of interest group association in modern America. Yet social scientists have had relatively little to say about contemporary trade unionism in the U.S. as a political, economic, and institutional phenomenon. In particular, social scientists have neglected two themes that are the focus of this collection: The first is that the interest disjunction between the layer of salaried, full-time officers—the union bureaucracy—and the rank and file is crucial to understanding union behavior; the second is that American capitalism has undergone a fundamental transformation, in part due to the globalization of production and financial markets, which has effectively undermined the preconditions for postwar-style American trade unionism. What emerges from these thematic developments is a distinctive portrait of American unions during the past thirty years.

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