

Out with the Old, In with the New?

The French New Right in Britain, 1981-1986

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Preface

The far right in Europe has in the decades since World War Two taken several different, and sometimes unexpected forms. The *French New Right* (Nouvelle Droite, ND) movement has undoubtedly been one of the most influential in developing far right ideological discourse. Because of its influence beyond the French border, the movement has increasingly been referred to as the *European New Right*, highlighting its transnational European character. Using the British context as a case study, this thesis aims to understand how the ideological discourse of the ND was disseminated to a wider European audience.

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Introduction

Presentation of Thesis

The French *Nouvelle Droite* (New Right, ND) movement has since its birth in 1968 stirred interest and confusion among researchers. Is it Fascism in disguise? Extreme-rightist, ultra-revolutionary, or does it constitute, as the ND intellectuals themselves claim, a new paradigm completely, independent from the traditional left-right political spectrum? The aim of the *Nouvelle Droite*, manifested in the organization *GRECE* (*Groupement de Recherche et d'Études pour la Civilisation Européenne*), was from its very beginning to challenge the dominance of the liberal-left system, which the ND intellectuals saw as having cultural hegemony in the western world. It would achieve this not by political methods, but by a *metapolitical strategy*. In the view of the ND, the only way to real power was to fundamentally change attitudes and values in society, not by way of electoral politics or terrorist violence. Cultural power had to precede political power. This strategy involved reaching an audience by publishing journals, writing books, organizing conferences and contributing texts to independent magazines and newspapers. Throughout the 1970's and 1980's, the movement's influence grew and extended beyond France and organizations and journals which were modelled on the French *GRECE* emerged in other European countries. The movement has essentially evolved into a transnational phenomenon, and it has thus increasingly been referred to as the *European New Right* (ENR).

As the influence of the ND grew and the members of *GRECE* enjoyed newfound media attention in the late 1970's, the leading far right party in Britain, the *National Front*, was in crisis following a catastrophic election result in 1979. One group became interested in the ENR movement and saw it as an opportunity to develop a new discourse, strategy and presentation for far-right ideas in Britain, which would not be based on mere populist tendencies of prejudice and conspiracy theories among the "low-brow" electorate, but on sophisticated critiques of liberal society. The leading figure in this group was Michael Walker, a NF organizer based in London. As a linguist and translator, he was well positioned to disseminate *Nouvelle Droite* writings, which at that point had not been available in English, to British audience. This group also adopted the metapolitical strategy and began

publishing the *National Democrat* in 1981 (renamed *The Scorpion* in 1983). The journal became the main mouthpiece of the British branch of the ENR.

Although the ND as an intellectual movement has become a transnational phenomenon does not mean it is a homogenous school of thought. There are various schools of thought inside the movement based on regional and national differences and also between individuals.¹ This was not necessarily seen as a weakness for its intellectuals. When discussing the various national branches of the ENR in *The Scorpion*, Michael Walker himself wrote that “the most successful initiatives have been those which have not taken after G.R.E.C.E too slavishly but which have attempted to give their own national or regional character to their efforts.”²

The aim of this thesis will thus be to analyse how the discourse and ideology of the Nouvelle Droite was disseminated to the British public in the early 1980’s, what characteristics were emphasized and what forms did they take within the British context? Furthermore, were there any aspects in the British branch of the ENR which diverged from the “standard” ENR discourse, especially that of the original French founders? Additionally, the thesis will discuss whether the influence of Nouvelle Droite discourse, as propagated by the British branch, can be found in wider British far-right, specifically the *National Front* in the 1980’s and the *British National Party* in the 1990’s and 2000’s. In short, what influence did the British New Right have, if any?

Primary Sources and Methodological approach

The analysis of this thesis will be mainly based on publications of the journal *National Democrat* (renamed *The Scorpion* in 1983) from 1981 to 1986, which is considered to be the main mouthpiece for the European New Right movement in Britain throughout the 1980’s. The issues of this journal, especially the early ones, had a limited circulation and are not easy to find. Fortunately, I received a tip early on in this process that the University of Northampton had several issues in their archives. I was lucky enough to be given digital copies of the issues they possessed from the years 1981 to 1986.

¹ Bar-on, Tamir. *Where Have All the Fascists Gone*. 2007, p.142

² Walker, Michael. “Spotlight on the French New Right” in *The Scorpion: Against all Totalitarianisms*, issue 10, 1986, p.13

The first issue of *National Democrat* was published in 1981. In its own words, each issue would seek to deal in depth with “matters of national concern.”³ It also claimed to support no political party and oppose none, still they were not “unable to distinguish friend from foe.”⁴ The journal is generally described as the first and most prominent ENR publication in Britain, responsible for introducing the British public to the ideas of the intellectual movement.⁵ The journal is comprised of editorials, translated texts by various ENR intellectuals, a reader’s symposium, and outside contributions in the form of letters and articles. One can’t necessarily ascribe the views and attitudes of one single author to the journal as a whole, which is also stated in the very first issue: “Views expressed outside the editorial are the writer’s own and not necessarily those of “National Democrat”. Nor is it the purpose of this thesis to claim otherwise, even though the editors of the journal have made conscious choices over which texts to include. It is not the authors themselves which will be the focus of analysis, it is rather the journal itself and the discourse it disseminates which will be of importance.

³ “National Democrat” in *National Democrat: The Problem of Racism*, issue 1, 1981, p.2

⁴ Ibid: p.2

⁵ See for example: Bar-On 2007, P.7 & Cronin, Mike. *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition*, 1996, p.108

1 State of research

1.1 The Far Right

Where the Nouvelle Droite and the broader European New Right is situated in the political landscape has been the subject of many studies and discussions. Scholars have described the movement as being neo-fascist, radical-rightist, extreme-rightist among other things.⁶ It is not the purpose of this paper to label the ND with either of these terms, neither is it necessarily fruitful. Even so, however, when discussing the phenomenon that is the ND and its manifestations, one is entering the field of far right and fascist research. It is therefore necessary to have an understanding of what exactly meant by the *far right*.

Far right studies is an extensive field of research. It spans multiple decades and academic disciplines, including history, political science, anthropology and sociology to name some, and it has been scrutinized from a multitude of research angles. As a consequence, the question of how to precisely conceptualize the *far right* is not a straightforward one.

From a historical perspective, a central question is whether post-World War Two far right groups should be studied in light of historical fascism, or should they be considered completely new phenomenon, which are unrelated to fascism.

Saving fascism?

According to the prominent scholar Roger Griffin, historical fascism as it manifested in the interwar years, is dead, and we are now in what he calls the “post-fascist” era.⁷ Since the fall of the Third Reich in Germany, ultra-nationalism has been identified with war, destruction and genocide. Liberal democracy on the other hand emerged victorious, and if anything, strengthened from the war. Fascist activists then quickly realized that in order for the ideology to survive, it had to be extensively overhauled.⁸

⁶ Roger Griffin has for example characterized the ND as neo-fascist: Griffin, Roger. *Fascism, 1995*, p.315

⁷ Griffin, Roger, “Interregnum or endgame? The radical right in the post-fascist era”, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 5, No, 2, 2000: 163-178, p. 165

⁸ Ibid: p.165

For Griffin then, historical fascism as it emerged in the interwar period is no more, because the specific historical context which produced fascism in Europe at the time, is no longer present. However, ideological principles and characteristics of fascism have survived. According to Griffin, activists developed two basic strategies for keeping the dream of national rebirth alive: Internationalization and metapoliticization.⁹

The idea of international fascism was not a new one. There had been several calls for a federal, fascist Europe before the war, and the Nazi conquests of Europe made the “European New Order” a realistic prospect.¹⁰ Once Germany had lost the war, the concept of international fascism became a main focus for many fascist activists because the narrow ultranationalism of Mussolini and Hitler was discredited and besides, had failed to realize the “true” historical purpose of fascism: to save European civilization as a whole from the destruction at the hands of Bolshevism and Americanization.¹¹ This Europeanization became a striking feature of the post-1945 fascist radical right, propagated by prominent far right ideologues like Oswald Mosley, Julius Evola and Maurice Bardèche.

The other manifestation of the internationalization strategy of fascism, which Griffin describes as more original, is *third positionism*. This strategy seeks a third way between capitalism and communism and associated itself with third world struggles against the global market and a “USA-Isreal” dominated international community and cultural hegemony.¹² Another interesting trait of third positionism is that its proponents tend to reject the nation-state as the basis for homogenous cultural identity, instead promoting regionalist separatism (ethno-pluralism) which produce what Griffin calls a “Europe of a hundred flags.”¹³

The second strategy, metapoliticization refers to the ideological reproduction of fascist discourse by ideologues without any formal links to any organized politics. Fascist metapoliticization come in different forms, one of them being historical revisionism, for

⁹ Ibid: p.166

¹⁰ Ibid: p.166

¹¹ Ibid: p.166

¹² Ibid: p.168

¹³ Ibid: p.168

example Holocaust denial. Another form, which is more relevant in the context of this paper, is the metapolitical offensive of the European New Right, which Griffin describes as “by far the most sophisticated disguise assumed by the fascist radical right since the war.”¹⁴

Cutting the threads connecting past to present

For other far right researchers, like Cas Mudde and Stanley Payne, fascism is a historic concept and should not be referred to in the context of contemporary far right phenomenon (contemporary meaning post-World War Two). The argument being that the specific historical fascism of the interwar years could never be re-created and there is therefore little point in trying to conceptualize neo-fascism in the studies of the contemporary far right.¹⁵ Instead, Cas Mudde argues for the umbrella term “right wing extremism”, seeing no need to involve the study of historical fascism when trying to understand the contemporary far right: “Working within the marxist theory of fascism, most of these authors try to “prove” the historical continuity and cooperation of the traditional and extreme right.”¹⁶

In *Routledge Studies in Fascism and the Far Right*, historian Nigel Copsey argues that the view of fascism as a phenomenon which was relevant exclusively to the context of the interwar period impedes our ability to understand it. In addition to impeding our ability to understand its historical significance also after World War Two, not least in context of the contemporary far right – it is cutting the threads connecting the past to the present.¹⁷

Although Copsey does concede that the post-war forms of fascism clearly differ from their predecessors, and that fascism is not the historical force it was in the interwar period, it does not mean it is without historical and contemporary significance. It would be a mistake, writes Copsey, to “insist upon some epochal break in the lines of continuity between “classic” fascism and the contemporary far right.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid: p.170

¹⁵ See for example: Mudde, Cas. “The War of Words: Defining the Extreme Right Party Family“ in *West European Politics*, Volume 19, no 2, 1996: 225-248 & Payne, Stanley. *A History of Fascism, 1914-45*. 1995

¹⁶ Mudde, Cas. *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, 2000, p.12

¹⁷ Copsey, Nigel. ”Historians and the Contemporary Far Right: To bring (or not to bring) the past into present?“ in *Routledge Studies in Fascism and the Far Right: Theory, Method and Practice* 2021, Routledge, p.42

¹⁸ Ibid: p.42

Copsey argues then, like Griffin, that fascist essentials are to be found in the discourse of the contemporary far right, where it shades into radical-right populism. Copsey also claims that the “neo-fascist theorists” of the European New Right have played a major role in sophisticating right-wing populism, particularly with regard to the adoption of ethno-pluralist discourse.¹⁹

Some preliminary considerations

As already stated, it is not the intention of this paper to necessarily label the European New Right or its theorists as *fascist* or enter into a discussion regarding its ties to fascism. This discussion has, however, attempted to demonstrate why it is beneficial to study the contemporary far right in light of fascism in order to better understand its nature. In the words of Copsey, “when it comes to methodological approaches to the contemporary far right, we really should be bringing fascism’s past into the present.”²⁰

In this paper, it is the term *far right* that is of relevance and will serve as an umbrella term for the relevant movements, sentiments, parties, organizations and ideologies discussed. The Center for Research on Extremism at the University of Oslo defines the far right as comprising any actors that are located to the right of the mainstream and conservative right on the left-right political spectrum.²¹ Thus, the far right term comprises a wide ideological landscape. The choice to use the umbrella term far right when discussing the Nouvelle Droite and the European New Right is a conscious one, which will be reasoned in the following section.

1.2 Nouvelle Droite

Being one of the most influential far right intellectual movements in post-war Europe, there is no shortage of literature and research on Nouvelle Droite. Two of the most prominent scholars in this field are political scientist Tamir Bar-On, and historian Andrea Mammone. Both Bar-On and Mammone have produced several works on the movement, its transnational

¹⁹ Ibid: p.42

²⁰ Ibid: p.42

²¹ Gattinara, Leidig & Ravndal. “What characterizes the far right scene in Europe and beyond?” in Jupskås & Leidig, *Knowing what’s (far) right: A Compendium*, p.46

character and influence, and its connections to European New Right – and other far right movements across Europe.

Their research perspectives do however, differ. Bar-On's works focus on the movement itself, attempting to navigate through the movement's many, sometimes seemingly conflicting ideological traits and influences. For example, the Nouvelle Droite's apparent adoption of ideals generally identified with the political left.²² Bar-On is also concerned with the transnational aspect of the Nouvelle Droite, its inherent transnational world view and how the movement has influenced and helped to shape the transnational spirit in right-wing Europe.²³

Mammone, on the other hand, is predominantly concerned with the transnational influence of the Nouvelle Droite, how its ideology and discourse have transferred across borders, and how it has influenced far right political parties. Mammone is thus mainly a narrator of the Nouvelle Droite's transnational history.²⁴

There are also other scholars worthy of mention when it comes to ND and ENR. Political scientist Alberto Spektorowski has produced several articles on the ideological evolution of the New Right, especially concerning ethno-pluralism, ethno-regionalism and Europeanism.²⁵ The already mentioned historian Roger Griffin, who has been essential in my understanding and interpretation of far right history, has also written articles dedicated to the ND and ENR where he seeks to trace the origins of the movement and place it in context in the history of the European post-war far right.

Additionally, the writings of Alain de Benoist, the chief ideologist of the Nouvelle Droite has been one of my main sources of understanding of the movement. Benoist has been active for several decades now and being able to read his works spanning this time grants the

²² See for example: Bar-On, Tamir. The Ambiguities of the Nouvelle Droite, in *The European Legacy*, Vol 6. No. 3 pp. 331-351, 2001; Bar-On, Tamir. The French New Right: Neither Right, Nor Left? In *Journal for Study of Radicalism*, 8: 1-44, 2014

²³ See for example, Bar-On, Tamir. Transnationalism and the Nouvelle Droite, in *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol 45 2011

²⁴ See for example, Mammone, Andrea. *Transnational Neo-Fascism in France and Italy*, Cambridge University Press 2015

²⁵ See for example, Spektorowski, Alberto, "The New Right: ethno-regionalism, ethno-pluralism and the emergence of a neo-facist "Third Way", in *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol 8 p.111-130, 2003

opportunity to understand how the ND movement has evolved over the years and how it has transferred across borders.

(Far) Right?

Placing the Nouvelle Droite in the political landscape is not a straightforward task. In large part, the difficulties stem from the fact that the movement is not a political one and does not engage actively in politics, it is rather an intellectual and cultural movement that aims to influence culture and popular opinion through metapolitics.²⁶ The movement has, however, been a big influence in contemporary far right political parties and groupings, also among those which might be characterized as extreme rightist and radical rightist.

In the context of this paper, it is not interesting where one places the French (and European) New Right on the right side of the political spectrum. The question is whether it is justified to place it on the right side at all. Alain de Benoist and other ND intellectuals view this issue somewhat ambiguously. Benoist had no issue being identified with the right in his *Vu de droite: anthologie critique des idées contemporaines*, vol. 1 from 1977, defining *the right* as: “The consistent attitude to view the diversity of the world, and by consequence the relative inequalities that are necessarily the product of this, as a positive thing; and the progressive homogenisation of the world (...) as a negative thing.”²⁷ On the other hand, Benoist and other ND intellectuals have also argued, especially since the 1990s, against the traditional division of left and right politics, claiming the divide has become irrelevant as what is “right” and “left” continuously changes in the contemporary world.²⁸

Despite the NDs adoption of leftist ideals, and attempts to transcend the right-left political dichotomy, the movement is still generally identified as belonging to the far right. According to the Center for Research on Extremism at the University of Oslo (C-REX), the ideology of

²⁶ In *Manifesto for a European Renaissance*, 1999, p.9, Alain de Benoist defines the French New Right as “a think-tank and school of thought (...) which has attempted to formulate a metapolitical perspective.”

²⁷ De Benoist, Alain. *View from the Right: A Critical Anthology of Contemporary Ideas* Vol 1, 1977, p.54

²⁸ de Benoist, Alain, *On the French Right – New and Old: An Interview with Alain de Benoist*, 2003, p.113

far right groups “rests on the belief that inequalities are natural (..) which informs their nativist and authoritarian views of society.”²⁹

1.3 The British Far Right

In general, the history of fascism and the far right in Britain is largely seen as a history of failure among scholars. According to Matthew Goodwin for example, Britain has traditionally been seen as one of the countries without a successful far right.³⁰ From Oswald Mosley’s interwar *British Union of Fascists* and post-war *Union Movement* to the *National Front* (NF, founded in 1967), British fascism and far right has never managed to pose a serious threat at the ballot box, despite generating a decent amount of publicity.

Researchers point to several reasons for this apparent failure. Mike Cronin writes in his aptly named book, *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition*, that the “nature of British political society has always counteracted against any breakthrough for British fascism.”³¹ Some of the factors which constitute this political society are the strength of the British parliamentary system, the nature of the electoral system, the existence of a predominantly right-wing conservative party and the rejection of alien/foreign political ideologies.³² In short, fascism has never found room in the British political space. Additionally, the belief that the experience of World War Two has served as a lesson for Britain to not let fascism assert itself has also been a prominent one, making antifascism an aspect of British identity.³³

Still, Cronin argues that it is naively simplistic to claim that British fascism has indeed failed, because it denies it being a potential threat in the future. Furthermore, he argues that despite its failure to mount a successful challenge at the electoral level, fascism has been a constant

²⁹ Gattinara, Leidig & Ravndal. «What characterizes the far right scene in Europe and beyond?» in Jupskås & Leidig, *Knowing what’s (far) right: A compendium*, p. 46.

³⁰ Goodwin J, Matthew. *New British Fascism: Rise of the British National Party*. Routledge 2011, p.5

³¹ Cronin, Mike. *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition*. Palgrave Macmillan 1996, p.5

³² Ibid: p.5

³³ See for example: Eatwell, Roger. *Fascism: A History*, Random house 2003, p.312

force throughout the 20th century³⁴ and has the potential to surge to the surface of society in the future. This was demonstrated in 1993, when a candidate from the British National Party (BNP) was voted into local government. Although this candidate was voted out the next year, the BNP experienced in the later years a massive rise in support, especially since 2001. According to Goodwin there is an alternative perspective on the far right in Britain, other than that of failure, which argues that there exists in Britain a sizeable amount of latent support for the “extreme right” which is far greater than is apparent at the polls.”³⁵ Put simply, the British far right has as of yet failed to realize its potential.

³⁴ Cronin 1996, p.3

³⁵ Goodwin 2011, Preface, p.1

2. The Nouvelle Droite – Towards a European New Right

Introduction

The term “Nouvelle Droite” was first coined by the French journalist Gilbert Comte in 1978 in a series of articles in the newspaper *Le Monde*, highlighting the intellectual movement which was centred around the think-tank *Groupement de Recherche et d'Études pour la Civilisation Européenne* (GRECE), which had been founded in 1968. The term was an attempt to label this new intellectual movement which seemed to share certain ideals with the historical right (or, as some would argue, fascism), such as ethnopluralism and anti-egalitarianism. At the same time, it was seemingly not explicitly racist or hostile towards specific groups of people. Despite its similarities with the *old* right, the *New* right appeared different in terms of ideology and strategy.

The term caught on and has since been used to describe the thoughts, ideas and intellectuals which are connected to French intellectual movement that emerged in 1968 with the foundation of GRECE. This also extends beyond France. As media attention on the ND grew in the late 1970s, so did its influence. In the following years, ND ideas spread to intellectuals, think-tanks and far right movements and parties in Italy, Germany, Holland, Spain and England to name a few.³⁶

The following section will provide a brief history of the Nouvelle Droite, its origins, its ideology and strategy, and how it came to be one of the most influential transnational far right movements in post-war Europe.

2.1 Origins and the Foundation of GRECE

Many of the leading Nouvelle Droite thinkers and founders of GRECE, including Alain de Benoist, Dominique Venner and Pierre Viall had their origins in anti-enlightenment, revolutionary right and ultra-nationalist milieus in the 1950's and 60's.³⁷ They were members of, and contributed to various organizations and journals, such as the pro-western,

³⁶ Bar-On, Tamir. "Transnationalism and the French Nouvelle Droite" in *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol 45, 2011

³⁷ Bar-On, Tamir 2007, p.23

Europeanist and racist journal *Défense de l'Occident*, which was founded by neo-fascist Maurice Bardèche.

In the 1960s, several of the future GRECE founders were ultra-nationalists and sympathetic to the French Algeria cause. One of these, Dominique Venner, was a combatant in the French-Algerian war and founded the far right student organization *Fédération des étudiants nationalistes*, of which Benoist also was a member. *Jeune Europe* and its spiritual successor, *Europe Action*, are also often considered precursors in the 1950s and 60s to the Nouvelle Droite.

While *Jeune Europe* was an outright anti-parliamentary violent group and was banned in 1962, *Europe Action*, which was founded the following year by one of the future GRECE founders, Dominique Venner, made significant changes in terms of discourse and strategy. It abandoned the *Führer-prinzip* and the “scientific” doctrine of racism. Instead, it expressed conditional support for the liberal parliamentary system, a change from biological to cultural definitions of “difference”, in addition to a racial notion of a unified Europe.³⁸ Importantly, *Europe Action* turned away from the violent activism which characterized *Jeune Europe* and instead adopted a more metapolitical strategy. Alain de Benoist wrote articles for the *Europe Action* magazine and numerous other activists from both these organizations later became members of GRECE and supporters of Nouvelle Droite.³⁹

Founding GRECE

The think tank GRECE was officially established in Nice, in France, in January 1968 by forty European members, including Alain de Benoist, and two prominent future secretary-generals, Pierre Vial and Jean-Claude Valla. With it, the French New Right was born, although the term itself was not yet introduced.

Although the Nouvelle Droite and GRECE and inevitably linked together, the distinction is quite essential. GRECE was a specific organizational institution which consists of individual members, while the ND is an abstract school of thought and intellectual movement which has derived from the GRECE think tank. The ND is thus an umbrella term which applies to all

³⁸ Ibid: p.32

³⁹ Bar-On, Tamir 2011

intellectuals, think tanks and journals identifying with the movement. GRECE is a crucial part of the ND as the original incarnation of the movement, but the ND does not exclusively consist of GRECE.

2.2 GRECE and the Ideology of the Nouvelle Droite

The GRECE project was a union of three different revolutionary right-wing generations: the interwar era, World War Two and the Algerian War.⁴⁰ Benoist, who belonged to the latter generation, had argued since his *Europe Action* days that the revolutionary right had to take measures in order to return to political respectability. Benoist and the other GRECE members recognized that post-war Europe was firmly anti-fascist politically, and culturally liberal and left-wing. The protests which swept over Europe in 1968, which were heavily influenced by the New Left movement, only convinced the newly founded GRECE that the liberal left held the key to power in Europe because it supposedly controlled the schools, universities and media.⁴¹ In other words, the liberal left held cultural hegemony in society.

Cultural war

The aim of GRECE, was, and still is, to challenge this supposed cultural hegemony with a metapolitical strategy. The ND intellectuals argued that the old right was wrong to think that either electoral politics or terrorist violence was the way to power. Following the metapolitical strategy formed by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, Benoist argued that it was cultural hegemony – control over dominant values and attitudes in society – that promised long-term, durable political power.⁴²

In his *Vu de droite*, Benoist outlines the aim of Nouvelle Droite's metapolitical strategy by arguing that intellectual theory must precede action, if it is to have long lasting effects:

“All the great revolutions of history have only served to transpose into facts an evolution already realised, in an underlying way, in the spirit (..) The French right is Leninist without

⁴⁰ Bar-On, Tamir 2007, p.34

⁴¹ Bar-On, Tamir 2011

⁴² Bar-On, Tamir 2011

having read Lenin. It has not grasped the significance of Gramsci. It has not seen how cultural power threatens the apparatus of the state."⁴³

So which values and attitudes did the Nouvelle Droite ideologues seek to imprint on society? A deep analysis of the ideology of the movement would constitute too big of a task and is worthy of a whole paper in itself. It is, however, necessary to give a brief overview to outline the core ideological concepts which are associated with the French, and the European New Right.

As the Nouvelle Droite is a loosely connected intellectual movement comprised of many individuals and institutions, one should be somewhat careful to claim they all share the exact same mindset, ideology and goals. There are definitely differences and disagreement across the movement. Furthermore, the ND has also evolved since its creation in 1968. Some characteristics have, however, remained constant since its birth. These ideas are generally seen as fundamental to the movement's doctrine.

The Right to Difference

The Nouvelle Droite endorses a *right to difference*. Diversity between groups of people is seen as a fact of life, a product of historical forces, and therefore, inequalities are also a fact of life.⁴⁴ The ND claim to not relate this differentialism to race, but to culture. Furthermore, they argue that this view is not inherently discriminatory or implies an inherent ethnocultural hierarchy of worth between groups of people. In a principal Nouvelle Droite work, *Manifesto for a European Renaissance*, Benoist and Champetier write that "The true wealth of the world is first and foremost the diversity of its cultures and peoples."⁴⁵

This diversity and inequality is seen as a positive thing by ND ideologues, because it is a product of natural historical evolution. Multicultural societies should therefore be rejected. In contrast to diversity, *homogenization* of the world is seen as a menace, because it destroys humanity's cultural diversity – the "reduction of all cultures to a "global civilisation", built on

⁴³ de Benoist 1977, p.63

⁴⁴ Ibid: p.55

⁴⁵ de Benoist & Champetier, *Manifesto for a European Renaissance*, 1999, p.28

what is most common.”⁴⁶ Anti-globalization is thus obviously a trait in the Nouvelle Droite. Starting in the 1980’s especially, Americanization, understood as American cultural imperialism, and global capitalism also became an outspoken enemy for threatening organic society and national and regional traditions and cultures.⁴⁷

The wish to preserve distinct separate ethno-cultural regions as endorsed in the “right to difference” of the Nouvelle droite, is called *ethnopluralism*, or *ethnodifferentialism*. Scholars have pointed to the fact that the New Right’s turn from nationalism to this type of regionalism, from racism and colonialism to cultural pluralism and anti-imperialism, which traditionally have been leftist ideals, have defied the old political understanding of the right-left divide.⁴⁸

“Ethnopluralism” and the “right to difference” is, like several other aspects of the New Right, rather ambiguous. On the surface, it implies the right for each ethno-cultural group to practice their way of life, free of interference and discrimination. In this sense, it echoes leftist ideals of multiculturalism. There are, however, crucial differences, as for example scholar Alberto Spektorowski have argued: For the left, multiculturalism would coincide with protection and enhancement of non-European cultural rights. Some also chastise the assimilation of modern nation states for allegedly depriving immigrants of their cultural pride.⁴⁹ For the New Right, however, this approach demands segregation and impenetrable cultural barriers.⁵⁰ The New Right ethnopluralism concludes that the inclusion of foreign cultures damages both the “host” and the “visitor”, and it is therefore wise think of returning immigrants to their own country.⁵¹

Anti-Egalitarian and Anti-Democratic

⁴⁶ de Benoist 1977, p.79

⁴⁷ Spektorowski 2003, p.116

⁴⁸ See for example; Spektorowski, Alberto. ”The New Right: Ethno-regionalism, ethno-pluralism and the emergence of a neo-fascist third way”, in *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 8:1, 111-130. 2003

⁴⁹ Ibid: p.126

⁵⁰ Ibid: p.117-123

⁵¹ Ibid: p.126

Egalitarian societies aspire for equality among its people, implicating the same rights, status and basic worth for everyone. In essence, it preaches that all people are the same and should be treated the same, notwithstanding differences in ethnicity, gender, social status, religion or any other factors. Egalitarianism is therefore viewed by the Nouvelle Droite as homogenizing – undermining diversity among the world’s organic society.⁵² As a consequence of its valorisation of inherent difference and inequality, the ND is anti-egalitarian.

As for its attitudes towards democracy, the ND generally is opposed to representative liberal-democracy, which it claims to ultimately constitute a form of totalitarian oppressive system, in addition to being another “homogenizing ideology” which is destructive of Europe’s rooted cultural, regional and national diversity.⁵³ Instead, they argue for a direct democracy in the ancient Greek tradition, based on smaller organic communities.

In short then, in contrast to what is typically associated with the far right, the Nouvelle Droite endorse regionalism instead of nationalism; and cultural, anti-imperialism and ethnic pluralism instead of racism and colonialism.⁵⁴

Europeanism

Although the Nouvelle Droite claim to propagate a right to difference and regional ethnopluralism, there was also a strong element of Europeanism in the movement from the very start. This is illustrated in the name of the principal think tank GRECE, *Groupement de Recherche et d’Études pour la Civilisation Européenne*. The ND emphasized from the very start a shared European legacy and identity in all of the continent’s different ethnic groups.

This pan-national European nationalism was not new in far right milieus. As have already been discussed, Roger Griffin argues that Europeanization became a common feature in the far right after 1945 as part of what he calls the strategy of internationalization of fascism. The self-proclaimed French fascist, Maurice Bardèche, led the French delegation at the congress of Malmö in 1961 that sought to Europeanize fascism by erecting a pan-European fascist

⁵² de Benoist 1977, p.16

⁵³ Bar-On, Tamir 2011

⁵⁴ Spektorowski 2003, p.111-112

movement.⁵⁵ Bardéche was a major influence for Benoist and the Nouvelle Droite, he also collaborated directly to the ND through contributions in associated journals.

Benoist is viewed by many as a successor to Bardéche, with regards to his metapolitical pan-Europeanist turn.⁵⁶ To de Benoist, as stated by researcher Alberto Spektorowski, the narrow nationalism, synthesized with universal egalitarianism which emerged with the French revolution represented a form of racism, the reasoning being that the idea of universal citizenship leads to a multiracial society, which again was detrimental to cultural diversity.⁵⁷ Instead, the Nouvelle Droite argues for a European nationalism which would be an ethnic federation of European peoples – what Bar-On calls a "Europe of a hundred flags", a pan-national, authoritarian and corporatist empire cleansed of immigrants, with the purpose of preserving ethnic homogeneity with the "authentic" historical regions of Europe.⁵⁸

2.3 Transnational Influence – The European New Right

The Nouvelle Droite rose to prominence especially in the late 1970s when the movement started receiving widespread media attention, with Benoist as the principal face and spokesman. In 1977 he published his prominent work, *Vu de Droite*, for which he received the *Grand Prix de l'Essai*, he also figured regularly in the widely read weekly *Le Figaro Magazine*. The French New Right also managed to disseminate its ideas beyond the French borders. Both Bar-On and Mammone have emphasized the transnational character of the Nouvelle Droite, both in terms of scope and strategy.⁵⁹ By acting as the movement's transnational messenger, Benoist created intellectual networks throughout Europe, cementing ties and influencing other far right intellectuals. This cross-border networking was, and still is, a part of the Nouvelle Droite's metapolitical strategy for cultural hegemony, and reflects the movement's inherent Europeanism, Bar-On argues. If the egalitarian "poisons" of

⁵⁵ Bar-On, "Fascism to the Nouvelle Droite" 2008

⁵⁶ See for example, Bar-On, Tamir, "Transnationalism and the Nouvelle Droite" 2011

⁵⁷ Spektorowski 2003, p.121-122

⁵⁸ Bar-On 2011

⁵⁹ See for example: Bar-On, Tamir. "Transnationalism and the Nouvelle Droite" 2011, and Mammone, Andrea. "The Transnational Reaction to 1968: Neo-Fascist Fronts and Political Cultures in France and Italy" 2008

liberalism, socialism and social democracy were to be defeated, it would not merely be in France, but in the whole of Europe.⁶⁰

As the Nouvelle Droite extended its influence across Europe, sister organizations to GRECE appeared in other countries, and it became increasingly common to speak of a *European New Right* instead of a *French New Right*. This does not imply, however, that the ENR should be interpreted as a homogenous school of thought. The ENR, like GRECE, is divided into various schools of thought with regional and national differences, different intellectuals with different personalities and competing ideological traits, as have been pointed out by others.⁶¹ Still, such differences have not prevented European-wide cooperation between ENR intellectuals across various European nations in conferences, journals, university exchanges and debates. More often than not, despite national differences, they have shared a common focus on cultural metapolitics and an anti-egalitarian, anti-liberal and anti-capitalist view. Moreover, the relative success of the French New Right has served as a model for other New Right formations.⁶²

Italy: Nuova Destra

According to Mammone, the Nouvelle Droite has always considered the Italian peninsula to be an important nation and cultivated from its birth a close relationship with Italian activists. Additionally, some of the ND's fundamental philosophies and tactics were grounded in Italian-based traditions.⁶³ The long-term metapolitical perspective and the idea of cultural hegemony which was adopted from the Italian Marxist intellectual Antonio Gramsci has already been stated. The Italian neofascist writer Julius Evola also had a big influence on the Nouvelle Droite through his criticism of the modern world, Americanization of European

⁶⁰ Bar-On, Tamir, "Transnationalism and the Nouvelle Droite". 2011

⁶¹ Bar-On 2007, p.142-143

⁶² Ibid: p.142

⁶³ Mammone, Andrea. *Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy*, 2015, p.164

societies, Europeanism and the post-national stance.⁶⁴ Furthermore, Evola had in the interwar years developed a theory of differentialism and a “right to difference”, which would become a main characteristic of the Nouvelle Droite. All ethnicities were different according to Evola, with different features and cultural values which had to be preserved. Democracies, he argued, were responsible for wiping out diversity.⁶⁵

It was perhaps only natural then, that one of the first organizations directly inspired by the French New Right emerged in Italy. The *Nuova Destra* (New Right) was born in 1974 when Marco Tarchi, a youth leader in the neofascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, along with some companions met Alain de Benoist and other GRECE members in Paris.⁶⁶ The young Italians had become intrigued by the GRECE-published magazine *Nouvelle Ecole*, which they had discovered through the Italian magazine *L’Italiano*. Following the meeting in 1974, a close and frequent mail correspondence started with their French counterparts, they also participated in the annual GRECE conferences in Paris.⁶⁷ Inspired by the Nouvelle Droite, the *Nuova Destra* almost immediately engaged in the Gramscian metapolitical cultural war, publishing journals modelled on the French example. There were also frequent collaborations between the journals across borders in the following years, the French activists wrote pieces for the Italian *Elementi* and the Italians for its French version, *Eléments*. Mammone describes this process as a transnational crossfertilisation, a honeycomb structure where ideals of the French New Right could circulate and cross national boundaries.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Wolff, Elisabetta Cassina (2016) ‘Evola’s Interpretation of Fascism and Moral Responsibility’. In *The Ideologues and Ideologies of the Radical Right*. A special issue guest-edited by Matthew Feldman and John Pollard. *Patterns of Prejudice*. Cambridge Journals, volume 50, issue 4-5, pp. 478-494.

Wolff, Elisabetta Cassina (2014) ‘Apolitia and Tradition in Julius Evola as Reaction to Nihilism’. *European Review*, Cambridge Journals, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 258–273.

Wolff, Elisabetta Cassina (2012) ‘En ensom ridder mot den moderne verden: Julius Evola og høyre-radikalisme i etterkrigstidens Europa’. In Øystein Sørensen, Bernt Hagtvet, and Bjørn Arne Steine, eds. *Høyreekstremisme: ideer og bevegelser i Europa*. Oslo: Dreyer, pp. 161–191.

⁶⁵ Mammone, Andrea 2015, p.170

⁶⁶ Ibid: p.171-172

⁶⁷ Ibid: p.172

⁶⁸ Mammone, Andrea. ”The Transnational Reaction to 1968: Neo-Fascist Fronts and Political Cultures in France and Italy”, in *Contemporary European History*, Vol 17 no.2, 213-236, 2008, p.236

The Nouvelle Droite provided an ideological and strategical framework for the Nuova Destra. The Italian activists adopted the fundamental notion of “right to difference”, fighting for the preservation of cultural identities, a “society of communities” and federalism, while attacking the “homogenizing” ideologies of liberal capitalism and democracy, nationalism and socialism.⁶⁹ Still, this does not mean that the Italian grouping was a complete overlapping or an imitation of its sister organization in France. The Nuova Destra was born and shaped in a different national context than its French counterpart, which lead to certain disagreements. Alain de Benoist’s paganism and ferocious criticism of what he saw as the cultural structure implicit in the Judeo-Christian tradition was for example not easy for the Italians to swallow.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the Nuova Destra founders came from the Italian neofascist tradition, where violence was part of the political language of an entire generation.⁷¹ The metapolitical strategy therefore, with its purely cultural aspect, carried a different weight than in the French context, where the metapolitical perspective had been adopted gradually among intellectuals in the 50s and 60s.

Germany: Neue Rechte

According to researcher Samuel Salzborn, the emergence of the German Neue Rechte (New Right) can be traced to the late 1960’s, even though the German branch of GRECE – *Thule Seminar* – was not founded until 1980. The neo-Nazi party *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (NPD or National Democratic Party of Germany), failed to pass the five percent hurdle to obtain parliamentary representation in the Bundestag in 1969. As a result, the far right scene split into two camps. One camp, represented by extraparliamentary, paramilitary and terrorist organizations, argued that in striving for neo-Nazi goals, it was a mistake to play the parliamentary game all together. Democracy had to be overthrown with violence in order to establish a dictatorial regime. The second camp traced the NPD’s failure

⁶⁹ Bar-On 2007, p.146

⁷⁰ Casadio, Massimiliano Capra. “The New Right and Metapolitics in France and Italy” in *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* Vol 8, no.1 2014, pp.45-86, p.62

⁷¹ Ibid: p.66

to a lacking intellectual basis and dedicated themselves to fight for their cause in the intellectual and cultural world, instead of in the streets.⁷²

The German context is interesting for obvious historical reasons. Firstly, the Nazi-regime stood as a point of reference for the German far right, as the Fascist-regime did in Italy. Secondly, the French New Right was heavily influenced by the German school of thought *Conservative Revolution* (CR) and its German ideologues, which also was a big source of inspiration for the German far right. The CR is a conservative and nationalist school of thought which was developed in the German Weimar republic in the interwar years. The protagonists of this school of thought have been seen as forerunners and precursors to Nazism (some were also directly involved in the Nazi-regime), while also being seen as intellectually superior to it, in particular by ENR ideologues.

In 1950, Armin Mohler, who is widely seen as the father of the German branch of the European New right, published *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932* (The Conservative Revolution in Germany 1918-1932), thereby contributing to bringing the school of thought to a new audience. Many GRECE members, including Alain de Benoist, were heavily influenced by the CR's critique of Christian conservatism, egalitarianism, liberalism and parliamentary democracy. Alain de Benoist has himself written multiple texts on prominent CR intellectuals such as Carl Schmidt and Ernst Jünger, and their influence on the *Nouvelle Droite*.⁷³ Although the intellectual leader of the ND has stated that he was already aware of the writings of Jünger, he credits Mohler for being responsible for his discovery of the "other Jünger".⁷⁴ During the 1950's and 60's, Mohler worked as a journalist correspondent in Paris, where he was influenced by French far right ideas.

The German *Neue Rechte* was fragmented in numerous groups during the 1970's, with different ideals and goals. From the beginning of the 1980's, French New Right thoughts, heavily influenced by the German CR, Gramscian metapolitics and the "right to difference"

⁷² Salzborn, Samuel. "Renaissance of the New Right in Germany? A Discussion of New Right Elements in German Right-Wing Extremism Today" in *German Politics & Society*, Vol 34, No.2 2016, pp.36-63, p.39

⁷³ See for Example: de Benoist, Alain. "Schmitt in France" & Ernst Jünger & the French New Right".

⁷⁴ de Benoist, Alain. "Ernst Jünger and the French New Right" in *Ernst Jünger: Between the Gods and the Titans* 2020, p.2

gained an influential foothold in Germany,⁷⁵ centered around the think-tank *Thule-Seminar*, founded in 1980. Armin Mohler continued to play a big role in promoting de Benoist's works in Germany.

As with the Nuova Destra in Italy then, there was a definitive transnational cross-fertilisation between the French and German New Rights, which seemed to emerge almost in parallel, but were influenced by common schools of thought and by each other in the following years. Still, as with the Italian counterpart, there are divergences between the French and German New Rights. Alain de Benoist has for example accused the *Neue Rechte* for being overly fixated with internal and national issues. The ND leader recalls from a conversation with Mohler, "he did not hide his predilection for the national revolutionary movement. I was more reserved than him on the intrinsic value of the concepts of "nation" and "movement", but the idea of revolution undeniably seduced me."⁷⁶

The German *Neue Rechte* thus, had a much stronger ultra-nationalist current in the movement, as opposed to the pan-European current which was stronger in its French and Italian counterparts. This ultra-nationalism manifested itself in a desire to rehabilitate Germany's stained past and see the nation resurrected to its natural position as one of the world's great powers. To them, the westernized and liberal West- Germany which emerged after the war was a deviation from the course of German history.⁷⁷ Important to note, however, is that the Nazi-regime is in general not held in high regard either. To them, the ideas of the Conservative revolution represented the true German way, and Nazism was an unfortunate divergence. This is illustrated by Mohler himself, when he characterizes the CR writers as the "Trotskyites of the German revolution",⁷⁸ while the Nazis in this analogy, would of course be, the Stalinists of the German revolution. A missed opportunity in other words.

There was, and still is, however, a strong historical revisionist tendency among *Neue Rechte* intellectuals. They argue that Germans were in many ways just as much a victim during the

⁷⁵ Salzborn 2016, p.40

⁷⁶ de Benoist, Alain 2020, p.3

⁷⁷ Heilbrun, Jacob. "Germany's New Right" in *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 75, No.6 1996, P.80-98, p.94

⁷⁸ Griffin 2000, p.7

war as anyone else, and that while Holocaust was awful, war crimes of the allies were downplayed.⁷⁹

Russian New Right

The Russian New Right is associated mainly with one intellectual, Alexander Dugin. Growing up in 1970's Soviet Union, Dugin was from his youth a dissident and rebel, disillusioned with the conformity of life in the USSR. From the late 70's and early 80's, he frequented meetings and quickly became a prominent intellectual in various organizations, discussing and preaching various traditionalist, anti-modern, anti-socialist and occult ideas. Some of these underground groupings also expressed sympathies for fascism and Nazism, praising Hitler and hanging posters of him up on the wall. According to Dugin in later years, his rebellious activities during his youth were products of his implacable hatred for the conformity of the Soviet existence, and not reflective of genuine Nazi sympathies.⁸⁰ Dugin read a vast amount of controversial literature and became especially interested in the anti-egalitarian, anti-liberal and anti-democratic works of Julius Evola.⁸¹

In the year of 1990, political philosophers were busy pronouncing dramatically the fall of the Berlin wall and the dissolution of the Warsaw pact. The notions of "right" and "left" - the reliable indicators of public life on continent – seemed to lose their traditional significance. The same year, in June, Dugin travelled to Paris to meet with Alain de Benoist.⁸² The Russian had long nourished a strong interest for the ENR movement and impressed de Benoist at the meeting, seemingly having read everything the Nouvelle Droite leader had ever published. In the following years, de Benoist would serve as an intellectual role model for the young Russian thinker.⁸³

⁷⁹ Heilbrun 1996, p.90-91

⁸⁰ Clover, Charles. *Black Wind, White Snow: The Rise of Russia's New Nationalism*, Yale University Press 2016, p.379-383

⁸¹ Clover 2016, p.382-383

⁸² Ibid: p.418

⁸³ Ibid: p.422

The ideas of ethno-pluralism, ethno-federalism and the dangers of “cultural imperialism”, had a profound impact on Dugin and shaped his theory of “Eurasianism”, for which he is perhaps best known.⁸⁴ Dugin, inspired by de Benoist, refuted the idea of the nation-state and instead propagated the concept of a Eurasian empire, based on a federation of organic, ethnic communities, led spiritually by the Russian federation.⁸⁵ In 1992, Dugin launched the journal *Elementy*, the title of which referred directly to other ENR publications, including the French *Éléments* and the Italian *Elementi*. De Benoist and other ENR intellectuals also came on various trips to Moscow arranged by Dugin in the early 90’s, these meetings were channels for ENR ideas into Russia. It was during these meetings that the concept of *Eurasianism* and its geopolitical doctrine was born, it would later be manifested and published in Dugin’s 1997 blockbuster *Foundations of Geopolitics*.⁸⁶

Alain de Benoist has, however, disassociated himself from Dugin and from his work, claiming he does not recognize his influence in the Russian. The Frenchman was especially reserved about the “Eurasian” construct which he meant boiled down to a crude imperialism, a wish to restore the old Russian domination over Eastern and Central European countries. This disillusionment resulted in a communicational loss between the two intellectuals.⁸⁷ Bar-On writes that de Benoist was likely turned off by the openly nationalistic and antisemitic sentiments of the Russian New Right, which were detrimental to the right as a whole. Furthermore, there was, and still is, a vast gap between de Benoist’s Indo-European federalist and differentialist version of a spiritual European empire and Dugin’s traditionalist and more narrow concept of “Eurasianism”, characterized by the concept of an Orthodox Christian-Islamic empire, spiritually led by Russia, fighting western materialism and homogenised “totalitarianism”.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Ibid: p.427

⁸⁵ Shekhovtsov, Anton. ”Alexander Dugin’s Neo-Eurasianism: The New Right à la Russe” in *Religion Compass*, Vol 3, No.4 2009, pp.697-716

⁸⁶ Clover 2016, p.484-487

⁸⁷ Shekhovtsov 2009, p.700-701

⁸⁸ Bar-On 2007, p.144

This section has hopefully shown how the Nouvelle Droite has spread its tentacles to other European countries through transnational exchanges, be it personally arranged meetings, conferences or written collaborations. There are, however, major differences between the different national manifestations of the ENR, and it cannot be described as a homogenous and coherent school of thought, or a full-scale revolutionary right-wing international.⁸⁹ The Nouvelle Droite has shaped, and continues to shape, right-wing political cultures all over Europe, although the manifestations differentiate. In the next section, this paper will explore more the British branch of the European New Right.

⁸⁹ Ibid: p.148

3. Towards a British New Right

3.1 Introduction: The British post-war far right, from the Union Movement to the National Front

In order to understand the British New Right, however, both as a branch of the European New Right and as a stand-alone phenomenon, it is necessary to understand the historical context in which it originated. The following brief section will serve this purpose.

Oswald Mosley: The BUF and the UM

As was the case in many other European countries in the interwar years, there existed in Britain several fascist movements and political parties. The most important of these was the *British Union of Fascists* (BUF), established in 1932 and led by Oswald Mosley. Mosley made clear his desire to transform Britain into a single-party authoritarian regime based on corporatist economics and a strongly technocratic ethos.⁹⁰ As stated in chapter 1, BUF failed to rally mass support, both in elections and in the streets, and by the time WW2 broke out, Mosley was arrested alongside many of his fellow party members.

Mosley did not give up on the fascist idea, however, and in 1948 he founded the *Union Movement* (UM). He was well aware of the need to distance the movement from its past, tainted by National Socialism and European Fascism. One of the measures he took was a complete reversal of the narrow nationalist focus in his pre-war works, in favour of a pan-Europeanism, a sovereign European nation to stand in opposition to Americanism and Bolshevism.⁹¹ Racial policy and antisemitism were never the most prominent characteristics of the pre-war BUF, but they were always present. The ideas of biological racial differences and racial hierarchies were not abandoned by Mosley after the war, arguing that differences between groups of people were a fact of life.⁹² Additionally, he also heavily emphasized the importance of cultural diversity, and most importantly the protection of European culture. The Union Movement's programs and policies reflected Mosley's ideas. The emerging issue

⁹⁰ Goodwin 2011, p.20

⁹¹ Poole, Anna. "Oswald Mosley and the Union Movement: Success or Failure?", in *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition*. 1996, p.69

⁹² Ibid: p.70-72

of immigration in Britain, mostly from the imperial colonies in this period, was for example heavily targeted by Mosley and the UM. Some scholars see Mosley's emphasis on cultural protection and diversity, and racially determined policies as a precursor to the kind of racism that was later used by the New Right groups.⁹³

The Union Movement found no more electoral success than the BUF did. It never managed to rid itself of its association with continental fascism and was met with opposition practically wherever it went. Still, this does not necessarily mean it was insignificant. It has been argued that Mosley's success had been in the realm of ideas. His political philosophy was well within the post-war fascist thought, but he was also a precursor of important post-war far right ideas, such as his pan-Europeanism and his early attempts at forming a fascist international. Mosley did his utmost to spread his ideas throughout Britain and Europe.⁹⁴

National Front

The other alternative to Mosley's UM in the early post-war years was the *League of Empire Loyalists* (LEL), which had been founded by Arthur Kenneth Chesterton, a prominent BUF speaker before the war who had become disillusioned with Oswald Mosley. The LEL was more of a political pressure group, primarily concerned with preserving the British empire and end non-white immigration.⁹⁵ Chesterton did not follow Mosley's pan-Europeanist turn, but continued to promote ultra-nationalism and antisemitism in the style of the BUF, albeit in a somewhat more "respectable" overcoat.⁹⁶ The organization also served as an incubator of racial nationalists, such as John Tyndall, later chairman of the National Front and the British National Party. In addition to the LEL, Tyndall passed through numerous extreme rightist groups in the 1960s, including the self-established and self-proclaimed national-socialist *Greater Britain Movement* (GBM).⁹⁷

⁹³ Ibid: p.72

⁹⁴ Ibid: p.79

⁹⁵ Goodwin 2011, p.24

⁹⁶ Ibid: p.24

⁹⁷ Goodwin 2011, p.24

The National Front was born in 1967 as a merger of many far right groups, including the LEL and the GBM. Most of the leading activists in the newly formed NF had a history of involvement in extreme right activism and/or politics and these networks ensured from the outset that the NF adhered to the core pillars of racial nationalism and took the form of a neo-Nazi party. The xenophobic appeals of the NF resonated with a big portion of British society that was increasingly concerned with immigration and its effects. At the foundation of these appeals lay a crude biological racialism and antisemitic conspiracy theories.⁹⁸ Over the next seven years the NF flourished, managing to win support over the issues of immigration and law and order, the party reached its peak in 1974 under Tyndall's leadership.

The rise did not last long, however. In 1975, Margaret Thatcher was elected leader of the conservative party on a ticket of more restricted immigration and on a strong policy on law and order, thereby reclaiming the two main pillars of the NF's appeal to conservative dissidents. Thatcher's famous 1978 television interview, where she said she understood how English people felt about being "swamped" by those of alien culture, went a long way in pleasing these dissidents.⁹⁹ The general election the following year, in which Thatcher claimed the prime minister post, was a heavy blow for the NF's dreams of ever achieving any sort of political recognition via the ballot box.¹⁰⁰

3.2 Michael Walker and the British New Right

"Half a mind to join the National Front? That's all you need"

The decline in the late 1970's encouraged leading members to look for different approaches. One group became interested in the French Nouvelle Droite, which had received widespread media attention in 1979. The leading figure in this group became Michael Walker, a former NF London organizer. In the view of Walker, the National Front had failed because it relied too heavily on a lowbrow "populist" constituency, characterized by instinct and prejudice

⁹⁸ Ibid: p.25-26

⁹⁹ Gable, Gerry. "The Far Right in Contemporary Britain" in *Neo-Fascism in Europe*, ed. By Cheles, Luciano; Ferguson, Ronnie & Vaughan, Michalina, 1991, p.249

¹⁰⁰ Ibid: p.249

instead of intellect, illustrated by a slogan from the early 1970s: “Half a mind to join the National Front? That’s all you need”.¹⁰¹ Inspired by the Nouvelle Droite and its Gramscian strategy of cultural hegemony, Walker argued that the NF had not grasped the importance of winning over the media, education, the arts, and culture by intellectual pedigree.¹⁰²

As we have seen, the influence of the Nouvelle Droite had by the turn of the 1980s spread from France to other European countries. Publications like *Éléments* had spawned counterparts and central ND theoreticians like Alain de Benoist and Guillaume Faye had been translated into multiple European languages. Still, nothing had happened as of yet in Britain. As a linguist and translator, Michael Walker was well placed to edit a New Right magazine in Britain and as such, in 1981, he began publishing the journal *National Democrat* (renamed *The Scorpion* in 1983).¹⁰³

Although the French Nouvelle Droite has been highly influential and has provided an ideal and a framework for other European New Right manifestations around Europe, the movement has not become a homogenous school of thought. While these differences have not prevented European-wide cooperation in creating journals, conferences and establishing other channels of communication, ENR manifestations are characterized by national differences and are divided into various schools of thought.

In the following section of this thesis then, the goal will be to analyse publications from 1981-1986 of the main New Right journal in Britain, the *National Democrat/The Scorpion*, in order to see how the ideology and discourse of the Nouvelle Droite was disseminated to British readers. Which characteristics were emphasized and which forms did they take? Additionally, the analysis will aim to discover links between the British New Right, manifested in this journal, and the development of the discourse of the British far right, both contemporary and in later years. In short, what influence did the British New Right have, if any?

¹⁰¹ Copsey Nigel. “Au Revoir to the Sacred Cows”? Assessing the Impact of the *Nouvelle Droite* in England” in *Democracy and Security*, Vol.9, No.3, Far-right populism and Lone Wolf Terrorism in Contemporary Europe (July-September 2013), p.290

¹⁰² Ibid: p.290

¹⁰³ Clarke-Goodrick, Nicholas. *Black Sun, Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity*, New York University Press 2001, p.70

4. The British New Right: *The National Democrat/The Scorpion*

When analyzing these New Right journals, it is not always obvious how to best structure the arguments, claims, criticisms that are made. This is mainly because they are often entangled, relate to each other, or criticize a common phenomenon, but from different perspectives. It is not easy, for example, to discuss the anti-democratic arguments without discussing the anti-egalitarian and anti-liberal arguments. In the end, to be sure, most of the subjects (if not all) that are discussed in these journals, relate to the foundational French New Right creed of “right to difference”, as we shall see. Still, I will aspire to structure the arguments and ideological traits into sub-chapters. They will, however, inevitably be entangled.

4.1 The Right to Difference and “Anti-Racism”

The mantra of *right to difference* has since the beginning of GRECE in 1968 remained a constant for the French New Right and forms the premise for a major part of the movement’s ideology and discourse. In *View from the Right* Alain de Benoist defines *the right* itself by this premise; “ I hereby define *the right* (..) as the consistent attitude to view the diversity of this world (..) as a positive thing; and the progressive homogenization of the world (..) as a negative thing.”¹⁰⁴ This view was restated 12 years later in *A Manifesto for a European Renaissance*.¹⁰⁵

Naturally, this basic premise is widely expressed also in the British New Right journal. In the very first issue of *National Democrat*, the journal states that the international system which has developed since 1945, will ultimately destroy all *differentiation* in the world, unless it is prevented.¹⁰⁶ Taking a cue from Nouvelle Droite and Alain de Benoist in the following article, editor Michael Walker furthers the premise of “right to difference” to the characteristic New Right form of “anti-racism”, arguing that attempts to deny the uniqueness of peoples indeed constitutes a form of racism, because it ”leads to the abolition of all races,

¹⁰⁴ de Benoist 1977, p.54

¹⁰⁵ de Benoist & Champetier 1999, p.42

¹⁰⁶ Walker, Michael. ”National Democrat”, in *National Democrat* issue 1, 1981, p.2

their homogenization for the sake of one pseudo-race.”¹⁰⁷ With this argument, Walker is also eager to distance himself, and the New Right movement, from the primitive “gut hatred for immigrants”-racism displayed in traditional old far right ultra-nationalist movements. In fact, Walker singles out John Tyndall, the prominent 1970’s leader of the National Front and labels him a “Nazi” in a seemingly derogatory fashion.¹⁰⁸ According to Walker, the Nazis and the “multi-racialists” have one crucial common characteristic: by either wishing to reduce the world’s diversity to a “human race” (homogenization) or letting it be dominated by a ruthless “herrenvolk” - a master race. In the end, racism is at the core in both of these premises argues Walker, because they both lead to destruction of races.

Of course, Michael Walker does not, nor does his ideological inspiration Alain de Benoist, dismiss ethnicity and race as an important factor in humanity in itself. This first issue of the *National Democrat*, aptly sub-titled “The Problem of Racism”, contains an essay by de Benoist on the subject of racism, translated by Walker, in which the Frenchman argues that biological factors define a framework and base: They create a set of potentialities which inform human experiences and determines the capacity to adopt a culture. To speak of hierarchies based on race however, is an absurdity, de Benoist writes.¹⁰⁹ The subject of race and its significance is often an ambiguous one in New Right literature. The British case of *National Democrat/The Scorpion* is no exception. On the one hand, the articles which touch on the issue seem to adhere to the central notion of “right to difference” and while acknowledging that race is a significant human factor, they claim to reject racial hierarchies.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, there are several cases where apparent chauvinism is displayed concerning the British “race”. Already in the preface of issue nr.1, Michael Walker laments the repressive effect the “international system” has had on the British nation since 1945, at a time when the British could be at the height of its power because the technological

¹⁰⁷ Walker, Michael. “Rivers of Blood”, in *National Democrat* issue 1, 1981, p.3

¹⁰⁸ Walker, “Rivers of Blood”, 1981, p.3

¹⁰⁹ de Benoist, Alain. “Racism and Totalitarianism: An examination of the Problem of Racism“, in *National Democrat*, issue 1, Translated by Michael Walker, p.9-10

¹¹⁰ For example, editor Michael Walker seemingly laments mockingly that the British far right “appears to believe that all non-whites are totally inferior to the British.” *National Democrat*, issue 1, 1981, p.23

world provides opportunities which is “suited to its genius”.¹¹¹ Another example can be found in issue 10 of *The Scorpion*, where the author argues that the “Anglo-Saxons” may be the “paragons of European virtues” with its traditional cultural focus on individual freedom and refusal to accept tyranny. The author also rather bizarrely explains why the Anglo-Saxons seem to have a “high tolerance for ugliness”, even though beauty normally is an expression of “good”: the British were simply occupied with more important matters, such as innovation, making money and inventing new sports.¹¹² This type of language which, speaks of superiority of certain peoples, both in terms of race and culture, in one way or another, was virtually non-existing in the leading ideologues of the French New Right especially in the 1980’s. It was a characteristic of the old right, which they were keen to distance themselves from.

4.2 Egalitarianism, liberalism and globalization: The “homogenizing” ideologies

The view that “diversity” of peoples and cultures is the wealth of the world, and the notion of *right to difference* which derives from this view, is a foundational one in the Nouvelle Droite movement. Consequentially, the forces which are seen as homogenizing, and thereby a danger to this diversity, are a menace. This is also the case in the British New Right.

As already mentioned, in the preface of the first issue of the *National Democrat*, it is stated that the international system which has developed since 1945 will destroy all the differentiation in the world. The New Right activists see this “international system” as one increasingly globalized, dominated by egalitarian and liberal values, which has held cultural hegemony in the Western world since the end of the second world war. One finds multiple anti-egalitarian, anti-liberal and anti-global arguments in *The Scorpion* throughout the 1980’s. The 8th issue of *The Scorpion* for example, entitled “The Romantic Vision”, offers a rather convoluted criticism of the enlightenment ideals manifested in the French revolution, arguing that its nation-building processes amounted to separating people from their cultural roots,

¹¹¹ Walker, Michael. “National Democrat” in *National Democrat*, issue 1, 1981, p.2

¹¹² Hewitson, Harold T. “G.R.E.C.E Right Side Up: Alain de Benoist seen through Anglo-Saxon eyes” in *The Scorpion, Against all Totalitarianisms*, issue 10, 1986, p.26

sacrificing their personal freedom for the “general will”. The romantic movement, however, in the view of this unnamed author, was a reaction to the “excessive reason” of the enlightenment ideals, the argument being that they ignore the fundamental need of humans to belong to their organic rooted community.¹¹³

One of the most interesting arguments on this subject can be found in Michael Walker’s article named “Against All Totalitarianisms”, in the 10th issue of the *The Scorpion*. The editor argues that in the liberal world, growth and “improvement of life” are all that matters. In this sense, liberalism is a totalitarian system writes Walker, because it reduces individuals and nations to mere units measured by purchasing power, creating a mass society of disillusioned consumers.¹¹⁴ This critique of liberalism is characteristic of the French and the extended European New Right. As Walker himself writes later in the same issue: “G.R.E.C.E denounced “totalitarian liberalism”, which sought to create a one-world system and in doing so, destroy all the cultural, racial, economic, national and environmental elements which stood in its way. The message of world liberalism, according to G.R.E.C.E, was “convert to the western way of life, or perish.”¹¹⁵ As a vehicle for reductionism, the liberal system is therefore no better than the “traditional” totalitarian systems of communism and National Socialism/Fascism, in the eyes of Walker. The only difference is how they reduce humans into a common denominator: Class, race or consumer. Although Walker concedes that the “western system” seems to tolerate many individual freedoms of expression which would not be tolerated in the traditional totalitarian ones, such as criticism of leadership, demonstrations and strikes, the editor argues that these do not represent any real power for peoples and are just a part of the “western media show business”.¹¹⁶ The real power in the modern nation states, Walker argues, does not lie with its peoples as they like to proclaim, but within the hands of a few powerful individuals and working increasingly through corporations and institutions which lie far beyond the grasp of the general society. We now move into the anti-

¹¹³ "The Romantic Vision" in *The Scorpion* issue 8, 1985, p.6

¹¹⁴ Walker, Michael. "Against All Totalitarianisms", in *The Scorpion*, issue 10, 1986, p.6

¹¹⁵ Walker, Michael. "Spotlight on the French New Right" in *The Scorpion*, issue 10, 1986, p.9

¹¹⁶ Walker, Michael. "Spotlight on the French New Right" in *The Scorpion*, issue 10, 1986, p.6

democracy aspects of the British New Right and their implications for the worldview of its adherents. This will be the focus of the next section.

4.3 Anti-democracy?

As already stated in chapter two, the Nouvelle Droite is opposed to the liberal, representative democracy of modern Western nation states. In their view, the modern democracy has become estranged from its basic principles, corrupted by political parties whose sole occupation is gaining office, lobbying of private interests and crisis of representation. This does not mean, however, that the movement rejects democracy as a concept all together. For a society to be truly democratic, in the eyes of ND activists, universal suffrage for its citizens is not enough, not in most vast modern nation states, where the interests of multiple “peoples” clash. Instead, they endorse a direct democracy system, based on the ancient Greek tradition. In *View from the Right*, volume two, Alain de Benoist writes: “What the city (Athens) represented was not a state, but a small community in which only those with a common origin were citizens, espousing identical specific values.”¹¹⁷ In other words, political equality among citizens is not enough for a “real” democracy to function. For de Benoist, the bond between the people in a given society must have a deeper foundation. How are these ideas expressed in Britain?

On the 26th of October 1985, the British New Right activists organized their first international conference on British ground. The main theme of the conference was Europe and its destiny, which was a hot topic in the ENR milieu in the mid-1980’s. Michael Walker, the editor of *The Scorpion*, had already participated on two other international conferences on similar themes earlier the same year, which also saw heavy representation by GRECE members, including de Benoist, Guillaume Faye and Pierre Vial. Several of the speeches made at the conference on the 26th of October were printed in the 9th issue of *The Scorpion*, entitled “When Europe Awakens”, and it is in this issue one can find some of the most evident anti-democratic arguments expressed by the British New Right activists. This is not a coincidence, as these

¹¹⁷ de Benoist, Alain. *View from the Right*, vol.2. 1977, p.82

anti-democratic arguments are in some ways closely related to their Europeanist vision, in addition to the creed of “right to difference”.

In his printed speech: “The European Commonwealth”, the regular Scorpion contributor Douglas M. C. MacEwan delivers a critique of the state of “modern democracy” which is rather characteristic for the European New Right: The individual is lost in the masses; the choices which are presented are in fact false; the governments are controlled by professional political parties which take minimal notice of the people.¹¹⁸ A big part of this problem lies in the size of the electorate in modern nation states, writes MacEwan. The system of “representative democracy” was developed because the direct democracy in the style of ancient Greece could not function in the much bigger modern nation states. The more electors the representative represents politically, the less influence each individual has on his/her political representative, and is therefore estranged from political life, MacEwan writes.¹¹⁹ There is, however, another factor besides the general increase of the population, that is the extension of the vote to everyone over a certain age, including women. The author writes that this extension of the electorate is desirable on the basis of egalitarian ideology, it has, however, “destroyed democracy as a viable system”.¹²⁰ In the author’s eyes then, it would be beneficial if modern nation states were to be split into smaller governable states, and the “nation” as a whole, would represent a loose confederacy.

There is, however, also an ethno-cultural aspect in this vision. MacEwan also states that the modern electorate, besides its sheer number, “in Britain and other comparable countries, is too varied to be represented at all.”¹²¹ For the author, a common origin, culture, race and sense of identity of the people is vital in order for a “real democracy”. This argument is an echo of Alain de Benoist.¹²²

¹¹⁸ M. C. MacEwan, Douglas. ”The European Commonwealth” in *The Scorpion: When Europe Awakens*, issue 9, 1986, p.7

¹¹⁹ Ibid: p.7

¹²⁰ Ibid: p.7

¹²¹ Ibid: p.7

¹²² de Benoist 1977, vol.2, p.82

A similar critique of the liberal democracy is furthered in another article in the same issue, which was co-written by assistant editor Dominic Hampshire. Here, the authors claim that a direct democracy, the only real democracy in their eyes, is unthinkable in a “nation” whose citizens are merely a mass of equal voters and “nothing higher”.¹²³ This again reveals a central New Right creed: every individual is born into an ethno-cultural collective, which one cannot ignore or change, and which share a common destiny as a people. For the British New Right activists, this aspect should form the basis for citizenship. Going back to the 4th issue of *The Scorpion*, editor Michael Walker in the same vein states that “true citizenship consists in belonging to an ethnic national community.”¹²⁴

For the British New Right activists then, the “malaise” of modern democracy as they see it, is grounded in two main factors. The first being the sheer size of the electorate, which has been increased in modern times due to egalitarianism and the creation of big nation states, and which has resulted in the creation of the representative democracy. The second factor is more evidently indicative of the revolutionary-right heritage of the British, and the broader European New Right: The idea that each separate ethnic grouping shares an inherent identity and common destiny, something more than just a mere political equality. It is on these ethnic groupings that citizenship must be based in their view, in order for “real democracy” to function. This also relates back to the idea of “right to difference”: Each “ethnie” should be free to govern and develop themselves and their culture in their natural environment, separate from outsiders and foreign culture.

4.4 The European Destiny

Like other national branches of the ENR, the British activists also express a Europeanist outlook, as it is evident in *The Scorpion*. There is a strong vision of pan-European identity and a sense of a common European destiny. In their view, this destiny takes the form of a united Europe independent of the two superpowers and a Europe that is able to challenge their hegemony. As Michael Walker writes in the opening of the 9th issue of *The Scorpion*;

¹²³ Hampshire, Dominic & de Sorinnes, Guibert. “Needed: A Sense of Identity” in *The Scorpion: When Europe Awakens*, issue 9. p.17

¹²⁴ Walker, Michael. “The Nationalist Enigma” in *The Scorpion: What is Nationalism*, issue 4, p.4

“we believe that Britain should united with the other nations of Europe to create a European imperium independent of “the west and” “the east”.”¹²⁵ The editor goes on to chastise the project of European unity which already existed; the Europe of the “common market”, which is nothing more than a “condominium of political and economic convenience”, as Walker put it.¹²⁶ In the editor’s view, a united Europe must be based on a spiritual dimension, a notion of common European identity and destiny, which is lacking in the “common market” Europe.

Rejecting, in their eyes, the totalitarian and homogenizing western liberal and eastern socialist systems, the British New Right activists, along with their European counterparts, envision a European third way: A spiritual European federation, comprised of all the different “ethnies” of the continent. The already mentioned conference hosted by the British New Right activists in 1985 was for example headlined “A Third Way for Europe”. This vision of a “third way” between capitalism and communism was not new. It was a propagated as a fascist ideal in the interwar period, and after the war, Italian fascist loyalists again took up this ideological notion.¹²⁷ As already mentioned, Griffin has pointed to this third positionism as part of the post-war *internationalization* of fascism.¹²⁸ It continued to be a mainstay in postwar revolutionary far right milieus, also in the European New Right. The ENR intellectuals, however, claim to take this concept beyond the fascist vision of a political system somewhere between capitalism and communism, often called “corporatism”.¹²⁹ As de Benoist writes in *View from the Right*, “I’m gaining some idea of a “third way” that which rejects, from either side, extremisms and unilateralisms. (..) But I do not believe any more that a third way will be a “middle way”, kind of compromise”.¹³⁰ For de Benoist, and for the British New Right activists, the third way is a more spiritual concept, rejecting the

¹²⁵ Walker, Michael. ”Dear reader..” in *The Scorpion: When Europe Awakens*, issue 9, 1986, p.2

¹²⁶ Ibid: p.2

¹²⁷ Wolff, Elisabetta Cassina. *Starting from the End: Fascist Ideology in Post-War Italy (1945-1953)*. Dissertation, Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages. Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo. 2007, p.144

¹²⁸ See chapter 1

¹²⁹ For more on the ideological Fascist Third Way in post-war Italy, see Wolff 2000, p.144-149

¹³⁰ de Benoist 1977, p.78

“totalitarian ideologies” in favour of the vision of organic societies in the ethno-pluralistic “Europe of a hundred flags”.¹³¹

Traditionally, Britain has had an ambiguous relationship to the European continent. While being a part of Europe, it has also for several centuries fostered a more international outlook as a consequence of its vast overseas empire, in addition to its so-called “special relationship” with the US in the 20th century. This gives an interesting context to the New Right Europeanism in the British context, although the Europeanist turn was not new in the British far right either, it was obviously also a major trait in Oswald Mosley’s post-war Union Movement, as discussed in the previous chapter. One can undoubtedly draw parallels from the Union Movement’s Europeanism to the New Right’s Europeanism as expressed in *The Scorpion*. His call for defense of European culture is for example echoed by Michael Walker in the 10th issue: “The war which is destroying us (Europe) has not been officially declared, but we are losing all right: birth-rate, cultural decline, immigration. We are losing.”¹³²

The British were not solely responsible for the ambiguous relationship with continental Europe, according to Michael Walker. In his article on the French New Right, “Spotlight on the French New Right”, the editor of *The Scorpion* claims that the French harbors an inherent distrust of the “Anglo-Saxon” people, which goes beyond the hatred for American cultural imperialism. The French New Right intellectuals are no exception according to Walker. The editor seems, therefore, to have made efforts to highlight the European identity in Britain, and in some ways to justify Britain being a part of Europe, and the British New Right movement being a part of European New Right movement. As already mentioned, Walker participated in two ENR conferences on the subject Europe in 1985, and at both these meetings, he “warned of the dangers of neglecting Britain’s potential contribution to a European renaissance and thereby allowing Britain to become a “Trojan Horse” for Europe’s enemies. He also disputed the belief that ties of kinship with the “white commonwealth” and solidarity with Europe were mutually exclusive concepts.”¹³³

¹³¹ Walker, Michael. “We, the other Europeans” in *The Scorpion: When Europe Awakens*, issue 9, 1986, p.9-11

¹³² Walker, Michael. “Spotlight on the French New Right” in *The Scorpion: Against All Totalitarianisms*, issue 10, 1986, p.12

¹³³ Walker, Michael & Pesteil, Jean-Louis. “A Third Way for Europe” in *The Scorpion: When Europe Awakens*, issue 9, 1986, p.3

4.5 The Old Shines Through?

As we have seen, there are a lot of recognizable Nouvelle Droite themes to be found in *The Scorpion/National Democrat*. At times, the discourse and arguments are more or less forwarded directly by the journal, and in some cases, they are discussed in depth and nuanced by the British activists. One can also find themes, however, which are more characteristic of the “old” far right and which the Nouvelle Droite intellectuals indeed were very keen to disassociate themselves from, especially since gaining media attention from the late 1970’s. These themes, which for the most part relate to antisemitism and revisionist views concerning the Holocaust and Nazi-Germany, are mostly to be found in the 10th issue, “Against all Totalitarianisms”.

In the article named “Fascism, Racism and the Extreme Right”, by the frequent contributor Douglas MacEwan, these themes are more blatantly obvious than in the previous issues of the journal. At the outset, the article argues for the difference between “racialism” and “racism”, a common Nouvelle Droite argument. The author makes the following claims: (1) There are real racial differences between people; (2) These differences have some effect on the attitudes of normal people; (3) Each particular nation is characterised by a certain “racial mix”; (4) This racial “mix” reacts on the character and achievements of the various nations; (5) Different races can differ in types of achievement, for example in IQ. These theses are scientific facts and cannot be rationally disputed, according to the author.¹³⁴ These theses do not make one a racist, according to MacEwan, because they do not imply an inherent racial hierarchy, only that differences do in fact exist and they are a positive thing. This is a very recognisable argument, relating to the central ND creed of “right to difference” and its anti-racism. From this point, the article takes a different turn, however. The author claims that the results of Nazi-Germany's application of “racial theory alone has been singled out for condemnation in the 20th century.”¹³⁵ While he does not deny that the Nazi regime was indeed racist in every sense of the word, it inherited the doctrine of racism, which was already deeply embedded in European tradition, and was also a trait in libertarianism and Marxism, the author argues. In his view, the Nazis merely paid the price for “having the

¹³⁴ MacEwan, Douglas. “Fascism, Racism and the Extreme Right” in *The Scorpion: Against all Totalitarianisms*, issue 10. 1986, p.16

¹³⁵ Ibid: p.17

courage to put them (racist doctrines ed.) into operation.”¹³⁶ MacEwan points out that far more lives were deliberately sacrificed by Stalin than in the Holocaust by Germany, a disaster which in reality was relatively “moderate”, in the words of the author. Furthermore, he expresses doubts as to whether the Holocaust was “planned and executed deliberately as a policy of extermination.”¹³⁷

This article by MacEwan is rather ambiguous. On one side, it furthers the central ND mantra of “right to difference”, that race and racial differences are a fact of life and cannot be ignored as a trait of human nature and identity. On the same note, he denies the doctrine of racism, which he interprets as the domination of races. On the other side, he is somewhat apologetic of the Nazi regime in Germany and its racist doctrines, even if he stops short of defending them. It seems obvious that the author disdains the fact that, in his eyes, the legitimacy of racialist doctrines was stained by the racist doctrines in Nazi-Germany.

Another example of antisemitism in the 10th issue can be found in the article “Thoughts in Season”, where it is claimed that the “most racialist book in the world is not *Mein Kampf*, but the Old Testament.”¹³⁸

Although the racialist arguments here could have been found in other French, and European New Right publications, the antisemitic comments and arguments regarding the Holocaust and Nazi-Germany strays from the movement’s discourse. Leading ideologues in the movement were more eager to distance themselves from historical fascism and the “old” far right, and writings like these were therefore seen as damaging.

One should obviously be careful to assume that the opinions, attitudes and views presented by one contributor are also held by the other contributors or the journal in general. As already stated, the ENR was and still is comprised of many different currents and intellectuals who held diverging views. Still, the editor/editors chose to include the article in the journal. This seems like a somewhat odd choice, considering chief editor and most prominent British New Right activist Michael Walker’s original intent for the journal: to create an intellectual

¹³⁶ Ibid: p.17

¹³⁷ Ibid: p.17

¹³⁸ Baillet, Philippe. “Thoughts in Season” in *The Scorpion: Against all Totalitarianisms*, issue 10, 1986, p.15

pedigree for the traditional far right ideals in order to win cultural hegemony, and distance themselves from the “lowbrow” populist tendencies characterised by conspiracy theories which played on instinctual prejudice, for example antisemitism.

Walker himself also makes some ambiguous comments in the same issue. In his article which shares the same name as the issue itself, the editor claims that the “National Socialist regime was responsible for many superb achievements.”¹³⁹ Although he concedes that it was also responsible for many unforgivable things, Walker laments the fact that because of the “liberal consensus” of the day, only the negative aspects of national socialism are recognized.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Walker, Michael. “Against all Totalitarianisms” in *The Scorpion: Against all Totalitarianisms*, issue 10, 1986, p.3

¹⁴⁰ Ibid: p.3

5. The Influence of the British New Right: From the National Front to the British National Party

To conclude this analysis of the British New Right, and its mouthpiece *The Scorpion* in the first half of the 1980's, I wish to make some remarks regarding its influence on the far right in Britain, both contemporary and in later years.

As already mentioned, the disappointing results achieved by the National Front in the 1979 elections led its leading figures to pursue a reorientation. The group discussed in this thesis, were inspired by the Nouvelle Droite intellectuals and adopted many of their ideas and strategy of long-term cultural hegemony, thereby rejecting the political approach of the National Front. The National Front itself also looked to revamp its ideology. In the early 1980's, the NF came under control of the young radicals Patrick Harrington, Derek Holland and Nick Griffin, the latter who for an extended time shared an apartment with Michael Walker. This reorientation was heavily inspired by an array of foreign thinkers, among these perhaps the most significant was Julius Evola, and his ideas of spiritual European rebirth, criticism of liberal democracy and a third position between capitalism and communism. Meanwhile, Michael Walker published the first English translation of Evola's anti-American critique in *The Scorpion* in 1984.¹⁴¹ The NF's ideological reorientation gave rise to the creed of the "Political Soldier", the idea of an ideal man committed to the revolutionary cause of nationalism, this faction was headed by Griffin and the other young radicals and became the most prominent one in the NF during the 1980's.

Besides the Evolian influence, the new young leaders of the NF were also inspired by the ideological discourse of the French New Right, this is evident from the organization's publications, *Nationalism today* and *Rising*, in the course of the 1980's.¹⁴² Perhaps most drastically, the NF apparently turned away from radical racial nationalism and defense of the "white race" to promoting the idea of that every people and culture were equal, but mixing

¹⁴¹ Copsey 2013: p.292

¹⁴² Yngvild Storli examined the ideology presented in the two magazines between 1980 and 1985 in "On With the National Revolution" - An analysis of the ideological reorientation of the "political soldiers" in the British National Front, 1980-1990. Master's Thesis in Contemporary History, University of Oslo, 2019

cultures were harmful to all parts. Much to the incredulity of its long-time followers, the NF even called upon them to “Fight Racism.”¹⁴³

The influence of the New Right’s “right to difference” is obviously not hard to detect. Furthermore, they opposed what they saw as an American economic and cultural occupation of Britain. They claimed also to be pro-European, but against the Europe of the common market. Instead, they envisioned a Third Way for Europe independent of the superpowers, based on a “Europe of peoples”, united by common bonds of race and culture.¹⁴⁴

As Nick Griffin shared a flat with Michael Walker, one of the few translators of Alain de Benoist’s texts and the main editor of *The Scorpion*, he had ready access to New Right discourse. Even though neither the Nouvelle Droite nor *The Scorpion* is mentioned in the National Front’s publications during this period, the movement’s influence is evident in the party’s ideological reorientation. This is perhaps most obvious in the “anti-racist” turn, from ethnic-racial racism to what one might call cultural racism. This turn was cemented in 1987, when the official National Front, which according to Nigel Copsey was the Political Soldier faction, defined its pseudo-xenophile position as not racist but *racialist*,¹⁴⁵ meaning it was based on a principle of the right to preservation and self-rule of each people’s cultural identity. The “new” National Front claimed it was not a question of racial hierarchies or white supremacy.

Still, it should be noted that the National Front did not abandon its antisemitic conspiracy theories, claiming Zionism to be “a very real threat to world peace, a threat that draws much of its strength from the fact that many of its power bases remain unseen by the British public” in 1985.¹⁴⁶

The National Front did not succeed in gaining political respectability with its new face however, at least not in the short term. In fact, the ideological repositioning was only successful in alienating the Front’s original grassroots membership, and in 1990, the

¹⁴³ Copsey 2013, p.293

¹⁴⁴ Storli, Yngvild 2019, p.39-44

¹⁴⁵ Copsey 2013, p.293

¹⁴⁶ Storli 2019, p.42

“official” National Front was forced to disband. Instead, it was the British National Party (BNP), led by former NF leader John Tyndall, whom Michael Walker had dismissed as a “Nazi” in the very first issue of the *National Democrat*, that became the leading far-right party in Britain in the 1990’s. A devoted antisemite, white supremacist and with a nostalgia for the British empire, he was entirely indifferent to New Right ideas.¹⁴⁷

By the turn of the decade then, it seemed that the influence of the New Right in Britain was negligible. However, Nick Griffin resurfaced in the BNP in the mid 1990’s as a leading figure for the modernizing faction in the party – who wanted to out John Tyndall and his antisemitic conspiracy theories. They were successful in 1999 and Griffin remained the party’s chairman for 15 years. During these 15 years, the party underwent a number of ideological changes (at least on the surface), which bore the mark of New Right ideas. Heavy emphasis was laid on the concept of “identity”, which also was the name of the party’s theoretical journal which launched in 2000. They defined “identity” as an ethno-nationalist concept, based on a symbioses of race and culture, and as a right of all peoples. To underline the BNP’s new standpoint, Griffin claimed in 2000 that their purpose was to “preserve the traditional inhabitants and cultures of Britain. Our demand to preserve that identity threatens no one; it raises no alarming or debatable questions of superiority or inferiority.”¹⁴⁸ Multiculturalism was therefore criticized for being a danger to people’s right to their own specific identity. These arguments of course bear the New Right mark, and had been propagated multiple times by *The Scorpion*, and other ENR publications. Furthermore, the BNP under Griffin’s leadership proclaimed a wish to bring power closer to the people by destroying the undemocratic system. To replace it, the BNP promised decentralization and direct democracy in the style of Switzerland. This wish had already been proclaimed by *The Scorpion* in 1986, calling Switzerland “an example of a more genuine democracy than we usually see today.”¹⁴⁹

To what degree the European New Right and specifically its British activists influenced this modernization of the BNP is hard to state. Matthew Goodwin has for example argued that in

¹⁴⁷ Copsey 2013, p.293

¹⁴⁸ Ibid: p.295

¹⁴⁹ de Sorinnes, Guibert & Hampshire, Dominic. “Needed: A Sense of Identity” in *The Scorpion: When Europe Awakens*, issue 9, 1986, p.17

the late 1990's, the modernizers in the party saw mainly to the French *Front National* as a blueprint for escaping the electoral wilderness. The BNP even sent a delegation to the FN's annual *Bleau-Blanc-Rouge* festival in 1997 to learn from its French counterparts how to appeal to a wider electorate.¹⁵⁰ The *Front National* for its own part had of course adopted central Nouvelle Droite ideological aspects, with perhaps the "right to difference", the criticism of multiculturalism and its anti-racism at the forefront. Still, the currents of ideological reorientation in the BNP, which started in the late 1990's but accelerated under Nick Griffin's leadership were, one could argue, to a degree continuations of the ideological revamping of the National Front in 1980's, led by the *Political Soldier* faction. Even if the BNP looked to more successful nationalist parties as models of how to structure their discourse politically, the ideological reorientation itself was heavily influenced by New Right ideas, a process which started in the first half of the 1980's.

This is not to say that the BNP under Griffin was a complete political reflection of the European New Right movement. It remained a radical nationalist party, mainly concerned with Britain and the British "race", while the ENR endorsed organic ethno-pluralism, having moved beyond the modern nation-state. Furthermore, for the ENR intellectuals it was the international system of egalitarianism, liberalism and globalization which posed the real threat to the world and its peoples, the system itself therefore, needed to change. This was expressed multiple times both in *The Scorpion*, as shown in the previous chapter, and in other ENR publications. The BNP, however, while no fan of "cultural imperialism" from America, has played more on populist currents in the population, most notably on anti-Muslim sentiment following terrorist attacks in the early 2000's, for example in New York in 2001 and in London in 2005, instead of focusing on the structural critique of the liberal system. A trait it shares the French FN, which Alain de Benoist has dismissed as being "Vulgar, ultra-nationalist populism".¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Goodwin 2011, p.50

¹⁵¹ Bar-on 2007, p.37

6. Concluding remarks

This thesis has shown how the Nouvelle Droite ideology and discourse was disseminated to the British public when it was first introduced through *National Democrat/The Scorpion* in the first half of the 1980's. The inherent transnational and European outlook of the ND allowed for their ideas to spread throughout Europe, including Britain, where the National Front organizer Michael Walker was disillusioned with the British far right. For him and others, the ENR ideology and discourse represented an opportunity to “modernize” and provide an intellectual pedigree to the British far right which was lacking, and which would resonate with the wider population, not just the “low-brow” constituency. Thus, the British branch of the ENR was born, and its own metapolitical mouthpiece *National Democrat/The Scorpion* started propagating New Right ideology through editorials, articles and translated texts by other ENR intellectuals from the continent. This constituted a transnational network, which was also expanded by British New Right activists participating and also hosting conferences that were attended by leading ENR intellectuals, including Alain de Benoist and Guillaume Faye.

From the start of the first issue of *National Democrat*, it was clear that main editor, Michael Walker, was keen to distance himself and the journal from the “old” right, in particular National Socialism, with its conspiracy theories and biological racism. The creed of “right to difference” and its anti-racism was therefore highlighted heavily in the journal, and the first issue was dedicated to the subject. Other characteristic ENR arguments and ideals, mainly Europeanism and a European “third way”, anti-egalitarianism, anti-liberalism and critiques of liberal democracy were furthered in typical ENR vein in subsequent issues of the journal. However, there are also some aspects to be found which are typically related to the “old” right, mainly antisemitic comments and comments highlighting the “positives” of the Nazi regime in Germany, in addition to chauvinistic comments regarding specifically the “British” race. These diverge from the typical discourse of the intellectual leaders of the ENR, who saw such views as damaging to the movement’s metapolitical project. That the journal projected these views also seems somewhat contradictory to Walker’s stated intention to make a clear distance to the “Nazis” of the National Front and its conspiracy theories.

It seems clear that the ideological reorientation of the National Front in the first half of the 1980's, which gave rise to the "political soldier" faction, drew influence from New Right ideas, especially the right to difference and its critique of multiculturalism and promotion of a European third way. As the first translator of Alain de Benoist's and Julius Evola's works to English, in addition to sharing the apartment of leading "political soldier" Nick Griffin, it seems likely that Michael Walker and the British branch influenced this reorientation. Although it was John Tyndall's BNP that became the leading far right organization in the 1990's, the influence of the New Right reemerged from 1999 when Nick Griffin became chairman of the BNP, reorienting the party's racist discourse to the New Right's "right to difference" and anti-racism.

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