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Benjamin G. Martin, *The Nazi-Fascist New Order for European Culture*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2016. 384 pp. Abbreviations, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, and index. \$39.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9780674545748.

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Benjamin Martin's *The Nazi-Fascist New Order for European Culture* expertly weaves a detailed exploration of European film, music, and literary organizations in the 1930s and 1940s with a broader examination of both the fascist conceptualization of Europe and the relationship between culture and power. After an exhaustive look at both German and Italian efforts to restructure the cultural field of wartime Europe, Martin rightly concludes, "it will not do to dismiss the cultural New Order as merely a cynical sideshow to the horrors of World War II" nor to dismiss the fascist language of Europe as merely "European-themed propaganda" (p. 277). With these twin caveats, he challenges those who assume that fascist ultranationalism and international cooperation are mutually exclusive. And he reminds us that the soft power of cultural capital should take center stage alongside political and economic power in any discussion of fascist hegemony over Europe. [1] Both are valuable reminders for historians in any field and anyone observing the growth of extremist political organizations today.

Martin focuses his attention on three specific fields where the Nazis and Italian Fascists attempted to reappropriate the spaces, networks and structures of power in the international, or at least the European, cultural world: film, music, and literature. Rather than conducting a traditional intellectual history of the key artists in these fields, Martin looks at the organization of these artists and the conferences, festivals, congresses, and distribution markets that were their most visible evidence of international collaboration and exchange. The Union of National Writers, Permanent Council for International Cooperation among Composers, International Film Chamber, and European Writers Union were all intended to confer a much needed cultural and intellectual legitimacy on the Germans and Italians who had achieved economic and political dominance over Europe, but still needed to win hearts and minds. They recognized, Martin argues, the vital relationship between cultural capital and legitimization of political power. The Nazi goal was to create a "German-controlled system of international cultural institutions, based in Berlin, to be built on the ruins of the institutions of the interwar international system" that would become a "vital part of the German dominated New Order" (p. 154). In doing so, they proclaimed, the nationalists would wrest this system away from liberal, Western, and particularly French leadership. This goal, however, reveals one of the interesting tensions in Martin's work. The Nazi vision of the New Order was German dominated, while the Italian Fascists' was Italian led, and the rest of the European nationalists demanded cultural autonomy and their own nationalist expression. How could the ultranationalist and hierarchical politics of the fascists coincide with any true international cultural organization?

The conflict inherent in nationalist states attempting internationalist cultural organization would eventually contribute to the failure of the cultural New Order. But for the first few years, the question of how to merge these concepts consumed the fascists. The answer lay in a reconceptualization of Europeanism and a limitation of its scope to the cultural field. The Nazi alternative concept of Europe

pictured it as a conglomerate of distinctive national cultural identities that needed to be nurtured after long suppression by liberal French theories of a shared universal civilization. These ultranationalist artists could find common ground in a shared national traditionalism and anti-cosmopolitanism, advocacy for protectionist policies against intrusion by American products and distributors, rejection of materialism and modernity, and support for new *droit moral* protection for their cultural product. This new conglomerate was appealing to European nationalists because it protected each national culture while linking them in a transnational network. However, this appeal would eventually wear thin as European nationalists recognized and resented the Nazi dominance over this network where the restructured organizations presented Germans as the leaders in all areas of culture. Clearly this German vision “deployed the ‘mechanics of internationalism’ for political ends antithetical to the internationalist spirit” (p. 7). But, at least temporarily, it offered a model for transnational cooperation that could function under ultranationalist regimes. The more immediate tension arose because Germany’s was not the only attempt to redefine Europe or claim leadership of European culture in the interest of soft power for a fascist state.

The tension of trying to force internationalist organizations into the service of nationalist political visions and the resulting need to redefine Europeanism and European culture was perhaps most evident in the competition between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. While the title of the book suggests a cooperation between the Nazis and Fascists in the European cultural battlefield, and while Martin does show evidence of shared ambition leading to cooperative endeavors in the 30s, the more recurring theme seems to be one of competition between the two states. At every point where the Italians thought to lead, whether at the Venice Film Festival or the Europe 1942 Exposition, the Nazis undercut their efforts with a larger German dominated organization. Perhaps the greatest indicator of competition rather than collaboration between the two was the Nazi accumulation of files without the Italians’ knowledge from the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC) in Paris and the Union of International Associations in Brussels. This clearly disproportionate relationship left the Italians constantly searching for opportunities to either collaborate without capitulation or even to disparage German efforts like the Weimar Writers’ Conference in fields where the Italians felt confident in their superiority. Martin makes it clear that their conflict was not merely about which fascist nation could lead the most organizations and speak for the international community. It was also indicative of a deeper tension between Italian and German understanding of the foundation of European culture. The Italian Fascists considered Europe’s cultural patrimony to be Ancient Rome, the Renaissance, and the Catholic Church. Their vision of a New Order was predicated on a concept of fascism, Europeanism, and European culture drawn from classical humanism and Greco-Latin antiquity. If these were the natural wellsprings of a common European civilization, then Italy was Europe’s natural leader. The Germans, however, envisioned an international of nationalists, a “continental European community of destiny” where each national culture was a distinct piece in the larger mosaic (p. 147). In this vision of the New Order of Europe, it was the Germans who would lead and dominate as the original exemplars of this *volksgeist*.

One of the great strengths of Martin’s work lies in this ability to tease out these internal contradictions and conflicts within the Nazi-Fascist program for a cultural New Order. Overshadowed by the tension between nationalism and internationalism and the competition between Germany and Italy but still of interest to this question of fascist pan-Europeanism is the conflict between political dominance and cultural autonomy. As Martin notes in his introduction, the Nazis initially “seem to have appreciated that cultural fields have their own rules” (p. 9) and that cultural capital could not be militarily crushed the way political or economic power could. If they were to leverage cultural hegemony successfully, they would need to earn it legitimately. Yet, over the course of the war, the Nazis increasingly exerted state or military power to command the cultural field and exploited cultural organization for political power. The attempt to create a cultural New Order failed when artists recognized and resented this exploitation more than they appreciated the benefits of protectionism, state sponsorship, and traditionalist-friendly regulations. Here the Nazi goal of showing Germans leading European culture conflicted with the expectation that culture was autonomous and independent of political influence. Other tensions existed even within the Nazi inner circle where Joseph Goebbels, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and Otto Abetz all

worked for their own visions of European culture and personal political gain, most often in competition with one another. Martin does touch on each of these contradictions in the Nazi-Fascist New Order and highlights them in the conclusion. But, these conflicts, including those between Germany and Italy over the Catholic Church, anti-Semitism, and modern art seem essential to the struggle these fascists had in defining Europe and European culture. Further investigation of these avenues would have added even richer context for Martin's argument.

Of great interest to French historians is the relationship that Martin hints at between the Nazis and the interwar French cultural organizations and also the role that he reveals the Germans and Italians envisioned for Vichy France and collaborationist Paris in the cultural New Order. The fascist response to France reveals both common ground and internal disagreement between the Germans and the Italians. As early as the 1930s, the fascist Italian intellectuals had begun to imitate German concepts of *kultur* rather than the status quo concept of a universal western civilization promoted by the French. Their new concept of *civiltà* was intended to separate them from the French vision of restoring western civilization, perhaps best exemplified by Henri Massis' *Défense de l'Occident*, and align them with the German rejection of western civilization as too corrupt for any solution but replacement, as in Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*.^[2] By 1940, the Italians were adamant in their rejection of the French in favor of a German-Italian cultural axis as the core of the new European cultural system. According to Italian minister of national education Giuseppe Bottai, France would take "the position which it deserves, of a second-tier nation, morally, politically, and economically subordinate to the designs of the victors who have demonstrated through the force of arms the force of their disciplining and dominating spirit" (p. 150). This Italian discourse indicated the resentment the Italians had nursed over the preceding centuries of French cultural hegemony and also their hope that aligning themselves with the German military power would leave the soft power of European cultural life to them. However it belies the common ground that France and Italy shared: the concept of an underlying, universal Greco-Roman and Catholic civilization for the West from which all national expressions of culture sprang. I would have liked to see Martin pursue this paradox further since it appears that while Italian actions and language might support a Rome-Berlin cultural axis, their concept of European civilization and the source of a new order was more in keeping with that of the French universalists of the interwar years.

Here it seems Martin passes up a great opportunity to consider the Nazi-Fascist New Order for European Culture beyond the limits of German and Italian fascism. The French fascists who gathered in the Action Français, Groupe Collaboration, the Parti Populaire Français and other fascist-friendly outlets and journals had actively promoted themselves as the new purveyors of fascist culture for Europe as early as the 1930s and they expected France to be granted exclusivity in this role at the war's end.^[3] Their vision of their own importance in the cultural field was reinforced by Abetz and Epting and given credibility by the cultural events, artist exchanges, and socio-professional networks linking them to the Germans. But it contradicted both the Italian vision of a Rome-Berlin axis and the Nazi vision of a German led Europe. Granted, the focus of the book is the German and Italian vision, and Martin does explore Abetz's intention of keeping the IIC in Paris and then the Nazi abandonment of the effort to coordinate with French organizations and institutions. But including the cultural outlets in Vichy and Paris and their contributions both before and after the war to concepts of fascist culture and Europeanism might have added a new layer to Martin's work. Perhaps we can coax another book from Martin that expands his discussion of fascist concepts of European cultural organization and competing visions of internationalism in the service of nationalism to include organizations from outside Germany and Italy.^[4]

Martin's work is one of careful research into the inner-workings of the film, music, and literary organizations under the fascists. It vividly reconstructs the cultural world of the 1930s and 1940s through a wealth of detail on cultural icons turned fascist spokesmen like Richard Strauss, copyright legislation and protectionist policies, organization of festivals, networks of authors, and even the effects of the war on cultural events. But his contribution to the scholarship goes beyond a well-researched submersion into the cultural world of wartime fascism to explore the larger questions of how fascists defined Europeanism,

how they envisioned an international organization of nationalist cultures, what they intended in their alliances with other fascist powers, and how they perceived the relationship between cultural soft power and the force of military and economic conquest. It highlights not only the shared German and Italian vision of a New Order for European culture but also the internal contradictions, competitions, and conflicts that limited the success of this goal even before military defeat. It is certainly a superb contribution to our understanding of European fascism but also to any study of culture and power.

NOTES

[1] This position has been advocated by Arnd Bauerkämper, “Ambiguities of Transnationalism: Fascism in Europe Between Pan-Europeanism and Ultra-Nationalism, 1919-1939,” *German Historical Institute London Bulletin* 29 (2007): 43-67. It is also somewhat supported by the work of Tamir Bar-On and Andrea Mammone who consider the extreme right’s goals of pan-European empire in the post-war era. Mammone argues for successful conversion of extreme right fascist movements from ultra-nationalist to pan-national or European in the 1950s. Andrea Mammone, “Revitalizing and de-territorializing fascism in the 1950s: the extreme right in France and Italy, and the pan-national (‘European’) imaginary,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 45 (2011): 4. Bar-On places the evolution a decade later during the rise of the Nouvelle Droite saying it is the ND theorist Alain de Benoist and the journal *Europe-Action* that, in the 1960s, gave the Right an “ideological make-over” and “imbued French revolutionary right-wing militants with a new pan-national Europeanism and adopted the turn away from the narrow nationalism” of the past. T. Bar-On, “Transnationalism and the French nouvelle droite,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 45 (2011): 199-223. I have argued this turn can be found as early as the latter 1930s and early 1940s as opportunities for collaboration with fascist movements prompted a new language of Europeanism, as a substitute for narrow nationalism, on the far right. Sarah Shurts, “Continental Collaboration: The transition from ultranationalism to pan-Europeanism by the interwar French fascist right,” *French Politics, Culture & Society* 32 (2014): 79-96.

[2] Henri Massis, *Défense de l'Occident* Paris: Plon (1927) and Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (München: Beck, 1923).

[3] Numerous books have addressed this question of French fascist intellectual movements but a good place to start is with Samuel Kalman and Sean Kennedy eds., *The French Right Between the Wars: Political and Intellectual Movements From Conservatism to Fascism* (New York: Berghann, 2014).

[4] This addition would be in keeping with the recent approach to European intellectual movements as transnational phenomena seen, for example, in [Andrea Mammone](#), [Emmanuel Godin](#), and [Brian Jenkins](#), eds., *Mapping the Extreme Right in Contemporary Europe: from Local to Transnational* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

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