

FEATURES

The long-time anti-fascist campaigner is glad to see the back of the neo-Nazi leader Colin Jordan, who died earlier this month, but warns that his influence and racist ideology lives on in the activities of today's far-right extremists

My running battles with Britain's Nazi godfather

BY GERRY GABLE



► COLIN JORDAN, who died this month aged 85, never escaped the margins of the British extreme right and never had more than a few hundred followers in any of the parties he led. Yet the tradition he represented remains an important

influence on today's British National Party.

The high point of Jordan's career as a political leader was when he mounted the platform at the National Socialist rally he had organised in Trafalgar Square on 1 July, 1962. Behind him, a massive banner bore the words "Free Britain From Jewish Control" and "Britain Awake", echoing the slogans of Hitler's Third Reich.

Wearing the uniform of his National Socialist Movement's (NSM) paramilitary force Spearhead — brown shirt, military boots and pagan sunwheel symbol armband — he spat abuse at some 5,000 people in the square. Only around 800 were neo-Nazis, attracted by the NSM's hatred for Jews and democracy. There were also some 4,200 opponents, of whom I was one.



PHOTOS: SEARCHLIGHT

By the time the police intervened to arrest the speakers, a riot was under way. Many of the neo-Nazis were injured.

Later that year Jordan and his core officers, including John Tyndall, his second-in-command, who went on to lead the National Front and found today's British National Party, were convicted at the Old Bailey for organising and equipping a paramilitary force for political ends. Jordan was jailed for nine months. Among the material seized by the police was a canister of chemicals for making bombs with the words "Jew killer" on the outside.

As a result of the encounter in Trafalgar Square, a group of us formed the 62 Group, consisting of veterans of the 43 Group who battled against Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists and a new generation of Jewish anti-fascists. We were motivated by the belief that the neo-Nazi threat had to be fought in a sophisticated and effective manner.

From the start, the 62 Group was an intelligence-led militant organisation. My job was to recruit and train agents to infiltrate all the British neo-Nazi groups. We were also successful at turning some of their key members around to become informants. In the following months whenever Jordan's thugs appeared, selling the NSM's broadsheet, *The National Socialist*, they were physically driven off the streets.

I clashed with Jordan in public on many occasions. Once he arrived at Downing Street with a summons for the then Prime Minister Harold Wilson. When he knocked at No. 10, he was told "He's out" and the door was slammed in his face. Jordan was followed out of Downing Street by myself and other members of the press corps, laughing loudly at his discomfort. He then started to abuse me in particular, shouting how he was going to put all Jews in camps when he came to power. A few minutes later he was arrested, and the eventual conviction added to his long criminal record.

Many years later I had a long phone conversation with him about the way he had been forced out of British Movement by his rival Michael McLaughlin. Despite all the threats over the years and our work in getting him and his followers sent to prison, he was prepared to talk to me about a "common enemy".

Nonetheless, he still tried to sue me and *Searchlight* magazine as recently as last year for describing him as a terrorist for his role in arson attacks on Jewish



Colin Jordan (holding raincoat), his wife Françoise and supporters give a Nazi salute outside Marylebone Magistrates' Court in 1963

buildings in the 1960s. At the time, it was 62 Group intelligence officers who had uncovered the perpetrators of the attacks, and Jordan's wife, the French heiress Françoise Dior, a niece of the fashion designer, was convicted after a trial at the Old Bailey. Jordan was not charged, despite having prior knowledge of at least one of the arsons. When we at *Searchlight* made clear it that we had documented evidence to back up our "terrorist" claim and would fight any lawsuit every inch of the way, we never heard another word from him.

From his university days, Jordan followed the political ideas of Arnold Leese, who led the pre-war Imperial Fascist League and as early as 1928 had advocated the gassing of Jews.

In 1956 he formed the White Defence League, and four years later merged the group with the hardline National Labour Party to form the original British National Party.

In January 1962, he and Tyndall split to form the National Socialist Movement. In 1968, the NSM was reformed as the openly Nazi British Movement. Jordan led that organisation until 1975, when he was convicted and fined for stealing three pairs of red knickers from Tesco. His credibility damaged, he passed on the leadership to McLaughlin, a Liverpool milkman.

Although Jordan denounced other British Fascist leaders as cowardly or corrupt, he was widely revered on the far right as the godfather of British Nazism. In common with several academics, I consider that the BNP today is heavily influenced by his ideas.

Back in 1962, Jordan, together with American Nazi Party boss George Lincoln Rockwell, held a weekend camp at Temple Guiting in the Cotswolds, attended by neo-Nazis from around Europe.

There Rockwell and Jordan hammered out the

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**Jordan
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Cotswold Declaration. Its statement of the "modern national socialist worldview" contained principles that have similarities with the ideology of the BNP in 2009.

For much of his political career, Jordan advocated the formation of an elite national socialist "vanguard" to carry out "guerrilla activities" to "break down" the current system until the time was ready for "the physical seizure of state power by our people".

The current BNP leader Nick Griffin has echoed this in speeches, by talking about the coming civil war. After the BNP's failure to win seats in the last European election, Griffin hinted loudly in his writings about the possibility of turning away from the ballot box and looking for other means.

More frighteningly, Robert Cottage, a one-time BNP candidate, was sent to prison for stockpiling the largest quantity of chemicals to create bombs ever uncovered by the police on mainland Britain. In his statement on arrest he said he had put this material together to prepare for a race war.

Despite all his bravado, Jordan was a coward. When irate villagers attacked his camp at Temple Guiting, he ran away; when a rally in Caxton Hall, London, was stormed, he locked himself in a toilet until the fighting was over.

Pathetic certainly, yet dangerous, and his influence remains a force for evil which we must guard against.

Gerry Gable is an investigative journalist who has been campaigning against the far right for 50 years. He publishes the anti-fascist magazine Searchlight which has just launched its Hope not Hate campaign against the BNP to coincide with the upcoming European elections