"On With the National Revolution!"

An analysis of the ideological reorientation of the «political soldiers» in the British National Front, 1980-1990

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II

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"Legionary life is beautiful, not because of riches, partying or the acquisition of luxury, but because of the noble comradeship which binds all Legionaries in a sacred brotherhood of struggle."

- Corneliu Zelea Codreanu
  (*For My Legionaries, 1936)*

2019

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Abstract

The electoral breakthrough of the French Front National in the European Parliament in 1984 marked the beginning of an upsurge in electoral support for far right parties all over Europe. This process is often referred to as "the third wave" of right wing extremist and -radical parties. This master thesis analyzes the ideological reorientation of the "political soldiers", a faction within the British neo-fascist organization National Front, in the context of the "third wave". A common denominator among the political parties who gained any form of representation in this period was that they made an effort to distance themselves from their neo-Nazi or fascist pasts and renew themselves as political parties in order to break into mainstream electoral politics. The "political soldiers" however, did the opposite: they abandoned the quest for "legitimacy" and electoral support, and eventually became an elitist, revolutionary cadre organization of so-called "political soldiers". Influenced by a group of Italian neo-fascists, they adopted a more esoteric form of ideology, inspired by Corneliu Codreanu, Julius Evola, religious Islamic fundamentalism, and to some extent the French *Nouvelle Droite*. This thesis investigates these influences' impact on the British activists, and how this reorientation came to expression in their party newspapers and two of their political manifestos.

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Introduction

Presentation

The electoral breakthrough of the French Front National in the European Parliament in 1984 marked the beginning of an upsurge in electoral support for far right parties all over Europe.[1] This process is often referred to as the "the third wave" of right wing extremist and -radical parties.[2] A common denominator among the political parties who gained any form of representation in this period was that they made an effort to distance themselves from their neo-Nazi or fascist pasts and renew themselves as political parties in order to break into the electoral mainstream. In the spring of 2017, Marine Le Pen of the Front National made it to the final round of the presidential election in France. This was not coincidental: it was the result of a long modernization process that started in the 1980's, and it is maybe the foremost example of such a political reorientation.[3]

Like many of the far right parties of the "third wave", Front National was established already in 1972 by the leadership of one of the most prominent neo-Nazi organizations in France, the *Ordre Nouveau*, whose aim was to unite the many far right movements in the country at that time under the same "front". Inspired by the think tank GRECE (*Groupement de recherche et d'etudes pour la civilisation européenne)*, most commonly known as *La Nouvelle Droite,* they modernized, and carried out a doctrinal renewal: old ideas of historical fascism, corporatism and biological racism were perceived as outdated issues which did not attract voters, so inspired by the *Nouvelle Droite* they went through a rhetorical revolution. The classical talk of races was phased out in favor of "cultural differentialism", and by that, parties and organizations who had once been written off as neo-fascist were now regarded as somewhat legitimate.[4] The conclusion of many scholars is that many of the former neo-fascist and neo-Nazi organizations

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[1] See Davies, Peter, *The Extreme Right in France, 1789 to the Present – From Maistre to Le Pen,* London and New York: Routledge, 2010, p. 133-136
[2] Mudde, Cas, "The War of Words: Defining the Extreme Right Party Family" *West European Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1996: 225-248, p. 225
[3] Marcus, Jonathan *The National Front and French Politics – The Resistible Rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen*, London: Macmillian Press LTD, 1995, p. 12 / See also: Griffin, Roger, "Between Metapolitics and apoliteia: The Nouvelle Droite's Strategy for conserving the fascist vision in the 'interregnum'", *Modern and Contemporary France*, Vol 8. No. 1, 2000: 35-53 and Fysh, Peter og Jim Wolfries, "Le Pen, The National Front and the Extreme Right in France", *Parliamentary Affairs,* Vol. 45, 1992: 309-326
[4] Mammone, Andrea, "The Eternal Return? Faux Populism and Contemporarization of Neo-Fascism across Britain, France and Italy", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies,* Vol. 17, No. 2, 2009: 171-192, p. 174

have buried some of their "sacred cows", that is, some of their traditional traits, mainly biological racism and conspiracy theories.[5] Furthermore, many of those who modernized in the 1980's managed to break into the mainstream, and established themselves there.[6]

In this thesis, I will discuss one of the parties situated in "the third wave" in the 1980's: the British neo-Nazi party National Front. Social scientist Matthew J Goodwin recently claimed that "the story of the British extreme right has long been one of failure"[7], and for a long time, this was the case. After the Second World War, Britain was left victorious, not only over the axis, but also over fascism. Anti-fascism became, and for long remained, important for British national identity.[8] Contrary to in certain other national contexts, the performance by British far right parties in elections have been so marginal, that neither scholars nor politicians have granted them much attention. They have rather been regarded as political nuisances. This can be illustrated by the fact that the British far right only had one representative in municipal administration between Thatcher's electoral win in 1979 and Tony Blair's in 2001. This candidate represented The British National Party in Millwal, Tower Hamlets, in 1993. But if one looks beyond their electoral performances, these groups and parties have mobilized a quite large supporter mass - much larger than their electoral performances suggests.[9]

The aim of the thesis and historical context

The National Front (est. 1967) was, similar to the French Front National, a result of a merger between various nationalist and neo-Nazi groups in post-war Britain. Under the leadership of John Tyndall from 1972 until 1980, the party participated in elections with a political programme based on xenophobia, anti-Semitism, white supremacy and opposition to liberal democracy.[10] However, in the 1980's a group of young, well-educated radicals rose to prominence in the organization. Among these people were Cambridge graduate Nick Griffin,

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[5] Copsey, Nigel, "Au Revoir to «Sacred Cows»? Assessing the Impact of the *Nouvelle Droite* in Britain", *Democracy and Security*, Vol 9, No. 3, 2013: 287-303, p. 287
[6] Copsey, Nigel, "A Comparison between the Extreme Right in Contemporary France and Britain", *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1997: 101-116, p. 111-112
[7] Goodwin, Matthew, *New British Fascism. The Rise of the British National Party,* Abingdon: Routledge, 2011, unpaginated preface
[8] Goodwin 2011, p. 23
[9] Goodwin 2011, preface. Goodwin's book was published before the recent success of the populist UK Independence Party (UKIP). / Thorsen, Dag Einar, "En drøm om *Gleichschaltung* på en globalisert øy", Sørensen, Hagtvet and Steine(ed.), *Høyreekstreme ideer og bevegelser i Europa,* Dreyers Forlag, Oslo: 2012, 234-257, p. 234,
[10] Goodwin 2011, p. 23

and catholic Derek Holland. This group called themselves the "political soldiers". In this thesis, I will explore their attempt at political reorientation, which is often referred to by scholars as a "radicalization". The "political soldiers" represents a story quite different from those of other far right parties in the 1980s. While many far right parties of this period attempted to conceal their fascist roots in order to gain electoral support and break into mainstream politics and succeeded in doing so, the British "political soldiers" did not succeed in the short run. However, many of the actors involved in this particular reorientation achieved political success in European far right politics in the 2000's, and are still active today in new organizations and political parties.[11] In the 1980's they attempted to implement what is called *third positionism*: a political stance opposed to both capitalism and communism, favoring "revolutionary nationalism".[12] The "political soldiers" stayed in the National Front until 1990. In 1990, the "political soldier" faction only consisted of a few dozen members, and many could not agree on the future of the party. Eventually, that same year, the National Front split and the "political soldiers" established the International Third Position to spread third positionism, revolutionary nationalism and "political soldiery" to a broader, international audience.

The ideological reorientation of the "political soldiers" in the period between 1980 and 1990 will be the main subject of this thesis. First, I will discuss how this reorientation played out, what the new political project was, and what characterized this particular reorientation. Second, I will discuss sources of inspiration for the new ideology. Where did they get their ideas? Who were their political "idols"? I will look to both historical and contemporary movements and intellectuals, and show that they drew inspiration from historical fascism as well as from contemporary political Islam. I will discuss how religion and spirituality became a crucial part of the "political soldiers'" reorientation, and how the group developed a more and more religious conception of politics.

I will also address the ideological classification. In an abundance of literature and interpretations of fascism and the far right, should the "political soldiers" be placed in the "fascist" category, or are they better labeled right wing extremist or radical? Finally, I will

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[11] Nick Griffin for instance, was member of the European Parliament from 2009 – 2014 while chairman for the British National Party, representing North West England.

[12] See: Copsey, Nigel, *Contemporary British Fascism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 30-33 and Griffin, Roger, "Alien influence? The international context of the BNP's 'modernization'", Nigel Copsey and Graham Macklin (ed.), *British National Party: Contemporary Perspectives*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge 2011, p. 196

outline the breaches and continuities between the "political soldiers'" activities in the National Front and in the later International Third Position.

Sources

The analysis is mainly based on printed sources in the form of newspapers, journals and political manifestos published in the period under investigation, which will mainly be the 1980s and on a more general level the 1990s. Many of these sources had a limited circulation and are hard to get by. I have gained access to most of them by visiting the Searchlight Archives at the University of Northampton, England. Searchlight was an anti-fascist publication and press agency established in 1964 in order to keep an eye on and document the activities of neo-Fascists in Britain.[13] In 2013, they handed their archive over to the University of Northampton. With its major collection of material documenting activities of both British and international fascists and racist organizations, it is one of the most extensive of its kind in Europe.[14] The main sources analyzed for this thesis have been two magazines, *Nationalism Today* and *Rising*. In addition, I have analyzed two political manifestos, both written by "political soldier" Derek Holland: *The Political Soldier – A Statement* (1984) and the International Third Position's *Declaration of Principles* (1992). Other sources used in the analysis are Legionary Leader Horia Sima's *The History of the Legionary Movement* (translated into English in 1995) and the International Third Position's *The Third Position Handbook* (1997).

The first issue of *Nationalism Today* was published in 1980 after Tyndall had left the National Front, with Nick Griffin as one of its three editors. The magazine set out to be a platform for the spreading of revolutionary nationalism, bringing news on current events, new ideas and new strategies for its readers and supporters. In 1981, *Nationalism Today* was made the official publication of the National Front.[15] The Searchlight Archive holds almost every issue of *Nationalism Today*. I have chosen to focus mainly on the articles dealing with the party's strategies and ideology, written by the most prominent members of the organization.

The other magazine used in the analysis is the more clandestine publication *Rising*, published exclusively by the agents involved in the "political soldier" faction. Only five issues were

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[13] Read about Searchlight here: https://www.searchlightmagazine.com/about/ (20.04.2019)
[14] Read about the Searchlight Archive here: https://www.northampton.ac.uk/about-us/services-and-facilities/the-searchlight-archives/ (18.06.2019)
[15] See chapter 3

published between 1980 and 1985. The magazine had a less "newsy" profile than *Nationalism Today* and printed longer, more elaborate "metapolitical" articles.

Another main source for the analysis is the abovementioned *The Political Soldier – A Statement* published by Derek Holland in 1984. This publication was an ideological manifesto, describing both the need for, and how to become, a "political soldier". Lastly, I will discuss the International Third Position's *Declaration of Principles*, published in 1992.

The thesis consists of an introduction, followed by five chapters and a conclusion. The first two chapters are fairly short and will deal with interpretations of fascism and the far right, to establish a theoretical frame and point of departure for the analysis (chapter 1), and the history of the National Front and the "political soldiers", in order to establish the historical context and their ideological roots (chapter 2). Chapter 3 will discuss the ideological development in the National Front between 1980 and 1985. This delimitation was made for two reasons. First, *Rising* was only published in this period, and in 1985, the term "political soldier" was used for the first time in *Nationalism Today*. The whole profile of the magazine changed after that. Second, *The Political Soldier – A Statement* was published in 1984 and chapter 4 is devoted to an analysis of this manifesto. Finally, in chapter 5, I will outline what happened to the "political soldiers" and their national revolutionary project, and see how, or if, the establishment of the International Third Position was a continuation of the "political soldier" ideology of the National Front.

Literature, theory and method

The contemporary research on the British far right mainly revolves around Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists and the British National Party. However, regarding the latter, the history of the National Front is usually discussed while establishing the context for the British National Party. The outline of the historical context and the "background" history of the "political soldiers" in this thesis is mainly based on Nigel Copsey's *Contemporary British Fascism* (2004) and Matthew J. Goodwin's *New British Fascism, Rise of the British National Party* (2011). As it turned out, the scholarly research on what exactly the "political soldiers" were up to is deficient, and not a single historical book or article has (yet) been written exclusively on the subject.

As we know, fascists in Britain have never mobilized enough supporters to gain any real influence in society and politics. In fact, historian Stanley Payne states that the same goes for most fascist organizations who have tried to gain support in the Northern European democracies, with only a few exceptions. The reason for this is hardly surprising. Many of the acknowledged prerequisites for the emergence of fascist forces have been missing in Northern Europe. Britain in particular had by the 1980's not experienced significant issues with nationalism, ethnicity or international status. On the contrary, Britain was prosperous, economically developed and relatively socially balanced. The population was for the most part well educated, it was a modern democracy with long standing parliamentary constitutional traditions. As Payne puts it: "There was neither space nor 'need' for revolutionary nationalism".[16] Scholars have stressed the deep rooted democratic values and the association of "Britishness" with anti-fascism as another reason for fascism's failure to establish itself. Moreover, the electoral party system stability in Britain has often been seen as an explanation for the failure of British fascist- and far right parties.[17] However, fascist groups and movements did exist, despite the poor electoral results.

Like many other far right organizations, the British National Front never experienced any electoral success. According to the scholar Roger Griffin (not to be confused with the "political soldier" Nick Griffin), the historical context in which the party existed was the main reason. While running for elections, the members of the party regularly arranged and participated in provocative marches and rallies in areas with a high quantity of immigrants. This broadcasted their extremist tendencies and, in addition, the party attracted many young football hooligans who were not specifically opposed to violence. Another important reason was that the party was regularly branded as Nazi by its opponents, and even sold Holocaust Denial propaganda. Also, after 1977, the opposition, mainly the Conservatives led by Thatcher, specifically targeted potential National Front voters by making the immigration issue their own. Thus, after losing the immigration issue to the establishment, the National Front had lost its main cause.[18] This brings us to the 1980's and the "political soldier" reorientation. The "political soldiers" felt a clear need for a new strategy, and a way of distinguishing themselves from Tyndall's National Front.

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[16] Payne, Stanley G., *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2005, p. 303
[17] Eatwell, Roger, "The Extreme Right in Britain – The Long Road to Modernization", Eatwell, Roger and Cas Mudde (ed.), *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2004, p. 62
[18] Eatwell 2004, p. 64

In order to analyze the new strategy, it is important to clarify some of the most important terms used in the literature on the far right. The literature on fascism and far right ideology is quite ambiguous, and witnesses an unwillingness to brand contemporary far right movements as fascist. There is a certain consensus regarding fascist movements from the past, i.e before the "third wave", but the British scholar and critical discourse analyst John E. Richardson suggests that classification of contemporary movements as fascist is rather deficient. In practice, this means that movements which existed 10 to 20 years ago are often regarded as fascist or neo-fascist, but when it comes to contemporary parties and movements, they are branded as something else – fascism is in most studies today regarded as something of the past.[19] According to Richardson, this is well exemplified in the literature and classifications of British far right activity. Richardson states that the parties who merged and formed the National Front in 1967, were at this time considered fascist but the result of the merger - the newly established National Front - was not. Later, in the 1990's, the National Front *was* considered fascist, but the new contemporary group British National Party (est. 1982) was not. The reason for this, Richardson argues, is that the parties themselves present certain contradictions, meaning that they tend to promote revolution while simultaneously running for elections. This presents scholars with both analytical and political difficulties,[20] and this is also where the historical context becomes important.

British social scientist Michael Billig pointed out in 1978 that the inter-war fascists, the Nazis in particular, presented analysts with a similar problem.[21] The atrocities committed by the Nazis during World War 2, i.e. plans of genocide etc., was not a large part of the Nazi propaganda while they were trying to break into the mainstream and win electoral support. The point is that while active, it is difficult to reveal the true intentions of these parties and organizations, because they are systematically concealing their true interests. [22] Now, when the role of the "political soldiers" has played out, and we can study them from afar, it might be easier to reveal their intentions.

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[19] Richardson, John E., *British Fascism – A Discourse-Historical Analysis,* Stuttgart: *ibidem*-Verlag, 2017, p. 21
[20] Richardson 2017, p. 22-23
[21] See Billig, Michael, *Fascists: A social psychological view of the National Front*, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1978
[22] Richardson 2017, p. 23-24

1 Interpretations of fascism and the far right

1.1 Introduction

I have set out to discuss the nature of the "political soldier's" ideology, as presented in party magazines, journals and political programs mainly in the 1980s and 1990s. To determine whether the chosen organization is fascist, it is crucial to have an understanding of what fascism is, both historically and today. However, there are some issues. Most importantly, the study of fascism is a complex one. Furthermore, it is tightly connected to the study of the far right in general. In an abundance of studies on fascism, right wing extremism, right wing radicalism, radical right wing populism etc., it is difficult to keep track and to separate the different labels and concepts from each other.

The agents and groups discussed in this thesis were active (mainly) in the 1980s. That makes them contemporary far right activists. In the study of the far right, it is debated whether or not terms like "fascism" and "neo-fascism" are accurate, or if they are outdated. This arises the question if these groups rather belong in the category some social scientists call "the extreme right party family"?[23] Can the study of historical fascism at all help us understand these groups and movements, or are they something entirely new? In this chapter, I will first give a brief presentation of the historiography of fascism and the far right. Afterwards I will debate the different interpretations of fascism, and the far right, to establish a theoretical point of departure for the following analysis of the "political soldiers".

1.2 Historiography

How fascism should be interpreted has been an essential question in academia for the better part of the last century. Stanley Payne suggests that the debate on fascism began as soon as the March on Rome ended. Since the rise of fascism, historians, social scientists, sociologists, psychologists as well as other scholars have debated the essential nature of the ideology. They have not managed to agree on one single interpretation. As Peter Davies and Derek Lynch argue in *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far Right*, studies of fascism from before

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[23] See Mudde 1996, Mammone 2009 and Copsey 2013

1945 are not regarded very positively today, and did not gain much traction as a serious historical subject matter before the war had ended. By the 1950s, things had changed. The study of totalitarianism spiked the interest in fascism, and since, a number of studies have appeared.[24] Stanley Payne suggests that the main interpretations have tried to define the underlying nature of the politics, or more commonly, to identify the main sources or causes. He writes that "the main interpretations may for the sake of convenience be summarized in thirteen categories"[25]: fascism as a violent, dictatorial agent of bourgeois capitalism; a unique radicalism of the middle classes; a twentieth century form of "Bonapartism"; a typical manifestation of twentieth-century totalitarianism; a new form of "authoritarian polyocracy"; a cultural revolution; a product of cultural, moral or sociopsychological pathologies; a product of the rise of amorphous masses; a consequence of unique national histories; a reaction against modernization; a product of the struggle for modernization or a stage of socioeconomic growth; and, a unique metapolitical phenomenon. Lastly, some analysts have concluded that a form of "generic fascism" cannot be defined and identified at all.[26] Nevertheless, some have tried.

There are, as mentioned, some problems when defining fascism as an ideology, one being that the different types of fascism vary too much, and that the distinctions between the different fascist movements and fascist regimes are too great. Another problem is that some interpretations of "fascism" are based on only one specific form of fascism - that form often being German National Socialism.[27]

In the following, I will look into some of the major contemporary contributions to the scholarly debate, mainly the interpretations of Roger Griffin, Stanley Payne and Roger Eatwell.

1.3 Interpretations of fascism

By the end of the 1960, "fascism studies" had established itself as a specific discipline, but still without any consensus on how to interpret the concept. [28] Following Roger Eatwell, academics on the one hand argue that there is no generic concept – there is no "general fascism", because the ideology is conditioned by time and national context. The argument for this interpretation

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[24] Davies, Peter J. and Lynch, Derek, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far Right*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 42. See also: Sørensen, Hagtvet and Steine (ed.), *Ideologi og Terror – Totalitære ideer og regimer*, Oslo: Dreyer, 2011
[25] Payne 2005, p. 442
[26] Payne 2005, p. 441-442
[27] Payne 2005, p 442
[28] Davies and Lynch 2002, p. 42-43

is that there are too many major differences between the different fascisms, mainly between the Italian Fascism and the German National Socialism (Nazism), to find a common "fascist minimum". The main difference is that Italian Fascism was not based on biological racism, and that Nazism was the only totalitarian regime of the two, while the Italian is better termed authoritarian.[29] Other scholars suggest that it is possible to find enough common denominators for a model of "generic fascism" and a "fascist minimum". The first academic to develop a so-called "fascist minimum" was Ernst Nolte. Nolte argued that fascism consisted of three "antagonistic" ideological elements: anti-communism, anti-liberalism and anti-conservatism, combined with three political arrangements: the *Fhürerprinzip*, a party army and the aim of totalitarian control.[30] This interpretation was later further developed by scholars, among them Stanley Payne, Roger Eatwell and Roger Griffin.[31]

Roger Griffin: The palingenetic core of fascist ideology

The perhaps most common formulation of a fascist minimum was developed by Roger Griffin in 1991. He defined fascism as "a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism".[32]

Thus, fascism can be defined as a form of "palingenetic populist ultra-nationalism". What does this mean? An important aspect of this definition is that it assumes that fascism is a political ideology, but that extensive heterogeneity exists between different examples and allows significant complexity. However, in Griffin's definition they share a mythic core of "palingenesis" and "populist ultra-nationalism".[33]

In Griffin's mind, the "mythic core" points to the inspirational, revolutionary power exerted by the ideology. When the driving forces of fascism are interpreted according to its "mythic core", the *type* of ideology is no longer of the greatest relevance: it is the central role of belief systems and rituals that becomes the main concern. The question is how the ideology provides cohesion and stability to existing society, but also how it rationalizes collective movements of extreme violence, including those who aim at overthrowing societies in "crisis" and replacing them with

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[29] Eatwell, Roger, "Towards a new model of generic Fascism", *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol 4, No. 2, 1992: 161-194, p. 163-164
[30] Richardson 2017, p. 28
[31] Richardson 2017, p. 28 / See also: See also Nolte, Ernst, *Die Krise des liberalen Systems und die faschistischen Bewegungen,* Munich: R. Piper, 1968
[32] Payne 2005, p. 5
[33] Griffin, Roger, *The Nature of Fascism,* London: Routledge, 2006, p. 28

a new order. This revolutionary aspect of the "mythic core" is what is crucial to the nature of fascism, and why it is central in a definition of it.[34]

According to Griffin, fascism is also "palingenetic". The concept comes from the Latin words *palin* (again, anew) and *genesis* (creation, birth), and refers to "[…]the sense of a new start or of regeneration after a phase of crisis or decline which can be associated just as much with mystical as secular realities".[35]

The phoenix is perhaps the most common metaphor for palingenesis. It was frequently used in medieval and classical times to refer to areas where a period of decay had been replaced by one of both social and political renewal. The metaphor is applicable in modern society too: an old, doomed society creates the perfect climate for "palingenesis" and ignites the hope that a "new era" is dawning.[36]

The expression suggests the vision of a revolutionary "new order" which supplies the affective power of an ideology, even when its goal is a society neither violent nor war-like, and will center on a new society created by human action, not a metaphysical vision. At the core of the "palingenetic myth" is the belief that present day people are living on the edge of a historical turning point. This turning point is when the corruption, anarchy, oppressiveness, iniquities and decadence is at their high and perceived as a sure sign that a new order is about to emerge.[37]

Palingenesis is in a way a confusing term. Etymologically it refers backwards to a restoration of something lost, but this is not the case for fascism. Griffin suggests that since we live in a society with a linear understanding of time and history, palingenesis – a new order – will happen through revolution, within a linear historical time. Thus, palingenesis refers to the rebirth of society through revolution after a period of decadence, not the rebirth of former glory days.[38]

The last criterion is populist ultra-nationalism. Roger Griffin uses populism as a generic term for political forces that depend on the "people" and people power as their basis for legitimacy.[39] Ultra-nationalism refers to types of nationalism that go beyond what is compatible with liberal democracy and institutions; "ultra" refers to anti-democratic features. It renounces both traditional and legal forms of politics in favor of charismatic politics, making the movements

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[34] Griffin 2006, p. 28
[35] Griffin 2006, p. 32
[36] Griffin 2006, p. 24
[37] Griffin 2006, p. 35
[38] Griffin 2006, p. 35
[39] Griffin 2006, p. 36

depend on their leader's ability to mobilize his followers. The term is often associated with the idea of the nation as a higher racial, historical and spiritual natural order, which embraces all its members. This natural order is perceived to be in danger of becoming contaminated by immigration and miscegenation - the mixing of different racial groups through marriage or cohabitation etc.[40] - from the anarchic, unpatriotic mentality promoted by liberal individualism, international socialism and alien forces "unleashed" by modern society – the main threats being decay of moral values, levelling of society, cosmopolitanism, feminism or consumerism.[41]

Combining palingenesis with populist ultra-nationalism creates a solid and precise political concept. The binomial expression which they create defines a genus of political energy, namely one whose mobilizing vision is that of "the national community rising phoenix-like after a period of encroaching decadence"[42] which led the community to the brink of destruction. This, Griffin defines as the fascist minimum.[43]

Stanley Payne

Stanley Payne has also dealt with the nature of fascism for decades. In his book, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945*, he discusses some of the characteristics of the different forms of fascist regimes and movements and concludes that if those characteristics were to be synthesized into one definition, he would define fascism as

> a form of revolutionary ultra-nationalism for national rebirth that is based on a primarily vitalist philosophy, is structured on extreme elitism, mass mobilization, and the *fhürerprinzip*, positively values violence as end as well as means and tends to normatize war and/or the military virtues.[44]

Payne himself points out issues with this definition. The first being that an "either-or" approach towards fascism is misleading: by reducing all forms of fascism to one generic phenomenon of common identity, we fail to grasp all aspects of the different forms. At the same time, by viewing all fascisms as fundamentally different, we ignore the distinctive similarities.[45] The typological description might serve as an analytical device that is useful for limited purposes of comparison and distinction. One should not blindly look for similarities, but understand that

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[40] Encyclopedia Britannica: "Miscegenation", https://www.britannica.com/topic/miscegenation (08.10.2018)
[41] Griffin 2006, p. 37
[42] Griffin 2006, p. 38
[43] Griffin 2006, p. 38
[44] Payne 2005, p. 14
[45] Payne 2005, p. 462

further beliefs, goals and characteristics do not necessarily contradict the common features, but go beyond them.[46]

However, Payne's definition is not far from that of Griffin. It also includes rebirth, revolutionary ultra-nationalism, and rationalization of violence, but it goes further in including more specific factors, such as extreme elitism, mass mobilization and the *fhürerprinzip.*

Roger Eatwell

Roger Eatwell's definition of fascism is a four-point set of annotations:

> an ideology that strives to forge social rebirth based on a holistic-national radical Third Way, though in practice fascism has tended to stress style, especially action and the charismatic leader, more than detailed programme, and to engage in a Manichaean demonization of its enemies.[47]

This definition also includes nationalism as a premise, in addition to "radicalism", which in many ways can be compared to Griffin's and Payne's perceptions of revolution. New aspects however are "holism", the concept of fascism as a "third way" and demonization of enemies.

Eatwell views fascism as holistic nationalism in the sense that collective rights and interests are held to be more important than individual ones. This explains the hostility towards liberal democracy. On the other hand, on the individual level, it portrays man as a victim of alienation, incapable of finding fulfillment within established socioeconomic structures; he can only truly be free "when he shakes off the conditioning of bourgeois society"[48], a view that can underpin the legitimization of violence.[49]

Last, Eatwell introduces the idea of fascism as a third way between capitalism and socialism (communism). Though it is hostile towards both, it also draws from them: fascists view capitalism as too individualistic, too dominated by short-term goals and not loyal to "community", while socialism is too internationalist and too preoccupied with the struggle for equality. The most common fascist goal has historically been corporatism, but this is not necessarily particular to the nature of the third way ideology.[50]

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[46] Payne 2005, p. 465
[47] Eatwell, Roger, "On defining the 'fascist minimum': The Centrality of Ideology", *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol 1, No. 3, 1996: 303-319, p. 313
[48] Eatwell 1996, p. 314
[49] Eatwell 1996, p. 313-314
[50] Eatwell 1996, p. 314

1.4 Interpretations of the contemporary far right

To study fascism is to study the far right, and sometimes it is difficult to tell the difference between fascist and extreme right wing activity. The question is, however, how one should interpret the ideas and movements of contemporary far right groups. Should they be studied in light of historical fascism, or are they a completely new phenomenon that has nothing to do with fascism?

Roger Griffin has developed one of the most esteemed theories on the nature of fascism, but he also sees the need to develop a theory to understand the contemporary far right. According to Griffin, we are now in what he calls the "post-fascist" era. He claims that after WW2, the most persistent fascist activists had realized that "the age of mass armed parties lead by charismatic leaders was dead […]"[51] and for fascism to survive as an ideology, it had to undergo a massive modernization. What they now had to do was to adapt the ideology to the new political climate: a world with even clearer divisions between capitalism and communism, and a world where liberal democracy again was reinstated and strengthened after the war.[52]

Griffin claims that the "dramatic loss" of the historical climate that produced fascism in the inter-war period, caused activists to become more flexible, and they developed two main strategies for keeping the dream of palingenesis alive: internationalization and metapolitization.[53] There were signs of internationalization during the early stages of fascism before the war, but after 1945, "Europanization" of fascism became a striking feature of the ideology. The thought sprung out from the idea that Hitler and Mussolini were too narrow in their nationalism to realize the "true potential of fascism", which by some was regarded as the project to save European civilization from Bolshevism (communism) and Americanization (capitalism). Many symptoms of "Euro-fascism" emerged post-1945, among them certain periodicals, the creation of pan-European groups, and the publication of major texts by, among others, by Julius Evola and Oswald Mosley calling for a European Federation or Empire of fascist nations.[54] What Griffin calls an even more original form of international fascism is third positionism. Influenced by some forms of Italian neo-fascism, it seeks a third way between capitalism and communism, opposing the global market and the "USA-Israel dominated

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[51] 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
[52] Griffin 2000, p. 165-166
[53] Griffin 2000, p. 166
[54] Griffin 2000, p. 166

international community"[55]. In addition, they often promote regionalist separatism (ethno-pluralism) and supranational federalism, meaning they are abandoning the nation-state as the basis for homogenous cultural energy. Instead, they are promoting the idea of discrete ethnic groups (*ethnies)* which produces a "Europe of a hundred flags".[56]

The other strategy, and an even more important ideological development within fascism, was the metapolitization of the ideology after 1945. The fascist takeovers in the interwar period were made possible by the contemporary political landscapes – landscapes that completely changed after the war. After the war, keeping Nazism alive had almost become an ideology in itself. Today, Griffin claims that fascist metapolitization can be identified in different forms, one of them being historical revisionism, mainly Holocaust denial. Another form of metapolitization of fascism was carried out by the French *Nouvelle Droite* (the New Right).[57] On the one hand, they introduced an anti-immigration discourse, ignited by the first immigration waves from Africa to Europe after the Algerian crisis (1958-1962), but most importantly, they launched a metapolitical offensive against what they saw as a leftist hegemony.[58]

Nevertheless, despite all efforts to rescue fascism as an ideology, Griffin points out that the biggest structural problem, and the most telling sign of the marginalization of these revolutionary radical right wing groups, is electoral politics and their failure to perform as electoral parties. Where the NSDAP and PNF had paramilitary armies to back their fascist takeovers, today's modern parliamentary fascists are "more like a toothless, emaciated, old nag than a powerful Trojan horse capable of carrying revolutionaries into the citadel of power".[59]

Thus, today's activists most commonly belong to electoral parties. Cas Mudde, a social scientist and a leading scholar in the field of contemporary far right studies, consequently labels modern extra parliamentary groups as "right wing extremist", not fascist. He claims that the study of right wing extremism has its origins in the study of

> […](historical) fascism. Some terms that were used to describe (historical) fascism are still used
> in the literature on right wing extremism of today. Generally speaking, the term neo-Nazism, and

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[55] Griffin 2000, p 166
[56] Griffin 2000, p. 168
[57] Griffin 2000, p. 169
[58] Wolff, Elisabetta C., "Understrømmen som kommer til overflaten: Høyreradikalisme og fascisme i Europas moderne historie", *Fortid*, No. 3, 2018: 54-63, p. 60
[59] Griffin 2000, p. 171-172

to a lesser extent, neo-Fascism are now used exclusively for parties and groups that explicitly want to restore the Third Reich […] or that quote historical National Socialism (fascism) as their ideological influence.[60]

He views fascism as an outdated term when it comes to contemporary far right groups and movements. According to Mudde, these groups belong in a category he calls "the extreme right party family".

> In addition to the group of scholars that study characteristics that are part of all political parties, a large(r) group centres on the distinction of different subgroups within the larger group. This is generally done by constructing typologies or classifications of political parties.[61]

So what typologies or classifications define the extreme right party family? Mudde claims that the rise of these parties come in waves. According to some scholars, these waves are similar in most national contexts, whereas others claim they are country specific.[62] Mudde's research builds on the wave of parties that rose after 1980, the so-called "third wave" of extreme right parties.[63] The term "right wing extremism" is accepted by most scholars, though there is no consensus on what the term actually means. One reason for the lack of a definition is that the term is not only used for scholarly purposes, but also for political ones, but many agree that the term describes parties and groups that are a sort of anti-thesis to democratic political opponents.[64]

As mentioned already, Mudde consequently uses the term right wing extremism. In 1996, Mudde called the discussion about the different definitions a "war of words". He systematically reviewed the academic literature on the extreme right, and found 26 different definitions, containing 58 different characteristics. Only five of them were used by more than half. Based on that, he concluded that right wing extremism can be characterized as nationalistic, racist, xenophobic, anti-democratic and authoritarian.[65] This means that right wing extremist actors or groups operate outside of party politics and established institutions. In the German tradition, extremist and radical groups differ from each other by the fact that extremist groups do not respect law and order, and want to change the established systems with force – be that military

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[60] Mudde 1996, p. 230
[61] Mudde, Cas, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 2
[62] Mudde 2000, p. 5
[63] Mudde 2000, p. 6
[64] Mudde 2000, p. 10
[65] Mudde 1996, p. 231 / Mudde 2000, p 1

or violent – while radical groups also want to change the system, but in constitutional ways.[66] Furthermore, he claims that the term "right wing extremism" still is the most common used term for this first group of parties and movements, but that in recent years this concept has been challenged by the terms "right wing radicalism and -populism".[67]

Different scholars have different approaches to how they define right wing extremism, but Mudde distinguishes three different approaches:

1) "The quantitative: all features are considered equally important and only one criterion is used: the number of features;
2) The qualitative: one (or more) feature(s) is more equal than others, for example: at least anti-democracy must be part of the combination;
3) The mixed approach, which combines the two mentioned above, for example: the requirement of at least two features, of which one has to be an "exclusionist" feature and the other a "hierarchic" feature."[68]

Mudde sees the term "right wing extremism" as fully satisfying, and sees no need to involve the study of historical fascism when trying to understand these contemporary movements. "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."[69]

There have been some objections to the social scientific interpretations of the contemporary far right, mainly from historians. As British historian Nigel Copsey states, "social scientists have since the 1980's have us believe that something entirely detached from (neo-) fascism has emerged – a populist radicalization of mainstream concerns – a novel form of radical right-wing populism".[70] He claims that social scientists define this phenomenon as a combination of "nativism", "authoritarianism" and "populism".[71] By this, Copsey claims that social scientists view this phenomenon as something unremarkable, normal and connected to the mainstream:

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[66] Mudde 1996, p, 229-231
[67] Mudde 1996, p. 231
[68] Mudde 2000, p. 11
[69] Mudde 2000, p. 12
[70] Copsey. Nigel, "'Fascism… but with an open mind.' Reflections on the Contemporary Far Right in (Western) Europe", *Fascism – Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies,* No. 2, 2013: 1-17, p. 2
[71] Nativism as in a combination of nationalism with xenophobia, authoritarianism as law and order issues, and populism as a populist critique of liberal democracy. Copsey 2013, p. 2-3

instead of the extreme right being something alien to democratic values, it is rather perceived as a right-wing populist radicalization of mainstream concerns.[72]

To some extent, also Roger Eatwell and Italian historian Andrea Mammone share the belief that right wing extremism might not be the best term. Mammone raises the question "how should modern right-wing extremism be studied?"[73] and states "'History', as a method, can in fact provide the long-term perspective which is generally missing from other social sciences.".[74] Mammone agrees that "right wing extremism" serves as a container for the parties of the far right, but that this concept has recently been challenged by the term "populism". Both Mammone and Eatwell argue that "right wing populism" might be a more accurate term; most parties in the "extreme right party family" are not extremist, but rather populist. Eatwell defines populism as a political style, with charismatic leadership and with an anti-elitist and anti-establishment rhetoric.[75] Mammone on the other hand is not that preoccupied with the ideological features, but rather with how the label "populism" in itself involuntarily contributes to the legitimization of anti-democratic parties, by ridding them of the label "extremist". By calling these parties populist instead of extremist, they appear less dangerous to the public.[76] The main objection to the social scientific approach to understanding the contemporary far right in the view of some historians is, however, that it tends to downplay the importance of the role fascism has played in the development of the phenomenon.

1.5 Moving on

To summarize; there is an ongoing debate on how to interpret fascism and contemporary far right groups. What divides the theorists is their methodology. While social scientists tend to study the contemporary far right parties and organizations as something not necessarily connected to historical fascism, historians often find it crucial to take into account the role fascism has played in the emergence of these parties. What they do agree on, is that if these groups are successful, they could challenge the contemporary established democratic institutions.

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[72] Copsey 2013, p. 3
[73] Mammone 2009, p. 171
[74] Mammone 2009, p. 172
[75] Eatwell, Roger, 'The Rebirth of the 'Extreme Right' in Western Europe?', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 53, No. 3, 2000: 407-425, p. 412
[76] Mammone 2009, p. 174

Historian Elisabetta Wolff proposes a metaphor for the evolution of the radical far right. After the revolution of 1789, the opposition to egalitarianism and democracy became a small current under the surface, but not disappearing entirely. Imagine right wing radicalism as a river running freely across continental Europe, coming up to the surface in different phases of European history, like during the interwar era. Will it ever resurface again?[77] In this chapter, I have shown how the study of fascism has evolved into the study of the far right, and that fascism is no longer the only category in use when analyzing contemporary far right group's ideologies. Nevertheless, even though fascism is no longer the only term, it is still like an undercurrent, necessary to take into account when studying the far right.

An interesting aspect when studying these parties is the fact that some of the contemporary far right groups actually do have fascist roots: what implications does that have for our understanding of them today? Many groups, especially after the "third wave", have gone out of their way to modernize and move away from their fascist heritage; has that changed their fascist "essence" or it is just a question of opportunistic adjustment to new circumstances?

So what about the British right wing radicals? As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, they most definitely have fascist roots. The question becomes: did they modernize too, or did they just become a more legitimate version of their fascist self?

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[77] Wolff 2018, p. 57

2 The history of British fascism, the National Front and the "political soldiers"

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the historical context in which the "political soldiers" originated. I will give a brief history of British fascism, from its origins until the emergence of the "political soldiers" to demonstrate the fascist roots of these activists.

2.2 British fascism: from Oswald Mosley to the National Front

The first fascist movement in Britain was established in 1923 by Rotha Linton Orman, and was named *The British Fascisti.* The aim of the organization was to unite like-minded people who all shared the idea and fear that their country would in the not too distant future be invaded by Bolsheviks, and together fight back. During the next few decades, more fascist groups arose.[78]

Some of these movements were The Britons Society, Fascist League, Stamford Fascists, Yorkshire Fascists, National Fascisti and the Nordic League, who all tried to unite the British people under the "banner of fascism", but instead of looking towards Germany and the NSDAP and their obsession with race, they looked to Mussolini and the Italian fascists and their ideas on how to reorganize societies and the way they were governed. However, despite the names of the different British organizations, indicating they were fascist, scholars have concluded that the better part of them did not grasp the core fascist ideology and its goals.[79]

The most important person when speaking of British fascism, is Oswald Mosley. By the 1930s, most of the established fascist organizations had faded away, and the "fascist torch" was passed on to the British Union of Fascists (BUF), established in 1932. The party was founded by Mosley, originally a promising politician - first Conservative, later Labour - who found out that neither parties took the task of creating a country "fit for heroes" seriously enough.[80] What made the British Union of Fascists different from the former fascist organizations was that the Union had a thoroughly prepared political program. With the declaration *The Greater Britain,*

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[78] Eatwell, Roger, *Fascism, a history,* London: Pimlico, 2003, p. 222
[79] Goodwin 2011, p. 20
[80] Eatwell 2003, p. 227-228

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they presented a distinct fascist ambition.[81] Through a number of publications and speeches, Mosley made it clear that the goal was to establish an authoritarian, one-party state, built on a corporative economic system with a strong technocratic ethos.[82]

What made the Union of Fascists actually fascist, was not only their economic ambitions, which had clear parallels to the continental "third way" of thinking, but rather that they believed that people were "necessarily unequal" while, at the same time, they wanted to destroy class differences. Furthermore, as Goodwin puts it, "[Mosley's] more general attempt to synthesize key aspects of the old and new, especially in the quest to produce a new fascist man"[83], did in fact make the Union a fascist party. In addition, the Union did not question the expansionary foreign policies of Hitler or Mussolini as long as they did not threaten British imperial interests. During the 1930's, the Union also adopted anti-Semitism. Their fascist characteristics were also reflected in their almost para-military campaigning style, and more often than not, their rallies ended in political violence against opponents.[84]

Mosley himself was a revolutionary and wanted to seize power, but the electoral performances were catastrophic. One reason was probably that neither Mosley nor the party made any effort to gain public support in elections - their plan was rather to be "invited" into power during the next big national crisis. This did not happen, there was no "next big crisis", and by the time the Second World War broke out, Mosley was arrested along with many of his fellow party members.[85]

After the war, Mosley was released and he resumed his political activity. The problem now was that the political context had changed dramatically since before he was incarcerated.[86] Anti-fascism was now an important part of British national identity. Mosley had by this point become more of a political veteran than a prevailing politician and lost some of his "Messian" ardor, but regardless, he was determined to attempt a comeback. This comeback would be realized through the creation of his new party, The Union Movement (1948–1973).[87] With this party, Mosley turned away from the "Britain first" nationalism they had fronted in the Union of Fascists, in favor of a type of a pan-European fascist vision: he now pictured "Europe, a

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[81] Eatwell 2003, p. 231
[82] Goodwin 2011, p. 20
[83] Goodwin 2011, p. 20
[84] Goodwin 2011, p. 20
[85] Goodwin 2011, p. 21
[86] Copsey 2004, p. 5
[87] Eatwell 2003, p. 327

Nation".[88] This meant that Mosley's main cause was no longer nationalism, but to fight for a united Europe and European unity. However, due to a lack of credibility and little support, this political project failed.[89]

The only other far right option to Mosley at the time was the ultra-patriotic organization the League of Empire Loyalists. Arthur Kenneth Chesterton (1899–1973), who had been a leading speaker within the British Union of Fascists under Mosley, established this organization. Even though they ran in elections, they were more like conservative imperialist lobbyists than a serious political party. Chesterton did not follow Mosley into his pan-European Union Movement, but continued to promote nationalism and the conspiratory anti-Semitism that the BUF had promoted before the war. During the 1950s, the League became a natural "magnet" for the neo-fascist activists who still believed in the fascist project, but were opposed to Mosley's new take on it.[90]

The League's main goal was to preserve the British Empire and stop the immigration of non-whites into the United Kingdom. This organization would later also become very important in the future development of the British far right. This was because the League largely worked as an incubator for future nationalists, among them John Tyndall.[91] The League also influenced the future far right in the way they formed their arguments. Chesterton, like Mosley, had a way with words and forming "rational" arguments: for example, instead of opposing the European Community on the grounds of ultra-nationalism, he used arguments containing concerns about the bureaucratic nature of the emerging society, and the problems of achieving democracy in such a large unit that completely lacked the feeling of community.[92]

Chesterton became a popular character on the British far right. For this reason, he was elected chairman of the newly established party National Front in 1967. The party was a result of a merger between the League of Empire Loyalists and a number of other smaller far right groups. Among these were John Tyndall's Greater Britain Movement. He had left Chesterton's League and established his own organization to pursue a more direct form of neo-Nazism. This would later benefit him greatly in the "milieu". Chesterton's time as chairman in the National Front

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[88] Macklin, Graham, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black: Sir Oswald Mosley and the Resurrection of British Fascism after 1945*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2007, p. 4
[89] Goodwin 2011, s.23
[90] Copsey 2003, p. 5
[91] Goodwin 2011, p. 24
[92] Eatwell 2003, p. 335

would not last long, and already by 1971 he was pushed out of the party. One of the reasons for the dispute was that Chesterton's ambitions for the National Front differed from the rest of its members. Chesterton saw the National Front first and foremost as a political pressure group, while its other members, surprised by the fast growing membership, wanted to realize the potential of the Front to become a significant actor in electoral politics.[93] In 1972, the party peaked membership-wise with 15 000 members, and that same year, Chesterton was dismissed as chairman and replaced by John Tyndall, his former student.[94] By 1973, the membership had grown to around 17500 members, and according to historian Graham Macklin, around 64000 people passed through the ranks in the organization during this decade.[95]

2.3 **The National Front**

One could assume that when no fascist party or organization in the history of Britain had any form of electoral success, the activists would try a new approach. This was not the case for the National Front. In the National Front under Tyndall's leadership, neo-Nazism was blossoming, and xenophobia, biological racism and anti-Semitism was promoted openly. In addition, they were overtly against liberal democracy.[96] In most post-war European national contexts, those attitudes automatically made parties lose their credibility because of all the atrocities committed in the name of fascism during the war. In some countries, among them Germany and the Netherlands, such parties were banned. In Britain, however, fascism was not forbidden, and even though the National Front was renounced by the better part of the British population, they continued to promote the vision of a white Britain without any modification.[97]

Towards the end of the 1970s, the party started to decline and was about to enter a time of crisis. The general election of 1979, where the Conservatives won under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, was disastrous for the National Front and crushed every hope they had for electoral success in the future. The reason for this was that Thatcher and the Conservatives had almost claimed ownership to the immigration issue and stole many of the Front's potential voters. Especially comments from Thatcher herself regarding her sympathy for those who "[...] might

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[93] Eatwell 2003, p. 335
[94] Copsey 2003, p. 15
[95] Macklin, Graham, *"Co-opting the counter culture: Troy Southgate and the National Revolutionary Faction"*, *Patterns of Prejudice,* Vol. 39, No. 9, 2005: 301-326, p. 302
[96] Goodwin 2011, p. 23
[97] Goodwin 2011, p. 22

be rather swamped by people with a different culture"[98] attracted people who might have been considering voting for the National Front. By being a mainstream party, the Conservatives automatically had more credibility among the voters, while the National Front was extremely unpopular with the majority of voters. Polls and opinion surveys showed that a great majority of the British population was negative to the National Front's openly neo-Nazi image and the general assumption was that the party was more interested in a dictatorship than in a functioning democracy.[99] These factors lead to an internal crisis in the party and it started to break up and reorganize.

In 1980, John Tyndall left the National Front in protest. The party was trying to rebrand itself, much to Tyndall's disapproval, and after presenting an ultimatum that was voted down, he left and established the parallel-organization The New National Front. His intention was to continue to promote the Front's neo-Nazi politics from its "glory days". After Tyndall's and many other members' exit, Andrew Brons was elected the new chairman of what was left of the National Front: a divided organization with just around 5000 members.[100]

By 1983, the National Front had experienced a further decline in membership and bigger upheavals than ever before.[101] The "old guard" was thrown out and Martin Webster, a former party organizer, had in practice taken over for Brons as the party's leader. At this time, there were about 4000 active members left, and the party was quite different from what it had been only a few years earlier. This was to a large extent due to the fact that new, younger activists were now the most significant in the organization.[102]

Webster's "leadership" would not last long either. In December 1983, a number of the young radicals conspired to throw him out of the party, and early in 1984 this became a reality. Moving forward, the same young activists would become the ones to radicalize the National Front. "Radicalization" is a term used in the literature, in particular by Nigel Copsey and Gerry Gable, but a more appropriate term would perhaps be "renew" or "reorient". Even though the tensions did not culminate until 1984, the reorientation of the National Front might have started as early as in 1980. The initiative came from a group of young, inexperienced activists, the same

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[98] Goodwin 2011, p. 34
[99] Goodwin 2011, p. 34
[100] Copsey 2004, p. 22, and: Gable, Gerry, "The Far Right in Contemporary Britain", Cheles, Luciano and Vaughan (ed.), *Neo-Fascism in Europe,* 245-264. London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1991, p. 249
[101] Copsey 2004, p. 32
[102] Gable 1991, p. 250

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activists who conspired to overthrow Webster and who all had a background from the Young National Front. Among them were Nick Griffin (b. 1959) and Derek Holland (b. unknown).[103]

2.4   The new generation of radicals

Nick Griffin began his political career already in 1974. At the age of 14, he joined the National Front after having lied about his age. He was born into a right wing family: his parents met as young conservative hecklers at a communist party event when they were young. He grew up in Halesworth, Suffolk, far away from "the racial frontlines" of Britain. In 1977, Griffin moved to Cambridge to study. Attending Downing College, he graduated with an honours-degree in history and law. In his spare time, he was both a youth politician and a boxer. Boxing was something he got into after he had been in a fight with an anti-fascist. While at university, Griffin established a student organization for young National Front members, which he himself headed. After university, he moved to London and worked at the party's headquarters full time. In the 1980's he became one of the strongest driving forces behind the reorientation.[104]

Other important actors were Graham Wilkinson and Patrick Harrington, but most importantly Derek Holland.[105] Holland was an earlier student from Leicester Polytechnic, where the National Front's youth organization had been prominent in 1979.[106] Holland was also a catholic who supported the ideas of archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and the Society of St Pius X.[107] What was new about these young radicals, was that they were highly educated and not the typical working class skinheads. To attract a working class following, they brought in Joe Pearce, their "alibi" to claim working class status and to gain some form of street credibility among the younger skinheads.[108]

Even though the young activists believed they initiated the radicalization, the older members had influenced them in their time, and were the ones who in reality began the process. Particularly Brons, whose priority was the ideological development of the party after the

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[103] Copsey 2004, p. 33
[104] Strømmen, Øyvind, *Den Sorte Tråden – Europeisk høyreekstremisme fra 1920 til i dag,* Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2013, p. 207-208 / Toolis, Kevin, "Race to the Right", *The Guardian*, 20.05.2000
[105] Copsey 2004, p. 33
[106] Copsey 2004, p. 183: footnote from *Bulldog*
[107] Shaffer, Ryan, "Pan-European thought in British fascism: the International Third Position and the Alliance for Peace and Freedom" *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 52, No. 1, 2018: 78-99, p. 83. See also: Sudlow, Brian, "The Frenchness of Marcel Lefebvre and the Society of St Pius X: A new reading", *French Cultural Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2017: 79-94
[108] Gable 1991, p. 250

disastrous election in 1979, was important. He identified the lack of a clear, ideological identity as the party's biggest issue. It was also Brons who introduced the young radicals to the concept of *distributism*: a political and economic theory that offers a "third way" between capitalism and socialism. Supported by Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton in the inter-war period, it promised an end to financial slavery by ensuring that the widest distribution of productive property would be secured by small-scale craftsmanship and guilds.[109]

Under Webster's leadership, the newspaper *Nationalism Today* (est. 1980) became the ideological foundation for the Front's radicalization. In the beginning, it was an independent newspaper, but it was eventually made the official publication of the National Front. Through a series of articles, the young radicals took the Front down a path of anti-capitalism and anti-communism.[110]

2.5 The new generations' international networking

The radicalization of the National Front was heavily influenced by the members' activity outside the party. Michael Walker, an NF-organizer in central London, had turned his apartment in Pimlico into a meeting place for nationalists, right wing radicals and fascists from all over Western Europe and the USA. Walker himself was one of few translators of Alain de Benoist. He was a big supporter of *La Nouvelle Droite*, a French far right think tank, which was led by de Benoist. Walker had a large network including people from other far right groups. He also had friends in various eco groups, such as Greenpeace, and he spoke many languages, which made international networking possible. Most importantly, he had many friends from other foreign national socialist and fascist groups, who like the young radicals in the National Front supported the idea of a "Europe of nations", a united Europe strong enough to stand against the USA and the Soviet Union. Walker was a talented far right politician and his home in Pimlico became an important meeting place.[111]

Through the open door-policy in Walker's apartment, Griffin, Holland and others made friends with a group of Italian radicals from the organization *Terza Posizione* (1978–1982). Some of the Italians were also associated with the *Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari* (NAR), an Italian neo-

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[109] See: Belloc, Hilaire, *An essay on the restoration of property*", 1933, Copsey 2004, p. 184, Copsey 2004, p. 33
[110] Copsey 2004, p. 33 / Durham, Martin, "The British Extreme Right and Northern England", *British Contemporary History*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2012: 195-211, p. 201
[111] Gable 1991, p. 251

Fascist militant organization. Both of these organizations promoted a *third positionist stance*, meaning they opposed both capitalism and communism, and placed themselves in a "third position" between the two.[112] In Italy, the NAR was synonymous with violence and shootings and they were known for committing robberies to finance their organization.[113] *Terza Posizione*, on the other hand, was not a terrorist group but a radical political party. The Italians found themselves in London seeking political exile because they were suspected or convicted of criminal and fascist activities in their home country. One of them was convicted of murdering two Italian police officers and many of them were convicted for having taken part in a bank robbery in Spain where £12 million were stolen. The third positionists were inspired by the ideas of Julius Evola, the founding father of third positionism in Italy. Among the Italian radicals was Roberto Fiore, who became close friends with Griffin and Holland. He would later become one of the biggest influences on the British radicals in their ideological reorientation of the National Front.[114]

2.6   Creating a new platform for ideological development

Fiore, one of the founders of *Terza Posizione*, had arrived in Britain in October 1980, when he was 21 years old, fleeing the Italian police who suspected him of having connections with NAR. They had tried interrogating him regarding the Bologna bombing in 1980, where 85 people died and 200 were injured. However, Fiore was absolved from crimes related to terrorism, but was sentenced to nine years in prison for subversive activity. His sentence was reduced to five and a half years after an appeal, but instead of going to prison, Fiore went to England. The London police failed to extradite him and the statute of limitation eventually expired. From 1999, he was officially a free man.[115]

Fiore befriended the young radicals of the National Front early in the 1980s. He helped with editing their magazine *Nationalism Today* until the middle of the year 1983. After that, a new magazine, *Rising*, became the most important platform for spreading the even more radicalized third positionist philosophy. *Rising* (1982–1985) eventually became a source of concern to the

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[112] Shaffer 2018, p. 82-83, Macklin 2005, p. 303
[113] Gable 1991, p. 251
[114] Griffin 2011, p. 196
[115] Cobain, Ian and Matthew Taylor, "Language school run by Italian fascist leader", *The Guardian*, 29.02.2008

party's leadership, especially Webster, who feared a development of a new party within the National Front.[116] This concern turned out to be more than just paranoia.

Rising was co-edited by Derek Holland, and was a semi-clandestine publication. The publishers branded it as a magazine by the "vanguard of the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement", with an editorial board who did not hesitate to go beyond what was normally regarded as acceptable in the more traditional patriotic circles.[117] *Rising* was used as a platform to spread third positionist revolutionary nationalism, among other things the esoteric ideas of fascist philosopher Julius Evola and Rumanian activist Corneliu Codreanu. The aim with *Rising* was to challenge what the editors saw as the spiritual abyss of urban materialism and liberal capitalism. Because of the spiritual decay, the young radicals of the National Front saw the need for the creation of a new man, a "political soldier", who selflessly committed himself to the nationalist spiritual revolution.[118] The local activists were the face of *Rising*, but in reality, Fiore and his friends were the most important ideological sources of inspiration.[119]

The ambition of the young radicals in the National Front was to carry the party's ideology away from the classic neo-Nazism towards a third positionist ideology, fairly new to Britain. They were convinced that the time had come for a complete transformation of the far right, like the one Alain de Benoist had sparked in France only years earlier.[120] In the beginning, *Rising* was mainly edited by Holland and Fiore. The magazine had a very small circulation and only five issues were published during the course of five years. Nevertheless, *Rising* was later viewed as an important turning point in the history of the National Front and British radicalism. *Rising* argued that it was necessary to reevaluate the ideology of National Front, how the ideology and ideas were spread, and the necessity of certain qualities in the Front's "militants". However, *Rising*'s main task was to promote the idea that the approaching revolution would change the entire country: not just politically, economically and socially, but most importantly culturally and spiritually.[121]

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[116] Copsey 2004, p. 33
[117] Copsey 2004, p. 33
[118] Copsey 2004, p. 33
[119] Shaffer 2018, p. 82, Copsey 2004, p. 34, Strømmen 2013, p. 207-208
[120] Griffin 2011, p. 196
[121] Shaffer 2018, p. 83

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2.7 The "political soldiers"

This group of young activists, who at its height had a couple of hundred supporters, aimed to create an elite movement, whose membership consisted only of a carefully selected group of people who had completed a specific training programme. This group came to be known as the "political soldiers". The group was named after what they saw as their ideal recruit – the political soldier. This new faction within the National Front, the "political soldier-faction", thought that the reason for the Front's failure was their preoccupation with "elections and other irrelevant battles" in the 1970's. Therefore, the "political soldiers" would rather focus on building a new ethos, and, in Roger Eatwell's words, "a fanatic, non-materialistic, quasi-religious 'new man'".[122]

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[122] Eatwell 2003, p. 341

3   The "radicalization" of the National Front

3.1   Introduction

After 1979, and after several members of the old «neo-Nazi» guard of the National Front had been kicked out, a development referred to by scholars as a "radicalization" took place. John Tyndall, who was the chairman of the National Front until 1980, had, as we have seen, represented a clear neo-Nazi ideology, based on xenophobia, biological racism, anti-Semitism and anti-democracy.[123] This stance was radical in every respect. What, then, made the younger Nationalists, and later scholars, refer to the further development as a "radicalization"? A move away from obvious and explicit neo-Nazism would in most cases be labelled the opposite: "moderation". In this chapter, I will examine *Nationalism Today* and *Rising* in the period between 1980 and 1985, to see how the alleged radicalization was articulated.

3.2   Radicalism and radicalization

According to academics, the term "radicalization" has over the course of the past decade become the predominant analytical paradigm to interpret acts of political violence.[124] The term is most commonly used to analyze jihadism and cases of Western foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, but at the core, the term "radicalization" has been used to address the "roots of terrorism". As Malthaner puts it:

> In contrast to the term's earlier use in research on political violence and social movements, which had emphasized relational dynamics in processes of escalation at the collective level, "radicalization" came to be understood predominantly as the gradual adoption of "extremist" ideas that promote and eventually lead to acts of terrorism, thus focusing attention on processes of cognitive and ideological transformation, mainly at the individual level.[125]

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[123] See chapter 2
[124] Malthaner, Stefan, "Radicalization – The Evolution of an Analytical Paradigm", *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 58, No. 3, 2017: 369-401, p. 369
[125] Malthaner 2017, p 370

Thus, scholars now use the term "radicalization" primarily to understand how individuals on a personal level can become so extreme that they resort to acts of terrorism. In the current paradigm, radicalism refers to the type of development that eventually leads to acts of political violence, in contrast to processes where political beliefs shift in a more radical direction.[126]

In *Deradicalizing Islamist Extremism*, Angel Rabasa et.al. also embrace the same position. They interpret radicalization as "the process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support or facilitate violence, as a method to effect societal change."[127]

The consensus is then, that radicalization refers to a process in which individuals become more inclined to commit acts of political violence. The legitimization of political violence is a key aspect of fascism. However, as stated in the previous chapter and in the introduction, when the National Front fell apart after the election in 1979, the "old guard", the traditional neo-Nazi-wing of the Front, was kicked out of the party.[128] It seems to contradict the current understanding to claim that a radicalization took place in the National Front *after* the most radical neo-Nazi members were kicked out. So, in what sense did a radicalization take place in this case?

I will argue that what took place was in fact highly ambiguous. In one sense, there was an escalation of revolutionary rhetoric of the classical fascist utopia of overthrowing the established institutions and replacing them with something entirely new – the palingenesis. At the same time, there was an effort at developing a rather "traditionalist" alternative to the established order and to give this alternative a respectable heritage. Most important, however, there was a move towards metapolitics and an emphasis on individual conviction and commitment.

3.3   *Nationalism Today* and *Rising*

In 1980, the first issue of *Nationalism Today* was published. The paper was edited by Joe Pearce, Nick Griffin and Nick Wakeling. To begin with, it branded itself as a new radical nationalist magazine, intended to fill the vacuum in nationalist literature they believed existed

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[126] Malthaner 2017, p. 371
[127] Rabasa, Angel, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Jeremy J. Ghez and Christopher Boucek, *Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists*, RAND Corporation, 2010, p. 1
[128] See chapter 2/ Copsey 2004

at the time. The project of *Nationalism Today* was to bring British nationalist activists an interesting "newsy" magazine to inform on current news and events, and to be a platform where all activists could contribute with constructive ideas on strategy, organization and tactics. From the start, the magazine was party independent and was established to reflect a "cross section of contemporary British nationalist opinion" and to reflect on subjects British nationalists traditionally had not dwelt much on.[129] Even though they claimed to be party independent, the editors and most of the writers were members of the National Front, and they wrote on issues regarding the policies of the party.

At the same time, the first issue of the magazine *Rising* was published. *Rising* was also a party independent magazine, though it was published by the "political soldier"-faction of the National Front.[130] *Rising* had a more intellectual and metapolitical approach to societal problems than *Nationalism Today* and was more like a journal, with article-length contributions. Only five issues of *Rising* were published during the course of five years.[131] The first issue's "theme" was to address the problems of society and the failure of earlier nationalist movements, and to present concrete solutions to the task of carrying out the national revolution.[132] In the following issues, *Rising* printed articles about ideological influences, both from other movements and individuals, and they presented their alternatives for the societal organization.

This chapter will examine the ideology presented in these two magazines between 1980 - when *Nationalism Today*, and later *Rising*, was established – and 1985.

3.4 *Nationalism Today*: Developing a new ideological platform

The first issue of *Nationalism Today* was published in March 1980. In this issue, there is an article written by one of the editors, Joe Pearce, called "Nationalism: Moving forward into the 1980's".[133] After the National Front fell apart after the election in 1979, a new strategy was needed – and Joe Pearce presented a suggestion in this article.

On the one hand, the young wing of the National Front was optimistic about the new decade. On the other hand, Pearce stated that the 1980's would be the decade of "ultimate victory, or

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[129] "Introduction", *Nationalism Today*, No. 1, March 1980, p. 1
[130] See Chapter 2
[131] They were published in the course of five years according to Ryan Shaffer (See: Shaffer 2018) However, the second issue was published in 1982, the first is not dated.
[132] "Introduction", *Rising*, No. 1, publishing year unknown, p. 3
[133] Pearce, Joe, "Moving forward into the 1980's", *Nationalism Today*, No. 1, 1980

ultimate defeat" for racial nationalism. He urged that they turned away from electoral politics and claimed that a focus on recruitment was the best strategy. Most importantly, the main goal should be to radically change the strategy of the National Front if the nationalist ideal should have any chance of gaining widespread influence. The most important thing was to promote a sense of comradeship within the movement: this would be vital to surviving "attacks" from "the Establishment". The second most important thing was to develop a more structured and detailed ideology. The Nationalist movement had to know more about nationalist ideology than the policies only regarding race, immigration and [anti-] communism. Pearce stressed the importance of educating the party's members.[134]

The rest of the articles in the first issue were mainly about how British jobs were being occupied by immigrants, how the Establishment prioritized "blacks", how British jobs and production were being outsourced and how capitalism was destroying the world.[135]

In the third issue of *Nationalism Today*, the editors printed a small paragraph on page 8, presenting the National Front Directorate's new five-year plan. The plan included four points, based on the realization that they should no longer prioritize to strive for "respectability" and "legitimacy", but rather wait for the Establishment and capitalist society to destroy itself and *then* seize power. The plan was to wait for the people to realize the need for Nationalism. This would happen when the streets were in riots, when unemployment peaked, and when inflation "gets even beyond the present degree of minimal control". Other plans were to introduce a more thorough nationalist program of membership education; to better communicate their policies to the public; more local participation and presence; and finally, more organized fundraising, not based on "corruption" and "private enterprise".[136]

As a response to this five-year plan, Joe Pearce wrote an article where he appreciated the effort to "finally" abandon the quest for "respectability". He claimed that the mass media and the establishment would never regard them as equal, and to assume that they ever would was to him the peak of political stupidity. The most important alteration in policies was the now generally accepted concept that the inevitable "collapse" was necessary before the party could hope to come to power. "Collapse" was used in the revolutionary understanding of political forces, as the falling apart of the established *status quo* so that existing structures in society

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[134] Pearce, Joe, "Nationalism: Moving Forward Into the 1980's", *Nationalism Today,* No. 1, 1980, p. 8
[135] *Nationalism Today,* No. 1, 1980
[136] "Directorate announces 5-year plan", *Nationalism Today,* Issue No. 3, 1980, p. 8

could no longer maintain the standards of life expected by the population. "Not until then", wrote Pearce,

> […] when it becomes blatantly obvious that the liberal-capitalist system no longer realize the expectations and demands of the populace, will British Nationalism find the millions of adherents that it will require in order to gain power. […]If we accept this principle of collapse, as the NF now appears to have done, it follows logically that our tactical approach should be determined by how to prepare in advance for that collapse.[137]

In the same issue, in an interview with the then chairman of the National Front, Andrew Brons, Brons stated a different view, that the most important thing moving forward was to articulate and enlighten followers on their ideology, rather than develop it. And if there was an area where the ideology needed to be developed, it was not the "nationalistic aspect" but the economic and social aspects.[138] Andrew Brons was a well known "distributist", and was the one who introduced the younger radicals to this concept.[139]

In the fifth issue of *Nationalism Today*, the editorial board announced in the introduction that the ownership of *Nationalism Today* was officially transferred to the National Front, as a reflection of the confidence the editors had in the party's leadership. At this time, the party was officially lead by Brons, but in practice it was run by Martin Webster.[140] In the introduction of this issue, they declared that:

> "Nationalism Today was set up as a platform for Radical Nationalist ideas at a time when the NF was undergoing fundamental changes in leadership and ideology. Since that time, the Reactionary elements have either been expelled or have left to form Tory or populist splinter groups. This has resulted in the victory of Radical Nationalism and leaves the way clear for the development of a comprehensive and revolutionary set of ideas and values. […] the National Front can begin the serious task of building a revolutionary force capable of replacing the decadent and decaying remains of the liberal-capitalist system. FORWARD WITH THE NATIONAL REVOLUTION!"[141]

From this point on, the articles in the magazine reflected what they called the "national revolution". Earlier, most of the themes in the different issues of *Nationalism Today* had been about immigration, race, issues related to unemployment, outsourcing of British jobs and

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[137] Pearce, Joe, "Organising for the collapse", *Nationalism Today*, No. 3, 1980, p. 8–9
[138] "Interview with Andrew Brons", *Nationalism Today*, No. 3, 1980, p. 10
[139] See chapter 2.4
[140] Copsey 2004, p. 32
[141] "Introduction", *Nationalism Today*, No. 5, 1981, p. 2

capitalism, but from now on they began forwarding the message of a "national revolution". The introduction also confirms that the membership of the National Front had changed during the last few years. By the time this issue of *Nationalism Today* was published, they were about to "resurrect", or rebuild themselves, with new policies and a new doctrine.

3.5 **Distributism**

Even though the young activists were trying to distance themselves from Tyndall, they were still preoccupied with the same societal "issues": immigration, capitalism, unemployment, etc. However, the solutions were from now on nothing less than revolution. But what exactly did that mean? While advocating for a revolution, the party leaders actually continued to propose "reformist" and "traditionalist" resolutions for industrial and other problems. In an article in issue number five, for example, Nick Griffin examined the British economy and claimed that it needed to be made self-serving: the abandoned factories and warehouses should be renovated and used for new purposes, creating more and new jobs. Workers should be encouraged to invest in property. They would ideally get the capital from interest-free government loans, and areas and property which were monopolized by private landlords would instead be owned by countless small property owners: big business and capitalism would be replaced by individual ownership and competition.[142] This transfer of ownership would, according to Griffin, end inner city social problems and reduce vandalism and somehow also divorces. Combined with the repatriation of non-whites ("coloured immigrants"), which would end violent crime, this would save the British economy and society.[143]

This was how the National Front planned to save Britain. In their view, they were the only political party who were able to implement these radical changes because they had no economic interests to protect, as opposed to "the establishment". These politics were reconciled with the revolutionary message by claiming that such changes would eventually add up to a "national revolution".[144] In the same issue, there is an article about an alternative to the "slump" of capitalism and the "tyranny" of communism. This alternative, Nick Griffin suggested, was that corporate ownership should be replaced by many, individual private ownerships, where small, family owned businesses and workers' co-operatives would compete in an environment of free

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[142] Griffin, Nick, "New Hope for Britain's Docks", *Nationalism Today*, No. 5, 1981, p. 10
[143] Griffin, Nick, "New Hope for Britain's Docks", *Nationalism Today*, No. 5, 1981, p. 11
[144] Griffin, Nick, "New Hope for Britain's Docks", *Nationalism Today*, No. 5, 1981, p. 11

enterprise. They would set their own salaries, working hours and working conditions, and not be controlled by bureaucracy. This would be what the author called "the real Revolution".[145] We find and read the same ideas several times during 1981, by Joe Pearce in an article in issue no. 6[146], by Andrew Brons in number 7[147], and again by Nick Griffin and various other writers.[148] This type of economic organization is what they called *distributism.*

Distributism is a variant of corporatism. It was originally introduced at the turn of the 19th century, mainly by Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton.[149] The theory was not primarily fascist, but was adopted and "popularized" by the National Front in the 1980's as a third way between Marxism and capitalism. In short, the theory envisions a wide distribution of land, property and the means of production. It favors small businesses, decentralized economy, establishment of small farms, and craftsmanship. In addition, distributism was based on chauvinistic and exclusionary nationalism and the principle of no foreign ownership of British production.[150] The racist aspect of distributism was illustrated in an article in *Rising* in 1982. In *Rising* however, they did not brand themselves as distributists, they promoted what they called "folk-economy". The idea was that the folk-economy would replace modern capitalism and socialism: folk-economy's basic principle was that the economic well-being of the community, defined as a "racial" community, should come first, before the "narrow interests" of any group or individual. It would lead to the "liberation and social justice for the Aryan productive classes".[151] The ultimate goal was to realize the creative potential of every member of "the folk". It included, among many specific points, social ownership[152] of major industries, economic planning at national/regional level; encouragement of decentralized economic functions to promote self-reliance for local communities and prevent bureaucracy; the restoration of craftsmanship; agricultural prosperity and promotion of family farms and communities; emphasis on the simple way of life as opposed to the materialistic way, and finally a "paramount concern for ecological wholesomeness and racial values in all areas of economic life."[153]

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[145] Brady, Steve, "Capitalism, Communism and the REAL Alternative", *Nationalism Today*, No. 5, p. 20
[146] Pearce, Joe, "Industrial Ownership and Racial Nationalism", *Nationalism Today*, No. 6, 1981, p. 8
[147] Brons, Andrew, "We are not Marxists – We are not Capitalists", *Nationalism Today*, No. 7, 1981, p. 12
[148] See *Nationalism Today*, No. 7, 8 and 9.
[149] Richardson 2017, p. 227
[150] Richardson 2017, p. 227-228
[151] "Towards the folk-economy", *Rising*, No. 2, 1982, p. 7: reprinted from *The Odontist*, USA
[152] May take many forms: from state ownership to free collective ownership by workers themselves, *Rising*, No. 2, 1982, p. 7
[153] "Towards the folk-economy", *Rising*, No. 2, 1982, p. 7

This sort of economic organization could in some ways resemble Marxism, by renouncing corporate ownership and promoting a system where workers owned their means of production (shops, farms, etc). In reality, however, the nationalists opposed Marxism as much as they did to capitalism. The main issue they had with Marxists was that the nationalists thought there was more to history than economic change. What developed human societies was the innate differences between races, peoples and nations, resulting in unique national communities with organic lives of their own.[154]

The folk economy, and distributism, was part of the greater goal, which eventually would be the "nationalization of Britain" and the implementation of "racial nationalism". The connection between economics and race was explained by Nick Griffin in the article "All Good Nationalists?". Racial nationalism and nationalism were not the same thing, Griffin argued. Griffin stressed that the National Front renounced other contemporary nationalist groups, because

> Nationalism does not begin and end with opposition to Immigration. Many of our former colleagues, for all their talk about the Blacks, are no more Nationalist than [conservative party-members].[155]

He claimed that the difference between these other nationalist groups and the National Front was fundamental:

> the National Front is and must remain a Revolutionary Movement. Our aim is not to tidy up and de-niggerise the present System. We are not and will not be a prop for collapsing Capitalism and liberalism […] We in the National Front aim to "nationalise" the British people, […] The individuals who make up our race must own and control their own houses, factories, farms and destinies.[156]

The "folk economy", then, was deeply rooted in a racist concept of nationalism.

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154 "The folk community", *Rising*, No. 2, 1982, p. 4
155 Griffin, Nick, "All Good Nationalists?", *Nationalism Today*, No. 8, 1982, p, 8
156 Griffin, Nick, "All Good Nationalists?", *Nationalism Today*, No. 8, 1982, p, 8

3.6   De-urbanization and reconnection to the divine

The idea of a folk economy and folk community was intertwined with the idea of de-urbanization. The folk-economy promoted an "emphasis on total quality of life as opposed to materialistic 'standard of living'; encouragement of the simpler way of life". The simple life could not be lived in urbanized society. That is why the nationalists active in *Rising* promoted a move "back to the land" and a rural revolution.[157]

The nationalists believed that what they called the cosmopolitan lifestyle had alienated humans. One was born in a sterile environment, ignored by the community, performing jobs with no other purpose than to fill out trivial forms, and in the end died alone and friendless. The cities had become places where the color of one's skin no longer mattered, and traditions were denigrated. Because of multiculturalism, people could no longer be proud of their racial origins because they had been "contaminated",[158] just as the soil and the environment had been contaminated. The rural revolution would solve this. The ideal was to make sure the countryside was properly treated: no pesticides and no inappropriate agricultural machinery. In the place of capitalism and modern society

> there must be a redistribution of land which will foster continuity between present and future generations and where the relationship between the individual and the community will be reborn. Small settlements will become the norm, the intermediate structures between the Family and the Nation. [...] This new world, our new world, will represent a victory of the countryside over the anonymity of the city and will re-establish a link with the Divine.[159]

A big societal issue to the "political soldiers", and later to the National Front, was that the British population and the populations of modern societies in general, had lost their connection to the spiritual. The idea was that a move back to the land would reconnect the people to the spiritual, which would save society and make better nationalists. The rural and the spiritual revolution was intertwined, but in addition a cultural revolution had to be carried out.

> The facts and circumstances of the last part of this century have demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt that radical change in society, beyond the purely political and social, is

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[157] "Our rural heritage", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, p. 4
[158] Eccles, Bob "The rural revolution", *Rising*, No. 3, 1983, p. 3
[159] Eccles, Bob "The rural revolution", *Rising*, No. 3, 1983, p. 3

impossible if the whole question of Culture is ignored. Culture, in this sense, means more than just the artistic, it means the entire life, customs and traditions of a people.[160]

The point was that they could try to change the social and economic organization of society as much as they wanted, but that would have no real effect if the people were still the same, and still indoctrinated in the modern way of life. To really succeed with the revolution, the people had to change first. The idea was to return to a religious conception of life, in order to strengthen peoples "healthy values". Then the national revolution would, as they saw it, be unstoppable.[161]

3.7 The new national revolutionary ideology

Both *Nationalism Today* and *Rising* worked as platforms for the ideological development of the National Front and their policies. One can clearly see that the party's ideology no longer was solely based on the neo-Nazism that had been fronted under John Tyndall, whose main concern was, in their own words, to "de-niggerize" Britain. By 1985, the National Front had a new, complete political programme, which was presented in issue number 26 of *Nationalism Today*. This issue was named "A Vision for Britain".[162] The same year, the last issue of *Rising* was released. This could suggest that the two magazines finally had reached a common ideological foundation.

In the introduction to issue number 26, "A vision for Britain", it was claimed by the editors, representing the leadership of the National Front, that the party was not just a political party like other parties of the establishment, but that it placed itself "above" mere politics:

> We are a movement for racial survival and cultural regeneration; of idealism and spiritual awareness. In short, the NF transcends all preconceived notions of what a 'political' organization should be.[163]

Furthermore, they claimed to be the only thing standing between Britain's cultural and racial heritage and its future "eternal oblivion". This issue, which they called a special, visionary issue, was printed to spread the ideology of the National Front to old, new and non-members.[164] The introduction ended on the following note:

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[160] "The Cultural Revolution", *Rising*, No. 4, 1983, p. 4
[161] "The Cultural Revolution", *Rising*, No. 4, 1983, p. 5
[162] *Nationalsm Today*, No. 26, front page
[163] Introduction, "A vision for Britain", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, p. 2
[164] Introduction, "A vision for Britain", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, p. 2

> Let no man be mistaken about the importance of the vision for Britain outlined in these twenty-
> four pages and let no man flinch from the enormity of the Struggle ahead. Our nation and our
> people are threatened with extinction and our culture and heritage are being distorted, debased
> and raped. […].[165]

The front page had a picture of a Celtic cross. It contained various small paragraphs and articles, presenting their main concerns in society, and how to "fix" them. For example, the first topic was immigrants and immigration. Here, they presented three issues: "why the blacks were brought here", multiracialism, and repatriation.[166] All paragraphs ended with the statement "WE SAY:" followed by their answers to the problems. What they mainly said about immigration and immigrants, was that they wanted the British government to prioritize British workers and not import labor. This was nothing new. The National Front had always been white supremacists, blaming the blacks for the social and economic problems of Britain. What was slightly different, however, was that in this issue they were no longer so condescending towards minorities. First, they claimed that the reason for repatriation was that "blacks and Asians" were left "rotting at the bottom of our society"[167], so forced repatriation was presented as a favor to immigrants. Second, the National Front claimed that they respected all races and cultures equally – they just did not want them mixed. They claimed that

> [m]ulti-racialism doesn't protect the varied cultures that enrich the earth, but destroys them. Our
> enemies, the enemies of *all* nations and peoples are the internationalists[…].[168]

Here, then, they did not place themselves above other races, they simply claimed that races – and cultures – should not be mixed. The mixing of "races" would eventually destroy the various peoples and cultures and they pointed to different examples where repatriation had worked.[169] Several governments had allegedly systematically repatriated "hundreds of thousands" of immigrants, for example the Indian and Ceylon governments who repatriated half a million Indian Tamils "to the land of their ethnic origin", the French government's repatriation of Algerians and The Burmese-Bangladesh repatriation of Muslim minorities from Burma to Bangladesh. The nationalist argument was that since the British government was much wealthier, they could carry out repatriation of immigrants in a far better way than others could.

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[165] Introduction, "A vision for Britain", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, p. 2
[166] Nationalism Today, No. 26, p. 3
[167] "Why the Blacks were brought here", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, p. 3
[168] "Multiracialism – A threat to all races", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, p. 3
[169] "Repatriation – It has been done", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, p. 3

They could not understand why they were attacked for being "evil" while several governments were actually carrying out the politics they favored.[170]

They also emphasized that they officially fought to preserve the rural heritage and the environment, claiming that «[t]he aim of planning should not be urbanization but de-urbanization. We should not only halt the growth of suburban sprawl and the merging of settlements, but actually reverse the process."[171] They further stated that "[…] people will be encouraged back to the land to establish self-sufficient rural settlements."[172]. While this was promoted in *Rising* as an eventual goal, it was now presented as an official policy of the National Front. They also entered the anti-pollution campaign claiming that the National Front would demand the conversion to non-polluting energy sources such as wind-, wave- and hydro-electric power.[173]

They opposed to what they called the "American occupation of Britain", economically and culturally. The economic occupation was represented by multi-national corporations, the cultural was represented by fast food chains and American entertainment (movies, television etc.). There was also an American military occupation represented by the "Yank controlled" NATO.[174] They also opposed to what they considered to be the other superpowers: the Soviet Union, the Common Market, the United Nations and Zionism.[175] The opposition to all of them was rooted in the same issue: nationalism. American "imperialism" in the form of multinational companies was a threat to British culture and "denies [individual nations] their sovereignty and their peoples their own lifestyle".[176] The Common Market was, as they saw it, strangling British industries, small businesses and traditions.[177] The United Nations as a concept challenged nationalists' fundamental belief that "every nation has an absolute right to self-determination under whatever system of government its People find best suited to their needs."[178]

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[170] "Repatriation – It has been done", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, p. 3
[171] "Our rural heritage", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, p. 4
[172] "Our urban heritage", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, p. 4
[173] "Our environment", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, p. 4
[174] "American occupation of Britain", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, p. 5
[175] *Nationalism Today,* No. 26, p. 6
[176] "No to America", *Nationalism Today,* No. 26, p. 6
[177] "No to the common market", *Nationalism Today,* No. 26, p. 6
[178] "No to the United Nations", *Nationalism Today,* No. 26, p. 6

The National Front opposed to the Soviet Union, and communism in general, because they promoted multi-racialism due to their continuous expansion.[179] Lastly, they opposed to Zionism:

> ZIONISM is 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. Zionism whispers and manipulates in Fleet Street and at Broadcasting House; it has dozens of representatives in Parliament who work to distort our domestic and foreign policy; it dominates massive areas of our economy especially merchant banking and industrial corporations.[180]

The National Front was still heavily anti-Semitic, maybe just as much as before the exit of John Tyndall and the old neo-Nazi guard.

3.8 "A Europe for the peoples"

From page seven and onwards, the articles of issue no 26 take a more "positive" tone: here, they presented what they supported. Page seven had the heading "Yes to free nations", where they suddenly promoted cultural diversity:

> THE richness of the world's cultures lies in their diversity. The merging of the world's cultures is leading not to their enrichment but to their destruction.[181]

This again refers to the belief that all cultures (and therefore "races", in their view) are equally important. Zionism, however, was not seen as something cultural like Christianity or religion in general, but as a supranational institution.

The National Front said they promoted a "Europe of peoples".[182] Issue number 22 was entitled "Against the common market for a free Europe", containing an article written by Nick Griffin called "The Nationalist Alternative to the Common Market -A Europe of the Peoples".[183] In this article, he claimed that even though the National Front was against the EEC, they were pro Europe. This meant that they saw the nations of Europe as something that shared common bonds of race and culture, and that they also shared the same enemies: they were all captured between the two super-powers USA and the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Nick Griffin stated

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[179] "No to the Soviet Union", *Nationalism Today,* No. 26, p. 6
[180] "No to Zionism", *Nationalism Today,* No. 26, p. 6
[181] "Yes to cultural diversity", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, 1985, p. 7
[182] "Yes to cultural diversity", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, p. 7
[183] Griffin, Nick, "The Nationalist Alternative to the Common Market – A Europe of the Peoples", *Nationalism Today*, No. 22, p. 8

that the idea of a Europe of the Peoples was not to be confused with the idea of a Europe of Nations, which was made popular in the 1950's by Oswald Mosley. The idea of a Europe of Nations had now been rejected and had been replaced by the idea of a Europe of peoples.

The first goal was to leave the EEC. This was a priority because they saw the EEC as fundamentally built on capitalist ideals, which only goal was profit and which would eventually result in the elimination of national and regional differences.[184] Nationalists opposed this because they wished to

> […] organise our societies in a way in keeping with human nature, which leads people to associate with their own kind, with those with whom they share ties of blood, heritage, language and culture.[185]

Their vision was a united Europe, but not united through political or commercial unions, but through a common goal. That goal was to have every nation rule itself, side by side, and to fight internationalism and global capitalism and communism. The states should have self-determination and preserve their own unique traditions and cultural heritages.[186]

Thus, the National Front now promoted the idea that every culture and people were equal. This did not only apply to European peoples, but all peoples. An article on the Iranian Revolution appeared in the 21st issue of *Nationalism Today*. In this article, Derek Holland defended the actions of the Iranian revolutionaries, led by Khomeini, against what he called "the Western World's Zionist-controlled media"[187]. Holland claimed that the media failed to capture the "real" essence of the revolution, which in his interpretation was an opposition to both the East and the West, and a perfect example of nationalism in practice. The Iranians had risen and fought for the preservation of their culture, their economy, their identity and their national independence from intervention by the superpowers. In conclusion, he stated that British nationalists had far more in common with the Iranian revolutionaries than with the USA or the USSR.[188]

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[184] Griffin, Nick, "The Nationalist Alternative to the Common Market – A Europe of the Peoples", *Nationalism Today*, No. 22, p. 8
[185] Griffin, Nick, "The Nationalist Alternative to the Common Market – A Europe of the Peoples", *Nationalism Today*, No. 22, p. 8
[186] Griffin, Nick, "The Nationalist Alternative to the Common Market – A Europe of the Peoples", *Nationalism Today*, No. 22, p. 8
[187] Holland, Derek, "Iran's National Revolution", *Nationalism Today*, No. 21, p. 12
[188] Holland, Derek, "Iran's National Revolution", *Nationalism Today*, No. 21, p. 12

In sum, the National Front was moving away from the rhetoric of racial nationalism they had promoted for years. Their main politics was no longer to "de-niggerize"[189] Britain, but to revolutionize the way society was organized, both economically and socially. By this time (1985) the National Front can no longer be characterized as a purely neo-Nazi party only concerned with immigration, like they had been under John Tyndall. Now they had more elaborate politics involving many different aspects of society. The preservation of British culture and "race" was still a priority, but they also promoted de-urbanization, environmentalism, the expulsion of multi-national companies, the exit from the EEC, opposition to both capitalism and communism, and, lastly, they had changed their narrative from "save the white race" to "YES to cultural diversity".

3.9   Influences

Various fascist groups have made many attempts to implement an alternative to Marxism and capitalism - a so-called "third way". The British radicals wanted an economic revolution to implement a system where every man owned his own business – to restore a "nation of shopkeepers". What they wanted to implement was distributism. To legitimize this economic system, they claimed that the roots of "radical nationalist ideology" could be traced back at least as far as the roots of capitalism and Marxism. Holland stated that their views in fact had a long, intellectual tradition.[190]

3.9.1 British influences

In an article called "Our Radical Roots" in issue number 19 of *Nationalism Today*, Derek Holland did not focus on racial nationalist traditions; instead, he drew a line back to William Cobbett (1763-1835) in order to illustrate the roots of their economic ideology.

> [Cobbett] led the counter-attack against the Agrarian and Industrial revolution at the turn of the
> 19th century. Cobbett was a patriot and a racialist who deplored the power which was vested
> with Jewish bankers and money-lenders, but he was also concerned with the defence of what
> remained of small property in England against what he called "*the cotton craft and the usurer*
> *craft*".[191]

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[189] As written by Nick Griffin, "All Good Nationalists?", *Nationalism Today*, No. 8, year unknown, p. 8
[190] Holland, Derek, "Our Radical Roots", *Nationalism Today*, No. 19, 1983, p. 8
[191] Holland, Derek, "Our Radical Roots", *Nationalism Today*, No. 19, 1983, p. 8

The cotton craft and the usurer craft were in fact a reference to the two emerging branches of capitalism: the industrial and the financial. Thus, he was an advocate of private ownership of small businesses.

Most importantly, according to Holland, Cobbett used his weekly *Cobbett's Register* to rally workers against the emerging capitalist system and he wrote books such as *Rural Rides* to educate cottagers and husbanders on self-sufficiency. However, his most important inheritance was that he laid down one of the most fundamental tenets of their nationalist ideology – "that the freedom of the individual and the ultimate well-being of the Nation can only be secured by the widely distributed ownership of productive property."[192] Holland claimed that nationalism could not be understood within the confines imposed by economics alone, as nationalism at its core was a cultural creed. That was one of the reasons they distanced themselves from capitalism and communism, which were purely economic ideologies.[193]

Another source of inspiration claimed by Holland was John Ruskin, whom he thought they should look to because Ruskin had fought industrialization and sought to return to traditional craftsmanship. Both Ruskin and Cobbett saw the "division of labour" in capitalist enterprises as the reason for soullessness and de-spiritualization in urban society. Ruskin formed the Guild of Saint George, which later resulted in the launch of the critical review *The New Age*, edited by A. R. Orage. The legacy left by this review resulted in the birth of the Distributist Movement, according to Holland.[194]

It seems that a major point of this article was to prove that their economic ideology was not something they had made up from nothing: this economic theory did in fact have a long tradition, longer than the Marxists who based their ideology on *The Communist Manifesto.* Pointing to a long tradition of British anti-capitalism could obviously serve to make their own brand of radicalism more legitimate.

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[192] Holland, Derek, "Our Radical Roots", *Nationalism Today*, No. 19, 1983, p. 9
[193] Holland, Derek, "Our Radical Roots", *Nationalism Today*, No. 19, 1983, p. 9
[194] Holland, Derek, "Our Radical Roots", *Nationalism Today*, No. 19, 1983, p. 8

3.9.2 Influences from Italian neo-fascism

At the same time, the British radicals did have influences from abroad. As we have seen, a group of Italian neo-fascists arrived in London in 1980, and brought with them an Italian version of neo-Fascism which also influenced the British radicals of the National Front.

The idea of a folk economy, a rural revolution and de-urbanization can be compared to classical neo-fascist ideas from Italy. The fascists in post-war Italy were convinced that it was possible to find this perfect alternative, and in 1946 they stated:

> We believe there is a third opportunity, ours, which may be summarized as a form of social democracy that would reject class conflict; it would mostly allow labour and cooperative organizations to regulate the economy; it would overall lead and direct production and subjugate the specific interests of individuals and social groups to the general and superior interests of the nation[195]

The post-war fascists called this "national socialism". It was not a translation of the Nazi National Socialism, but an original term with origins in the late 19th and early 20th century Italy. Distinct features of the third way was, first, that the fascists did not want to abolish private property, but rather increase the number of residents who owned property themselves. The point of this was to protect private property as a form of safeguard of the integrity of the individual, as opposed to capitalist doctrine where private property is regarded as a right in itself. Second, the post-war Italian fascists aimed to achieve, as Elisabetta Wolff puts it, "social justice through class cooperation for the benefit of the country, without resorting to class struggle." [196] Thirdly, they rejected organized internationalism because that ignored the interests of the individual nations.[197]

The fascists of post-war Italy saw this third way as a practical option that linked the liberal notion of productivity with the socio-communist principle of justice and redistribution of wealth. They saw it as a form of

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[195] Wolff, Elisabetta C., *Starting from the End. Fascist ideology in Post-War Italy (1945-1953)*, Oslo: Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo 2008, p. 144, quote from "La terza via", *Rataplan*, no. 1, Vol. 7, 1946
[196] Wolff 2008, p. 145
[197] Wolff 2008, p. 146

more widespread, more authentic and politically more interesting socialism which may achieve the moral and political reconstruction of the country.[198]

To some extent, one could accuse the British radicals for plagiarism. The idea of redistributing property between a larger number of residents is exactly what the British radicals proposed. The goal was to make every man responsible for his own private property and compete in a national, self-sufficient environment of free enterprise without bureaucracy.[199]

Another aspect of the Nationalist ideology was the idea of "Europe for the peoples". As I mentioned, they claimed that this was not the same idea of "Europe a Nation" fronted by Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists. Mosley envisioned a Europe as a single market protected by tariffs. He also envisioned that the State of Europe would be given the "best parts" of Africa to exploit and run under apartheid conditions. This was presented by Mosley as a redemptive geopolitical solution for a European third way between the Soviet Union and the USA. He stated "away with the nations of yesterday to make room for the nation of today. That nation is Europe."[200] The British radicals of the National Front in the 1980's did not want to "merge" the states of Europe into a single nation, but rather build a Europe where sovereign states ruled side by side, preserving their own unique cultural heritage. What connected them was the idea of common enemies: Communism in the east and capitalism in the west. [201]

What this idea resembled, however, was the form of "Europe as a Nation" represented by Italian post-war fascists. This form was called fascist "Europeanism", and was mainly fronted by the younger generation of fascists. After 1945, the hope that Europe would ever become prominent in world politics was impaired, and they were coming to terms with the fact that Europe was inevitably succumbing to America. Fascists had a hard time identifying with Europe because it had been crushed and defeated during the war.[202] The post-war fascists of Italy identified with Europe as a culture centered around scientific progress and art, but rejected Hitler and the Nazi idea of a Europe united through the Aryan race.[203] What they envisioned was, according to

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[198] Wolff 2008, p. 148, quote from «Battaglia sociale. Socialismo nazionale", *L'idea nuova (Fracassa)*, no. 2/4, 1947

[199] See chapter 3.5

[200] Richardson 2017, p. 117-118

[201] Griffin, Nick, "The Nationalist Alternative to the Common Market – A Europe of the Peoples", *Nationalism Today*, No. 22, p. 8

[202] Wolff 2008, p. 211-212

[203] Wolff 2008, p 212

Wolff, "a Europe of Nations whose essential elements are the identity and sovereignty of the individual Nation."[204] It is thus quite similar to the "Europe of the Peoples" promoted by the British radicals. To the British, the sovereignty of the state was a vital part of the idea, as it was to the Italians. To them, the restoration of Italian sovereignty was essential to the unification of Europe.[205] Another aspect was that Europe should represent a middle way between American capitalism and Soviet communism, similar to the idea of "Europe for the Peoples". A united Europe would, in the eyes of the British radicals, represent unity of nations opposing capitalism in the west and communism in the east.

However, it was not only the Italian neo-fascists that were preoccupied with pan-Europeanism. It has been stated that the idea of a pan-European empire has been a significant feature in post-was fascism in Western Europe in general. A main driving force has been the perception of a decline of homogenous western identities. The idea of a pan-European empire was also promoted by the French *Nouvelle Droite*, and scholar Tamir Bar-On claims that this idea of a pan-European empire, united against materialist ideologies such as capitalism and communism, has been one of the causes that post-war European fascists unite around.[206]

Finally, one cannot avoid the fact that even though the British nationalists promoted cultural diversity, their ideology was still racist. This comes out most clearly in their continued anti-Semitism.

3.10 **Radicalization?**

In terms of ideology, then, the development of the NF in the early 1980s forms a mixed trajectory of continued racism and a more elaborate anti-capitalism with both revolutionary and reformist elements.

British fascism had a long tradition of anti-Semitism, and the newspapers I have analyzed in this chapter suggest that the "political soldiers" did not abandon this principle at all. In 1985, they stated that Zionism was a "very real threat to world peace" and that the Zionists [Jews] had representatives everywhere who worked to distort both domestic and foreign policy and that they dominated economic institutions such as banks and industrial corporations, as well as

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[204] Wolff 2008, p. 214
[205] Wolff 2008, p. 115
[206] Bar-On, Tamir, "Fascism to the Nouvelle Droite: The Dream of a Pan-European Empire", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies,* Vol. 16, No. 3, 2008: 327-245, p. 327

the media.[207]John E. Richardson states that, in fact, the distributist economic theory was at its core anti-Semitic, and that this anti-Semitism was very present in for example Belloc's writings. Richardson argues that fascists did not project anti-Semitic conspiracies into distributism; the anti-Semitic conspiracies were present there already from the outset since Belloc and Chesterton themselves were fundamentally anti-Semitic. Belloc was allegedly convinced, to his despair, that the future was in the hands of Jewish bankers and financers, and claimed that the Jews were an alien body within society and "[a]n alien body in any organism is disposed of in one of two ways: elimination and segregation".[208] Whether the "political soldiers" adapted distributism because they believed it was the best economic alternative or because of its anti-Semitic core, is not easy to decide. They seemingly moderated their white supremacism by stating that all cultures were equal, but at its core this "cultural truth" was still fundamentally racist in its resistance to the mixing of peoples and cultures.

In two respects it seems appropriate to call the development in this period "radicalization". First, after 1980 the National Front stopped participating in electoral politics. The new strategy was to wait for society to destroy itself, and then carry out the revolution. Joe Pearce wrote that he was happy that the National Front finally had decided to abandon the quest for "legitimacy" and electoral politics. In 1985, in *A vision for Britain*, the National Front declared that it was not just a political party and that it placed itself above "mere" politics. Second, the nationalists in the National Front had become "revolutionaries" or, more specifically, they had become what they called "political soldiers". This implied an emphasis on *individual* conversion and commitment. In this respect, they conform to the pattern observed by contemporary scholars of radicalization, focusing on, as Malthaner puts it, "processes of cognitive and ideological transformation, mainly at the individual level".[209] This is the kind of radicalization that has led individuals to resort to acts of, often extreme, violence.

 "The political soldier" was a term that did not appear in *Nationalism Today* until issue number 26 was released in 1985, whereas it was mentioned from the beginning in *Rising*. In fact, the whole point of Rising was to contribute to the education and creation of "political soldiers". In the first issue of *Rising* (*Rising – a booklet for the political soldier)* the editors identified "a lack of political soldiers" as one of the main reasons for the decay of society. They claimed that too much emphasis had been put on developing and articulating doctrines, instead of preparing

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[207] See chapter 3.7
[208] Richardson 2017, p. 228-229
[209] Malthaner 2017, p. 370.

the "political soldiers" Europe desperately needed.[210] The political soldiers were the vanguard of the National Front, Holland argued in 1985, because "the spiritual revolution he undergoes guides and dominates his life. He judges all his actions according to whether or not they advance the Cause".[211] The year before, he had published *The Political Soldier – A statement*, which was a manifesto for the political soldier-faction of the National Front.

To conclude this chapter, we can say that the ideology presented by the "political soldiers" is ambiguous. First, in some ways it resembled many of the other far right parties in the 1980's "third wave", in the sense that they did reorient themselves: they developed a broader political program, they followed the "trend" from the continent of promoting cultural differentialism instead of the explicit racism and white supremacy the National Front had been known for in the 1960's and 1970's, and they made an attempt to distance themselves from their neo-Nazi past. This particularly came to expression in Holland's "Our radical roots", where he claimed that the nationalism they were promoting had roots all the way back to intellectuals of the 18th century.

On the other hand, they also promoted the importance of the "political soldier", and the notion of this new man was at the core of the ideology. To really understand the nature of this reorientation, and be able to discuss the radical nature of it, one has to look closer at what exactly the "political soldier" was.

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[210] Introduction, *Rising – booklet for a political soldier*, No. 1, (probably 1980, according to literature on the subject), p. 3
[211] Holland, Derek "The Political Soldier", *Nationalism Today*, No. 26, 1985, p. 16

4 *The Political Soldier – A statement*

4.1 **Introduction**

It might still be unclear what exactly the "political soldier" was. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the young radicals of the National Front took the party down a more metapolitical third positionist path. They had by 1985 been introduced to the writings of Julius Evola and Corneliu Codreanu, and one of the organizers in the party – Nick Griffins flatmate, Michael Walker - was one of few British translators of Alain De Benoist and *la Nouvelle Droite's* works.

Chapter 2 illustrated the "political soldier's" (neo)-fascist roots, and chapter 3 discussed the development of their ideology during the first half of the 1980s. This chapter will analyze Derek Holland's 1984 manifesto *The Political Soldier – A Statement* and discuss the ideological core of the "political soldier" ideology: did they modernize and move away from fascist ideology or did they merely turn to a new type of fascism? As mentioned in chapter 1, many of the contemporary far right groups do in fact have a fascist history but have moderated themselves in order to gain support in party politics and elections, and can hardly be placed, without qualifications, in the "fascist" category. This, however, might not be the case for the "political soldiers". The previous chapter suggested some signs of "fascistification": they abandoned electoral politics and adopted a revolutionary strategy, but while the previous chapter discussed the development in light of the term "radicalization", this chapter will discuss *The Political Soldier – A Statement* in light of various currents of fascism as well as contemporary political movements.

In the manifesto, Holland identifies the problems with modern society, and presents the "political soldier's'" solutions. In the following pages, I will summarize how they perceived "the state of the nation" and their solutions to contemporary problems. According to Ryan Shaffer, Holland wrote *The Political Soldier – A Statement*, in two hours, to "give simple ideas to totally areligious, aspiritual people".[212] The manifesto is interesting because it demonstrates the nature of the "radicalization" process that these young activists went through during the 1980s. Some would suggest that the name "political soldiers" indicated a move towards a more radical form of ideology, but according to Roberto Fiore in an interview in *Nationalism Today*, it did not. He explained that the term "soldier" was not in reference to someone who "merely

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[212] Shaffer 2018, p. 83

fights with guns"[213], as many would assume, but in the radical's eyes the essence of the term "soldier" referred to someone who fought a war against the world, on behalf of a cause or an idea.[214] Scholar Roger Eatwell however, described the "political soldiers" as a "fanatic, non-materialistic, quasi-religious 'new man'".[215] As we shall see, he was not exaggerating.

The manifesto is divided into three parts: "The State of the Nation", "The Need for the Political Soldier", and "The Path to the Political Soldier". We can single out two main themes by Holland. On the one hand, he deals with the political and economic situation of contemporary society and the causes of what he sees as the problems. The other main theme of the manifesto is the lack of spirituality in society in general.

The first part of this chapter will present the analysis and solutions laid out in *The Political Solider – A Statement* (from now on referred to as *The Political Soldier*). The second part will analyze its historical and contemporary sources of inspiration and discuss its relation to the *Nouvelle Droite* in France. Finally, I ask whether this can be called a fascist manifesto. If generic fascism is an achievable concept, which, as the first chapter suggested, many scholars agree that it is, the ideology presented by the alleged fascists should contain some key points: a "mythic core"*, a vision that a new world order is emerging (palingenesis), populist revolutionary ultra-nationalism, and the legitimization of violence as a means to an end. Furthermore, fascists and far right groups tend to buy into conspiracy theories. They view the heads of state and elites to be the enemies, and the reason for society's decay. Lastly, they oppose to both capitalism and communism. At the end of the chapter, I ask if Holland's writing fits these criterions.

4.2   The crisis of contemporary society

The first part of *The Political Soldier*, "The contemporary situation", is an analysis of the modern world and todays' society. Holland described society on the political level, the economic level and lastly on the spiritual level. This was Holland's "diagnosis" of contemporary society, and his conclusion was that the British society was in a crisis, both socially, economically and spiritually:

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[213] "Roberto Fiore: Thoughts & Action", *Nationalism Today,* No. 46, 1989, p. 16
[214] "Roberto Fiore: Thoughts & Action", *Nationalism Today,* No. 46, 1989, p. 16
[215] Eatwell 2003, p. 341

> Whereever we look today amongst the nations of Britain and of Europe, we see mounting
> evidence of disintegration and of decay. The evidence is there for all to see; it is inconvertible
> fact.[216]

There were several problems – every aspect of society was corrupted, as Holland saw it. First, on the political level, the leaders of the world were the mean spirited and selfish individuals. "They" held the power of the established political parties, structures and national and international governments. The politicians (all politicians) were not particularly interested in serving and protecting the people they claimed to represent, and as a result, corruption and treason had become the new normal.[217] Leaders were not leaders because they wanted to make a difference for the people, but because they wanted to make money:

> Politicians and party bosses are lining their own pockets by selling out their countrymen to
> poverty, to degradation and to hostile, foreign interests […], receiving the adulation of a deceitful
> media, whilst Britain slowly but surely bleeds to death.[218]

To the "political soldiers", the politicians and leaders – the elites – were the enemies. In addition to attacking politicians, Holland was also convinced that the media was working for the elites, making the media as well an enemy.

Holland referred to foreign countries, meaning every other country than Britain, as "hostile". By this, he had already revealed himself as a nationalist: not necessarily a radical ultra-nationalist, but at least as someone who was not pleased with foreign interference in Britain. Whether this was only in regards to foreign politics or also in regards to immigration, is still unclear at this point in the manifesto.

Holland went on to analyze the contemporary situation on the economic level. Again, the politicians were the villains. They were liars: the people of Britain had been promised the end of the recession since the "Tories" took office in 1979,[219] but unemployment was still expected to rise, and he claimed that millions were unemployed at the time. "The nation of shopkeepers", an expression made famous by Napoleon when describing the UK, was dead due to the emergence of super- and hypermarkets, and multinational corporations. He claimed that the year 1984 saw the highest number of bankruptcies ever, all while the currency was becoming

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[216] Holland, Derek, *The Political Soldier – A Statement*, 1984. Reprinted with new preface by the International Third Position, London: BCM ITP, 1994, p. 6
[217] Holland 1994, p. 6
[218] Holland 1994, p. 6
[219] Holland 1994, p. 6

worthless. The "political soldiers" perceived all politicians and heads of states and institutions as liars.[220]

Holland identified global corporative capitalism as one of the reasons for societies' decay. The social impact of what the author saw as a political and economic crisis had been catastrophic: it had, according to the manifesto, led to a national housing crisis, the inhabitants were living in houses "not even fit for animals"; unemployment had led to an increase in divorces, abortions, child battering and suicides; and as a result, Britons had turned to alcohol, drugs and gambling. According to the manifesto, youths had turned to anti-establishment groups and cults and to violence, all while the "Westminster tyrants" did not care.[221] While Holland distrusted party politics and politicians, he at the same time wrote of anti-establishment groups as another societal problem.

He went on to list other enemies: banks, communists, freemasons, Zionists and capitalists – the ones with money and power who dominated the media, the armies, and governments contaminated society with corrosive ideas.[222]

The Political Soldier opposed central features of Western liberal society: urbanization, materialism, individualism, social differences, capitalism and so on. The opposition to these features was, to put it briefly, opposition to modernization in general. Some scholars see such opposition as a central feature to the definition of fascism.[223] Immigration, globalization, global capitalism and what the "political soldiers" saw as failing institutions, were the main causes of the "death" of Europe and of British culture. Holland's vision was apocalyptic:

> [...] the culture of Europe is going to die within our lifetime. [...] The death of Europe will signal the end of White peoples forever: it will be goodbye to you, your family, your friends. Britain will become a vague, unimportant memory.[224]

4.3   Solution: A spiritual revolution

In the manifesto, Holland and his "team" did not present what we would ordinarily call "political solutions" to societal issues. In fact, Holland did not really seem to care too much at

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[220] Holland 1994, p. 6
[221] Holland 1994, p. 7
[222] Holland 1994, p. 11
[223] Payne 2005, p. 455-456
[224] Holland 1994, p. 7

all about the practical and physical aspects of the crises he listed. On the contrary, "[...] it is spiritually that our people have suffered the most".[225] Holland claimed that the ability to balance a material and a spiritual life was something that died with our ancestors, and as a result, our attitudes towards life had changed: everything should be as effective and instant as possible, and people had become soulless, unhappy, frustrated and dehumanized. This *cultural* and emotional decadence would culminate in the death of European culture.[226]

Instead of presenting concrete political solutions, Holland presented personal, spiritual ones. Society's crisis was due to the fact that the *people* were in crisis. Because "we" no longer believed fervently in the supernatural or the divine, we had "been left prey to the manipulation of con-men, quacks and latter-day Wizards of Oz."[227]

Spirituality is a key aspect in the worldview in *The Political Soldier*. In the first part of the booklet, Holland described the importance of spirituality:

> Man to be truly healthy must be balanced materially and spiritually. It is not enough for a man to barely feed himself or have roof over his head. He must have reason to live; he must know why family life is vital; why the bloodline must be perpetuated; why the Common Good of the British peoples must be protected; why we must ensure that our Nation and Culture survives and prospers.[228]

Spirituality (or the lack of it) turns out to be the biggest reason for what the "political soldiers" saw as the death of Europe and the British culture, but also the only solution to the problem. When the people eventually went through a spiritual revolution, the culture would be saved.

 Holland claimed that the National Front was the only true representative of the nationalist "cause", but acknowledged that they failed in the 1970's because they were too preoccupied with what he called irrelevant battles; elections, marches, the preservation of image and so on. The failure was crucial; it did not stop one single immigrant, and not the "rape, physical or spiritual of our country".[229]

Holland's point was that politics and doctrines were of no need: what was needed was the creation of a new type of man who was committed to the nationalist way of life. This new man

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[225] Holland 1994, p. 7
[226] Holland 1994, p. 7
[227] Holland 1994, p. 7
[228] Holland 1994, p. 7
[229] Holland 1994, p. 9

would serve as inspiration, instead of politics and doctrines. This is the heart of the message: the "political soldiers" were needed to replace established politics and replace it with themselves; a man of action, who practiced what he preached. This way of life demanded another personal attitude than ordinary politics – it demanded total dedication, subordination to the cause, and willingness to sacrifice oneself for the cause.[230]

4.4   Becoming a "political soldier"

So who exactly was this "new man", or the "political soldier"?

As examples, Holland pointed to the Spartans, the Roman centurion, and the Christian Crusaders – all examples of men who were willing to fight and die for their cause. Holland listed a variety of examples of movements to be inspired by – but pointed out that all of them were military. This was not the most important common denominator, however, but rather that they were all motivated by a spiritual and religious ideal. This ideal was their driving force, and dominated their lives, and they were willing to sacrifice their lives for it. It was this spirit that Holland found necessary to rekindle to ensure the survival of culture. If this will and belief in the cause, the ideal, was missing, the culture would surely be doomed. The task for the political soldier was thus to promote this will, which would then be the reason to live. The political soldier must oppose the materialist way of life, and to do so, he must undergo a spiritual revolution first. When this was achieved, all future actions must be in service to the "cause".[231]

 Holland listed a string of words that he claimed held the key to the meaning of life, the virtues every nationalist should strive after: honour, justice, self-respect, honesty, faith, humility, compassion and love. Man should not let his honour, or that of the nation, be undermined by what he called the "unworthy", and he would become the focal point in the fight for justice. His self-respect should not be lost through drug use or drinking because the "inner strength" he possessed would make him invincible. He should be honest in his dealings, because the nationalist militant led through example. He would have unquestionable faith in his cause, and strive to the limits of his abilities to advance the welfare of his people and nation. He should remain humble, knowing his actions were inspired by a higher way of life, and he would be stirred to action by the "physical rape of our beautiful country and the destruction of our rich

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[230] Holland 1994, p. 10
[231] Holland 1994, p. 10

culture. His compassion will cloak the needy, and his love will be pure, inspiring everyone it touches".[232]

> The Political Soldier is the man sustained by an Eternal Ideal who will act positively in any and all situations in the defense of what is Right, Good and True. Never in the history of Europe has the need for battalions of Political Soldiers been so urgent, so vital.[233]

They, the few thousand patriots, and like-minded activists in Western Europe had to rise up. He painted a Spartans vs. Persians picture – the few against the many, who needed to rise and fight for the nation. But because the "political soldier" was an idealist, the faith in his cause would win against injustice, and through acting as an example he would encourage others to follow. In the end, national freedom, social justice and a truly free Europe would be achieved.

The manifesto demonstrates that Holland and his followers had a religious conception of politics. Politics to them was not about interests, negotiations and compromise, but about something absolute. This was stated already in the preface to the manifesto:

> Whithout this core belief that our Cause is absolute, immutable, timeless, we run the very real danger of betrayal: betrayal by Party hacks; betrayal by those taken up with "media image"; betrayal by those mesmerized by the deceit and falsity of liberal democracy.[234]

This shows that the "political soldiers" envisioned a state where politics were based on a core belief in a cause that was absolute and non-negotiable. This implies that opponents to their project did not represent other legitimate views: opponents were traitors.

The path to become a "political soldier" was a life of dedication. It would not be easy to "live the cause every day", but when committed, it was a straightforward process. Holland made clear that the need to be a "political soldier" was not a subjective choice, but a type of calling from above, something objectively given:

> Unfortunately God, Destiny, call it what you will, has decreed that you and I must undertake this daunting task. Our forefathers had to confront similar situations and we must draw from their spirit which urges us on. It is upon this bedrock that we must erect the banner of the Celtic Cross and defy all stupid enough to provoke the wrath of this nation. […] The path to development, the programme of training that culminates in the birth of the Political Soldier is a Cross laid upon

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[232] Holland 1994, p. 11
[233] Holland 1994, p. 11
[234] Holland 1994, unpaginated preface

our backs. It is through carrying this burden, through struggle, that we come slowly – and I mean slowly – to acquire the qualities we need.[235]

The ability to understand the relationship between means and ends was an essential part of determining your qualification as a "political soldier" and a "warrior of the National Revolution"

A frequent assertion made by Holland in *The Political Soldier* is that the end justifies the means, but he stressed that this was a problematic attitude to "subscribe" to as a nationalist. He stressed that means and ends were a linked unity, and mutually dependent on each other in practical politics. But since the "political soldiers" did not practice practical politics, their ends were naturally different from the ones of establishment, which means that the meant would be different too.[236]

Holland actually used terrorism as an example of a means *not* fit for nationalists. He saw terrorism as something distinguished from both political violence and assassinations, and called it "utterly alien" to nationalist tradition because the goal of terrorism was to install fear into the population through murder of ordinary people, with the use of bullets and bombs. He renounced terrorism as a means completely, and blamed (amongst others) the IRA and ETA, Latin American reactionary military dictatorships and terrorist organizations for the bad reputation of nationalist groups. Legitimization of violence is usually seen as a criteria for both fascism and right wing extremism, but the "political soldiers" manifesto rejected terrorist violence for the simple reason that they sought the *support* of the people – this was hardly achieved through exterminating them.[237] However, he did make a distinction between terrorism and political violence and assassinations, but he did not elaborate on his views on the latter.

The means used must be justifiable – if you preach of love and truth, as a "political soldier" should, you cannot lie and cheat as a means. Those who chose the latter ended up creating "the slave states" of the U.S.S.R and the U.S.A. The "political soldiers" should choose a different path, for they sought the National Revolutionary State as their end goal.[238]

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[235] Holland 1994, p. 14
[236] Holland 1994, p. 13
[237] Holland 1994, p. 13
[238] Holland 1994, p. 13

4.5   **Sources of inspiration**

The "political soldiers" drew inspiration from earlier ideologues and from contemporary examples. As noted already, their new Italian friends introduced those who later became the "political soldier"-faction to the texts of Corneliu Codreanu and Julius Evola, among others. In addition to this, Nick Griffin had access to translated texts of French "metapolitician" Alain de Benoist and *La Nouvelle Droite* trough his friend Michael Walker. Holland himself explicitly mentioned certain groups as examples in the manifesto, the most important being the Rumanian Iron Guard, a branch of the Legionary Movement founded by Corneliu Codreanu, which he called the "most outstanding" example of "political soldiery" in the 20th century.

4.5.1 **Corneliu Codreanu's Legionary Movement**

At one point during the 20th century, Romania had one of the largest movements in Europe usually seen as belonging to the fascist family. After the First World War, Romania struggled with economic crisis, a lack of national identity, and it failed to democratize itself. The people lost faith in party politics and after the failure of several governments, they were searching for other alternatives.[239]

Corneliu Codreanu established The Legion of the Archangel Michael on Friday, June 24th, in 1927. On this day he listed the party and claimed that "Whosoever comes into its ranks let him believe totally. Whosoever stays without, let him have doubts."[240] After just a few years, they were banned by the Rumanian government. Still, they continued their activities, but remained a small sect rather than a political party for several years until they in 1930 founded a sort of militia, The Iron Guard, to include all legionaries and form their mass base.[241] In 1972, Horia Sima, Codreanu's successor as the Legion's leader, wrote *The History of The Legionary Movement*, summarizing the movement's history and goals. In 1995, the almost 200 pages long book was translated and published by the Legionary Press[242] in England.   According to Sima,

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[239] Payne 2005, p. 277
[240] Sima, Horia, *The History of the Legionary Movement*, The Legionary Press, England: 1995, p. 38
[241] Payne 2005, p. 282, Roger Griffin(ed.), *Fascism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1995, introduction to Codreanu, Corneliu Z., "The Resurrection of the Race", p. 219
[242] The Legionary Press was a British publishing house located in Hampshire, run by, or at least tightly connected to, the "political soldiers".

the movement was born out of the deep worries that disturbed every social class of society. The whole population shared a common worry: the decadence of the nation and culture.[243]

Stanley Payne states in *A History of Fascism 1914–45* that the Legion had no concrete political program.[244] This was the case also according to the Legionaries themselves: their goal was not to spread a political platform. Anyone could write a manifesto, they claimed, but to make a difference and spark "revolution" one had to create a collective *movement*, not a political party. This movement claimed to be mainly spiritual. From its establishment, the Legionary Movement possessed more than just a political platform – it possessed a doctrine: "a social and spiritual synthesis of Romanian nationalism", expressing the interests and concerns of the whole nation.[245] What was needed, was a new spirit and a cultural revolution whose goal was the creation of a "new man".[246]

Payne describes the Legionary Movement as one of the most unusual movements in interwar Europe.[247] The movement has generally been classified as fascist by scholars (and by other contemporary fascist groups), because it met many of the criteria of general fascism. The Legion was anti-democratic and revolutionary. Politically, their aim was to replace the parliament with a corporate assembly based on "family vote". They opposed liberalism and wanted a more national and communal basis for the economy which opposed the materialism of both capitalism and socialism. Industrialization should only be carried out to the extent that it was necessary. They also wanted to build a modern, strong army. Their enemies were the heads of state at the time, the leaders of the present "corrupt systems", and the Jews. The Legionay Movement has been characterized as the only fascist movement as anti-Semitic as German Nazism.[248] As Codreanu himself wrote in *For my Legionaries* in 1936, "The greatest danger [the Jews] pose to the people is rather that they are undermining us racially, that they are destroying the racial […] structure of our people and calling into being a type of human being that is nothing but a racial wreck".[249] They also promoted Eastern Orthodox

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[243] Sima 1995, p. 35/36
[244] Payne 2005, p. 281
[245] Sima 1995, p. 41
[246] Payne 2005, p. 281
[247] Payne 2005, p. 279
[248] Payne 2005, p. 281
[249] Codreanu, Corneliu Z., "The Resurrection of the Race", Griffin(ed.) 1995, p. 221

Christianity.[250] Not only did they promote this form of Christianity, they believed all political, economic and social problems were caused by one single factor: anti-Christian influence.[251]

However, it was not politically that they stood out the most from similar movements. As Payne states:

> […]it undeniably presented individual characteristics of its own. What made Codreanu especially different was that he became a sort of religious mystic, and even though the Legion had the same general political goals as other fascist movements, its final aims were spiritual and transcendental[…][252]

Horia Sima writes that under "The Captain's"[253] (Codreanu) leadership, the Legion was a political structure built on a religious base.[254] To carry out the revolution, the spiritual revolution and the creation of the "new man" first had to become a reality.[255] This meant that a personal revolution had to happen before society could change. This spiritual revolution would come from the love of the country: "where souls do not beat from a pure love of the nation, there is no Movement".[256] Second, it would come from the love of God. Sima claimed that to the Legion, political life could not be separated from "the first truth of life" which was the church and the religious idea. It was only by remaining in close contact with the church that one could avoid losing focus on the cause.[257]

According to a 2012 article by historian of religion Cecilie Endresen, the Legionaries portrayed themselves not only as Legionaries, but as soldiers of Christ, representing him in the struggle between light and dark, faith and disloyalty and between Christ and the Antichrist. These battles could only be won by educating and creating these "new men": "a virtuous, honest Christian patriotic man of action who loves his nation and the Church".[258]

The similarities between Holland's manifesto and this Rumanian form of fascism are many. First, Codreanu's "road to revolution" was through a personal spiritual revolution, before

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[250] Payne 2005, p. 280
[251] Endresen, Cecilie, "Romania's Saving Angels: «New Men», Orthodoxy, and Blood Mysticism in the Legionary Movement", *Bulletin for the study of religion*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 2012: 16-22, p. 17
[252] Payne 2005, p. 280
[253] In Romania, "Captains" had arisen when the legitimate rulers had ceased to be the defenders of the people. Sima 1995, p. 39
[254] Sima 1995, p. 41
[255] Sima 1995, p. 43
[256] Sima 1995, p. 43
[257] Sima 1995, p. 46
[258] Endresen 2012, p. 17

anything else, just as it is in Holland's manifesto. They share a religious conception of politics, while neither Codreanu nor Holland see the need for political programs.

The Iron Guard was a sort of militia that sprung out from the Legionary Movement and was supposed to serve as the movement's mass base, just like the "political soldier"-faction sprung out from the National Front. The Legionary Movement was also based on Christianity. Holland was a Catholic and both Codreanu and Holland thought that the contemporary decay of their respective nations and cultures were due mainly to the lack of Christian spirituality.

4.5.2 Julius Evola

Another obvious source of inspiration for Holland is Julius Evola – although Evola was not explicitly mentioned in the manifesto.[259] However, it is constantly stated in the literature regarding the "political soldiers" that they were heavily influenced by this particular Italian philosopher. So in what way did the writings of Evola influence *The Political Soldier*?

Evola (b. 1898) was an Italian intellectual. Until his death in 1974, he produced great amounts of writings and was recognized as a leading intellectual, despite the fact that his ideas continuously fell in and out of favor. On the one hand, scholars have studied his philosophy exclusively in terms of to what degree it inspired and provided cultural roots to Italian right wing terrorism in the 1970's. On the other hand, scholars have also studied his philosophy as solely apolitical. This interpretation is often based on his work *Ride the Tiger* (1961), where Evola deals with the general processes of moral and political dissolution, claiming that the only sensible attitude is *apolitía*: "a total disinterest and detachment 'from everything that is "politics" today' while remaining faithful exclusively to oneself.".[260]

Even though he defined himself as apolitical, he did become an icon for radicals who viewed his ideas and theories as fascist doctrine.[261] The "political soldiers" were no exception. According to Andrea Mammone, Evola gave (mainly young Italian) radicals the opportunity to look beyond the traditional Italian-based nationalist rhetoric connected to Mussolini and instead allowed them to explore another "ideological galaxy, a thematic system made up of references

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[259] Griffin, Roger, introduction to Holland, Derek, "The Political Soldier and the National Revolution", *Fascism*, 1995, p. 359

[260] Elisabetta C. Wolff, "*Apolitìa* and Tradition in Julius Evola as Reaction to Nihilism", *European Review*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 2014: 258-273, p. 258–259

[261] Wolff 2014, p. 259

to the Waffen SS, Indo-Aryanism, esotericism, Oriental doctrines and spiritual racism"[262] and also introduced them to other intellectuals. Evola's philosophy was based on concepts like tradition, idealism, paganism, counter-revolution, hierarchy and a spiritual attitude towards life. The doctrine was deeply aristocratic and elitist and his aim was to construct an elite of "pure and uncontaminated 'warriors'"[263], not eligible for wider public consumption.[264] Evola was anti-democratic, anti-egalitarian, anti-liberalist, anti-socialist and anti-communist and called all of the abovementioned concepts "decrees of the same evil, each of them preparing the following one in a process of utter decline"[265].

The term "Traditionalism" in the Evolian and esoteric sense, is fundamentally opposed to the modern world and the constant development of it, while simultaneously being a form of collective consciousness referring to the traditional [i.e. primordial] identity of communities. It is the traditionalist's duty to promote and enrich the traditions of the past.[266]

Evola's philosophy was perhaps best put into practice by the Italian neo-fascist organization *Ordine Nouvo* (est. 1956), who had Evola as its main reference.[267] They claimed that all doctrinal and existential stands derived from Evola himself and their aim was, according to scholar Franco Ferraresi, to transform Evola's ideas into politics. Ferraresi claims that Evola's work *Gli Uomini e le Rovine* (*Men Among Ruins,* 1953), where concepts like tradition, aristocracy, hierarchy and "political soldiers" were generously used, can be read as a doctrine for post-war national-revolutionary youth.[268] As Mammone writes, the *Ordine Nouovo* would go on to become an important training base for some of the more extreme extra-parliamentary neo-fascists in Italy.[269]

Ferraresi claims that the development of the radical right influenced by Evola in post-war Italy could be divided into four phases (per. 1987 when the article was published). The first phase mainly revolved around the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI). *Ordine Nouvo* belonged in the

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[262] Mammone, Andrea, "Revitalizing and de-territorializing fascism in the 1950's: the extreme right in France and Italy, and the pan-national ('European') imaginary" *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 45, No. 5, 2011: 295-318, p. 303
[263] Mammone 2011, p. 303
[264] Mammone 2011, p. 303-304
[265] Mammone 2011, p. 304
[266] Bar-On, Tamir, "The *Nouvelle Droite* and 'Tradition'", *Journal for the Study of Radicalism,* Vol. 8, No. 1, 2014: 87-106, p. 88
[267] Mammone 2011, p. 306
[268] Ferraresi, Franco, "Julius Evola: Tradition, Reaction, and the Radical Right", *European Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 28, No. 1, 1987: 107-151, p. 135
[269] Mammone 2011, p. 306

second phase, and the fourth and last phase was characterized by a new generation of "militants".[270] This fourth generation consisted of radicals born in the period after 1950. What characterized them was that they had no memory of the historical fascism in practice. Furthermore, this generation replaced the importance of *ideology* with the importance of *action* and saw action as the most important instrument of political struggle. Action was considered an end in itself and had to be rooted in higher values.[271] Ferraresi writes:

> Against any notion of profit, utility, equalitarianism, combat shall be ruled by dignity, courage, and, above all, honour and heroism. Such are the values of the 'political soldier', and the 'new legionary'.[272]

Interestingly enough, Ferraresi points to Roberto Fiore's *Terza Posizione* as one of the groups who subscribed to this mentality. The concept of the "new legionary" was in reference to Codreanu's movement.[273] The similarities to *The Political Soldier* are obvious.

In issue number 2 of *Rising*, an article called "Evola: reaction/revolution" appeared where the writers reviewed his stand on the decay of the modern world and tradition, but most interesting was the conclusion. Evola claimed to be a traditional revolutionary, in contrast to a reactionary. Being a traditionalist meant that he saw himself as a defender of historical reality, "a dynamic force obeying principles from high".[274] Furthermore, Evola and the "political soldiers" did not regard tradition as something only of the past; above all it represented permanence in development and continuity and the traditionalist would "faced with crisis and modified circumstances, […] know how to stay calm, understanding what must be abandoned in order that the essential may be preserved"[275]. Finally, the article discussed the use of the word "fascism".

> There are those among us who in attempting to organise themselves against worldwide subversion, take as points of reference National-Socialist principles that are qualified by their opponents on the Left as 'Fascist', 'Nazi' or 'Authoritarian'. Let us never lose sight of an overriding principle. If 'Fascist' ideas must be defended, they must be so not because they are 'Fascist' but because they present the expression and affirmation of ideas that are superior to mere Fascism. They must be defended because they are an integral part of the Great European

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[270] Ferraresi 1987, p. 137-137
[271] Ferraresi 1987, p. 138
[272] Ferraresi 1987, p. 138
[273] Ferraresi 1987, p. 138
[274] "Evola: reaction/revolution", *Rising*, No. 2, 1982, p. 3
[275] "Evola: reaction/revolution", *Rising*, No. 2, 1982, p.

political tradition. To suppose these ideas to be revolutionary, original and belonging wholly to the concept of Fascism can only result in a restricted point-of-view, rendering discrimination more difficult.[276]

This suggests that even though the "political soldiers" were aware of the fact that Evola in some circles was considered fascist, they themselves regarded his doctrine as inspirational. They had no objection to being labeled as fascist, because to them, the dedication to the cause was more important than their public image. Furthermore, this paragraph can be read as a direct appraisal of the historical fascism, claiming that those ideas were a part of the "Great European political tradition".

4.5.3 The Iranian Revolution

One contemporary source of inspiration explicitly mentioned in Holland's manifesto, is the Islamic Revolutionary Guards in the Iran of the Mullahs. Holland states:

> It is not necessary to agree with any or all of their aims to appreciate and respect their courage. Their belief in their cause is so strong that they will run through minefields unarmed to attack enemy positions; their ideals are so all consuming that they will drive truck bombs into enemy camps knowing full well that death is inevitable. Whether they are right or wrong is not at issue, but it is clear that this power, this contempt for death, is the stuff of which victories are made.[277]

The Iranian revolution began in 1979, when the opposition started to gather around Ayatollah Khomeini, an Islamic religious and political leader. The revolution lead to the dismissal of the reigning government and replaced it with an Islamic republic, led by Khomeini. He reigned from 1979 to his death in 1989, and during his reign the clergy gained political control and Sharia became the basis for all law.[278]

This praising of Khomeini actually turned into more than just long distance admiration. In 1988, the National Front, which at this point only consisted of the political soldier-faction under Nick Griffin, who had become chairman in 1986, created an official alliance, the New Alliance, which included the National Front, Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi, Louis Farrakhan, head of the strongly race oriented American Nation of Islam, and Khomeini himself.[279] The alliance

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[276] "Evola: reaction/revolution", *Rising*, No. 2, 1982, p.
[277] Holland 1994, p. 10
[278] See: Halliday, Fred, Review Article: "The Iranian Revolution", *Political Studies,* Vol 30, No. 3, 1982: 437-444, Store Norske Leksikon: https://snl.no/Irans_historie
[279] Eatwell 2004, p. 65

opposed the USA and the USSR and was a mix of "revolutionary nationalist groups, racial separatists and the anti-Zionist nations of the Middle East".[280]

Holding up the Iranian revolution as a model and even forming an alliance with Gaddafi and Khomeini, shows how the context for right wing parties in Europe has changed since the 1980s. The manifesto was written just five years after the Iranian revolution. Today, most far right groups in Europe are fighting against immigration of Muslims to Europe: they have become villainized by nationalists. This was not the case in Britain in 1984 – the post war immigrants mainly came from former Commonwealth countries.[281] In this context, Holland would salute the Islamic Revolutionary Guard for their efforts because they, like the political soldiers, were nationalists, fueled by a religious and spiritual cause.

4.5.4   Influence from the French Nouvelle Droite?

In the manifesto, Holland talks a great deal about nation and culture and he does not explicitly use the word "race". However, by expressing concern for white peoples he nevertheless gives the manifesto a racial dimension.

The avoidance of the word race could suggest that "the political soldiers" were aware of the trends on the continent, illustrated by for example the French Front National. The Front National, like "the political soldiers", branched out from a post-war fascist organization, but due to the ideas of the French *Nouvelle Droite* – the New Right - they modernized.[282]

The *Nouvelle Droite* was no political party but a metapolitical think tank, led by Alain de Benoist. The think tank GRECE (*Groupement de recherche et d'etudes pour la civilisation européenne)* was established in Paris in the late 1960s, after the election in 1967 and the realization that the French far right had failed in gaining the popular vote. GRECE's task, as they saw it, was to change the leftist hegemony. Through a number of journals and publications during the 1970s, they gained a significant amount of media coverage and they became quite famous. They were named "La Nouvelle Droite" by the public. [283]

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[280] Shaffer 2018, p. 85
[281] Encyclopedia Britannica, "Immigration", https://www.britannica.com/topic/immigration (17.04.2019)
[282] See McCulloch, Tom, "The Nouvelle Droite in the 1980s and 1990s: Ideology and Entryism, the Relationship with the Front National", *French Politics*, Vol. 6, 2006: 158-178
[283] This, and the following 3 paragraphs are based on Mammone, Andrea, "The Transnational Reaction to 1968: Neo-Fascist Fronts and Political Cultures in France and Italy", *Contemporary European* History, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2008: 213-236, Alberto Spektorowski, "The New Right: Ethno-regionalism, ethno-pluralism and the emergence

There were two main reasons for La Nouvelle Droite's success: the first was that they were not afraid of being associated with the label "right", which was unusual in the French political environment at the time.[284] The second factor was that they early on were accused of being "dangerous" and that they before the world appeared to breathe new life into fascism. The more they were accused of this, the more media attention they gained and the more they had to come up with new ways to defend themselves.

It is important to stress that *La Nouvelle Droite* was fundamentally more occupied with gaining cultural power than political power. They were not trying to influence day-to-day politics but they wanted to change the political discourse in the long run. *La Nouvelle Droite's* task, as they saw it, was to change the values and perceptions of French society and influence ideologies and discourses *without* seeking political power and without explicitly promoting institutional change. Even though they publicly renounced fascism, their project was to modernize fascist and far right ideology, to "cultivate" some of the most controversial aspects of fascist doctrines, to downplay verbal extremism and to give a more clever and tasteful façade to fascist ideas.

There are a few examples of what this meant in practice. First of all the controversial anti-egalitarianism they promoted: people are not born equal and society should not strive for equality. Hierarchy was seen as a necessity to achieve a harmonious society. But their main ideological "innovation" was to replace "race" with "culture". There were irreducible "cultural" differences between peoples and therefore cultures should be kept apart.[285] This concept let them and their supporters promote racist messages without talking about "race": it started a transition from *biological* racism to *cultural* racism.[286]

It is highly probable that the "political soldiers" drew some form of inspiration from French. As Roger Griffin writes: Michael Walker founded the magazine *Scorpion* (originally *The National Democrat)* in 1981, and Roger Griffin claims it was the most important British organ for the new right. It was a regular "mouthpiece" for the New Right's vision of a European

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of a neo-fascist "Third Way"", *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2003: 111-130, Roger Griffin, "Between Metapolitics and apoliteia: The Nouvelle Droite's Strategy for conserving the fascist vision in the "interregnum"", *Modern and Contemporary France*, Vol 8. No. 1, 2000: 35-53, Douglas Johnson, "The New Right in France", Cheles, Ferguson and Vaughan (ed.), *Neo-Fascism in Europe*, 234-264. London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1991 / Storli, Yngvild "1968 og reaksjonens fødsel", *Klassekampen,* 21.02.2018: 14-15
[284] Due to the history of France in the Second World War and the Vichy-regime, being associated with "the right" was not desirable.
[285] Johnson, Douglas, "The New Right in France", Cheles, Ferguson and Vaughan (ed.), *Neo-Fascism in Europe*, London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1991, p. 234-264
[286] Mammone 2008, p. 229-231. See also: Spektorowski 2003 and Griffin 2000

Empire as long as the Soviet Union lasted. It also frequently printed pieces opposing the materialism of the USA and the USSR, but its major project was to spread the idea of the European distinctive "ethnies". However, Walker was not a part of the "political soldier"-faction, he instead branched out by himself:

> weaving an apparently independent New Right strand of fascism as part of the diversification
> which occurred whithin the [National Front] once its leadership was no longer dominated by
> neo-Nazis.[287]

In the manifesto, Holland never mentions the *Nouvelle Droite*, but neither does he use the word "race"; he consequently writes of "culture". In addition, other formulations indicate that Holland believes in the New Rights "cultural differentialism". This is indicated for example by the statement: "But Europe does not have monopoly on the Political Soldiers and all peoples and cultures have the potential to produce this type of man, each fitted to his peculiar circumstances."[288]

The impact of the New Right on British Nationalism was perhaps not very present in *The Political Soldier* but, as shown in the previous chapter, the "political soldiers" definitely became less explicit about their racism and began promoting cultural differentialism as an official policy.[289] Furthermore, the "political soldiers" became more and more preoccupied with influencing the long-term political discourse. Their main goal was to win "intellectual" power, not political power, because they believed a cultural and personal change in beliefs was fundamental to changing the established institutions. As mentioned in chapter 2, the National Front had an ambition of changing British nationalism in the same way that Alain De Benoist had done in France years earlier,[290] and there is no doubt the radicals of the National Front were aware of the French movement.

One clear distinction between the French New Right and the "political soldier's" ideology as presented in Hollands manifesto, is that the "political soldier" did not necessarily want to be "rightist". Where the French were not afraid of being associated with the right, the "political soldiers" opposed both sides of the political specter. Second, the National Front made no attempts to make it in electoral politics in the 1980s, while *La Nouvelle Droite* had considerable

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[287] Griffin, Roger, preface to Walker, Michael, "A Breath of Fresh Air", Griffin (ed.) 1995, p. 350
[288] Holland 1994, p. 10
[289] See chapter 3
[290] See chapter 2

success in "practice" in France with the Front National. The Front National did in fact eventually become a mainstream political party.[291] What this meant, was mainly that the Front National stopped talking about "races" and adopted cultural differentialism as promoted by the Nouvelle Droite. With Jean-Marie Le Pen as their "charismatic leader", the Front National made the immigration-issue a mainstream concern that attracted many voters.[292] One of the reasons for this popular support was the economic and social situation in France at the time – it was in crisis, and the establishment parties did not manage to handle the situation in a satisfying manner.[293] In Britain, however, Thatcher and the conservatives were the ones who managed to mobilize on the immigration issue and took ownership of it.[294] Furthermore, the "political soldiers" were not interested in making it in mainstream politics and failed to establish themselves as a legitimate political actor who could ever make it into a powerful position in the establishment.

4.6 Fascism?

Among his historical sources of inspiration, Holland never mentions any of the "classical" fascists, such as Mussolini or Hitler, and the words "Fascism" or "Nazism" does not appear at all. This could indicate that the "political soldier"-faction of the National Front wanted to distance themselves from the neo-Nazi image John Tyndall had fronted while he was the chairman of the party. In this perspective, what happened in Britain was parallel to, or part of, a trend going on in continental Europe, where formerly fascist parties went through a rhetorical "cleanse" to gain public support and electoral success.

However, the manifest clearly fits several criteria usually ascribed to fascist ideology. First, we find the "mythic core" of palingenesis - the belief that society is about to be reborn.[295] Roger Griffin also points out that palingenesis does not refer backwards to a restoration of something lost, because we live in a society with a linear understanding of time. The "new order" will

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[291] See Wolfreys, Jim, "The European extreme right in comparative perspective", Mammone et.al. (ed.), *Varieties of Right-Wing Extremism in Europe,* London: Routledge, 2013: 19-38, p. 23
[292] Bell, D. S., "The French National Front", *History of European Ideas,* Vol. 18, No. 2, 1994: 225-240, p. 226-228, 236
[293] Copsey, Nigel, "A Comparison between the Extreme Right in Contemporary France and Britain", *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1997: 101-116, p. 108-110, Goodliffe, Gabriel *The Resurgence of the Radical Right in France – From Boulangisme to the Front National*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 307
[294] See chapter 2
[295] Griffin 2006, p. 35

happen through revolution and society will be reborn as something entirely new. This belief is very present in the first part of *The Political Soldier*.

With no party politics and no "leaders", a liberal, representative democracy is impossible. The solution is a nationalist revolution. Holland however does not call for a dictatorship with a strong state, his political imagery concentrates on mass mobilization and the creation of a "new man": a spiritual revolution to save the culture. This also resonates with Roger Griffin's definition of fascism. The mythic core of Holland's ideology does in fact "point to the inspirational, revolutionary power exerted by the ideology".[296] The "political soldiers" ideology demands for a revolution to be implemented.

Holland envisions a spiritual revolution for the people – a *cultural* revolution. One of the most stringent interpretations of fascism is the one of George Mosse, who interpreted historical fascism as a new form of cultural revolution. He saw fascism as an effort to develop a new ideology and culture in order to create a "new man" in place of the materialist, pragmatic and liberal culture of the nineteenth century. Mosse viewed Nazi Germany not as reactionary, but as a specific revolution from the right that was based on race and a combination of mystical concepts that were employed to nationalize and mobilize the masses. Even though fascism made a strong appeal to the past, it also made a strong appeal forwards, to a creation of a new "race of heroes" who would gain a sense of fulfillment through community and comradeship.[297] This is almost exactly what Holland urges.

According to the different definitions of fascism, the parties' or organizations' ideologies should contain some form of populist revolutionary ultra-nationalism. Roger Griffin's interpretation of "populism" is that it is a generic term for political forces that rely in the people and people power as its basis for legitimacy.[298] Holland's manifesto does contain some indicators of this type of nationalism. The "political soldiers" revolution entirely depends on the people: they aim to engage as much of the population as possible and totally reform society. Without the people, the movement will remain marginal: a tiny group of men, unable to accomplish the revolution.

In addition, the movement can be said to contain a populist revolutionary ultra-nationalistic aspect. Society as imagined in *The Political Soldier* is not compatible with modern liberal

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[296] See chapter 1
[297] Payne 2005, p. 450-451
[298] Griffin 2006, p. 36

democracy. They want to replace the entire system with something new, and most importantly, they want to implement a new system totally dedicated to preserving the British nation and culture. This new society has no room for regular party politics - which Holland sees as the forces of evil - or "others": immigrants, "Zionists", capitalists, communists or anyone not dedicated to the "cause". These people are to be excluded for the good of the racial community. Thus, the ideology presented by Holland is a type of exclusionary nationalism that go beyond what is compatible with liberal democracy.

It is not made completely clear in the manifesto whether the "political soldiers" legitimize the use of violence. Holland uses terrorism as an example of what *not* to do if you want to gain the people's support. However, even though Holland never talks of violence, the references in the manifesto are to groups and organizations that were most certainly violent.

For example, from 1933 the Legionary Movement began organizing so called "death squads", with the goal to develop the fascist cult of violence more elaborately than any equivalent movement at the time. In December, one of the activists assassinated the prime minister, which resulted in the arrest of thousands of other Legionaries.[299]

Moreover, the Rumanian Iron Guard was in fact a militia. Some scholars even call them a terror organization.[300] For a few months between 1940 and 1941, Romania was overcome by a fascist regime called the "National Legionary State". However, due to their street violence and continuous pogroms against the Jewish population of Romania, the Third Reich overthrew the Legionary State in order to install a more "organized and disciplined" form of government.[301] Also the concept of martyrdom – which Holland admirers the most – is connected to the Legionaries attitudes towards violence. Towards the outbreak of WW2 the Legionaries became increasingly more preoccupied with the concept of martyrdom, while they at the same time became increasingly more violent. Members assassinated dozens of politicians and other "enemies" and when authorities retaliated, they answered with more violence.[302]

The other references to "idols" in *The Political Soldier* are the Spartans, the Roman Centurion and the Crusaders: all military armies. The reference to the Crusaders is especially interesting

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[299] Payne 2005, p. 284
[300] Endresen 2012, p. 16
[301] Endresen 2012, p. 16
[302] Endresen 2012, p. 19

as their task was to spread Catholicism and/or guard and protect it from intervention from heathens, Muslims or heretics.[303]

Thus, even though Holland himself never explicitly mentions violence in his manifesto, it is worth noting that all his references are to either warriors or known armies or to violent fascist organizations. Holland also writes a passage about means and ends, arguing that since the "political soldiers" do not practice practical politics, their means would differ from those of the traditional politicians. Exactly what this means is not specified, which might indicate that the "political soldiers" are open to the use of violence if necessary.

Furthermore, the "third way" between capitalism and communism is a central feature in the definition of fascism. In *The Political Soldier*, Holland refers to USSR and USA as "tyrant states" – the pillars of liberalism (capitalism) and socialism (communism). In the manifesto, Holland emphasizes several times his opposition to capitalism. He blames capitalism and capitalist institutions for the societal problems in Britain. The "political soldier's'" attitude towards capitalism and communism was extensively discussed in a previous chapter. As was the presence of conspiracy theories in their ideology.

Other features in fascism are, at least according to Stanley Payne and Roger Eatwell, that fascism is based on the *Fhürerprincip* and/or built around charismatic leaders. If this is a central part of the definition, the "political soldier" do not meet the criteria. However, this criteria is only applicable if the actors are engaged in mass mobilization in form of politics. The "political soldiers" opposed electoral politics and campaigning. In their time, Hitler and Mussolini were dependent on popular support before they could hope to gain political power. Gaining popular support is not of crucial importance to the "political soldiers" as their ideology relies on a personal revolution first and societal revolution second. This supports Roger Griffin's remark on the "metapolitization" of fascism in the "post-fascist" era. The "political soldiers'" ideology was, if nothing else, highly metapolitical.

Based in this discussion, I would state that the ideology presented in *The Political Soldier* meets many of the criteria for generic fascism and that it found major sources of inspiration in the European ideological and political history of fascism.

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[303] Store Norske Leksikon: "Korstog", https://snl.no/korstog (16.04.2019)

Now, I will get back to the term "radicalization". The concept of the "political soldier" is quite interesting. It does not resemble anything else seen in contemporary European politics. Yes, they reoriented politically, but at the core of the reorientation was this individual, personal, spiritual, highly religious revolution. It *was* in fact a process of "cognitive and ideological transformation, mainly at the individual level", as Malthaner puts it.[304] Based on the analysis of *The Political Soldier,* it is not farfetched to claim that the reorientation of the National Front, led by the "political soldiers" can in fact be labeled as a radicalization. It even drew inspiration from what is now regarded as political Islam, and resembled many of the traits of contemporary, religiously inspired, Islamist radicalism. As we shall see in the following chapter, the presence of religious fundamentalism only grew stronger during the coming years.

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[304] See chapter 3

5 On with the National Revolution

5.1 Introduction

What exactly would the National Front and the "political soldiers" do when they eventually came to power? And what happened to the "political soldiers" and the National Revolution? In 1986, the "political soldiers" officially took over the leadership of the National Front, and Nick Griffin was made chairman. By this point, they had a clear ideology and a revolutionary program, and they had educated "political soldiers" to make the revolution a reality. Where did this evolution of the National Front carry these activists? To answer this, I will evaluate the issues of *Nationalism Today* from 1985 up until 1990, when they eventually broke out and established the International Third Position. Furthermore, I will discuss to which extent the International Third Position was a continuation of the "political soldier"-ideology of the National Front.

5.2 The road to power

By 1985, it was still unclear to the readers of *Nationalism Today* just how the "political soldiers" were planning to achieve revolution. The main "strategy" this far was to educate a "new man" and when everyone was transformed, the revolution would inevitably happen by itself. This was clearly not a realistic strategy, so after the "political soldiers" had gained control over the National Front, the articles of *Nationalism Today* were to a larger extent about how to seize power. First, we have to understand what exactly "power" was to the "political soldiers".

The activists themselves discussed this question of "power". In July 1985, Nick Griffin tried to answer it himself, and stressed the importance of understanding the true nature of power in order to understand where to "attack". During the period before the "political soldiers" rose to prominence in the National Front, the leadership, and John Tyndall in particular, was regularly accused of wanting to install a dictatorship built on racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and white supremacy.[305] Was this the vision of the "political soldiers" towards the end of the 1980s? I have already discussed the politics of the National Front up until this point, and suggested that they had made a move away from the explicit neo-Nazi biological racism in favor of cultural

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[305] See chapter 2

racism. They had also developed rather elaborate politics on various issues, and I have concluded that there was a clear breach between the ideology of Tyndall's National Front, and the "political soldier's". However, the question of how they envisioned a National Revolutionary society and how they would organize it remained.

> WHEN WE COME TO POWER" is a common phrase in the Nationalistic vocabulary, but it is
> a strange fact that the movement has never given any real thought to what "power" actually is,
> or how it may be gained.[306]

So what is power? That was the question Nick Griffin raised in the introduction to his abovementioned article. Then he identified what he called the different pillars of power: physical power, economic power, social power and political power. He used Ulster as an example for his analysis. First, he claimed that the Ulster Nationalists had the street force and paramilitary necessary to take on the IRA, and could only be suppressed by Westminster government if they should start a civil war. Second, they used strike as a means when the loyalist power began to decline and the result was the Ulster workers strike. Griffin identified this as the second aspect of revolutionary "muscle": economic power. Third, no revolutionary group could control the streets or the economy without public support, therefore social power was essential. Finally, he pointed out the possible backlash from the media as an issue. To solve this potential problem, political power was key: if they were able to prove public and electoral support, and in addition political representation, the media could not designate them for being movements based on fear and violence.[307]

The problem was that the Ulster Nationalists never gained a secure, long-term position of power. This, Griffin claimed, was due to the lack of a fifth pillar, the last requirement for revolution: ideological power. "Of all five, this is the most important for without it there is not even the idea of revolution. If one of the other pillars is missing or weak, failure is likely, but without a revolutionary ideology there cannot even be a revolutionary organization".[308] Thus, what made the National Front at this stage more equipped to carry out a revolution and come to power was that they had a so-called revolutionary ideology.

The strategy was to build the party's strength in the areas of power identified above. When it came to physical power, Griffin stated that they did not seek confrontation, but because their

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[306] Griffin, Nick, "Understanding the Nature of Power", *Nationalism Today,* No. 31, 1985, p. 22

[307] Griffin, Nick, "Understanding the Nature of Power", *Nationalism Today,* No. 31, 1985, p. 22

[308] Griffin, Nick, "Understanding the Nature of Power", *Nationalism Today,* No. 31, 1985, p. 22

opponents were prepared to use violence against them, they always had to be prepared to defend themselves. Therefore, it was critical that the activists in the National Front were properly disciplined.[309] Who their opponents were was not specified, but it is at this point safe to say that the "political soldiers" saw anyone who was opposed to the national revolution as enemies. In the first chapter of the thesis, I discussed various interpretations of fascism. What most of them agreed on, was that fascists tended to rationalize violence and consider it as a legitimate means to an end.[310] In the previous chapter (chapter 4) I discussed whether the "political soldiers" could fit into the "fascist" category, since the rationalization of violence seemed to be absent or under-communicated in *The Political Soldier.* Even though Derek Holland stated in *The Political Soldier* that nationalists should not use or legitimize terror, his stance on self-defense was not discussed. However, in this article, Griffin does in fact rationalize the use of violence by framing it as pure self-defense. It is likely that the entire directorate of the National Front agreed on this.

Another aspect of Griffin's strategy for gaining power was to increase their production of propaganda, but most interesting, he claimed that they already had public support.

> [...] popular sentiment – what people really believe – is already basically on our side, since millions of Britons agree with our main policies, even though they do not yet see us as the people to carry them out. We just need to keep working away to undermine the dam of Establishment lies which is all that is between us and a flood of popular support.[311]

To claim that they had the support of the better part of Britain may have helped with the motivation to keep going. However, while they kept publishing on strategies and pillars to conquer, they always came back to the spiritual struggle and anti-materialism. This was at the core of the ideology, as illustrated in various issues of *Nationalism Today* and *The Political Soldier*, and the key to the revolution. Another key aspect of the revolution was "struggle" in general. To the "political soldiers" this was common to all political ideologies.[312]

> The marxist believes in the material struggle of the urban proletariat overthrowing the ruling class; the capitalist believes in the material struggle of 'making a fast buck'. The Nationalists,

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[309] Griffin, Nick, "Understanding the Nature of Power", *Nationalism Today,* No. 31, 1985, p. 22
[310] See chapter 1
[311] Griffin, Nick, "Understanding the Nature of Power", *Nationalism Today,* No. 31, 1985, p. 22
[312] Introduction, "The spirit of struggle", *Nationalism Today,* No. 32, 1985, p. 2

on the other hand, while seeing the value of some forms of material struggle, puts the ultimate faith in the infinitely greater struggle of the spiritual over the material.[313]

Joe Pearce further went on to explain exactly what they meant by "spiritual" and claimed that before anyone could commit to the spiritual struggle, they had to fully accept the "superiority of spiritual truth over material truth"[314]: they should believe in God(s), in the infinite, in man's limitations, and realize the "cliché" that there is always more to learn. Once these truths were accepted, one would realize that the biggest struggle in this age was the struggle between the material and the spiritual.[315] Pearce claimed that their forefathers had solved this "struggle" in the sense that spirituality was usually reflected in the architecture: the pyramids of ancient Egypt, the Aztec temples, and the catholic cathedrals were all monuments raised to commemorate some form of higher power.[316] Holland stated something similar in 1984 in *The Political Soldier*, when he claimed that the ability to balance a material and a spiritual life is something that died with our ancestors, and as a result, our attitudes towards life had changed.[317] The point was that traditional art and architecture was inspired by the spiritual, while modern art, and modern society, was a product of materialism. The realization that life is an eternal struggle between the spiritual and the material was key to understanding the national revolutionary ideology:

> [this] allows the Nationalist to perceive the existence of their immediate material surroundings.
> It is this elevation of spiritual values which sets Nationalist ideology apart from all the other ideologies of our age[…][318]

As they saw it, their connection with the divine was why they would be able to carry out a revolution in contrast to other, previous, revolutionaries. To carry out the revolution, the "political soldiers" did not plan to use terrorism and violence. Terrorism was, as mentioned, not a respectable means for a National Revolutionary and it was stated again, also by Derek Holland in 1985. In *The Political Soldier*, Holland was not very explicit about what means he thought of as legitimate, other than "the means used must be justifiable – if you preach of love and truth, as a "political soldier" should, you cannot lie and cheat as a means."[319] How to carry out a

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[313] Pearce, Joe, "The Spiritual Struggle", *Nationalism Today,* No. 32, 1985, p. 12
[314] Pearce, Joe, "The Spiritual Struggle", *Nationalism Today,* No. 32, 1985, p. 12
[315] Pearce, Joe, "The Spiritual Struggle", *Nationalism Today,* No. 32, 1985, p. 12
[316] Pearce, Joe, "The Spiritual Struggle", *Nationalism Today,* No. 32, 1985, p. 12
[317] Holland 1994, p. 7/chapter 4
[318] Pearce, Joe, "The Spiritual Struggle", *Nationalism Today,* No. 32, 1985, p. 12
[319] Holland 1994, p. 13/see Chapter 4

revolution by preaching "love and truth" was unclear in the least, so during the course of the years following the release of *The Political Soldier*, Holland tried to become clearer. In an article in issue number 33 of *Nationalism Today* called "Terrorism: An enemy of Nationalism", Holland presented his "new" strategy.

> Does [no use of terrorism] mean that National Revolution is impossible? No, National Revolution may be compared to a saucepan of milk – when it begins to simmer bubbles appear round the edge of the pan, then whoosh! the milk has boiled over.[320]

Thus, the plan was to take over, little by little, until the national revolutionary ideology was indoctrinated in every aspects of society to the point where it "boiled over", as the pan of milk, and established itself as a new societal order. He then stated that the National Front was first a political alternative and called them political revolutionaries.[321] This could in some ways be conceived as contradictory. The "political soldiers" had for years tried to move away from regular politics in favor of becoming revolutionaries. However, the "political soldiers" did believe that they were engaged in politics, they just had a different conception of what politics was compared to the majority of the population. As discussed in the previous chapter, the "political soldiers" believed that politics was not about negotiations and compromise: politics were, in their view, based on a belief in a cause that was absolute.

5.3   Strategies for the National Revolution

In the introduction to issue number 39 in 1986, the editorial board of the National Front made several declarations: first, that the Front was under pressure from two sides, a campaign of "harassment" lead by the State, and on the other hand, pressure from a tiny reactionary element from within the Front itself. Second, they announced that due to limited human and financial resources, *Nationalism Today* would from now on become a bimonthly publication.[322] The Front was showing signs of decay. However, they were determined to continue the National Revolutionary project. How exactly they were planning to seize power was still unclear. Based on the articles dealt with until now, it seems like they were planning to wait until the collapse of the contemporary system and then strike when there was a power vacuum that needed to be filled. Nick Griffin pointed out in an article that the National Front was now more prepared for

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[320] Holland, Derek, "Terrorism: An Enemy of Nationalism", *Nationalism Today*, No. 33, 1985, p. 13
[321] Holland, Derek, "Terrorism: An Enemy of Nationalism", *Nationalism Today*, No. 33, 1985, p. 13
[322] "Introduction", *Nationalism Today*, No 39, 1986, p. 2

a power position than ever before: they had an idea of what power was and the circumstances in which they were likely to achieve it. They knew where they were heading, and they knew which obstacles they had to overcome, but Griffin stated that dedication and a sense of direction was not enough.

> If we are going to win the race to power, we need a powerful machine that can cope with the knocks along the way. Realistic analysis shows quite clearly that the NF's machine is simply not up to it at present. Our organizational structure, financial base and training levels are pitifully inadequate. This must change.[323]

The strategy to solve this situation was as follows. First, Griffin stated that the National Front needed to be, at a time of crisis for the "old system", able to distribute sufficient amounts of propaganda and have built up enough credibility to win over the population "to active support for the basic aims of revolutionary nationalism".[324] In addition, the Front would have to be organized to avoid chaos and anarchy. They had to build a national command structure, they had to be coordinated ideologically and they had to find the funds to finance these things.[325] Furthermore, they had to train an "elite" of nationalists to construct and run the "power winning machine". Nick Griffin, representing the National Directorate of the National Front, believed it was time for a complete restructuring of the organization in order to implement these structural changes to make them fit for carrying out the eventual revolution.[326]

One of the structural changes was to make everyone armed. Derek Holland wrote an article called "The Armed People" where he urged that the establishment should allow every man to own a firearm, train the population in using them, and by that get rid Britain's reliance on NATO. In a possible invasion, the British army would be reinforced by a "millions strong militia, armed and trained in the use of modern weapons. In the event of an invasion of this country the whole population will be active partisans against the enemy[...]"[327]

We have seen that the National Front had quit regular politics and by this point regarded itself as a movement "above" mere politics. What happened in 1987, was a further development of this philosophy and yet another structural change. At the 19th Annual General Meeting of (probably) 1986, the National Front officially decided to adopt a new structure of membership,

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[323] Griffin, Nick, "The way forward: adapt or die!", *Nationalism Today,* No. 39, 1986, p. 8
[324] Griffin, Nick, "The way forward: adapt or die!", *Nationalism Today,* No. 39, 1986, p. 8
[325] Griffin, Nick, "The way forward: adapt or die!", *Nationalism Today,* No. 39, 1986, p. 8
[326] Griffin, Nick, "The way forward: adapt or die!", *Nationalism Today,* No. 39, 1986, p. 9
[327] Holland, Derek, "The Armed People", *Nationalism Today,* No. 39, 1986, p. 23

a so-called cadre structure.[328] This structure was a reaction to what they called the old guards "bigger is better"-mentality. The cadre structure was a new form of membership selection. One could no longer just "join" the National Front only by being attracted to their racist ideology like one could in the 1970's. Members had to be carefully selected and trained and they had to commit themselves to really get to know the ideology of the political soldiers and prove that they were willing to make financial sacrifices. In that way, the directorate of the National Front could sift out the dedicated "cadres" from the ones not dedicated enough.[329] The leadership of the National Front at the time thought that the reason for the failure of the revolution in the history of the movement was that the old guard was too preoccupied with gaining members and voters: quantity over quality. In their eyes, this cadre structure was the change they needed to finally succeed in overthrowing the old system and build a new societal order.[330] Griffin wrote that it was impossible for the "political soldiers" to achieve their goals by just "tinkering" with the system: "*we must seek to replace the whole thing.*"[331]

One of the issues at heart of the nationalist movement was to implement a new alternative to capitalism and communism. The National Front had chosen distributism as their "third way" between the classic left and right-axis in politics. In an interview from the late 1980's, conducted by an American sympathizer, Holland elaborated also on his thoughts on democracy, on fascism/Nazism, and how he, and the National Front, envisioned the ideal state.

On democracy, Holland stated that since they were distributists who believed in handing the economic power back to the people, they would naturally want to hand the political power back to the people as well. That was why they condemned the contemporary parliamentary system because it did not reflect the ideal economic system (distributism) - it reflected capitalism and centralization.[332] Instead, they would

> [...]abolish parliamentary structures as they currently exist and would abolish the very idea of representation. We believe that people are not to be represented. People would delegate power, and that power would not be used by the delegate as he "sees fit" but he would merely be a mirror of what the local community thinks and desires.[333]

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[328] "Introduction: Forging a new ethos", *Nationalism Today,* No. 40, p. 1
[329] The "cadre" structure is also a widely known strategy used by revolutionary left-wing movements
[330] Griffin, Nick, "The way forward: Cadre hope", *Nationalism Today,* No. 40, (year unknown), p. 10
[331] Griffin, Nick, "The way forward: Cadre hope", *Nationalism Today,* No. 40, (year unknown), p. 10
[332] Malone, Matt, "*Ideas for the Future - An Interview with Derek Holland*", Northampton, University of Northampton, Searchlight Archive, SCH/01/Res/BRI/09/002, p. 6
[333] Malone, Matt, "*Ideas for the Future - An Interview with Derek Holland*", p. 8

This would result in the power being handed back to the street level, so that parliamentary democracy would be replaced by something new, where local communities chose their own delegate to represent them, but where they could replace him at any time if the delegate did not live up to the expectations.[334]

Even though the "political soldiers" condemned liberal democracy and almost every other established institution of modern society, they did not think of themselves as fascists or right wing extremists. The main reason for this, Holland explained, was that Fascists and National Socialists fundamentally claimed control over people's lives, both socially, economically and religiously. Those ideologies also indulged in state worship and the belief that the state was anterior to the population. This was, at its core, incompatible with the revolutionary nationalism promoted by the "political soldiers" because they were fighting *for* individual freedom.[335] Instead of having a leader at the top, they believed that a true revolution, and a true nationalist revolutionary society, was only accomplishable when *all* men were great.[336] Thus, they strongly opposed the *Führerprinzip*. From experience, Holland explained, former chairmen of the National Front tended to inevitably become dictatorial. This had for a long time been regarded as a problem by the "political soldiers".[337]

> An organization such as the NF draws highly individualistic people into the movement, which is a natural reaction against a system that promotes uniformity. People who are against uniformity are therefore very free spirited. As a consequence an organization which relies on a "leadership cult" will inevitably lead to a clash of personal egos.[338]

By the time the interview was conducted and the "political soldiers" officially had taken over the National Front, they had apparently solved this issue. They had, apparently, reached a position where no one wanted to control the organization because they had become aware of the "corruptive nature" of that power. This was regarded as a good sign because it showed that when they were in a position where they were willing to delegate power down the ranks of the organization, they would also be able to delegate power to everyone when they eventually came in control of the entire country.[339]

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[334] Malone, Matt, "*Ideas for the Future - An Interview with Derek Holland*", p. 8
[335] Malone, Matt, "*Ideas for the Future - An Interview with Derek Holland*", p. 4
[336] Malone, Matt, "*Ideas for the Future - An Interview with Derek Holland*", p. 9
[337] Malone, Matt, "*Ideas for the Future - An Interview with Derek Holland*", p. 9
[338] Malone, Matt, "*Ideas for the Future - An Interview with Derek Holland*", p. 9
[339] Malone, Matt, "*Ideas for the Future - An Interview with Derek Holland*", p. 9

This seems to amount to a major contradiction in their ideology. On the one hand, they seem to have advocated extreme individualism, if not outright anarchism, as a ruling principle of their ideal society. At the same time, the whole "political soldier" ideology was extremely elitist and based on a concept of an organic, racial community that stood above individual interests and differences. This contradiction, and how to solve it, was never addressed by the "political soldiers".

5.4 The end of the National Front and the emergence of the Third Position

By this point, the "political soldiers" had come to realize that they had to gain physical, economic, social, political and ideological power. They had adopted a new membership structure to better prepare for the revolution, and the members all had to be trained and indoctrinated into the National Revolutionary ideology. The National Front had abandoned party politics overall, and was now an organization waiting for the inevitable collapse of contemporary society so that they could seize power and revolutionize the social order. That new order would be a society where there was no state and where individual freedom, both economic and political, was at the center. Society would worship the spiritual and return to a religious conception of politics.[340] There was very little left of the National Front that reminded of the political party they were only a few years earlier. During the course of the 1980's, the National Front drifted more and more into obscurity. Their ideology became more and more esoteric, and fewer people stayed active in what was now an organization promoting third positionist ideas. [341]

In the fall of 1989, the National Front was in a crisis and their membership consisted of only a few dozen activists. One of the members, Patrick Harrington, had gradually taken another line and moved further away from Nick Griffin and Derek Holland. In October that same year, Harrington sent a press release on behalf of the National Front and announced that the NF must, for moral reasons, prepare to make a public apology to correct any manifestations of anti-Semitism that had occurred during the course of the years. He announced that the National Front had no conflict with Jews. This press release caused "all hell to break loose in the NF"[342],

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[340] See chapter 3 and 4
[341] Richardson 2017, p. 132
[342] Shaffer 2018, p. 85

and many of the activists, including Holland and Griffin did not support Harrington at all. They were no longer interested in fighting to preserve and restore the National Front name, and other activists only saw the name as an obstacle because it no longer represented any of the traditional National Front policies. The members who were left, voted to disband the entire party.[343] By 1990, the National Front, along with their revolutionary project, was history.

The dissolvent of the National Front resulted in the establishment of two new groups: The Third Way and the International Third Position. Griffin, Holland and Fiore were the main driving forces of the latter. Other key members were Colin Todd, Troy Southgate and Phil Andrews.[344] The International Third Position was officially established early in 1990, with the ambition of spreading the "political soldier ideology" to a broader and international audience.[345]

The ITP was, according to Holland, founded as a leaderless movement, and they continued to stay away from electoral politics. The ITP would "foster" an elite movement and change society through ideas rather than policies.[346] The name almost certainly came directly from their Italian friends, in particular Roberto Fiore, the exiled leader of the Italian neo-fascist party *Terza Posizione* (1978–1982). As Nick Griffin said himself, the Italians and Fiore had massive influence on the British radicals.[347] Fiore described *Terza Posizione* as an organization opposed to communism and immigration, in favour of small and medium business enterprises. He was also a catholic.[348] After the collapse of the National Front, he helped organize the International Third Position along with Holland and Griffin.[349]

The academic research on the International Third Position is deficient. However, Ryan Shaffer stated in a 2018 article that the organization was in many ways a continuation of the National Front's "political soldier" ideology, but it differed in some of its goals, structure and methods.[350] The ITP claimed that the purpose of the Third Position was to "foment political revolution, to bring about revolutionary change that will work spiritually and materially in the interests of England and the English people."[351] The revolution was still referred to as the "National

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[343] Shaffer 2018. p. 85
[344] Shaffer 2018, p. 85
[345] Shaffer 2018, p. 85
[346] Shaffer 2018, p. 86
[347] See chapter 2
[348] Shaffer 2018, p. 83
[349] See chapter 2
[350] Shaffer 2018, p. 86
[351] *The Third Position Handbook - A Structure for Victory in England*, London: The Third Position, BCM ITP, 1997, p. 2

Revolution" as it was in the National Front. The revolution would mainly be carried out through ideas; they would not focus on the "phoney problems" which establishment politicians focused on. The ideas had to be put into action, and to make this possible, there needed to be a certain structure. With no structure, there would be no coherence between ideas and action, and thus no revolution. [352]

They later stated that the Third Position was a world view that rejected the received wisdom of the modern world where all peoples and cultures were doomed forever to choose between the left and right.

> The Third Position does *not* seek an unviable centrism, but a mode of Thought and Action that truly *transcends* the sterile hatreds of the modern world. The Third Position, therefore, is the political creed of the twenty-first century.[353]

5.5 The International Third Position

In 1992, Derek Holland wrote another political declaration. In contrast to *The Political Soldier*, this was a 10-point declaration, called *The International Third Position: Declaration of Principles.*[354] The ten points were thoughts on, in order; the primacy of spirit; the moral order; opposition to materialism; Zionism and the Palestinian people; the ideal of popular rule; racial and cultural diversity; preservation of the environment; the menace of bankerdom; a third position ownership; and National Revolution worldwide.[355]

The declaration had clear resemblances to the ideology of the "political soldiers" as presented in *Nationalism Today* and the previous manifest *The Political Soldier*. In chapter four I discussed *The Political Soldier*, and concluded that the "political soldiers" fundamentally had a religious conception of politics, they were anti-capitalist and anti-communist, anti-democratic, anti-Zionist, which in this context is hard to distinguish from anti-Semitic, anti-immigration, anti-urbanization, anti-materialist, anti-modernist, anti-globalist, and they thought the solution to all contemporary societal problems was the creation of a "new man" through a

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[352] *The Third Position Handbook,* 1997, p. 2
[353] *The Third Position Handbook*, 1997, p. 8
[354] Holland, Derek, *The International Third Position: Declaration of Principles* , see also Shaffer 2018, p. 86.
[355] *The Third Position Handbook* 1997, p. 8-14

spiritual revolution. In addition, the "political soldiers" were pro ruralism and environmentalists. [356]

The International Third Position resembled many of these traits. There was a correlation between the "political soldiers" ideology and the International Third Position in many of the points on the declaration. First, the ITP strongly opposed materialism. Second, they were still racial separatists, as they were before. Third, they still wanted to preserve the environment and promoted ruralism and a "back to the land" mentality. Last, they continued to promote distributism.[357]

At the same time, there were some differences, as Ryan Shaffer suggests. In my opinion, the first difference, was they believed a worldwide National Revolution would only be accomplishable through the creation of a "new man" who was a "complex of spirit and matter" and who embodied the ideal of the Third Position. Where it differed from the concept of the "political soldier", was that the "new man" of the Third Position was called a militant, and furthermore, he must have his roots in the Christian Faith. The goal was to return Europe wholeheartedly to the Faith. "As each individual develops his spiritual qualities, Europe will move forward thereby to a New Imperium."[358] At its core, the International Third Position was Christian and deeply religious, more so than the National Front post 1985. The moral order of Europe post revolution would be built on Christian standards of living. Large families would be the norm, and, consistent with God's law, abortion, contraceptives, divorce, euthanasia and homosexuality would be illegal.[359] The International Third Position would also, like the "political soldiers", implement what they called a popular rule, which was similar to the society described by Derek Holland in the interview discussed above. However, the popular rule presented by the ITP would fundamentally be built on religion, not just religiously inspired principles.

> The Third Position asserts that all healthy societies are built upon recognition of God's Law and
> the rights of Truth, and not upon the civil constitutions and Bills of Rights that have been foisted
> upon us by vested interests striving to promote liberalism and relativism.[360]

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[356] See chapter 4
[357] *The Third Position Handbook* 1997, p. 8-14
[358] *The Third Position Handbook* 1997, p. 8
[359] *The Third Position Handbook* 1997, p. 9
[360] *The Third Position Handbook* 1997, p. 11

Thus, the International Third Position did not just want to abolish liberal democracy and constitutions, they wanted to rebuild and create a society which was in full based on the law of God. They did not just have a religious conception of politics; they had a religious conception of life and society as a whole. It suggests that one of the reasons they opposed to liberal democracy was not only, as suggested earlier, that it robbed individuals of personal freedom, but that it actually was blasphemous.

Furthermore, they wanted to abolish the modern banking system, as it was perceived as corrupt and the root of all evil. They would replace it with a "social banking system based on sound money".[361] That way, debt would be erased and people would be compelled to work for the common good, not for themselves.[362]

Last, every third positionist across the world had to prepare for the National Revolution. Should a revolutionary situation occur in any country, the declaration of principles stated that every affiliated member had to be prepared to offer moral, financial or technical assistance to make the completion of the revolution possible.[363]

At this point, I will not repeat where the influences came from, as they kept referring to Codreanu, Belloc and Chesterton. However, now they also held up Libya and al-Gaddafi's *Green Book* as a major inspiration. The National Front had already made an alliance with with Louis Farrakhan and The American Nation of Islam, Khomeini, and al-Gaddafi in Libya.[364] A few members of the National Front, including Holland and Nick Griffin, actually went on a visit to Gaddafi in Libya in 1988.[365] The purpose of the trip was to study third positionism, and how the "Third Universal Theory" was put into practice by Gaddafi. Libya was portrayed as a progressive and forward-looking nation who National Revolutionists should admire and learn from.[366]

The idealization of Libya makes one suspect that they received financial support from Gaddafi, or that they at least desired it. Shaffer claims in his article that the British radicals went there in hope of receiving financial support, but that the only thing they got was a copy of the *Green*

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[361] *The Third Position Handbook* 1997, p. 13
[362] *The Third Position Handbook* 1997, p. 13
[363] *The Third Position Handbook* 1997, p. 14
[364] See chapter 4
[365] Shaffer 2018, p. 84-85.
[366] "Libya: A study of the Third Position in practice", *Nationalism Today,* No. 44, 1989, p. 8

Book.[367] The third positionists claimed that the Libyan General Peoples Congress had adopted a plan to make all production run as partnerships or cooperatives, rather than being owned by capitalists and having workers on wages. This transition had supposedly already been made in light industry and small operations. Furthermore, they admired the Libyan regime for allegedly providing loans to private persons for homes and houses, and since the Koran forbid usury, the regime would not collect interests on those loans. The *Green Book* forbid the concept of profit, so even the businesses who had failed the transition into cooperatives were hindered to maximize their profits and wages.[368] In another article from an earlier issue of *Nationalism Today,* Holland had praised Gaddafi for arming all his people, and for still walking the streets without bodyguards.[369]

In reality, scholarly research on the Gaddafi regime proves that the reality was not so romantic. Gaddafi's regime expanded the public administration compared to the monarchy that reigned before him, and made it the largest employer and item in the national budget. The model for public administration rested on decentralization, and Gaddafi claimed it was a form of direct democracy, but in reality, this system was just an authoritarian rule in disguise.[370] Political scientist Youssef Sawani stated that "[d]espite Gaddafi's claim of building a direct democratic system, his era was strongly marked with centralization rationalized by a populist discourse that mocked popular administration and local governance in favor of clientelism and subordinate elites"[371]. Furthermore, he claims that the public administration benefited loyal allies and clients, rather than the population in general.[372] Another scholar claims that this regime in fact was characterized by domestic corruption, favoritism and constant deterioration of economic conditions.[373]

Either way, the British activists romanticized about the Libyan economic system. The economic system installed in Libya was portrayed as looking very much like the one promoted by the "political soldiers" and the International Third Position. They also hailed Libya for combining elements of nationalism and pan-Arab-socialism with Islamic revivalism, and Gaddafi himself

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[367] Shaffer 2018, p. 85
[368] "Libya: A study of the Third Position in practice", *Nationalism Today,* No. 44, 1989, p. 9
[369] Holland, Derek, "The Armed People", *Nationalism Today,* No. 39, 1986, p. 23
[370] Sawani, Youssef M., "Public Administration in Libya: Continuity and Change", *International Journal of Public Administration,* Vol. 41, No. 4, 2018: 807-819, p. 807
[371] Sawani 2018, p. 808
[372] Sawani 2018, p. 808
[373] Bahgat, Gawdat, "Nonproliferation Success: The Libyan Model", *World Affairs,* Vol. 168, No. 1, 2005: 3-12, p. 9

was a held to be a devoted Muslim. Gaddafi was said to believe that the only way to regenerate the Arab peoples was to reject Western influence and the West in general, and return to the fundamentals of Islam.[374] In the same manner, the International Third Position wanted to build the new society on the law of the Christian God and the rejection of all foreign influences.

At its ideological core, The International Third Position was largely a continuation of the ideas of the "political soldiers". However, where the "political soldiers" were deeply "spiritual", the International Third Position explicitly saw Christianity as the fundament of society. This should hardly be seen as a departure from their fascist heritage; it did not make them less fundamentalist. In 1998, one of the former members of the organization, Troy Southgate, wrote that even though some ITP activists seemed to oppose the ideas of fascism, "the ITP was fascist at its very core".[375] What is striking is how the Christian fundamentalism of ITP developed parallel to, and directly inspired by fundamentalist political Islam, as practiced in Iran and as imagined in Libya.

5.6   The result of the National Revolutionary project

The 1990's was an eventful decade for the International Third Position. In the early 1990's, the organization purchased a property in Normandy, France, to try to realize the "back to the land" project and the rural revolution.[376] In an interview in the third positionist magazine *Final Conflict* in 1996, the activists said that during their time in the National Front, they had realized that a great flaw in their strategy was that their ideology was mainly theoretical. Recently, after having established the IPT, they had realized that practical action was needed. They were under the impression that they could not wait around for an opportunity to change the world, they just had to start, on however small a scale.[377] However, during the course of the 1990's, this project too was dissolved, and the International Third Position broke up. One of the reasons was the falling out between Nick Griffin and Derek Holland, rooted in the fact that Holland thought Griffin was not Catholic enough. Holland eventually quit the ITP to go "back to the land" on his own.[378]

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[374] Little, Douglas, *American Orientalism – The United States in the Middle East since 1945,* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002, p. 207
[375] Shaffer 2018, p 87
[376] Shaffer 2018, p 87 / "The Rural Revolution! An interview with the 'back to the land' activists", *Final Conflict*, No. 11, 1996, p. 16
[377] "The Rural Revolution! An interview with the 'back to the land' activists", *Final Conflict*, No. 11, p. 16
[378] Shaffer 2018, p. 90-92

Nick Griffin and Roberto Fiore are still active in politics today. After Nick Griffin left the International Third Position, he joined John Tyndall in the British National Party and began engaging in electoral politics again. In 1999, Griffin was elected chairman of the party, and began a large modernization process.[379] Under his leadership, the BNP experienced a surge in electoral support in the 2000s.[380] In 2009, Griffin and former National Front chairman Andrew Brons were elected into the European Parliament.

Back in Italy, Roberto Fiore launched yet another third positionist organization, called the *Forza Nuova*, which is still active today. He was elected MEP for Italy in 2008, but lost his seat to Alessandra Mussolini in July 2009. The seats in European Parliament enabled Griffin and Fiore to network with other far right representatives from across Europe, and in September 2009, Griffin initiated the launch of the Alliance of European National Movements together with several extremist parties, for the

> creation of a Europe of free, independent and equal nations in the framework of a confederation of sovereign nation states, refraining from taking decisions on matters properly taken by states themselves.[381]

In 2014, Griffin lost his seat in the European Parliament and he was later expelled from the British National Party. This was not the end of Griffin's career, however, and in 2015, Griffin launched the most recent transnational extremist group, the Alliance of Peace and Freedom. The alliance included prominent far right parties like Greece's Golden Dawn and The National Democratic Party of Germany. Roberto Fiore was elected president of the organization.[382]

A look at the Alliance for Peace and Freedom's website today (April 2019), shows that the activities of this party is financially supported by the European Parliament. Fiore is still the president and Griffin is the deputy chairman.[383] The organization claims to stand for

> A Europe of sovereign nations in which the independent states work together on a confederated basis to address the great challenges of our time and to protect, celebrate and promote our common Christian values and European cultural heritage.[384]

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[379] Shaffer 2018, p. 91-92. See also: Griffin 2011 and Eatwell 2012
[380] Eatwell 2004, p. 67
[381] Shaffer 2018, p. 92
[382] Shaffer 2018, p. 95
[383] https://apfeurope.com/our-members/ (22.04.2019)
[384] https://apfeurope.com/where-we-stand/ (22.04.2019)

The organizations has board members from Sweden[385], the Czech Worker's Party, the Spanish Democracia Nacional, Belguim's Nation, and the German NDP.[386] According to Wikipedia, the Golden Dawn is also still a member of the organization.[387] In other words, some of the major agents of this thesis are working to promote far right, nationalist interests in Europe to this day.

On a closing note, it is appropriate to point out that this national revolutionary project was in fact one of failure. Where many of the previously fascist parties of the "third wave" modernized and reoriented themselves in order to become more legitimate and break into mainstream politics, the "political soldiers" did the opposite. So why did this reorientation not "work"? There are many possible answers.

First, they withdrew from elections, launched a large offensive against liberal democracy, and made a strategy for how they were going to organize the state once the liberal democratic institutions collapsed. In addition, they made it nearly impossible for the masses to join after they adopted a "cadre structure": only members dedicated enough were allowed into the movement. Instead of trying to move into the mainstream political landscape, they adopted a more obscure and esoteric profile. This is in many ways an example of metapolitization of ideology, a strategy Roger Griffin claims became important to post-war fascists.[388]

Second, other reasons for the failure of the "political soldiers" are probably linked to the national context. Like mentioned in the introduction, Britain had few of the prerequisites usually necessary for fascists to succeed. Britain was economically developed, was relatively stable socially, and had long traditions of democracy. Furthermore, Britain has a two (and a half) party electoral system that is hard to break into at all. However, it is interesting to note that Nick Griffin, after leaving the International Third Position, joined Tyndall in the British National Party. After being elected chairman, he began a modernization process, and did eventually get his electoral breakthrough in Britain. This process is, on contrary to the history of the "political soldiers", widely researched.[389] Even though Nick Griffin has not yet managed to secure a more "permanent" or stable political position, he is still active in politics. With the

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[385] The Swedish member is Stefan Jacobsson, who was the leader of the now dissolved Party of the Swedes (formerly National Socialist Front), and later the Swedish Resistance Movement, a contemporary neo-Nazi organization. Hallandsposten: https://www.hallandsposten.se/nazister-gick-till-attack-med-tillhyggen-1.1498325 30.04.2019
[386] https://apfeurope.com/where-we-stand/ (22.04.2019)
[387] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alliance_for_Peace_and_Freedom (22.04.2019)
[388] See chapter 4.1
[389] See for example: Goodwin 2011, Copsey 2004, Griffin 2011, Eatwell 2004 and Thorsen 2012

Alliance for Peace and Freedom, he, along with various far right activists and parties, have enabled themselves to engage in politics on a supranational level. If they are to succeed and grow in numbers, it is not unsafe to say that they could eventually become a real threat to the established liberal democracy.

Concluding remarks

The subject of this thesis, the "political soldiers", did attempt to complete a reorientation like many of the other parties of the "third wave", but they never managed to gain much support, or establish a form of permanent, active organization. Can they, even so, teach us something of general relevance to the study of Europe's far right since the 1880s? By way of conclusion, I will highlight some of the results of my investigation of the British "political soldiers" by relating them to three lines of inquiry: the relevance of fascism to the study and classification of these groups, how the reorientation in Britain related to the general reorientations taking place during the 'third wave', and if and in what sense we can speak of "radicalization".

First, there has been a discussion on how to classify these groups. Is the study of historical fascism a useful tool when studying them, or are they something entirely new? I have argued that fascism is a necessary context to understand my object of study, the "political soldiers". I initially claimed that the literature on fascism and far right ideology is quite ambiguous, and witnesses an unwillingness to brand contemporary far right movements as fascist. This is partly because they sometimes conceal their true interests while trying to rally public support. The "political soldiers" however, did not present me with such a contradiction. They were not particularly preoccupied with breaking into mainstream politics; they were not, in their own words, particularly hesitant to go beyond what was normally regarded as acceptable in the more traditional patriotic circles.[390] They were in fact very explicit about their desires and goals from the outset, because they had the luxury of not relying on electoral performances in order to stay active. I have argued that their ideology fit many of the criteria of general fascism. There were, admittedly, no romances of the Fhürerprinzip, totalitarianism, and references to Hitler and Mussolini in the ideology of the "political soldiers", but many other certain features *were* present. If one takes Roger Griffin's formulation of the fascist minimum into account, the "political soldiers" could be called fascist. Griffin claimes that fascism is "a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism".[391]

In chapter 4, I suggested that many aspects of *The Political Soldier – A Statement* fit this definition of fascism. The same can be said about the "political soldiers" in general. To

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[390] See chapter 2
[391] See chapter 1

summarize, they were anti-democratic, anti-capitalist, anti-communist, anti-immigration, anti-Zionist (which in this context is the same as anti-Semitic), anti-modernist, ultra-nationalist and revolutionary, to list the most basic features. At the heart of the ideology was the idea that society had to be reborn. To make this happen, the national revolution had to happen, but instead of attempting a *coup d'état*, they aimed to wait for the inevitable collapse of modern society, and *then* seize power. The idea of the national revolution was not only presented in *The Political Soldier*, but was at the core of the "political soldier's" ideology from the onset and until the end.

Even though they did not draw inspiration from earlier fascist regimes (with the exception of the month-long Legionary State in Romania), they referred to and drew direct inspiration from earlier fascist movements and ideologues, including extremely violent branches such as the Iron Guard. Furthermore, in regards to sources of inspiration, in chapters 3 and 4, while discussing these sources, it became clear that a form of Italian neo-Fascism was a big influence. Ferraresi points out in an article on Evola and the far right that Terza Posizione was one of the organizations who based much of its ideology on Evola. He also points out that the group reproduced much of the terminology of the Rumanian Iron Guard.[392] In addition, we have seen that Roberto Fiore, the founder of the Terza Posizione had a big part in the development of the British "political soldiers". What I would suggest, is that the entire project of the "political soldiers" was to reproduce and adapt this form of Italian neo-Fascism in Britain, and making it their own by claiming that their "third position" had roots in British economic theory, i.e. in Cobbett, Belloc and Chesterton. Other than the economic aspect, based on the sources of inspiration discussed in this thesis, there was very little new and original about the core of the "political soldier". In conclusion, I am suggesting is that it would be very difficult to understand and discuss this particular group outside the context of fascism, as historical and contemporary fascist movements were constantly referenced to.

Second, I have discussed how the reorientation of the "political soldiers" fit into the contemporary European context of the "third wave". On one side, they clearly fit into this pattern of right wing reorientation. In the beginning of the 1980's they banned the older neo-Nazi guard of the party, which could suggest a sign of ideological moderation, or at least an attempt to conceal their neo-Nazi heritage. Furthermore, they did attempt a reorientation from

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[392] Ferraresi 1987, p. 138

the classical neo-Nazism promoted under Tyndall. They developed a broader political program that did not only revolve around the immigration issue, but which also included policies on environment, social and economic administration, and the preservation of cultural heritage. They also adopted the French model of promoting cultural differentialism in the place of white supremacy. On the other hand, in some ways they did not fit into this pattern at all. In contrast to for example the Front National in France, they made no efforts to break into the political mainstream. Instead, they adopted a more esoteric and metapolitical ideology, and instead of pursuing the quest for political legitimacy, they became an elitist, revolutionary cadre-organization, which only a few, carefully selected members were allowed to join. This brings me to my third major finding.

While developing an ideology which in some respects could appear to be more moderate than the old Nazi one, they went through a process of what contemporary scholars call "radicalization", emphasizing a turn to radicalization on the *individual* level. This was at the core of the 'political soldier' project. In *The Political Soldier – A Statement*, Derek Holland declared that the *most* important step on the road to revolution was the creation of a new man, fully dedicated to the cause. This was closely connected to a religious conception of politics and an emphasis on individual conviction and commitment. To Holland, the need to be a "political soldier" was not a subjective choice, but a calling from God. Eventually, the goal was to bring about a 'spiritualization' of the whole people and nation.

The importance of the relationship to God only grew stronger as the organization evolved, and by 1985, the importance of understanding the struggle between the spiritual and the material, and the importance of individual conviction, was fundamental to the national revolutionary ideology. Reconnecting to the divine was thought of as a main aspect of the revolution, and it was promoted as an official policy by the National Front. By the 1990's, spirituality had gone from being a key aspect of the ideology to being fundamental to the way they perceived the world and life – by this point, they believed that both personal life and society should be built on the law of the Christian God, similar to how Sharia law was practiced in certain Islamic regimes. Today, far right groups seem to have emerged as a reaction to the "Islamic threat". The history of the "political soldiers", however, shows us a very different picture. The "political soldiers" promoted a "spiritual" radicalization that was not at all a reaction to the rise of political Islam; they saw political Islam as another source of inspiration to the decadent West. At the same time, they shows us that Christianity too can be a source of political fundamentalism.

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The present concern with "radicalization" is very much focused on processes where individuals become inclined to resort to acts of political violence or terrorism. The "political soldiers" never produced any terrorists of its own. In fact, in their writings the "political soldiers" were highly ambiguous when it came to the legitimization of violence. On the one hand, they condemned terrorism, but on the other, both Nick Griffin and Derek Holland suggested that the use of violence was a useful means if necessary. This was particularly in cases where self-defense was required. Holland also urged the armament of the entire population so that the nation as a whole could defend itself in a possible invasion. However, the combination of religious fundamentalism, individual 'calling' and appeals to 'self-defense' make for a dangerous mix. As we know, the terrorist of 22 July was not a member of any organization (with the exception of the not yet proven existence of the Order of Knights Templar) but drew his inspiration from various intellectual and right wing extremist currents of the 20th and 21st century.[393] He could easily have found inspiration in something like the 'political soldier' ideology. In the words of Roger Eatwell, the ideal "political soldier" was a "fanatic, non-materialistic, quasi-religious 'new man'", who would go to almost any length, if it would advance "the cause".

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[393] Wolff 2016, p. 478-479. See also: Østerud, Svein (ed.), *22. Juli: forstå, forklare og forebygge,* Oslo: Abstrakt Forlag 2012.

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