

**Plus ça change!**  
**The Fascist Pedigree of the Nouvelle Droite**

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Plus ça change!  
The Fascist Pedigree of the Nouvelle Droite

The taxonomic problem posed by the Nouvelle Droite

Ever since its foundation in January 1968 there has been considerable uncertainty about where to locate the Nouvelle Droite (ND) in political space. Scholars are still divided over whether in its hey-day of the 1970s and 1980s it legitimately fell into the remit of students of right-wing extremism in general and fascism in particular. Using insights drawn from recent developments in the scholarly understanding of fascism as a generic ideology, this essay argues that at the height of its fame the ND had indeed retained much of fascism's mythic foundations and groundplan despite the extensive structural alterations and redecoration it had carried out to the visible ideological edifice. It also considers the relevance to an evaluation of the contemporary ND, now that it has apparently adopted a low profile as an active participant even in 'meta-political' debate, of a particular stance consciously assumed by some neo-fascists concerning the tactics to be applied in a post-war climate inhospitable to fascism. It will suggest that some representatives of the ND may have assumed this stance to camouflage their continuing fidelity to an extreme right-wing mindset and network of affiliations, and applied this ploy so successfully that their democratic credentials are sometimes vouched for even by the most astute observers of the ND's evolution.

The newcomer to scholarly literature on the ND soon encounters radically diverging assessments of its significance. For example, *Neo-Fascism in Europe* (1991) (subsequently called *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe* for the second edition) includes a chapter by Douglas Johnson on the 'French New Right', but one which delivers no clear verdict as to its core political identity. It ends on an ambiguous note by commenting that the ND had by the early 1990s become 'a centre of confusion' — though whether the confusion is in the minds of the ND's ideologues or its critics is not made clear — and concludes with the suggestion that its denial of allegations of 'anti-Semitism, negationism [Holocaust denial] and Pétainism' means that it is 'lost in a welter of self-justification which weakens whatever message it still intends to put forward in the future'.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand forty 'French and European intellectuals' felt sufficiently alarmed by the ND's association with former communist theorists in the pages of its reviews to publish 'An Appeal to Vigilance' in *Le Monde* on 13 July 1993 alleging that it posed a serious threat to democracy. This judgement was upheld in the same issue by Roger-Pol Droit, who warned of the danger of 'the alliance between a few militant communists and neo-fascism', or what he called 'national Bolshevism', specifically referring to de Benoist's attempt to 'cover his tracks' by blurring the difference between Left and Right. A year later the Appeal was republished as an advert with an additional 1,500 signatures.<sup>2</sup>

As for the ND's own spokesmen, they are, as Douglas Johnson points out, adamant in repudiating such insinuations of extreme right or fascist associations. Alain de Benoist's indignant reaction to the inclusion of a text from his anthology of essays *Les Idées à l'endroit* (1979) in my Reader *Fascism* may be taken as typical. In his letter of protest he claims that the ND is motivated by the need to rethink contemporary values in a spirit which is profoundly anti-fascist, anti-nationalist, anti-totalitarian, and anti-racist.<sup>3</sup> If this were true, the ND would represent an innovative source of cultural criticism which would have no place in a collection of essays on the radical right. Certainly the political analyst Paul Piccone is prepared to endorse

such a claim, condemning such allegations of the ND's extremism as perversely wide of the mark, and stating that 'What makes the French new right particularly interesting is that it does not merely propose a bizarre reversal of positions but the end of the traditional contraposition of Left and Right in favour of a new political paradigm.'<sup>4</sup>

However, talk of the ND as a 'new political paradigm' does not convince Marco Revelli, one of Italy's leading experts on contemporary political movements. He argues that the emergence of the European New Right is partly explained by the opportunism of right-wing intellectuals who saw the chance to fill the ideological space created by the collapse of the radical Left as the principal source of a sustained critique of (capitalist) modernity. His verdict is that it has been unable to break out of its self-appointed role as a form of 'metapolitical' speculation. In other words it has proved incapable of 'inventing forms of articulation at the level of practical politics either nationally or internationally, or even, when all is said and done, of producing really original culture (the intellectual Pantheon it fields are almost all located between the beginning of the century and the early 1930s)'. Hence 'This right-wing culture is condemned to provide an "ornament" to modernity, [...] deprived of any capacity to act as a true opposition to it.'<sup>5</sup>

### An ideal type of fascism

Aside from its colloquial usage as a term of abuse for anything that smacks of authoritarianism, 'fascism' is a notoriously problematic concept when attempts are made to apply it to political phenomena outside Italy. To resolve the issue of the ND's relationship to fascism (and if it is demonstrably fascist then the issue of its relationship with the equally contentious term 'extreme right' can be safely sidestepped), an ideal type of fascism is needed. Until recently the acute lack of consensus which prevailed outside the Marxist camp on the most heuristically useful definition of this term would have made pronouncements by any one commentator on the subject highly controversial. However, the last few years have arguably seen the emergence of a nascent consensus among a number of experts working in the field of fascist studies. Despite some inevitable idiosyncrasies, they all converge on the premise that the most fruitful approach to studying generic fascism is one which treats it as a revolutionary form of ultra-nationalism, one whose mobilizing myth (in a Sorelian sense) is the vision of the nation's rebirth in a post-liberal new order which will put an end to a period of acute decline and decadence.<sup>6</sup>

My particular variant of this consensus definition stresses the populist thrust of fascism's regenerationist crusade, which ideally wants to integrate all 'genuine' members of the national community within the process of rebirth so as to create a 'new man' (even when the movement is pioneered and orchestrated by a small elite), and uses the term 'palingenesis' to refer to the recurrent image of the rejuvenated nation arising phoenix-like from the old order. The elusive 'fascist minimum' is thus reducible to the formula 'palingenetic populist ultra-nationalism'.<sup>7</sup>

The salient points about this definition (which, it should be stressed, as a consciously constructed 'ideal type' has nothing essentialist about it) are that: i) fascism becomes a much broader category than one primarily embracing the historical experience of Fascism, Nazism, or any of the inter-war movements commonly associated with it; ii) fascism is identified according to exclusively ideological criteria, and not in terms of the style, practices, policies, or institutions of particular movements or regimes; iii) the component term 'ultra-nationalism' embraces a wide gamut of anti-liberal nationalisms, ranging from those focusing on the historically evolved 'nation-state' to those concerned to preserve a particular 'ethnie', as well as a broad range of ways the nation/ethnie is conceived, admitting 'imaginings' fleshed out in 'merely' historical,

cultural, as well as in biological and eugenic terms (though these too often subsume cultural, 'spiritual' components); iv) it does not preclude forms of fascism with a supra-national or international dimension: internationalist fascism arises naturally from the fact that many fascist ideologues see the rebirth of their particular nation/*ethnie* as a local triumph over forces of decadence which prevail internationally or even globally, a vision which allows for alliances with parallel movements in other countries.

One major advantage of the new consensus over approaches which take the external traits of Fascism or Fascism-Nazism as the basis of their paradigm is that it allows scholars to track the way fascism's core myth continues to be perpetuated within certain political or cultural movements, despite the radical, and sometimes genuinely innovative, changes that they introduce to its surface ideological rationalizations and outward expressions. Its major disadvantage is that it applies to anti-liberal forms of rebirth myth which are far removed from Fascism or Nazism in their specific diagnosis of contemporary history, and have nothing to do with paramilitary formations, mass rallies, racial hatred, street violence, and leader cults. Given that fascism is a highly emotive word steeped in Nazi connotations, to use it about forms of thought which are genuinely anti-Nazi can give rise to confusion and provoke righteous indignation. I should therefore stress here that 'fascism' in this paper does NOT denote any direct link with historical Fascism and Nazism, which were two distinct manifestations of an ideological genus which can assume many different forms.

#### The ND and the revision of fascist ideology

By the mid-1950s it was becoming increasingly recognized in some European neo-fascist circles that the defeat of the Axis powers had signalled the end of an era, and that it was now necessary to overhaul conventional fascist ideology comprehensively rather than piecemeal if it was to survive as a credible alternative to liberal democracy. The enormous human and material cost of the Second World War and the calculated atrocities committed by the Third Reich on an unprecedented scale gave fascist militarism, hyper-patriotism, racism, and promises of a 'new order' appalling connotations in the public mind. In addition, the rapid stabilization and growing prosperity of Western democracies quickly removed the prevalent sense of a generalized crisis of liberalism and civilization itself in which ultra-nationalism along with its fascist permutations had thrived between the wars. An even more basic issue was raised in some minds by the defeat of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany as military powers. Their catastrophic fate could be seen as calling into question the primacy of politics itself, namely the basic premise of 'armed parties' such as Mussolini's PNF and Hitler's NSDAP that a new national culture could be instigated through the semi-legal seizure of political power and the creation of a new state. As a result, some fascist revisionists sought ways to reorient their strategies for national rebirth away from forms of politics which were overtly charismatic, chauvinist, paramilitary, massifying, and centred on the cult of the leader. This meant that it was necessary to develop a fascist discourse which, while retaining the core paligenetic myth, was clearly dissociated from Nazism or Fascism and the state-orchestrated manifestations of imperialism, xenophobia, and intolerance which they had so devastatingly unleashed on Europe up to 1945.

In France, which at the level of publicism rather than movements has one of the richest traditions of extreme right-wing cultural production in Europe, the crisis of fascism had by the early 1960s taken on specific contours. The discrediting of collaborationist fascism in the wake of her 'liberation' by the Allies, the country's defeat in the Algerian War (1954-62), the evident impotence of the traditional Maurrassian and Vichy nationalist right to affect the status quo, and

the increasing ideological sophistication and influence of the Euro-communist Left, caused some fascist intellectuals to undertake a major rethink. One of the best known results of this process was Maurice Bardèche's *Qu'est-ce que le fascisme?* (1961), which celebrates fascism's bid to create a healthy new type of society in various European nations before the war, and identifies as its central goal in the post-war era the creation of a new Europe freed from the pernicious influence of the USA and Soviet Empire, already a theme of some currents of inter-war fascism.<sup>8</sup> Another sign of the times was the journal *Europe-Action* (1962-7), which became the main vehicle for Dominique Venner's attempts to reorient fascism away from its abortive inter-war expressions. His article *Pour une critique positive* (1962), in some respects a fascist equivalent of Lenin's *What Is to be Done?*, was an influential call for a French ultra-nationalism to be rooted in a Europeanist framework and provided with a new ideological rationale.<sup>9</sup>

Pierre-André Taguieff has scrupulously documented how the ND originally came into being as an attempt to answer calls of the kind being made by Venner for a radical overhaul of fascist ideology.<sup>10</sup> Between 1968 and 1987 the ND's revision of fascism proceeded on two premises. The first was the adoption of the theory of the primacy of cultural over political hegemony originally formulated by the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci, appropriately enough to explain to fellow-Marxists the establishment of Fascism in Italy despite the lack of the objective material circumstances to win power.<sup>11</sup> As a result of operating a 'right-wing Gramscism' the fascist assault on liberal democracy was conceived no longer in terms of a paramilitary putsch or of the forging of a populist movement powerful enough in its electoral guise to become the Trojan horse with which to penetrate the citadel of state power, but as an attempt to take over the 'laboratories of thinking'.<sup>12</sup> The second premise, a corollary of the first, was the translation of the recurrent *topoi* of inter-war fascist thought into a 'new' discourse deliberately conceived as 'metapolitical' (i.e. one which spumed the forum of party-political or paramilitary agitation). In February 1969 GRECE (Groupement de recherche et d'études pour la civilisation européenne), the principal think-tank behind this strategy, apparently circulated a Confidential Internal Bulletin contained a paragraph which can be taken as a euphemistic warning to those writing for its main organ *Nouvelle École* to avoid explicitly fascist ideas: 'It is necessary to be very prudent in the conclusions which are drawn in *Nouvelle École*. It is equally necessary to be prudent in the vocabulary used. In particular it is necessary to abandon an outdated vocabulary.'<sup>13</sup>

To simplify drastically the complex ideological transformation which occurred over the next two decades, the ND revised the goals of 'classic' (inter-war) fascism in five main areas:

- 1 The pluralistic, multi-cultural society of liberal democracy was to give way, not to a culturally coordinated, charismatic, and, in the case of Nazism, racially pure, national community coterminous with the nation-state, but to an alliance of homogeneous ethnic-cultural communities (*ethnies*) within the framework of a federalist European 'empire'.
- 2 'Western' forms of democracy based (at least in theory) on universal human rights,<sup>14</sup> equality, and individualism were to be replaced, not by a single-party authoritarian state under a charismatic leader, but by the democracy of an 'organic community' and respect of natural inequality.<sup>15</sup>
- 3 The cosmopolitanism, atomization, rootlessness, and anomie of the modern age were to be overcome, not through a xenophobic crusade to revitalize the sources of authentic national culture and recapture the era of national greatness which allegedly existed before the process of national decline set in, but through the celebration of all authentic cultures in a purportedly xenophile, 'differentialist' spirit, i.e. based on a cult not of superiority but of difference.<sup>16</sup>
- 4 The specifically Nazi obsession with the decay of the Aryan race brought about by

Jews, whether through Judeo-Christian humanism or cultural Bolshevism, gave way to the sense that a highly variegated Indo-European culture has been all but lost. This decay of authentic 'Europeanness' was to be presented as the result of the pernicious influence, not only of the decadent forces universally recognized by 'classic' fascism (cosmopolitanism, secularization, individualism, materialism, Marxism), but also of Judeo-Christianity. This alleged source of European decline, which demonstrated the strong influence of Nietzschean thought on the ND, had been attacked only by the more overtly pagan forms of classic fascism, though the corrupting impact of the Jewish spirit on Western society has, of course, been an integral part of the credo of all its anti-Semitic forms.

Decadence was also to be attributed to two forces particularly prominent in the post-war era: first, multi-culturalism and multi-ethnicity, perceived as undermining originally homogeneous cultural and ethnic identities; and second, economic and cultural globalization, conceived as a new form of totalitarianism based on Western ethnocentrism. In this way, liberal democracy and capitalism, which in the inter-war period were attacked as decadent because of the overt crisis they were undergoing, could be presented as decadent precisely because of their apparent success, namely the stability and hegemony they have achieved.<sup>17</sup>

- 5 The Third Way between liberalism and Bolshevism, which in the inter-war period was imagined as a political, economic, militaristic, and ultra-nationalistic new order, was to be replaced by a Third Way conceived in primarily cultural, social, and anthropological terms, one which embraced a Third World and ecological dimension, and placed a new stress on ending the Left/Right dichotomy by fusing 'healthy' elements in the anti-systemic criticism of both.<sup>18</sup> Such a strategy had become particularly attractive as a way of widening support for the ND since the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the resulting crisis in the radical Left's credibility as source of plausible alternative to the status quo.<sup>19</sup>

Thanks to the remarkably prolific scholarly and publicistic activity of its leading ideologues, notably Alain de Benoist himself who in 1993 claimed to have written twenty-five books and more than 5,000 articles,<sup>20</sup> the ND could by the end of the 1980s be credited with the not inconsiderable achievement of having carried out a 'make-over' of classic fascist discourse so successfully that, at least on the surface it was changed beyond recognition. Indeed, many intellectuals of both Centre and Left appear to have been thoroughly thrown off the scent. For the narrow, chauvinistic ultra-nationalism, the primacy of politics, the (para-)militarism, the mass-mobilizing populism so familiar in interwar fascism, as well as the biological racism of its most virulent manifestation, Nazism, had been substituted the project of creating a federalist Europe made up of 'organically' democratic *ethnies*. It was a vision expounded with a stress on the primacy of culture, and a pronounced intellectualism and elitism far removed from the realm of street violence, opportunist party politics, and the mass liturgy of fascism in the inter-war period when it operated as a civic religion engaged in mortal combat with liberalism and communism, one fought with arms which were not just theoretical and verbal, but made of barbed-wire and high explosive.

Nevertheless, the basic mindset of ND ideologues in the period 1970-90 still remained both palingenetic and ultra-nationalist, and hence, at least in terms of our ideal type, fascist. The subtext of their writings was the levelling, 'reductionist', difference-eroding, 'ethnocidal' thrust of the modern era, and the need to close the present decadent cycle of history so as to inaugurate a new age. Its extravagant display of erudition (so typical of autodidacts free from the trammels of

professional academic rigour) was not geared to increase the passive understanding of the world, but to changing it. Its driving force was a complex, highly syncretic cosmology structured round the vision of the present decay and future regeneration of Europe conceived as a common homeland for distinctive *ethnies*.<sup>21</sup>

If the foregoing still fails to convince, and smacks of a hysterical overreaction to an intellectually challenging and politically innocent 'new paradigm', I invite the reader to think through the practical consequences of ND thought once the 'meta-' has been taken out of its metapolitics (not that many ND ideologues would dream of doing such a thing and thereby risk dirtying their hands or consciences by responsibility for actions inspired by their 'pure' speculation). Any attempt to realize the utopia of a European federation of culturally homogeneous 'ethnies' based on 'organic' democracy, rooted in a 'pre-Judeo-Christian' cosmology, and freed from the corrosive effects of multi-culturalism and globalization, would in practice involve social engineering by an autocratic (super-)state pursuing policies of cultural and ethnic homogenization and exclusion. These policies, even if different in their rationale from the genocide attempted by the Nazis and the 'ethnic cleansing' carried out in the former Yugoslavia, would deliberately set out to reverse the effects of many decades of liberal pluralism, multi-culturalism, multi-ethnicity, secularization, and individualism. The quest to restore 'difference', 'identity', and a pagan sense of the sacred on the basis of a claimed xenophilia would inevitably turn nationalism into ultra-nationalism, and introduce measures of social control and ideological indoctrination hardly distinguishable in their effects from those which have been adopted by various states in the twentieth century on the basis of organized xenophobia. For the umpteenth time in the modern age, the attempted implementation of a utopia would have produced a dystopia. Moreover it would have been a utopia based on radical right-wing values, no matter how many 'left-wing' elements had been incorporated within it.

The ND's appropriation of the 'Conservative Revolution' as a form of fascist revisionism

In rationalizing their paligenetic scheme of history, the ND's thinkers have scrupulously avoided not only dealing with the 'vulgar' sphere of practical politics, but also drawing on authors too directly associated with Fascism, Nazism or other inter-war fascist movements. Instead they seek legitimation for their intellectual *jihad* against the hegemonic assumptions of modernity from two main sources. One is provided by the arsenals of the human sciences, which in a spirit of rampant eclecticism are raided whatever the particular discipline or ideology they represent (e.g. biology, anthropology, psychology, economics, philosophy; Marxism, situationism, decisionism, Traditionalism) in order to invoke the authority of ideologues and thinkers of any provenance (e.g. Nietzsche, Koestler, Gramsci, Lorenz, Evola<sup>22</sup>) susceptible of being enlisted in the front-line of the 'cultural war' against egalitarianism and reductionism. The classic example of such eclecticism is Alain de Benoist's *Vu de Droite* (Copernic, Paris, 1977).<sup>23</sup> One of these arsenals is so central to ND thinking that it can be treated as constituting a source of its authority in its own right, namely the 'Conservative Revolution' (CR). This is the collective term used by Armin Mohler in the book of the same name to cover a formidable array both of German artists who celebrated authentically 'German' values and of German intellectuals who nurtured projects for Germany's cultural renewal in a spirit profoundly antagonistic to the liberal democratic principles which informed the Weimar Republic. The classification of the CR as a variant of fascism in the light of the ideal type being used in this chapter is crucial to a recognition of the fascist nature of the ND's basic mindset.<sup>24</sup>

Because the CR was a 'purely' literary and intellectual phenomenon made up of highly

idiosyncratic figures who in most cases spurned direct association with political movements, let alone formal membership of the NSDAP, only definitions of fascism which are primarily ideological and focus on common denominators at the level of a shared mythic core underlying highly diverse world-views will treat it as a putative fascist phenomenon. It is nevertheless significant that, even if they do not offer a definition of fascism, the authors of the German Verfassungsschutzbericht (Report on the Defence of the Constitution) who monitor Left and Right-wing extremism — defined as overtly anti-systemic ideologies, and hence beyond the realm of the merely 'radical' Left and Right — include the CR in their report. To explain its basic thrust they quote the definition of Edgar Jung, one of the CR's outstanding representatives:

We call Conservative Revolution the reactivation of all those elementary laws and values without which man loses his relationship with nature and God and becomes incapable of constructing a true order. The place of equality is taken by inner value, mechanical election is replaced by the organic growth of leaders, instead of bureaucratic coercion there is the inner responsibility which comes with genuine self-direction, for the pleasure of the masses is substituted the right to *Volksgemeinschaft* [to belong to an organic national community].<sup>25</sup> volks

It is Armin Mohler, though, who provides the most convincing evidence for the CR's classification as a permutation of 'palingenetic ultra-nationalism', and hence of what we have ideal-typically defined as fascism. In a lengthy introduction to his 'Handbook' of the Conservative Revolution, an exhaustive annotated bibliography of writers germane to his theme, he dedicates a whole section to establishing the central motifs of CR thought. According to his own analysis this revolves around the ending of a cycle in an *Umschlag* (sudden metamorphosis) and rebirth which would finally close the 'interregnum' into which history has decayed since the end of the Second Reich.<sup>26</sup> As for the centrality of ultra-nationalism, Mohler himself characterizes the writers of the CR as the 'Trotskyites of the German Revolution', who longed to put an end to the Weimar Republic, not by resuscitating the Second Reich of the Wilhelminian age, but by moving forward to a nebulously conceived (but non-Nazi) 'Third Reich'. Moreover, the biography of several of the CR's outstanding representatives, notably Martin Heidegger, Gottfried Benn, and Carl Schmitt, reveals that they were prepared to serve the Nazi regime, even if only temporarily, while the works of others (Sombart, Jünger, Spengler) were appropriated by the Nazis for their own purposes, so compatible was their critique of various aspects of liberalism with the Nazi ethos.

What this analysis suggests is that the ND's constant recycling of CR thinking can be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to keep a fascist agenda of cultural, and eventually political, palingenesis alive in a way which conveniently bypasses its thoroughly discredited Nazi manifestations and confines itself strictly to the realm of the 'metapolitical'.<sup>27</sup> In this way actual events are relegated to being the epiphenomena of the 'real' structural processes and underlying forces which allegedly shape contemporary history. These are exposed in the teleological spirit of Hegel and Spengler, who had sated their urge to discern the grand design of history before the age of Popperian methodological scepticism and Derrida-esque deconstruction of 'grand narratives'. In terms of the impulse to affect the course of history through the power of ideas, however, the ND is closer to Marx and Nietzsche. Its compulsive cultural criticism and metapolitical analysis is carried out in a 'Gramscian' spirit in order to bring about a transvaluation of values in the cultural sphere and so prepare the ground for an eventual political *Umschlag*. This will betoken the end the 'interregnum' constituted by democracy and capitalism

in their contemporary forms and regenerate European societies by revitalizing the 'healthy' Indo-European elements still preserved in their cultural heritage. Though the specific contents of this vision and the tactics to realize it are quite different from those of Hitler, there is a structural affinity with the insistence in *Mein Kampf* that Germany's misfortunes since 1918 were due to the forces of 'decadence' and that her social and political rebirth depended on reactivating the healthy 'Aryan' elements which had remained within the 'Volkskörper', or body of the people.

Referring to the ND as 'fascist', let alone mentioning Hitler and the ND in the same breath, even in the highly circumspect and qualified terms employed in this chapter, would doubtless horrify a ND spokesperson. Yet in the light of the new consensus, its almost hagiographic respect for the major figures of the CR, taken together with its stress on 'cultural hegemony', can be seen as part of a highly refined revisionist strategy for dehistoricizing fascism, and thus expurgating it of its indigestible connotations, while staying true to its fundamental historical mission: to replace the decadence of liberal democracy with a 'new order' in which national/ethnic identities are intensified rather than diluted, and the differences between peoples enhanced rather than eroded. The animus which the original writers of the CR had against the Weimar Republic and made them the cultural protagonists of the 'Los-von-Weimar' [Let's get out of Weimar] movement,<sup>28</sup> is turned by the contemporary ND against *mondialisation* or 'one-worldism' as a whole.

A 'third empire' may have been turned into a European rather than a national project. The longed-for rebirth may now focus on *ethnies* rather than on nations. The time-schedule for achieving the goal may have been indefinitely extended now that the crisis of the West is only perceptible to an 'awakened' elite. But the mythic core of the ND in its prime was still recognizably fascist. Through the prolific publicistic output of its spokesmen it aimed to gain control over the forces of cultural production and so induce a European rebirth which will shatter the totalitarian, ethnocidal monster which globalization represents for them.

#### Corroborating evidence of the ND's fascist credentials

The validity of this interpretation of the ND may well be called into question on the grounds that it is based on a theory of fascism on which there is at most only partial consensus among experts. However, it is grist to our mill that Pierre-André Taguieff, the ND's most assiduous analyst, has come to a parallel conclusion by applying far more *terre-à-terre* criteria for identifying a fascist pedigree. In his article 'From Race to Culture: The New Right's View of European Identity'<sup>29</sup> he highlights the structural affinity between the account of neo-fascism offered by Maurice Bardèche in his *Qu'est-ce que le Fascisme?* of 1961 and the vision of European rebirth being promulgated by Alain de Benoist's in the 1980s. It is also revealing in this context that de Benoist collaborated with Giorgio Locchi in *Il male americano*, brought out by the MSI publishers Libreria Editrice Europa in 1978, and that he wrote an article<sup>30</sup> acknowledging his intellectual debt to Locchi when he died. It was in the period of their association that Locchi published *Essenza del Fascism* (1981) which not only argued for the centrality to generic fascism of the myth of national or cultural palingenesis, but stressed the importance of Indo-Europeanism, Nietzsche, myth, anthropology, the human sciences, and writers of the Conservative Revolution such as Spengler to the future vitality of neo-fascism, all of which are themes taken up within the ND's cultural struggle.

There is further evidence of the structural affinity between the ND and fascism in the way many of its core themes have been appropriated by the extreme right in France,<sup>31</sup> Italy,<sup>32</sup> Germany,<sup>33</sup> Britain,<sup>34</sup> and Russia.<sup>35</sup> Just to take one example, Christian Boucher, member of the

national directorate of the 'revolutionary nationalist' Third Positionist (and unambiguously neo-fascist) French formation Résistance, stated in an interview with a member of England's National Revolutionary Faction that its chief ideological influences included Strasser, Jünger, Bombacci (a major ideologue of the republic of Salò), Evola, Jean Thiriart (leader of the fascist group Jeune Europe in the 1960s), and Alain de Benoist.<sup>36</sup> It should not be forgotten that de Benoist has publicly 'disowned' Le Pen's Front National<sup>37</sup> and Alexander Dugin's 'Eurasianist' Den movement.<sup>38</sup> He also claims in his correspondence with me that he has broken off any contact with his German proselyte Pierre Krebs, founder of the Thule-Seminar.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that ND ideas in general and de Benoist's writings in particular continue to be cited by all three organizations suggests at the very least a convergence between the ND's assault on the hegemonic values of the West and demonstrably fascist schemes for a post-liberal new order.

We are now in a position to return to the issues raised at the outset of this chapter concerning the ND's location in political space. Once a litmus test is applied to it based on the new consensus on fascism, the Nouvelle Droite of the 1970s and 80s is shown to have been a highly sophisticated and prolific form of revisionist neo-fascism. It was bent on establishing the cultural hegemony of a particular diagnosis of late 20thC realities whose deep structure consists in the mythic core of paligenetic ultra-nationalism common to all fascisms. Even if the surface rationalization of this myth was heavily influenced by ideas originally propounded by German fascists to analyse the crisis of the Weimar Republic, the 'classic' ND contained several highly innovative elements when considered in relationship to inter-war fascism and its nostalgic or mimetic variants in the post-war era: first, its neo-Gramscian insistence on the primacy of culture over politics which removed it from the sphere of overt political action; second, its stress on the culturally constituted *ethnie* within a federalist Europe rather than the nation-state as the basic unit of the homogeneous community to be rejuvenated; third, its celebration of difference in a purportedly 'xenophile' spirit as the basis for the rejection of racial and cultural mixing; fourth, its readiness to draw on forms of thought originating on the Left as well as the Right in a spirit of unbridled eclecticism; fifth, its intense engagement with issues which in the classic era of fascism were configured differently (e.g. modernization, culture, democracy) or played a minor role if any in the *imaginaire* of the extreme right (globalization, ecology, human rights, the USA, multiculturalism, Europe, the Third World).

Despite such elements of genuine renewal, and the fact that ever since its formation in the late 1960s the ND has been engaged in a constant process of evolution and diversification,<sup>40</sup> it did not offer a new paradigm as Piccone suggests. Nor was it primarily a product of the crisis of the Left as Revelli implies: rather it was the product of the acute crisis of credibility which fascism faced as a viable extra-systemic ideology in the post-war era, fruit of a concerted effort at transforming fascism's strategy and discourse so as to keep its paligenetic project alive. In IT terms the ND did not offer a new type of programme. Rather it is to be compared to a series of new or modified editions of an old software product (Wordperfect versions 4.1 to 6.3?), whose basic design and purpose are recognizably unchanged underneath all the impressive improvements to the display and the vast range of new functions which have been added to bring it in line with rival products. The ND at the height of its influence was thus a classic example of the adage 'plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose'. Not only did its cosmology retain the mythic core of all inter-war fascist ideologies, but it called for a revival of primordial pre-Christian values as the premise for cultural renewal, and insisted on the relevance to understanding the present of ideas put forward in an entirely different context over sixty years ago. Curiously enough, this judgement chimes in with a comment made by Giorgio Locchi in his *L'essenza del fascismo* (1981), which set out his own strategy to keep ideological fascism alive

in the hostile climate of the post-war era. He stated that 'The Nouvelle Droite in reality is pretty old, the repetition of a "historical moment" which has been totally superseded.'<sup>41</sup> In short, while the ND has successfully discarded fascism's 'outdated phraseology', it has not only zealously retained the basic structure of its mindset and dreams, but some of its original cultural analysis.

Even the (con)fusion of Left and Right, which so impressed Paul Piccone as a sign of a new paradigm, has a well documented historical precedent in the history of the extreme right in France. At the turn of the century some left wing French intellectuals were drawn to the Action Française, becoming part of what Stenhell calls 'la droite révolutionnaire' (Stenhell has naturally become the ND's favourite fascist theorist ever since his publication of *Ni droite, ni gauche*).<sup>42</sup> What emerged was a new synthesis of left and right in extreme right wingkey, a form of national socialism which found clearest expression in the Cercle Proudhon, one of whose members, Georges Valois, went on to found Le Faisceau in 1925.<sup>43</sup> The novelty of the ND thus lies not providing the human sciences with a new paradigm for understanding modernity, but in providing fascism with a new intellectual passport with which it has been able operate largely incognito as a purely metapolitical form of cultural speculation.

At times, though, the mask slips and the linkages become transparent. An outstanding case in point is the ideological itinerary of Pierre Vial, lecturer in history at the University of Lyon III, one of the founders of Grece, and one of the most high-profile ND advocates of 'right-wing Gramscism'. In 1988 he joined the Front national and went on to become a member of its central committee in 1990 and its political bureau in 1994. In 1995 he created *Terre et peuple*, and in one of its bulletins stressed the necessity to prepare 'mentally, psychologically and physically' for the 'ethnic war' which was approaching a war which would be 'total'. In March 1996 he wrote in an article in the Fn's newspaper *National Hebdo* claiming that those who had been collaborationists during the war had simply been refusing 'to serve the Anglo-Saxons or the Soviets.' More recently he has emphasized once again that 'it is necessary, indispensable to make a permanent link between cultural war and political struggle. For it would be absurd to claim to be able to take over political power without having secured control of cultural power.' In another *Hebdo* article published in April 1998 Vial praised Mussolini's creation of Cinecittà as evidence that 'Fascism was able to integrate the perceptive analyses of Antonio Gramsci, who attributes cultural struggle a decisive role in the conquest and exercise of power.'<sup>44</sup> In a case like this the membranes between the Nouvelle Droite, Lepenism, Vichy authoritarianism, and historical Fascism prove to be extremely permeable, and ND metapolitics reveal themselves as a dense web of mystification of an essentially fascist agenda bent on replacing liberal democracy by a society based on a form of racism which might be called 'cultural eugenics', albeit of a 'differentialist' variety.

### The need for caution when judging the ND

No matter how satisfying such an unequivocal verdict on the ND's intellectual pedigree may be for those with a taste for simple answers, it needs to be hedged round with a number of qualifications. This scrupulousness is required in the interests both of academic rigour and of a humanistic concern with truth, especially since, as we have seen, the anti-fascist zeal of some intellectuals has led them to demand the ND's banishment from the arena of public debate in a spirit which smacks of a profound illiberalism itself, as if right-wing Gramscism could be combatted effectively with a left-wing McCarthyism.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, it is particularly wise to avoid reductionist judgments and simplistic allegations in the context of the French extreme right,

since the suggestion made in one study of it (which made no concessions to populism or vulgarization) that a certain ideologue's writings exhibited fascist thought-patterns once led to a successful lawsuit for libel.<sup>46</sup>

First, it should be stressed that the classification of the ND as fascist is a taxonomic judgment, not a moral one. The application of other ideal types of fascism would lead to different conclusions being drawn, and the ideal type used here, though part of a new consensus, would still be rejected by many experts in fascist studies. Thus I accept in good faith the protestations of ND thinkers, notably Alain de Benoist himself, that ND thought is not fascist, and indeed anti-fascist, which I interpret to mean that they operate, whether consciously or subliminally, a different ideal type of fascism from the one applied here, one which excludes a purely metapolitical discourse centring on the *ethnie* in a xenophile spirit and a European context.

Second, even if both the ideal type applied here and the conclusion it leads to concerning the ND are accepted as heuristically useful, this is in no way to imply some direct link between the ND and Nazism or other forms of virulently destructive fascism based on eugenic fantasies and systemized hatreds. Indeed, the insinuation that de Benoist's world-view in the 1990s is closely akin in its ideological content and intent to that of inter-war fascist movements and regimes, and through a process of guilt by association is thus linked with the atrocities committed by the Third Reich would be academically untenable, intellectually perverse, and probably genuinely libellous. All that is being suggested here is that the ND belongs to the same (ideal-typically constructed) genus of ideology of which Nazism is a member, though it is more a distant cousin than a blood-brother. As the deep gulf which separated Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany up to 1936 illustrates, all concrete manifestations of fascism are unique and attempts to implement their various world-view and policies would lead to very different social and political realities.

Third, it is extremely difficult to make categorical statements about ND ideology beyond the generalizations about recurrent themes, because not only has it undergone a protracted process of evolution away from the Nazified Eurofascism which provided its starting point,<sup>47</sup> but it is made up of scores of intellectuals who have their own idiosyncratic specialisms and values, and are capable of shifting their position radically over time to embrace new points of view or focus on new themes.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, wherever its ideas take root in intellectual circles abroad they acquire new connotations and elaborations because of the different cultural context to which they are applied.

Finally, the cultural production of some of the most important ND ideologues in the 1990s, including de Benoist and the Italian intellectual Marco Tarchi, would suggest that they no longer see themselves as the samurai of a metapolitical combat. Instead, they appear to have withdrawn into the sort of radical criticism of the present offering no realistic prospect of an alternative. Indeed, Taguieff, the greatest authority on the French New Right, states categorically that with the creation of his review *Krisis* in 1988, Alain de Benoist left the political arena altogether: 'Alain de Benoist and his review *Krisis* no longer belong to extreme right-wing space'.<sup>49</sup> If this analysis is correct then some of the most sophisticated thinkers of the ND have now adopted a stance of cultural pessimism which falls outside the remit of students of extreme right-wing politics, let alone of fascism. In this case they would no longer be part of a 'New Right' as such, but *de facto* resemble disaffected 'liberal' cultural critics such as Noam Chomsky or Gore Vidal, who criticize the deficiencies and contradictions of actually existing liberalism without suggesting an alternative (other than that of liberal democracy finally becoming genuinely liberal, democratic, and humanistic).

However, there is another possibility which is worth briefly exploring, namely that their new, apparently apolitical position is actually akin to that of the post-war Ernst Jünger. Jünger, one of the major stars in the ND firmament, withdrew from Nazism in the mid 1930s, and thereafter cultivated a metapolitical cultural criticism. Yet, though he wrote an allegorical novel attacking the Third Reich, he never renounced the fascist world-view he expressed so forcibly in *The Worker* (1932), or denounced the celebration of his works by such an overtly fascist thinker as Julius Evola.

The ambiguity of 'cultural pessimism' and the possible persistence of the ND's fascist mindset

At this point it becomes important to distinguish between two forms of cultural pessimism. The first is a sense of the moral bankruptcy and structural breakdown of the present phase of history which is unrelieved by any sense of way out of the morass. Such a conviction should logically lead to a sense of nihilism, resignation, impotence, cynicism, and inertia, at least as far as politics is concerned. Indeed, a *zoon politikon* who gave into the temptations of cultural pessimism should logically give up the ghost as agitator and commentator altogether, and devote him- or herself instead to memoirs, the solaces of poetry, or the pleasures of a strictly private existence.

Far more common than genuine pessimism among political animals, however, is what could be called 'palingenetic pessimism', a conviction that the present chaos and decay may sooner or later give way to society's radical transformation within a new age, and that it is worth staying true to the spirit of an alternative value system even if in the present state of affairs they seem utopian, heretical, or downright mad. This is the 'pessimism' of the Russian nihilists, of Nietzsche, of the German cultural critics, Lagarde, Langbehn, and Moeller van den Bruck studied by Fritz Stern in his *The Politics of Cultural Despair*<sup>50</sup>, and of the post-war Jünger. Significantly, Mohler treats Moeller as one of the key ideologues of Conservative Revolution, his despair in Weimar being the corollary of his belief in the ultimate possibility of a 'Wiederanknüpfung nach vorwärts', 'a reconnection forwards' with eternal values which were to have produced a new Germany, a 'third Reich'. The classic embodiment of cultural pessimism of a palingenetic nature was Spengler, who, despite being famous for his sense of the inexorable decay of the West, actually left room in his cyclic scheme of history for a coda of authoritarian German 'Caesarism' which would abolish the age of materialism and revitalize civilization. In the course of the 1920s he went on to develop this theme into a fully fledged fascist diagnosis of the ills of Weimar without ever succumbing to the temptations of Nazism.

As we have already seen, a belief basic to Mohler's diagnosis of contemporary history as set forth in *The Conservative Revolution in Germany*, is that modernity in its prevailing hegemonic form constitutes an 'interregnum', a period of dysfunction, decay, and collective amnesia regarding 'genuine' values so total when judged by the norms of an 'organic' society that there can be no prospect of a process of healthy transformation emerging from within the system. Those who intuitively 'remember' their roots and the higher spiritual values bound up in this remembering have little option but to become 'German nihilists', which means radically rejecting the present in a spirit of 'creative destruction', secure in the knowledge that rebirth and a new order lie on the other side of the inevitable disintegration of a civilization which worships the false gods of equality, individualism and materialism.

Though Julius Evola's philosophy of history is cyclic and idealist rather than spherical and nominalist, his diagnosis of the plight of those who belong to the invisible community of the enlightened in this age of darkness is essentially the same. Since 1945 'man' has been living 'among the ruins'<sup>51</sup> of the *kali yuga*. According to the Hindu cosmology, this 'black age' forms

the last stage of a process of decay which, once it has reached its term, will give way to a new golden age. The defeat of Fascism and Nazism destroyed any immediate prospect of the creation of a new Empire based on spiritual values and led by the new supra-national European elite of 'warrior-priests' or *kshatriya* who came together in the international sections of the SS towards the end of the war.<sup>52</sup> Those who have inwardly resisted spiritual corruption by the contemporary world system have no option but to 'ride the tiger'<sup>53</sup> in a state of 'apoliteia', a cultivated aloofness from conventional politics and the media version of world events, an 'inner emigration' of the right. A German Evolan Website on the subject addressed to such spiritual exiles was assuring them in the summer of 1998 that:

All external refuges have long since been destroyed... Only the 'inner Tibet' can be our asylum in a world to which we do not belong. A world which is nothing other than an orgy of meaninglessness, violence, and vulgarity. A modernity whose decadence we must turn against itself if we wish to stay inwardly pure. We promote the *purificatio* by turning the filth outwards. It is not for us to hate the materialist, decadent world. We are simply turning its hate, which originally was the diabolical hate of those who rebelled against the Tradition, the divine order, against itself.<sup>54</sup>

Today's *kshatriya* are exhorted to withdraw from the world secure in the knowledge that the tiger of the modern age will one day be worn out and the dawn of a new golden age will break, even if it is not to be in their life time.<sup>55</sup> To underline how erroneous it would be to confuse tactical *apoliteia* and its consequent withdrawal from party politics with the abandon of politics as such, it should be pointed out that in the era of black terrorism in Italy in the 1970s some 'Evolans' believed it to be quite compatible with 'riding the tiger' to indulge in acts of violence against the public, not to overthrow the system, but just to keep the flame of fidelity to a 'higher reality' burning bright.<sup>56</sup>

What is to be made, then, of intellectuals who made a prominent contribution to the European New Right in its demonstrably neo-fascist phase and have now apparently withdrawn into cultural pessimism. Are they genuinely disillusioned and 'apolitical', or are they merely 'apoliteic', biding their time till the West collapses under the cumulative weight of its own decadence? I would suggest that if they have not explicitly abandoned palingenetic hopes for a new order and continue to produce radical critiques of the West they may belong to the spiritual tribe of 'inner Tibetans'. In this case they still inhabit an ideological cavern of 'extreme right-wing space' in a state of spiritual hibernation, ready to emerge when the cultural winter of capitalist modernity finally metamorphosizes into a new spring, and the hated liberal democratic 'interregnum' comes to an end.

A case-study in this intriguing possibility is the doyen of the ND himself, Alain de Benoist. In three interviews published in *Telos* in 1994 he seemed intent on dissociating himself once and for all from the palingenetic hopes for society he once nurtured (though he still let slip one or two coded references to them, as when he states that the duty of the ND is 'to struggle for a revitalization of collective life committed to generosity, decision, and solidarity').<sup>57</sup> Yet one sign that the launch of *Krisis* in 1988 did not betoken, as Taguieff claims, a clean caesura with the neo-fascism he had spent so much intellectual energy revising and refining over the years is provided by his continued readiness to be associated with the dissemination of revisionist, CR, or extreme right-wing ideas. These include editing for the extreme right-wing French publisher

Pardes a series called *Révolution Conservatrice* which from 1989 started reprinting works by Schmitt, Sombart, Niekisch and other members of the Conservative Revolution; coediting with Stefan Ulbricht, an activist of the Wiking-Jugend (banned by the Federal Interior Ministry of Germany in 1994 as an 'extreme-right' neo-Nazi organization), *Gedanken zu Großdeutschland* (Thoughts on Greater Germany), was published in 1990; and editing for Éditions des Grands Classiques a new series devoted to Les Grands Classiques de l'Homme de Droite, which will include de Maistre, Thierry Maulnier, Edouard Drumont (author of *La France Juive*), Georges Valois, Robert Brasillach and Pierre Drieu la Rochelle (collaborationist fascists). De Benoist offered as the rationale for this last project the observation that 'Quand les idéologies font faillite, la pensée de droite renâit', implying that the collapse of the Left combined with the ongoing failures of liberalism are creating the space for a rebirth of the radical right.<sup>58</sup> Such sentiments hardly suggest that de Benoist has renounced right-wing palingenetic utopianism.

Nor does his *L'Empire Intérieur* (Fata Morgana, Paris), published in 1995, which portrays imperialism as an ethical and inner force, a myth, and promises that 'revenir dans la clarté du mythe serait pour l'homme connaître une révolution comme il n'en a jamais eu'. Such a myth, once realized in Europe, would not only sweep away the totally inorganic Europe of Maastrich, but reveal the power to federate diverse peoples, nations, and religions within a single entity, so putting an end to the progressive corruption of political authority which set in with the end of the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>59</sup> Palingenetic longings also lurk in his 1996 article 'Dans la rue' published under the pseudonym Robert de Herte<sup>60</sup> which reads into a wave of strikes affecting France at the time not only evidence of a 'social awakening', but the sign that 'a new people demands to be constructed'. It thus seems within the bounds of possibility that the title which de Benoist chose for his new review, *Krisis*, is to be taken with its original palingenetic connotations of 'turning point', and that the attempt to create a forum in which right- and left-wing critiques of 'actually existing modernity' cohabit the same issue should create a sense of *déjà vu* for students of fascism.<sup>61</sup>

Another case where there may be more to an apparent shift away from neo-fascist politics than meets the eye is provided by the Italian periodical *Diorama letterario*, which in the 1980 played a role in weaning Italian neo-fascism off its Fascist legacy and reorienting it towards the intellectual orbit of the European New Right. By the 1990s its editor, Marco Tarchi, who resigned from the Movimento Sociale Italiano in 1981, had withdrawn from the sphere of active politics altogether. Thus it is possible to take at face value his vehement insistence that his critiques of liberal party politics and hegemonic western values are expressions of a unqualified cultural pessimism, and that he does not hanker after the establishment of a nebulously conceived new order based on the rebirth of some mythic entity such as 'Indo-European culture' or 'sense of the sacred'. Yet *palingenetic* pessimists could be forgiven for finding the critiques of the existing system which feature so prominently in his periodical supply grist to their metapolitical mills.

Let us take the issue for March 1996 as a random sample. The theme stated on the cover, 'the need not to take sides', is developed in an editorial by Tarchi which asks whether it is:

a utopia to believe that it could be possible to create a space of reflection outside the sphere of every day politics and its subterfuges in which to bring together the energies of those who do not think that in the dialectic right/left/centre the answers can be found to the great questions which confront us, such as the defence of the quality of life, the search for adequate solutions to the problems posed by multi-ethnic societies, the reconstruction of a concept of common good

that can be shared by all? Those who think so have the right not to be classified on the basis of prejudices and categories which have had their day.<sup>62</sup>

Tarchi himself, now professor of political science at the University of Florence, may well intend this 'space of reflection' to be located within an intellectual orbit far removed from fascism, whether in its historical or New Right incarnations. Yet would this be self-evident to readers perusing the rest of the issue? It underscores its kinship with the French ND by publishing a piece by de Benoist, an appeal for the protection of regional identities, an advertisement for *Éléments*, a review of a biography of Carl Schmitt, and a review article on *Cosmopolis*, a novel which attacks the idea of a world government as a latter day Leviathan, a totalitarian project to impose a single cosmology on all human beings irrespective of their indigenous culture. The section on 'special book offers' then remains in the orbit of ND thought with adverts for books on Julius Evola, Carl Schmitt, 'the sacred', and a study of Tolkien (fantasy and legend play a major role in the Italian New Right's preoccupation with 'sacred time').

The ethos shifts markedly towards classic fascism, however, with the other 'special offers', which include books by Drieu La Rochelle, Céline, Knut Hamsun, and Ezra Pound. For those convinced by Fini's protestations that the AN too has vacated 'extreme right-wing space', it might be sobering to find three books devoted to it in this section, alongside others exploring the 'roots of Fascism' and comparing Hitler and Stalin. The back cover advertizes four books which suggest how within the orbit of the 'new' New Right an underlying preoccupation with classic and neo-fascism can be simultaneously bound up with the bid to devise a discourse which disguises it: they are *Razzismo e antirazzismo* which brings together contributions by de Benoist and Taguieff; Mohler's classic *The Conservative Revolution*; yet another book on Ernst Jünger; and *The Fascist Temptation* by Tarmo Kunnas. Overall *Diorama letterario* hardly demonstrates an apolitical, purely cultural concern with the modern world, whatever its editor's intentions. Indeed, its contents still betray its earlier role as a forum for intellectuals of the blatantly neo-Fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano who wanted to renovate the party's crudely nostalgic and anachronistic programme based on the Salò Republic. It is no coincidence if the book offers include works on Giovanni Gentile, Nicola Bombacci (who drew up the programme of the Republic of Salò), and *The Balilla Will Go to Salò!* Marco Tarchi may be no 'inner Tibetan', but it would make the message *Diorama letterario* transmits to its subscribers less ambiguous if it stopped advertizing texts which are capable of nurturing extreme right nostalgia and palingenetic imaginings.

In *Krisis*, and possibly in *Diorama letterario* too, it is surely ingenuous to suggest that we encounter a form of radical cultural criticism which is somehow 'beyond left and right'. Instead, it is tempting to think that they represent a curious innovation in fascist thought which might be termed 'Fabian fascism': its protagonists have resorted like the general Fabius Cunctator to achieving victory through the enemy's exhaustion rather than through their own efforts to overthrow it. At the end of the *apoliteia* imposed by the interregnum, the age of ruins, a new era will dawn. Chaos will give way to order once more. Ethnic substances and true cultures will be regenerated. Even if de Benoist and his associates have slowly dematerialised like Cheshire-cats as substantive fascist ideologues, the smiles they have left behind still leer lopsidedly from the extreme right.

Conclusion: old dreams, new failures

By applying to the ND the new consensus on the 'fascist minimum' which defines it in terms of

an ultra-nationalist version of the archetypal rebirth myth, its core identity is revealed as a revisionist and exclusively ideological permutation of neo-fascism. Though the taxonomic value of this verdict depends on the use of a particular ideal type of fascism which is far from universally accepted, its heuristic value is borne out independently by the sense it makes of several empirically verifiable facts: i) the ND originated as a response to the need recognized by some French neo-fascists in the early 1960s to change their ideology and tactics without abandoning their fundamental values or goals; ii) the central themes of the ND's cosmology are broadly consistent with the extended definitions of fascism (which also fit our ideal type) provided by Maurice Bardèche and Giorgio Locchi, both ideologues of neo-fascist revisionism with demonstrable links to the ND in its formative phase; iii) the ND makes extensive use of the (highly diverse) cultural analyses collectively known as the Conservative Revolution, which can be shown to have helped prepare the ground for the ideological success of Nazism, and (when the 'new consensus' is applied) to be variants of German fascism; iv) there is a profound link between the ND's vision of a new Europe and that evolved by some fascists between the wars, then taken up and elaborated by many neo-fascists since 1945; v) the ND has had a demonstrable influence on the discourse of some currents of fascism and the extreme right in a number of European countries; vi) some members of the European ND have maintained links with extreme right movements or even been recruited by them.

The suggestion that the French ND should be regarded as a neo-fascist think-tank is broadly consistent with what emerges from Taguieff's impressively painstaking research into the ND and his assessment of its development up to the late 1980s. However, the interpretation offered here diverges from Taguieff's interpretation in an important respect by claiming that even after the foundation of the review *Krisis*, currents of thought which originated in the ND, including that of its most famous spokesman, Alain de Benoist, may have continued to contain an extreme right-wing agenda in the spirit of *apoliteia*. This possibility (which is a matter of inference and speculation, since it cannot be proved if ND spokesmen deny it) is entirely consistent with the fact that most current ND ideologues have no any explicit links to any political activism, and do not go beyond offering highly theoretical critiques of fundamental defects in the prevailing world system in a key of cultural pessimism, without suggesting any practical alternatives to it in the immediate future.

If the broad lines of this analysis are accepted \_ and by its very nature it cannot count on universal agreement, least of all from ND ideologues themselves \_ it has a number of implications for political scientists. First, they should treat the New Right as a deliberately modernized form of fascism and a fully fledged member of the ideological family of the extreme right, connected with more conventional manifestations of it by a fine but dense web of affiliations and influences both nationally and internationally. Second, they should recognize that the increasing sophistication of fascist and extreme right-wing discourses in Europe, particularly notable in such parties as the Front National, the Alleanza Nazionale, and the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, result from a conscious strategy adopted by neo-fascists and exemplified by New Right thinkers to adapt their ideology and style of self-presentation to a post-war political habitat inhospitable to overtly racist, anti-liberal, and revolutionary demands for the overthrow of liberal democracy and the creation of a new order.

Third, rather than indulging in alarmist condemnations of the ND as a threat to democracy, political scientists and journalists should perhaps realize that precisely because the ND is fascist it suffers the fate of all contemporary attempts to realize the utopia of a new order based on a revolutionary ultra-nationalism, no matter how subtly 'made over' to disguise the underlying kinship with inter-war fascism, namely to be systematically marginalized.<sup>63</sup> The

failure to break out of the ghetto of 'metapolitical', and hence inconsequential and impotent, cultural speculation (which Marco Revelli noted) is a symptom of the impotence of all fascist radicalism since 1945 to move into the ideological mainstream\_ even if Ernst Jünger and Alain de Benoist have been awarded prestigious literary prizes by cultural establishments (hopefully!) unaware of the hidden agenda of the writings on which they were so eager to bestow respectability and prestige.

The bid by the ND in any of its forms to 'take over the laboratories of thinking' is thus based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of contemporary culture and an overestimation of the power of political versions of paligenetic mythopoeia to attract believers as long as society is perceived as fundamentally stable. Furthermore, historical fascism is so thoroughly discredited as an alternative to 'the system' that even the looming ecological crisis is unlikely to create the political space for its revival, however much it disguises or travesties its original identity. Thus the idea that de Benoist, Pierre Krebs, Michael Walker and their ilk have ever been engaged in a full-scale 'cultural struggle' with mainstream society in the name of the rebirth of Indo-European values or the return of the sacred is as pathetic as Don Quixote's misreading of his encounter with a windmill. One swallow does not make a summer, and a few verbal skimmishes in the quality press over whether the ND should be banned as a form of fascism hardly constitute a war.

It would thus be reassuring to find more political scientists eager to focus their intellectual energies, not on condemning the ND as a threat to society, but on rediscovering their own ideological identity, ethical citizenship, historical roots, and civic community by refuting the anthropological and sociological fallacies at the heart of New Right thought. Just to take one example, the Thule-Netz's struggle to create 'a heterogeneous world of homogeneous peoples' is anthropological nonsense, since in the recorded history of the world peoples have never been homogeneous, least of all in Europe. Indeed, such a project could be dismissed as a harmless fantasy had not the twentieth century produced several examples of political systems attempting to recreate the utopia of a mythical ethnic homogeneity \_ partly under the influence of 'purely' metapolitical thinkers \_ and demonstrated the dystopia of atrocities and mass murder which resulted.<sup>64</sup>

Seen from this point of view, liberal and Leftist intellectuals should perhaps be grateful to the ND, which at least gives them the rare opportunity to engage in duels of a safely intellectual kind with a political movement which takes ideas seriously. After all, specialists on the sort of issues raised by the ND may still sometimes feel marginalized in a society where their research is largely ignored by the general public and there are few seminars at which to present their findings. If so they should take heart from one of the stirring slogans proclaimed at the Thule-Netz Website: 'Nothing can stop the arrival of a Europe of study groups.'

#### NOTES

All the Websites referred to were accessible at the addresses indicated in August 1998

1. Douglas Johnson, 'The New Right in France', *The Far Right in Western Europe*, (Longman, London, 1975), p. 242.
2. For the text of both the Appeal and Droit's article ('The Confusion of Ideas') see *Telos*, Nos. 98-9, Winter 1993-Fall 1994, pp. 135-40 and p. 157. For a discussion of the campaign accusing De Benoist and the ND of being part of a red-brown (or even a neo-

Nazi) conspiracy see Pierre-André Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*, (Descartes & Cie, Paris, 1994), pp. 314-336.

3. In a letter to me dated 2 November 1997 Alain de Benoist writes 'Not only have I been publishing since more than 25 years books and articles *against* almost all the ideas historically connected with fascism (racism, anti-Semitism, Führerprinzip, totalitarianism, imperialism, colonialism etc.), but I have constantly denounced the myth of the Nation-State, the nation(alist) obsessions etc....I am not a nationalist, but a federalist. If I had an intellectual "ancestor", he would be somewhere between [Johannes] Althusius and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[...] I am not against a pluralistic society. All societies today are and remain pluralistic. The problem is to think this pluralism in coherent terms.' He goes on to distance himself both from Alexander Dugin and Pierre Krebs (with whom he claims to have had no contact for more than 10 years). This chapter will suggest that the key phrase here is 'historically connected', and that a world-view can share a structural core with an ideology which exhibits crucial differences at a surface level.

4. 'Confronting the French New Right: Old Prejudices or a New Political Paradigm?', *Telos*, Nos. 98-9, Winter 1993-Fall 1994, pp. 3-22. The quotation is from page 7. It is perhaps not without interest that Paul Piccone is a contributor to Marco Tarchi's New Right periodical *Trasgressioni* which regularly publishes contributions by Alain de Benoist.

5. Marco Revelli, 'La nuova destra', *Iride*, No. 18, May-August, 1996, pp. 361-5.

6. The case for the emergence of this consensus is made in Roger Griffin, *International Fascism. Theories, Causes, and the New Consensus*, (Arnold, London, 1998).

7. See particularly Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (Routledge, London, 1993), and *Fascism* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995). Since several intellectuals who claim to be acquainted with my theory, including Alain de Benoist and the expert in fascist theory, James Gregor, have failed to grasp some crucial connotations of the term 'ultra-nationalism' in this context, I would like to take this opportunity to stress that the prefix 'ultra-' points to a form of nationalism which is based on an organicist (sometimes called 'tribal') myth of the nation/*ethnie* as a homogeneous historical or ethnic community. It is thus a form of nationalism both compatible with (but not identical with) biological racism (e.g. Nazi nationalism was eugenically racist) and simultaneously incompatible with liberalism, whose commitment to parliamentary politics, tolerance of multi-culturalism and ideological pluralism, and belief in the civic society as opposed to a primordial 'community' it axiomatically rejects.

8. Cf. Maurice Bardèche's observation made in his seminal *Qu'est-ce que le fascisme* (Les Sept Couleurs, Paris, 1961) that for neo-fascists 'Le rêve des puissances fascistes d'avant-guerre de constituer un Empire européen, qu'il ait été sincère ou non, est une nécessité grave et pressante de notre temps' (see also Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*,

op.cit., pp. 85-6). On the recurrence of a pan-European vision of regeneration in inter-war fascist thought and its centrality to post-war fascism see R. Griffin 'Europe for the Europeans' at <<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/humanities/staff/europ.txt>>; cf. also R. Griffin, *Fascism* op.cit., pp. 342-6.

9. See Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*, op.cit., pp. 109-22.

10. See *ibid.*, 122-63. For a valuable corroborating account of the fascist origins of the Nouvelle Droite (in Italian) see also Marie-José Chombart de Lauwe, 'La Nouvelle Droite in Francia, le sue origini nell'estrema destra, I suoi legami con la destra liberale. Filiazioni e conflitti', in P. Bologna and E. Mana (eds), *Fascismo oggi. Nuova destra e cultura reazionaria negli anni ottanta*, (Notiziario dell'Istituto Storico di Resistenza in Cuneo e provincia), No. 23, (June 1983), pp. 147-162. Cf. by the same author *Complots contre la démocratie. Les Multiples visages du fascisme*, (FNDIRP, Paris, 1981).

11. On right-wing Gramscism see Alain de Benoist, *Vu de droite*, (Copemic, Paris, 1977), pp. 456-60, reproduced as 'Pour un "gramscisme de droite"', *Éléments*, No. 20, Feb.-April, 1977, pp. 8-10. Cf. also Pierre Krebs, 'The Metapolitical Rebirth of Europe', Text 191 in Griffin, *Fascism* op.cit., pp. 348-9.

12. Cf. Krebs, *ibid.*, p. 349.

13. Recap No. 29: GRECE, *Searchlight*, (August 1984), No. 110, p. 16. The article contains revealing information about GRECE's direct links with overtly fascist groups, including the neo-Nazi Northern League, of which Alain de Benoist admitted being a member in his 1975/6 entry for the French *Who's Who*. According to *Searchlight* he later claimed it was a totally different Northern League of which 'no trace is to be found'. It should also be noted in this context that in August 1998 the Website 'Bibliothek Rechtsextremismus' (<http://www.hadeshda.org/bib/gfbaev.html>) was still listing de Benoist as one of the activists of the Gesellschaft für biologische Anthropologie, Eugenik und Verhaltensforschung or Society for Biological Anthropology, Eugenics, and Behavioural Research (formerly the Gesellschaft für Erbgesundheitspflege, or Society for the Maintenance of Hereditary Health), dedicated to combatting the 'dissolution of the ethnic substance of the German nation' (Volkskörper: a term used in Nazi eugenics) under the impact of foreign immigration and the higher fertility rates of non-ethnic Germans'. The Website claimed the GfbAEV had direct links to *Nouvelle École*.

14. A good example of the sort of 'purely academic' work which the ND can draw on in rationalizing their assault on hegemonic values is Michel Villey's *Le Droit et les droits de l'homme* (Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1983) which ends with the pronouncement (p. 154) that the language of the rights of man is 'indistinct, dangerously woolly, the source of illusions and false claims which are impossible to satisfy. If its triumph is total in the twentieth century it is because the decadence of culture goes hand in hand with technical progress'.

15. For an example of Alain de Benoist's critique of democracy see his article

'Democracy Revisited' (*Telos* No. 95, Spring 1993, pp. 65-75) in which he claims that a 'genuine democracy' is based on a homogeneous community rather than on an abstract concept of universal rights. (Cf. his 'Vers une démocratie organique', *Éléments*, No. 52, Winter 1984-5, pp. 33-5.) A preoccupation with conserving the homogeneity of organic communities (*ethnies*) also underlies de Benoist's rejection of egalitarianism and universal human rights as 'abstractions', i.e. not anchored in organic, differentiated cultures: see de Benoist's 'L'engrenage de l'égalitarisme' *Le Figaro-Dimanche*, 26-7 November, 1977, reprinted in *Les Idées à l'endroit*, op.cit., pp. 159-62; 'La religion des droits de l'homme', *Éléments*, No. 37, Jan.-March 1981, pp. 5-22, reproduced in Pierre Krebs (ed.), *Mut zur Identität*, (Verlag für ganzheitliche Forschung und Kultur, Struckum, 1988), pp. 41-74, made available by the Thule-Netz at Website <<http://www.thulenet.com/texte/philallg/text0004.htm>>. The essay closes with the comment that the belief in human rights, born of the 'monotheistic mentality' is the 'religion of the dying century'. An interesting aspect of de Benoist's attempt to reorient democratic theory away from universalism is his appropriation of Rousseau as the ideologue of direct democracy based an ethnic rather than a cosmopolitan conception of citizenship (see his 'Relire Rousseau', in *Études Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, vol. 4, 1990, pp. 209-226; Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*, op.cit., p. 264, fn. 327), hence his allusion to Rousseau in his letter to me (see note 6 above).

16. Cf. Alain de Benoist, 'Différents mais inégaux, réponse à A. Jacquard', *Éléments*, No. 26, Spring 1978, pp. 3-7. See also Pierre-André Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*, op.cit., pp. 92-106; 'The New Right's View of European Identity' *Telos*, Nos. 98-99, Winter 1993-Fall 1994, pp. 99-125. Note that the upholders of differentialism claim to be *anti-racist* (because they wish to preserve cultural distinctions from the corrosive effects of the multi-ethnic society), and that accordingly anti-racism is the true racism because it encourages the loss of ethnic differences and identities. (A feature of the Newspeak evolved by the ND is to hi-jack words associated with the extreme right such as 'totalitarian', 'racism', 'genocide' and turn them against its critics, while giving its own illiberal gloss to 'liberal' *topoi* such as 'rights', 'democracy', 'freedom', 'citizen', 'Third World', and 'ecology'.)

17. See Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*, op.cit. pp. 148-94. Another good example of the sort of 'apolitical intellectual' whose works lend themselves to being used by the ND to construct a counter-cultural discourse is Julien Freund's *La décadence. Histoire sociologique et philosophique d'une catégorie de l'expérience humaine* (Siney, Paris, 1984) which presents the civilization created by the European genius as caught up in a process of irremediable decay.

18. E.g. de Benoist's articles 'Une droite qui soit à la fois *et* la droite *et* la gauche', *Éléments*, Nos. 24-5, Winter 1977-78, p. 11; 'End of the left-right dichotomy', *Telos* No. 102, Winter 1995, pp. 7-89, slightly modified in its Italian translation 'La fine della dicotomia Destra/Sinistra' in A. Campi and A. Santambrogio (eds), *Destra/Sinistra* (Antonio Pellicani, Rome, 1997), pp. 77-9. As de Benoist's own comment makes clear, the transcending of the left and right dichotomy is still part of the project to create a new

right.

19. Ibid., pp. 265-8.

20. *Telos*, Nos. 98-9, Winter 1993-Fall 1994, p. 189.

21. See Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*, op.cit., pp. 80-83, 156. De Benoist's admiration for the cyclic (or non-linear) theory of history beloved of some of the Conservative Revolution and of Evola emerges clearly in his essay on Ernst Jünger reprinted in English by Michael Walker's *Scorpion*. See <<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2125/15jueng.htm>>, and published in Italian in *Trasgressioni*, No. 18, (Jan.-April 1994) pp. 3-64. For evidence of how blatant de Benoist's palingenetic mythopoeia was in the formative phase of GRECE see his *Dix ans de combat culturel pour une renaissance*, (GRECE, Paris, 1977), and the extract entitled 'Regenerating History' in Griffin, *Fascism* op.cit. pp. 346-8. In fact, the ND's conception of history can either be 'cyclic', under the influence of Julius Evola, or 'spherical', following the theory expounded by Armin Mohler in his *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932. Ein Handbuch*, (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972, pp. 78-108), itself extensively influenced by the 'spherical' temporal schemes of Nietzsche and Ernst Jünger.

22. On Julius Evola, a figure central to Italian neo-fascism, author of a major 'philosophical' rationalization of the Fascist race laws (*Sintesi di dottrina della razza*, Ulrico Hoepli, Milan 1941), and the most 'Nazi-ophile' of ideologues under Mussolini, see R. Griffin, 'Revolts against the Modern World', *Literature and History*, No. 11, spring, 1985, pp. 101-23; R. H. Drake, 'Julius Evola and the Ideological Origins of the Radical Right in Contemporary Italy', in P. H. Merkl (ed.) *Political Violence and Terror. Motifs and Motivations*, (University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1986), pp. 161-89; Franco Ferraresi, 'Julius Evola: Tradition, Reaction, and the Radical right', *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 28 (1987), pp. 107-151; Anna Jellamo, 'Julius Evola, il pensatore della tradizione', in F. Ferraresi (ed.) *La destra radicale*, (Feltrinelli, Milan, 1984). A fascinating comparison of de Benoist and Evola as fascist ideologues is offered by T. Sheehan in his article 'Myth and violence: the fascism of Julius Evola and Alain de Benoist', *Social Research*, Vol. 48, No. 1, 1981.

Evola's highly idiosyncratic 'metapolitical' cyclic theory of history, his concept of a European empire, his stress on the revival of a pre-Christian sense of the sacred, and his concept of 'apoliteia' (see below) have been highly influential in ND thinking — as shown by the references to it in such publications as *Scorpion* and *Elementy* — even though it is profoundly incompatible with Nietzschean 'nominalism'. This is just one symptom of the fact that the ND is driven by the logic of mythopoeia and the urge to change the world rather than by the quest for intellectual rigour and understanding.

23. For an equivalent exercise in eclecticism carried out by the German New Right see Krebs, *Mut zur Identität*, op.cit.

24. I would go so far as to suggest that if ideal types of fascism are applied to the ND which deny the CR fascist credentials, then it is more than likely that the ND will not be classified as fascist at all. It should be stressed that the spirit which informs this analysis of the ND is one of 'methodological scepticism and pluralism', rather than of McCarthy-style 'fascism hunting' or a misconceived essentialism. Hence there is no suggestion here that the application of alternative conceptual frameworks to the ND which remove it from the orbit of fascist studies are somehow 'mistaken': indeed they may produce important insights into the ND by placing it in another context altogether. What I would contend, however, is that, within the conceptual framework offered here, some empirical data about the ND's extreme right and fascist affiliations becomes more intelligible, and that inferences about its tactics and ultimate goals can be drawn which would otherwise be obscured.

25. Verfassungsschutzbericht Website at  
<[http://www.verfassungsschutz.nrw.de/jaschke/ja\\_1\\_5.htm](http://www.verfassungsschutz.nrw.de/jaschke/ja_1_5.htm)>. Another of its Websites, <[http://www.verfassungsschutz.nrw.de/zwischen97/2\\_8.htm](http://www.verfassungsschutz.nrw.de/zwischen97/2_8.htm)> was stating that the German New Right organization Thule-Netz 'pursues racist goals antagonistic to freedom and democracy and is hence to be considered extreme right'. Left-wing anti-fascists have no doubt as to the Thule-Netz's fascist credentials, as the statement at <<http://www.rrz.uni-hamburg.de/JUKO/thule.htm>> makes abundantly clear.

26. For a sample in English of the palingenetic mood typical of the protagonists of the Conservative Revolution see Mohler's text 'German Nihilism' in Griffin, *Fascism* op.cit., pp. 351-4. See also Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution*, op.cit., pp. 78-108.

27. For a recent overview of Jünger's seminal contribution to the European New Right see Elliot Neaman, 'Ernst Jünger's Millennium: Bad Citizens for the New Century' in Richard J. Golsan (ed.), *Fascism's Return. Scandal, Revision, and Ideology since 1980*, (University of Nebraska, Lincoln and London, 1998), 218-243. Significantly Neaman concludes that 'The New Right has taken the cue from Jünger and updated the fascist rejection of Western culture to fit a plethora of current resentments' (p. 238).

28. See Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik*, (Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung Munich, 1962).

29. *Telos*, Nos. 98-99, Winter 1993-Fall 1994, pp. 99-126.

30. *Éléments*, No. 76, Dec. 1992, p. 23

31. See, for example, the section 'L'apport de la nouvelle droite' in Jean-Yves Camus, *Le Front National*, (Olivier Laurens, Paris, 1996), pp. 161-170. See also Alain Bihr's chapter on GRECE in *La résistible ascension du F. Haine* [i.e. FN!] (Syllepse, Paris, 1996) (a collection of articles from *Ras l'front*), in which he stresses the links which have existed between GRECE, the Europeanist right in general and overtly fascist groupings such as the Parti des forces nouvelles in late 1970s and Mouvement nationaliste

révolutionnaire in the mid-1980s. He also points out that some prominent GRECE members have maintained links with the FN even if others (notably de Benoist himself) have publicly dissociated themselves from it.

Examples of FN appropriation of ND thought are i) its insistence on 'la préférence nationale', a concept first formulated by the Club de l'Horloge (founded by the Nouvelle Droite in 1974) and fully elaborated as an argument against immigration in *La préférence nationale: réponse à l'immigration* (Albin Michel, Paris, 1985) written by Jean-Yves Le Gallou and the Club de l'Horloge; ii) its attacks on the left/right dichotomy and iii) on 'mondialisation', both exemplified in Samuel Maréchal *Ni droite, ni gauche.. Français! Contre la pensée unique* (Éditions Première Ligne, Paris, 1995); iv) the couching of anti-immigration sentiments in terms both of 'the right to an identity', and of solidarity with the Third World, thus echoing recurrent themes of the ND's 'differentialist' racism (e.g. in the FN 'Programme for Government' *Trois cents mesures pour la renaissance de la France* (Éditions Nationales, n.p., 1993); v) the FN's description of universal human rights as 'the new State religion' in a pamphlet of 1992 (*À bas la loi scélérate!* reproduced in J-Y Le Gallou and P. Olivier *Immigration. Le Front national fait le point*, (Éditions Nationales, 1992, p. 95), which echoes de Benoist's characterization of the belief in them as the 'religion of the dying century'.

Similarly, de Benoist's rereading of Rousseau to suggest that he made nationality in the sense of an ethnically based citizenship the basis for the enjoyment of civic rights is paralleled by Le Pen's insistence that 'le fondement de la participation à la vie politique est donc le critère de la citoyenneté, conféré par le principe de nationalité' (*National Hebdo*, No. 715, 2-8 April 1998, p. 5. Cf. *Présent*, No. 4058, Tues. 31 March, 1998, p. 3, 'Le Pen répond à Chirac'). In the same interview Le Pen claims that the principle of 'national preference' is inscribed in article 3 of the Constitution ('Le principe de toute souveraineté réside dans la nation'), so that it was Jacques Chirac who was 'trampling on the Constitution' by upholding a universalist interpretation of citizens' rights and accusing the FN of racism.

32. See Marco Revelli, 'La nuova destra' in F. Ferraresi (ed.) *La destra radicale*, (Feltrinelli, Milan, 1984), pp. 119-214; and Dino Cofrancesco, 'La nuova destra dinanzi al fascismo' in P. Bologna and E. Mana (eds), *Fascismo oggi. Nuova destra e cultura reazionaria negli anni ottanta*, Notiziario dell'Istituto Storico di Resistenza in Cuneo e provincia, No. 23, (June 1983), pp. 75-114.

33. The principal formation of the German New Right is the Thule-Seminar and its electronic offspring Thule-Netz, which runs its own Website at <<http://thulenet.com/index.htm>>. Modelled on GRECE, it was formed in 1980 in Kassel by the Franco-German Pierre Krebs, choosing a name that clearly alludes to the Thulegesellschaft which became the DAP and then the NSDAP. According to chapter two of the *Verfassungsschutzbericht* of 1996 (at Website <[http://www.verfassungsschutz.nrw.de/jahr96/2\\_5\\_7.htm](http://www.verfassungsschutz.nrw.de/jahr96/2_5_7.htm)>) it describes itself as 'a party of the mind' seeking to bring about cultural change as the premise for political change, and organizes colloquia, seminars, a public-speaking school, as well as solstice and heathen rituals. Its self-proclaimed mission is to act as an 'intellectual and metapolitical think-tank

preparing for a European new order on the basis of the mature cultures of all European *ethnies* and peoples with special regard for their heathen-religious heritage.' (One of its more revealing slogans is 'A heterogeneous world of homogeneous peoples'.) The goal it has set itself is to overcome egalitarianism, which is contrasted with a 'scientific' theory of difference, and combat both the multi-ethnicity and the notion of universal human rights which it alleges threaten the ethnic identity and cultural roots of peoples to the point of 'genocide'. For a report on a meeting of the Thule-Seminar in the late 1980s which exposes its extreme right-wing linkages and ethos see H. Gilbhard and H. Goblirsch, 'Rückkehr des Rassenwahns. Die Ideologie der Neuen Rechte', in Wolfgang Betz (ed.), *Rechtsextremismus in der Bundesrepublik*, (Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 1989), pp. 213-223.

For an example of the way the New Right has influenced the discourse of conventional neo-fascism in Germany see the appeal for the 1789 Rights of Man and Citizen to be completed by recognizing that 'every people has a right to its own identity' published in the Euro-fascist periodical *Nation Europa* vol. 39, no. 7, 1989, and reprinted in R. Griffin, *Fascism*, op.cit., pp. 365-6. 33.

34. The main organ of the New Right in Britain is *Scorpion*, the English language magazine of 'metapolitics and culture' edited by Michael Walker (formerly of the National Front), which appears once-yearly. Issues 17 and 18 (1996, 1997) included Alain de Benoist's extended appraisal of Ernst Jünger, a review of his *Europe, Tiers Monde: Même Combat* (1986), articles on Julius Evola, Carl Schmitt, and Richard Wagner, and the 'McDonaldising' of society, and an extremely hostile review by Vasili Molodiakov, Associate Professor at St Petersburg State Technical University, of *Fascism*, my anthology of primary sources in fascist ideology, expressing stupefaction that I had included New Right and Conservative Revolutionary authors such as de Benoist and Heidegger. Extreme right-wing linkages of a more conventional kind can be detected in a review of books by Colin Jordan (leader of the British National Party) and by the British revisionist historian David Irving, a piece on the neo-Nazi ballad-singer Frank Rennicke (whom M. Walker wishes had updated his national socialism with insights from the New Right!) For a listing of its articles, most of which are reprinted in full, see Website <<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2125/scorpion.html>>.

A fascinating glimpse into the positive way the Nouvelle Droite is seen by British neo-Nazis was given in Tyndal's organ *Spearhead* in August 1997 (originally from *Impact*), and still reprinted at the BNP Website <<http://www.webcom.com/bnp/mon.html>> in August 1998. In his article 'The coming earthquake', Gilbert Monchanin described how impressively the ND had radicalized the French extreme right and concluded that 'Either the FN with a Celtic, Nordic and polytheistic world view wins and the fundamentalist Christians gain an advantageous position, or the FN fails and Mondialists — the One World plutocracy — triumph and those Christians will be the first to be destroyed.' He goes on to draw attention to the appearance in France of new extreme right magazines such as *Réfléchir et Agir*, stressing approvingly how 'they long for a total revolution and the complete dismissal of the present rotten society, they repudiate Judeo-Christianity, and they call for a new

racialism which would return our world to the time when it had a real sense of pride and dignity, instead of the shameful cowardice of the present-day "elite". This is a complete revolution that is taking shape now in France. Few people — even inside the Front national — realize the magnitude of the earthquake which, once it starts, is going to rock the whole of Europe and the whole of the white world. A new force is taking form. And there is definitely nothing that will stop it. The only question is — When?

35. The Russian extreme right formation most indebted to the European Right, though with its own highly idiosyncratic genesis is Den (Day) led by Alexander Dugin and Alexander Prokhanov (editor-in-chief of *Zavtra*, originally *Den*). The movement's key ideological theme is 'Eurasianism', a synthesis of the Slav-Turkic (Orthodox-Muslim) world (Eurasia) which will allow Russians to combat 'Atlantica', the Western world of trans-national corporations, USA-dominated one-world totalitarianism and homogenization. (Atlantica is sometimes presented as Jew-dominated as well, at which point it resembles ZOG, the Zionist Occupation Government which is the principal bugbear of the American Neo-Nazi conspiracy theorists). The first issue of the Den periodical *Elementy*, modelled on the ND's *Éléments*, published articles on all the themes dear to its French cousin publications: mondialism (e.g. No. 2, 1992), Julius Evola, Carl Schmitt, Moeller van den Bruck (No. 3, 1992); the Conservative Revolution, the ideology of the Third Way, and the Geo-politics of Karl Haushofer (No. 1, 1992); articles by Robert Steuckers (Nos. 1 and 2), the major Belgian exponent of the New Right who has close links to Michael Walker of *Scorpion*. Issue 4 (1993) was dedicated to 'fascism' and included an article by Armin Mohler on 'fascism as style'. In the same issue it reported on Alain de Benoist's magazine *Krisis*, and included a long article by him, though by this time he had formally severed links with Dugin and after issues 1 and 2 his name disappeared as a member of the editorial board. Dugin's Eurasianism forms part of the ideology of Limonov's National Bolshevik Party.

Another insight into the surreal world of the Russian extreme right and its appropriation of the French ND is provided by a Website devoted to the manifesto of 'Arctogaia: The Northern Land' (a name reminiscent of the hyperborean 'Ultima Thula' which gave its name to the proto-Nazi Thulegesellschaft and later to the Thule-seminar). It warns that contemporary humanity is 'the absent centre' for which Arctogaia does not exist. As a result 'actual mankind is doomed and is going to disappear soon....The last men...the apocalyptic majority' will die. 'Resistance against this dying breed' [which seems unnecessary if we are all doomed anyway] is declared to be total, involving all spheres of reality — 'from the highest where the new spire [sic] of desperate battles between the celestial warriors and the army of hell is going on, to the lowest ones — the political, economic and every day life.' Since the Men of Arctogaia feel utterly misplaced in the modern world (cf. the concept of *apoliteia* explained below), they have to realize the need to affirm the world of 'Tradition and Being'. The Liberal West and the new world order are the anti-Christ, the evil empire is the USA. Arctogaia takes ND eclecticism to dizzy new heights. Among the heroic forces on hand to help maintain the struggle, the anonymous author lists; Islam, the Conservative Revolution; Third Way [i.e. neo-fascist Third Positionism]; Russia; Islamic socialism; hard-occultism (?!); Apocalyptic terror; and dsog-chen (?!). As for individuals they include René Guénon, Evola, Marx, Sorel, Che

Guevara, Heidegger, Moeller van den Bruck, Nietzsche, Carl Schmitt, Dostoevsky, C.G. Jung, Marcuse, Gottfried Benn, Lautréamont, Sartre, Céline, Mircea Eliade, Ezra Pound, Deleuze, Bakunin, and Dumézil (a crucial source of the ND's concept of Europe's Indo-European roots).

The penultimate name is Alain de Benoist followed somewhat bathetically by the hero of 1970s punk rock, Jonny Rotten. A brief excursus into the philosophy of history then assures us that ever since Descartes Western history has been all down hill. Yet humanity is rapidly approaching a moment when the enemy will be overpowered: 'This victory will be the last and final Endkampf and Endsieg. There won't be any time. Join us because tomorrow it will be late.' Though it is unlikely that anyone in the French ND would wish to be associated with Arctogaia, I would argue that its apocalyptic diagnosis of current world history represents a simplified, sensationalist version of the basic paligenetic myth underlying the more sophisticated ND discourse of 'alternatives to totalitarian globalization', 'spherical time', 'interregnum', and 'cultural renaissance'. In August 1998 Arctogaia's Website was at <<http://web.redline.ru/~arctogai/eng2.htm>>.)

36. *The English Alternative*, Issue 9, (Summer 1998), p. 4.

37. See Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*, op.cit. pp. 254-65.

38. De Benoist's letter dissociating himself from the Russian New Right, which originally appeared in the German New Right magazine *Europa vorn* on 15 September 1993, is republished in P-A Taguieff's *Sur la Nouvelle Droite* op.cit. pp. 311-2. De Benoist goes over his reasons for rejecting an association with Dugin again in his interview with *Telos*, Nos. 98-9, Winter 1993-Fall 1994, pp. 203-4. Given the vast gap between Dugin's concept of a Christian-Islamic Russian empire and de Benoist's Indo-European, federalist and differentialist vision of a European empire, I accept that his bid to dissociate himself from Den is quite genuine. The Den movement's wholesale borrowings from French New Right cultural criticism and socio-political analysis nevertheless confirm how susceptible its ideas are to appropriation by modern fascists and ultra-nationalists, supplying a vital discourse for rationalizing their fantasies of an alternative national/world order uncontaminated by liberalism, communism (or by historic fascism).

39. De Benoist has not to my knowledge made public disclaimers to dissociate himself from other equally fascistically oriented publications which cite him such as the German *Junge Freiheit*, the Italian *Elementi*, and the British *Scorpion*.

40. See Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*, op.cit.

41. *L'essenza del fascismo*, (Edizioni del Tridente, n.p., 1981), p. 54.

42. This is not just because of Sternhell's choice of title, and his focus on France, but because he stresses the revolutionary idealism of those who aspired towards the renewal of France within the framework of a new civilization in an anti-materialist revolt which fused nationalism with socialism, and radically dissociates fascism from Nazism.

43. See P. Mazgaj, *The Action Française and Revolutionary Syndicalism*, (University of North Carolina Press, 1979).
44. *Le Monde* Sunday 3 - Monday 4 May 1998.
45. For an extended discussion of this issue see Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*, op.cit., pp. 308-91.
46. Bertrand de Jouvenel sued Zeev Sternhell for libel and was partially vindicated by the court's decision: see Pierre Assouline, 'Enquête sur un historien condamné pour diffamation', *L'Histoire*, 68 (June 1984), pp. 98-101.
47. Writing in the early 1990s Taguieff identifies four major phases of the ND: 1962-71: its pre- and early history is associated with the overtly neo-Nazi 'Message of Uppsala' (1958-60) and the publication of *Europe Action* (1962-7) in which revisionist French neo-fascism starts expressing its Aryan racism in a Europeanist, but still biological, key; 1972-79: its main theme becomes the attack on inequality (now in association with Indo-Europeanism), and a cultural discourse replaces biological determinism; 1979-1983: it evolves the doctrine of differentialism and a radical relativism is formulated; 1984-1987: the ND's ideological emphasis shifts to encompass third-worldism, the revival of the sacred, and the mission to keep all cultures alive. Taguieff implies that in the fifth (present) phase the ND vacates 'extreme right wing space', a verdict at variance with the one we put forward here which sees the ND since 1987 as still upholders of a minimalist extreme right world-view.
48. De Benoist himself is the outstanding example: see Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*, part II: 'Itinéraire d'un intellectuel atypique: Alain de Benoist'.
49. Taguieff, *Sur la nouvelle droite*, op.cit. p. 313.
50. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1961.
51. *Gli uomini e le rovine*, (Edizioni dell'Ascia, Rome, 1953) translated into French as *Les hommes au Milieu des Ruines* (Les Sept Couleurs, Paris, 1972). It is surely significant that de Benoist's dedicated a whole chapter to this book in his contribution to *Julius Evola, Le Visionnaire foudroyé*, (Copemic, Paris, 1977).
52. A vision most comprehensively expounded in *La rivolta contro il mondo moderno*, (Hoeppli, Rome, 1934).
53. Julius Evola, *Cavalcare la tigre*, (Società Editrice Il Falco, Milan, 1981), pp. 171-5.
54. <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1404/index.html>. The site offered to send 'warriors against the world' a mailing list in German or English, and was linked to an article which attacked the 'materialistic' racism of the Third Reich as ideologically

unsound. Furthermore, its defeat is blamed for having allowed the emergence of the capitalist and Russian superpowers, 'the two most anti-Traditional states on earth'.

55. It is surely significant that de Benoist's dedicated a whole chapter to this book in his contribution to *Julius Evola, Le Visionnaire foudroyé*, (Copemic, Paris, 1977).

56. Cf. Franco Ferraresi (ed.), *La destra radicale* (Feltrinelli, Milan, 1984), pp. 89-96; 233-9.

57. *Telos*, Nos. 98-9, Winter 1993-Fall 1994, p. 183. The interviews are contained in pages 173-207.

58. Alain Bihr, 'Grece', *Ras l'front*, no. 15, Sept./Oct. 1993: <http://www.globenet.org/RLF/txtresist/96.html>

59. Cf. also De Benoist, 'The Idea of Empire', *Telos*, Nos. 98-9, Winter 1993-Fall 1994.

60. *Éléments*, No. 35, Feb.-March 1996.

61. Alain Bihr is keen to stress this point in the context of *Krisis*: see Alain Bihr, 'Grece', op.cit., p. 3.

62. *Diorama letterario*, March 1996, no. 186, pp. 1-2

63. For an explanation of why fascism fails to break through in the post-war era see Roger Griffin, 'British Fascism: The Ugly Duckling' in Michael Cronin (ed.) *The Failure of British Fascism*, (Macmillan, London, July 1995). If parties such as the FN, AN, and FPÖ achieve stable electorates of over 15% it is because they have publicly disavowed the revolutionary, anti-systemic goals of genuine fascism.

64. Other blatant ND fallacies include a) the myth that 'mondialization' is leading to a ethnocidal homogenization (in fact modernization is leading to a diversification and enrichment of contemporary culture not its impoverishment); c) the assumption that contemporary life under 'globalization' is destroying community, whereas in reality it is constantly creating all sorts of new forms of community life to counteract anomie and atomization; d) the assertion that human rights is part of an ethnocentric war against cultural pluralism: not all 'difference' is good. For example, the attempt to put an end to the horrific abuses associated with child labour (including child prostitution) which is so rife in the 'Third World' (not to mention parts of the Second and First worlds as well) is hardly to be seen as a ploy to undermine cultural diversity.