REZENSIONEN

Arnd Bauerkämper / Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe (eds.): Fascism without Borders. Transnational Connections and Cooperation between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945, New York / Oxford: Berghahn Books 2017, 373 p.

Review by
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Fascism is now an international movement, which means not only that the Fascist nations can combine for purposes of loot, but that they are groping, perhaps only half-consciously as yet, towards a world system.[1]

As early as 1937, George Orwell pinpointed the significance of the transnational character of fascism. He underlined its potential to dismantle the world we know and threat the rights we have won and defended during the twentieth century. 80 years later, fascism with its underlying transnational ambitions is unfortunately present on the international political scene again. Today it appears in a neo-fascist costume, with a new combination of beguiling rhetoric, appalling ideas and clumsy political behaviour, but nevertheless, it is still fascism in its core of strong nationalism and chauvinism, and of anti-democracy, anti-communism, and anti-humanism. From Washington to Budapest, Brasilia to Moscow, Manila to Warsaw, neo-fascism is seeking power. Warning signals from brilliant historians as Federico Finchelstein and perceptive politicians as Madeleine Albright are now as vitally important as once George Orwell's.[2]

In "Fascism without borders", the editors Arnd Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe are very modest when emphasizing the importance and topicality of their book. In their outstanding introduction, they primarily focus, in a very illuminating and clarifying way, transnational fascism from a historical perspective. They start with defining the three dimensions of "transnational fascism": a) fascism was in fact a transnational political movement; b) fascism was in the historical context perceived as a transnational phenomenon; and c) fascism can analytically be approached with a transnational perspective (p. 2). Then they continue to scrutinize "fascism as a transnational political alternative to democracy" in interwar Europe (p. 16). In this, Bauerkämper and Rossolinski-Liebe write pleasurably and concisely with great expertise and analytical abilities. It is pure educational delight to read this.

As the editors initially point out, historical research that focus on the transnational dimensions of fascism are still very rare (pp. 1, 6). However, this volume connects to a small but very important field of historical research, where the most studies are quite recently published.[3] In all, this book consists of thirteen chapters, the introduction and the afterword excluded. In fact, the contributions can be divided into three themes. First, there are three essays in this book that stands out with a distinctively conceptual and intellectual ambition. They analyse central key notions and ideas within interwar fascism that had the obvious and strong potential to break national boundaries and bring fascists in interwar Europe together: Johannes Dafinger about the völkisch elements throughout fascist Europe; Aristotle Kallis about violence and creative destruction "at the heart of the fascist history-making project" in Europe (p. 41); and Matteo Pasetti about the corporatist ideas as a central political cornerstone, overcoming national borders. These three intelligent essays dig analytically in the overlooked and contradictory intellectual history of fascism with a true transnational perspective.

Second, there are a group of essays that focus on national case studies, specific movements, and personalities, and their various international relations and transnational aspirations: Raul Carstocea about the international relations around the legionary leader of the Romanian Iron Guard, Ion I Mota; Monica Fioravanzo about the idea of a New European Order (NEO) within Italian fascism; Anna Lena Kocks about the relations and circulations of ideas about leisure among Italian and British fascists; Goran Miljan about the interrelated organization of youth activities within the Croatian fascist group Ustasha and the Slovak Hlinka Party; Claudia Ninhos about the obscure channels between Portugal and Germany beyond the German Kulturpropaganda; Marleen Rensen about the French fascist intellectual Robert Brasillach; and Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe about the meaning of inter-fascist conflicts between National Socialists and national fascist groups in Austria, Romania, and Ukraine. These seven essays – the backbone of this book – are all qualitative, empirically based and well written, but some of them maybe slip a little when it comes to staying true to the transnational main theme; internationalism is not the same as transnationalism.

Third, there are three essays on the fringe of this book that all have in common that they deal with antifascism: Kasper Braskén about communist antifascism; Silvia Madotto about universities as the centres of transnational antifascism activism in France and Italy; and Francesco Di Palma about transnational channels between antifascist activists in European exile. This is where the weakness of this book is revealed. These three essays are unfortunately not fully compatible with the qualified and well-defined theme around transnational fascism that the editors initially point out. The general idea that "transnational activities of fascists and antifascists were interrelated" (p. 361) is not really convincing or underpinned by these essays. Of course, were antifascists often related to fascists because of their nature as a collective political reaction against them. But does that really mean the opposite; that fascists actually were related to the antifascists in general? According to

this, it also unclear, what is really meant by dubious suggestions like: “a new history of communist antifascism should be written in close relation to transnational fascism” (p. 304). Here it becomes obvious that international antifascism, not only during the interwar period, need to be more critically investigated by historical research that is able to explore the complex antifascist grey-scale from factual and ideologically manifested (communist, syndicalist, social democratic, and radical liberal) antifascism, via political strategies and party tactics within and between the different antifascist actors, to totalitarian, anarchist, irresponsible, and adolescent, versions of antifascist disguises.[4]

However, this does not take away the strength and importance of this splendid book. It illustrates and problematize interwar fascism in Europe as an organic and multifaceted political force field, something Arnd Bauerkämper (in his interesting but too short afterword) portrays as: “fascist ultranationalism did not exclude a sense of common mission or solidarity, giving rise to a wide scope of relations, from mere perceptions to contacts, interactions, transfers, and processes of learning” (p. 355). On the basis of the essays, he also underlines that entanglements, conflicts, and antagonism were a significant factor in these “multiple asymmetries that characterized relations between fascists” (p. 357). On the other hand it is also essential to keep in mind the strong common concept of violence – which Aristotle Kallis in one of the sharpest essays of this book highlights as “the violent pursuit of the fascists ‘new order’” (p. 56) – that ties European fascists together and unifies them, not at least discursively and practically. This also reminds us about Robert O. Paxton’s important and clarifying definition of fascism as, beyond ideology and politics, a question of “a form of political behaviour”.5 Twentieth century fascism is in that sense like a rat: it is adaptable and could orientate and reproduce itself everywhere; it behaves nasty and completely unscrupulous; and it shuns the day, preferring the darkness.

In conclusion, the sheds new light on this; fascism’s overlooked but lethal capacity to emerge and amalgamate above national (and other) borders. This transnational “fascist spirit” (p. 208) that Marleen Rensen picks out in her shining contribution, must continue to be historically investigated and observed, not least because it is through that kind of knowledge we can stand stronger as democratic and humanitarian societies in the future. We may never forget George Orwell. This book helps us not to do that.

Notes:

1 G. Orwell, The Road to Wigan Pier, London 1937, p. 200. Also quoted in this volume, p. 5.

2 M. Albright, Fascism. A Warning, New York 2018; F. Finchelstein, From Fascism to Populism in History, Oakland 2017.

3 See, for example, M. Albanese, P. del Hierro, Transnational Fascism in the Twentieth Century. Spain, Italy and the Global Neo-Fascist Network. A Modern History of Politics and Violence, London 2016; N. Alcade, War Veterans and Fascism in Interwar Europe, Cambridge 2017; A. Costa Pinto, K. Aristotle (eds.), Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe, Basingstoke 2014; M. Durham, M. Power (eds.), New Perspectives on the Transnational Right, Basingstoke 2010; M. R. Gutmann, Building a Nazi Europe. The SS’s Germanic Volunteers, Cambridge 2017; A. G. Kjostvedt, A. Salvador (eds.), New Political Ideas in the Aftermath of the Great War, Cham 2017; A. Mammone, Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy, New York 2015; Ph. Mor-

gan, Fascism in Europe, 1919–1945, New York 2003.
4 See, for an excellent example, H. Garzia, M. Yusta, X. Tabet, Ch. Climaco (eds.), Rethinking Antifascism. History, Memory and Politics, 1922 to the Present, New York, Oxford 2016.
5 R. O. Paxton, The Anatomy of Fascism, London 2004, p. 218.

Ralph Callebert: On Durban's Docks: Zulu Workers, Rural Households, Global Labor, Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2017, 256 S.

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Recent years have seen a shift of historical scholarship on South Africa, in the direction of transnational perspectives. This new work has had a salutary effect on a historiography previously characterized by a considerable degree of national exceptionalism and even, at worst, parochialism. It has also highlighted, for the first time, the maritime dimension of modern South African history, with considerable attention given to port cities and their linkages across the world. Yet in its more simplistic manifestations, the new work has tended toward an over-optimistic celebration of 'cosmopolitanism' and 'global mobility'. Simultaneously, we have seen something of a decline in the strong tradition of South African labour history. While there has been much attention to global cultural flows and the travels of radical anti-colonial politicians, working class life and struggles have become somewhat neglected.

Ralph Callebert's *On Durban's Docks* is an important corrective to all of these trends. It is an account of the harbour workers of South Africa's most important port during the Twentieth Century (with a focus on the 1930s to 1950s). The study is in the best traditions of labour history and of modern African social history, drawing on an extensive programme of oral history interviews and on deep archival work. While recognizing the benefits of a more global understanding of South Africa, Callebert fundamentally questions the centrality this has been given, and the implicit optimism that has come with it. He stresses the relative disconnection of Durban's dockworkers from the wider world, and simultaneously he shows the depth of their exploitation. At a deeper conceptual level, this approach is linked by Callebert to a questioning of accounts of globality which are steeped in a universalist view of the diffusion of wage labour and economic rationalism. He charges such approaches with a failure to grasp the specificity of the African context.

Callebert sees dockworkers as constrained by segregationist laws and by linguistic barriers in their interactions with passing ships.[1] Poverty meant that they consumed little of what was imported through Durban. He shows how workers' self-definition was bound up, not with their position as workers, so much as with their aspirations to be heads of rural households and to accumulate cattle. They seldom desired to settle in the cities, and to this extent, the migrant labour system was not simply a product of state coercion. Their footholds in the countryside represented a zone in