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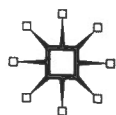
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1968 IN EUROPE

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Foreword

Like other volumes in the Palgrave Series in Transnational History, this book makes a valuable contribution to the study of modern history in a transnational framework. It focuses on "1968," the year that symbolizes protest movements in many parts of Europe and marked a point separating two worlds, one defined primarily by sovereign nations, in particular the great powers, and the other that came to be shaped as much by smaller countries and by nonnational, global, and transnational forces, as by geopolitical and national agendas.

As the essays in this volume demonstrate, "1968" was a transnational phenomenon across Europe, both Western and Eastern. Although the "revolution" took many shapes and exhibited varying degrees of intensity in different countries, what happened in one part of Europe had an almost immediate impact elsewhere. The "revolutionaries" were aware that they were players not just within their national boundaries but also on the world stage. Although the book focuses on Europe, various chapters refer to developments in the United States, China, and other countries. Those involved in the movement spoke similar, often identical, languages, and the way they looked at their societies and at themselves made the "the long 1960s" (from around 1956 to around 1977) a major landmark in contemporary history—the age of protest on a global scale.

The history of the world after the Second World War is usually understood in the framework of such large themes as the Cold War and decolonization. Undoubtedly, these were among the overarching themes in the history of the world in the second half of the twentieth century, but it should be noted that the Cold War was an international geopolitical phenomenon, whereas decolonization was something that led to nation-building. In other words, the nation was the key to both developments. One important aspect of "1968" was the questioning of the presumed omnipotence of the nation and the state, as various essays in the book show. The New Left, as distinct from the Old Left, challenged the privileging of the national community and the authority of the state as the fundamental definers and regulators of human beings. To the radicals espousing the new movement, the national or state framework as the key source of identity was too restrictive of individual rights and social movement. There was, to be sure, nothing new about the ideas of individual liberty or social reform. But in "the long 1960s," these

became such a transnational aspiration precisely because during the preceding several decades, human beings throughout the world had tended to be conceptualized in terms of nationality and citizenship. That is why "1968" came to be seen both as an occasion for profound political transformation and a "cultural revolution," for it was a cultural aspiration to pit the individual against the all powerful state, a political entity, and to organize social groupings outside of national affiliations.

But can individuals and social groups, liberated from restrictive state and national identities, construct an alternative order, whether within national boundaries or worldwide? That question was bequeathed to the following decades, which may have answered the question by developing a world of globalization, a transnational world order that is interconnected by technology, goods, and capital. Is this the world the generation of "1968" dreamed of? Hardly, so the inevitable question would be how to connect the cultural revolution of the 1960s to the global economic order forty years later. The contributors to this book help us get started in that exploration.

Akira Iriye
Rana Mitter

1968 in Europe

An Introduction

Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth

On June 13, 1968, the popular British broadcaster Robert McKenzie brought together student activists from across Europe, the United States, and Japan in a BBC television show entitled “Students in Revolt” to discuss their aims and objectives in the aftermath of the events in Paris the previous month.¹ McKenzie compared the emergence of a “student class” to the emergence of the working class in the nineteenth century, arguing that in both Western and Eastern Europe, student activists were carrying their protest into the larger society, thereby “clearly influencing the political course of history.” The discussion featured such prominent student leaders as Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Alan Geismar from France, Tariq Ali from Great Britain, Karl-Dietrich Wolff from West Germany, and Jan Kavan from Czechoslovakia, among others, who also insisted that they were not leaders but, rather, “megaphones” of a far larger movement that included both members of the young generation and workers.

Decrying the alienation and the lack of democratic participation in their societies, students from Western Europe largely blamed capitalism for the rise of technocratic and authoritarian structures. As Tariq Ali pointed out, “what unites us, those of us from capitalist societies, is our feeling that capitalism is inhumane and unjust and that we are all in favor of its overthrow.” In this process, the universities could serve as “centers of revolutionary protest” to prevent domestic repression, connect to the working class, and transform the underlying roots of society to stop further imperialist wars such as the Vietnam War from taking place. Student representatives from Eastern Europe similarly criticized the bureaucracy, party oligarchy, and lack of freedom in Socialist societies, emphasizing the need for a greater opening and a turn to true socialism. As Jan Kavan explained, “the current situation in Czechoslovakia gives us the hope this may be the first country where a system of socialist democracy could be created.” All participants agreed that the protest movement had transcended national borders in its attempt to realize an alternative society and world order and, in a remarkable display of this

mutual transnational solidarity, rose up and jointly intoned the Communist Internationale in their native tongue at the end of the program.

The BBC meeting was extraordinary because it highlighted not only the transnational but, most important, the truly European experience of "1968." Although research on the transnational and global nature of the events of "1968" has been blossoming for several years, the specific European dimension of protest movements and their subcultures during the Cold War has only been analyzed marginally and within closed national contexts.² This extensive gap in historical research is all the more regrettable because Europe at the time of the Cold War can be considered a microcosm for global political events. It was here that the geopolitical fault line between East and West was most visible, with the Berlin Wall as its symbolic embodiment. As a consequence, not only this unique geopolitical environment but also the variety of national experience ranging from the Communist East European states of the Warsaw Pact to the democratic nations of Western Europe, as well as the dictatorships of Spain, Portugal, and Greece, practically offer themselves for a more thorough examination of border transcending cultures of domestic dissent. The goal of this volume is to therefore present a concise reference for students and researchers of the protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Europe. It aims at presenting information on the history of the various national protest movements to facilitate comparative studies, on the multifaceted transnational aspects of the protest movements to gain a deeper understanding of the similarities between the various national movements, and on the common narratives and cultures of memory to further the discussion on the consequences and relevance of domestic protest in the various countries as well as for Europe as a whole.

One of the outstanding historical characteristics of "1968" was that it transgressed the ideological fronts of the Cold War. This "magical year" can be viewed as the climax of various developments that had been set in motion by the immense speed of the social and economic transformations after the Second World War: demographic changes and dramatic increase in university enrollment, a globalization of communication channels, an unprecedented economic prosperity that brought the arrival of consumer society, and a generational gap expressed in differing expectations and hopes for the future.³ Whether we regard "1968" as a transition point to a postindustrial modernity, a revolution in the world system, a global revolutionary movement, or a conglomerate of national movements with similar characteristics, the transnational dimension of 1960s protest perceived by contemporaries was one of its crucial motors. This aspect is particularly distinguished in the following four areas: roots and cognitive orientation, personal and institutional networks, action repertoires, and alternative lifestyles and emotional dispositions.⁴

Roots and Cognitive Orientation

The roots of many of these movements reach back to the beginning of the 1960s and the previous decade, making a strong case for extending the general periodization to the "long 1960s," dating roughly from 1956 to 1977. In this book, "1968" thus stands as a metaphor used to capture the broad history of European protest and activism, encapsulated by events such as the Polish riots and Hungarian revolt of 1956 and the climax of political violence and terrorism in Germany and Italy in 1977 and afterwards, to name but a few examples. The late 1950s already saw the emergence of a transnational New Left that was significantly influenced by the international peace movement.⁵ Developed in British Leftist circles, the New Left was a distinctively European product that found its way across the Atlantic through, among others, the American sociologist C. Wright Mills, who popularized the concept with his "Letter to the New Left" in the fall of 1960.⁶ At the same time, several Socialist youth organizations from West Germany, France, Great Britain, Belgium, and the Netherlands, among others, formed an international New Left nucleus at International Union of Socialist Youth meetings and began loose cooperation. With the programmatic Port Huron Statement of 1962 by the American Students for a Democratic Society, the New Left also acquired its specific characteristics in the United States and continued to establish itself in a transatlantic framework. What united activists on both sides of the Atlantic was a departure from orthodox Marxism and its focus on the working class; a fundamental discontent with Cold War, its anti-Communism, the deterrence policy, and the threat of nuclear extinction; and a deep-seated frustration with the apathy, materialism, and capitalist competitiveness of their societies.

In Eastern Europe, in contrast, the worker's uprising in East Germany in 1953, as well as the riots in Poland in the summer and the Hungarian revolt in the fall of 1956, had already highlighted the potential magnitude of dissatisfaction in the Warsaw Pact states. Although the de-Stalinization policies of Krushchev had promised limited liberalization, the Kremlin's grip on its satellite states in Eastern Europe remained firm and only allowed very narrow niches for any forms of dissent throughout the 1960s. Dissenters either articulated their demands on the basis of the official ideology of their countries' Communist parties or opposed Soviet ideologies with the classical works of Marx and Lenin—references to their harsh living conditions or their lack of democratic participation. The opportunities for these expressions, however, depended heavily on the lenience the individual governments were willing to grant and differed substantially from country to country. Whereas in Czechoslovakia the reform movement of the Prague

Spring brought a liberalization from above, party officials in East Germany were unyielding toward any modifications of the party line. In nonaligned Yugoslavia, in contrast, protesters enjoyed relative freedom to express their criticism of society and the shortcomings of both Eastern and Western regimes.

Across Europe, the stumbling blocks for the conflicts between young activists and state institutions were thus strikingly different. Even though anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and international solidarity were diffuse but common elements of the cognitive orientation of these movements, specific national issues generally determined the characteristics of protesters. In Belgium, the dominance of the French language in the Flemish university of Leuven triggered major protests among Flemish students, which had a strong nationalist current. In Italy, and even more in Germany, activists turned their anger on their parents' Fascist past. In Greece and Spain, the dictatorships of the colonels and of General Franco were the main targets of criticism.

Personal and Institutional Networks

Transnational networks between activists from different countries were nonetheless an essential factor in the European dimension of 1960s/1970s protests. Mediated exchange between student organizations from all over Europe led to a permanent diffusion of ideas, with networks such as the Underground Press Syndicate intensifying the spread of new concepts and symbolic forms. Events such as the International Vietnam Congress in Berlin in 1968 gave activists from all over Europe and other parts of the world the opportunity to meet and share their experiences while at the same time discussing their views on forms and tactics of protest. As platforms for international solidarity between the various youth movements, these events also gave activists the opportunity not only to present transnational solutions for what they perceived as global problems, such as capitalism and imperialism, but also to help prepare a global revolutionary strategy that would result in a revolutionary transformation of the Cold War system.

Despite similar political concerns and countercultural inspirations, however, national and regional idiosyncrasies were still pervasive. Whereas activists in Western Europe frequently attacked the United States for its imperialist interventions, most notably in Vietnam, dissenters in Eastern Europe often used American cultural items such as music or clothing to voice their grievances. Although the young generation in Eastern Europe, for example, welcomed efforts such as the Prague Spring, it was partially denounced as reformist by their Western counterparts. International encounters, often tightly controlled or manipulated by Eastern European authorities, occasionally illustrated these differences in ideological concepts and political realities. Events like the

World Youth Festival in Sofia in 1968 displayed the deep trenches between the leftist ideologies among the European movements: the Czech and the West German delegations were fiercely offended by representatives of more dogmatic Communist and Socialist delegations from Bulgaria, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Germany. The many international contacts and meetings between European activists therefore did not always lead to tight and permanent networks transcending national borders but could equally showcase the dissent among activists triggered by the antagonisms of the Cold War.⁷

Action Repertoires

A major effect of these personal and institutional networks, however, was the rapid spread and mixture of new forms and tactics of protest that clearly distinguished the protest movements of "1968" from their historical predecessors. Students held teach-ins to generate a critical public in egalitarian discussions, go-in activists put forward their claims to ensure their participation in the debates and decision-making processes of the authorities, and anti-ritualism aimed at disturbing the order of everyday life and suspending the social cohesion constructed in conventional ritual performances. Whereas the roots of direct action strategies lay in the African American civil rights movement and the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley, other features such as *détournement*, happening, and subversive anti-ritualism were inspired by aesthetic avantgardist and neoavantgardist movements from Europe such as surrealism, Situationism, and Provo.

Moreover, these forms of direct action were not just appellative and symbolic expressions of dissent addressed to the public. In fact, their goal was to change the activists themselves. By exposing the often hostile response of society and the authorities, direct actions were designed to raise protesters' awareness of society's "repressive" character. In addition, these protest techniques served as anticipations of the new society: Activists acted as if the norms of the actual society had been temporarily suspended, and by autonomously following their own rules, they were prefiguring the alternative society they envisioned.

Even though these protest techniques were only selectively adopted by the various national protest movements according to the different opportunity structures of their countries, they formed a widespread resource for mobilization and thereby markedly amplified the action repertoire of 1968's activists in Eastern and Western Europe.

Alternative Lifestyles and Emotional Dispositions

The rise of alternative lifestyles and countercultures as additional forms of dissent was another truly transnational aspect of the protest movements in the late 1960s and 1970s. A global popular culture, inspired by new aesthetics emerging in art, music, film, architecture, graphic design, and fashion, joined with hippie ideologies and lifestyles and melted into a set of symbolic forms, which became an infinite resource of mobilization in both the East and the West. Long hair, beards, colorful and exotic clothes, casual behavior, and a hedonistic search for pleasure and ostentatious informality became distinctive marks of a rebelling youth. The youths' belief that they were more sentient than their parents' generation, and the hope of building a new society founded on tenderness met with the search for the "new man" in psychedelic music and drug experiences, in "free" sexuality, and in new forms of living and communication. The synaesthetic nature of rock music served as the colorful display and global transmitter of these new symbolic forms of living and communication. Portraits of musicians like Jimi Hendrix promised the same freedom as the images of Che Guevara or Ho Chi Minh, the only difference being that their freedom could be gained in the here and now.

Meanwhile, these new symbolic forms of living and communication often provoked conflicts with both conservative elements in societies and state authorities and thus acquired a political dimension. Concerts by the Rolling Stones or Jimi Hendrix often ended in outbreaks of violence. In Zurich, the riots succeeding the "Monster Concerts" in the late spring of 1968 triggered political protest against the brutal intervention of the police and hardened the antagonism between youths and the local authorities. Given the limited room for dissent in the dictatorial regimes of Eastern Europe, young people often used these aspects of Western popular culture to voice their grievances. Communist authorities, however, met long hair, unconventional clothing, and beat music with suppression and interpreted it as a dangerous deviance from state ideology and as symbols of Western decadence.

Drawing on a variety of these transnational orientations, even the U.S. Department of State concluded in 1969 that student protest in Europe was not a "national phenomenon" anymore but had become "European in character."⁸ A profound identity crisis and fundamental disaffection with the existing political system would continue to spur youthful activism and was beginning to occupy a firm place in all European societies: "Armed with a sophisticated knowledge of society's ills at an earlier age than ever before, more and more European young people are becoming actively hostile towards the prevailing values of their elders and towards the official government ideology in both East and West Europe. Evidence in several countries—notably

France, Germany and Eastern Europe—indicates that radicalism has taken root in secondary schools where it was never known before. This is an important indication of what can be expected from future student generations.”⁹

Feeling that most of the current student dissident leaders would occupy influential political positions in the future, a transformation in the domestic political landscape and social fabric of European countries seemed to be the natural consequence.

Nobody today seriously doubts that European societies were fundamentally transformed as a result of the events of “1968.” As many eyewitnesses of this “miraculous” year start to reflect on their own lives, the turbulent events of the 1960s and 1970s are slowly passing into the continent’s cultural memory. When closely examining the politics of memory involved in this process, it is remarkable to see that in almost all European countries, the actual historical events have been transformed by subsequent narratives illustrating a vast array of nostalgia, condemnation, and myth-making. On the one hand, “1968” is blamed for the disintegration of traditional family structures—an atomization of society or even terrorism; on the other hand, it is used as a foundational date for a greater liberalization and democratization of society and for the enlargement of individual freedoms and as a forerunner for the fall of Communism in 1989.¹⁰ As Kristin Ross has rightly pointed out with respect to the French May, the “afterlives” of “1968” have developed a life of their own.¹¹

This book and the online and teaching guide that accompanies it provide a starting point for the historical events and the legacy they formed and for an analysis of their afterlives on both a national level and European level.¹² The goal is to inspire further examinations of the significance of “1968” for Europe as a whole, both in terms of memory culture but also as “a transnational moment of crisis and opportunity.”¹³ Although it can only provide a limited window into the panorama of European experiences, the book is intended to contextualize the protest movements and cultures of “1968” within larger political processes and sociocultural transformations of post-war European history. Reflecting on the legacy of this year, German philosopher Hannah Arendt wrote from New York on June 26, 1968, to her colleague Karl Jaspers in Basel the following lines: “It seems to me that the children of the next century will once learn about 1968 the way we learned about 1848.”¹⁴ In this sense, the events of “1968” can be considered not only as a critical juncture in the history of the Cold War and the twentieth century but also as occupying a prominent place in the annals of transnational revolutionary projects. In both cases, their messages and reverberations are still with us today.

Notes

1. Participants included Tariq Ali (Great Britain), Daniel Cohn-Bendit (France), Lewis Cole (United States), Alan Geismar (France), Leo Nauweds (Belgium), Alberto Martin de Hijas (Spain), Yasuo Ishii (Japan), Jan Kavan (Czechoslovakia), Ekkehard Krippendorff (West Germany), Luca Meldolesi (Italy), Dragana Stavijel (Yugoslavia), Karl-Dietrich Wolff (West Germany).
2. Most of the literature on 1968 in this respect focuses on the Western world and only rarely puts forward an integrative, transnational perspective. The very few decidedly transnational studies of 1968 to date are Massimo Teodori, *Storia delle nuove sinistre in Europa, 1956–1976* (Bologna: Mulino, 1976); Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, *Die 68er-Bewegung: Deutschland, Westeuropa, USA* (Munich: Beck, 2001); Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Martin Klimke, *The "Other" Alliance: Global Protest and Student Unrest in West Germany and the U.S., 1962–1972* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, forthcoming). However, pointing in this direction are Etienne Francois, *1968: Ein europäisches Jahr?* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1997); Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958–c. 1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Gerd-Rainer Horn and Padraic Kenney, *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, ed., *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960–1980* (New York: Berghahn, 2006). For other comparative or global approaches see Gianni Statera, *Death of a Utopia: The Development and Decline of Student Movements in Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston, Mass.: South End Press, 1987); Ronald Fraser, *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (New York: Pantheon, 1988); Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Carole Fink et al., eds., *1968: A World Transformed* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For a chronology of the year itself, see David Caute, *The Year of the Barricades: A Journey through 1968* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988); Susan Watkins and Tariq Ali, *1968: Marching in the Streets* (New York: Free Press, 1998).
3. Eric Hobsbawm, "The Year the Prophets Failed," in: Eugene Atget and Laure Beaumont-Maillet, ed., *1968 The Magnum Photographs: A Year in the World* (Paris: Magnum Photos/Editions Hazan, 1998), 8–10.
4. Alain Touraine, *La Société post-industrielle* (Paris: Denoel, 1969); Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society. A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Immanuel Wallerstein, "1968—Revolution im Weltsystem," in: Etienne François, et al., eds., *1968—Ein europäisches Jahr?* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1997), 19–33.
5. See the chapter by Michael Frey in this volume.
6. C. Wright Mills, "Letter to the New Left," *New Left Review* 5 (September/October 1960): 18–23. Also see the chapter by Madeleine Davis in this volume.

7. For an illustration with respect to the Czechoslovakian reception of the West German, Italian, and Polish movements see Paulina Bren, "1968 in East and West: Visions of Political Change and Student Protest," in: Horn and Kenney, *Transnational Moments*, 119–135.
8. Dean Rusk to all European diplomatic and consular posts, "Student Unrest: Roundup of EUR Posts' Reporting," Department of State, January 14, 1969, 3, in: NSF, Intelligence File, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
9. "Bonn Conference Of Embassy and USIS Officers On Youth and Change in Europe," Conference Report, Bonn, June 11–13, 1969, 3 f., in: RG 59, IAYC Records, NA. For more on official U.S. reaction to "1968" see Klimke, *The Other Alliance*, passim.
10. See the chapter by Philipp Gassert in this volume.
11. Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1.
12. The online and teaching guide to this book can be found at <http://www.1968in europe.com> and includes further information on sources, teaching aids, and related literature, as well as comprehensive chronologies prepared by Rolf Werenskjold on "1968" in various European countries. We are indebted to Rebekka Weinel and Marten Deuter for the creation and maintenance of this Web site. Furthermore, we especially want to thank Thea Brophy for her invaluable support, skill, and enthusiasm in completing this volume.
13. Horn, *The Spirit of '68*, 4.
14. Lotte Köhler and Hans Saner, ed., *Hannah Arendt–Karl Jaspers. Briefwechsel 1926–1969* (München: Piper, 1993), 715 f. (translation by the author).